



# St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief James W. Ransom  
Chief Monica M. Jacobs  
Chief Mark H. Garrow  
Sub-Chief Ron LaFrance Jr.  
Sub-Chief Pamela D. Brown  
Sub-Chief Stacy A. Adams

## PRESS RELEASE

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For more information:  
David T. Staddon, Director  
Public Information Office  
St. Regis Mohawk Tribe  
Tel: (518) 358-2272 ext. 286

### **AKWESASNE LEADERS URGE COOPERATION AT U.S. PORT OF ENTRY**

*Tribal and U.S. Customs Officials Continue to Collaborate*

**Akwesasne Territory.** U.S. Customs and Border Protection (U.S. CBP) guards have recently increased security at the Rooseveltown Port of Entry in response to two vehicles running the border. One of the incidents put a Custom Officer's and other travelers' lives at risk.

On Monday, September 14, 2009, U.S. Customs officials and representatives from the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe met to discuss the recent incidents of running the border. MCA Grand Chief Mike Mitchell, Chief Wesley Benedict, Chief Billy Sunday, Chief Brian David and St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Chief James Ransom joined Area Port Director Alan Whitcomb and Port Director, Bob Stephenson at the meeting.

U.S. CBP officials made it clear that border running is a national security risk and they are required to report every incident to their Washington, D.C. headquarters. They asked for the community's help to prevent future incidents and indicated that more restrictive action could be taken to maintain security at the port. This may include funneling all traffic coming from Cornwall Island through one lane, which will create a lengthy and cumbersome process for local travelers.

Akwesasne leadership noted that they are continuing to address local concerns with the U.S. Port. Immediately following a September 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials, local leaders were successful in having the number of speed bumps reduced and the lighting minimized at the checkpoint. During that same meeting, U.S. CBP officials expressed a willingness to reopen the northbound roadway, but it requires the community's cooperation to do it in a manner that is respectful of established security measures.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials expressed a willingness to work cooperatively with Akwesasne to avoid unnecessary delays in crossing the border, but they must still be able to do their jobs effectively. The new barriers are evidence that the incidents of border running endanger the recent progress and cooperation Akwesasne leaders have made.

"We recognize that the vast majority of the community is respectful when crossing the border. However, the actions of a few individuals can have consequences for the Mohawk community and all others crossing the border," stated Chief Ransom.

Grand Chief Mitchell noted, "We are pleased that the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Area Port Director Stephenson is taking such a collaborative approach in addressing our community's issues. We want to continue working in a cooperative fashion to maintain the convenience of an expedited crossing for Akwesasne residents."

Leadership of both Councils are strongly urging community members to be respectful and cooperative when crossing the border. This will ease congestion and promote convenience for everyone.

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The St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Council is the duly elected and federally recognized government of the St. Regis Mohawk People.