



# St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Ron LaFrance Jr.  
Chief Paul O. Thompson  
Chief Beverly Cook  
Sub-Chief Michael L. Conners  
Sub-Chief Eric Thompson  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Home Loan Program for Akwesasne Veterans** *MOU Signed between Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and Veteran's Affairs*

**Akwesasne** - On Saturday, December 7, 2013, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) securing direct home loan benefits to eligible Mohawk veterans on the Saint Regis Mohawk Reservation. Loans are now available for veterans to purchase, build or improve a home at Akwesasne, a benefit not previously available. Traveling to mark this occasion were two representatives from VA. Mike Frueh, National Director of Loan Guaranty Programs in Washington, DC is responsible for the oversight of all loan programs for the VA. His focus is bringing a greater understanding and use of Native American veteran's loan products to Indian Country. Peter Vicaire is a Tribal Government Relations Specialist from the Eagan, Minnesota office. Mr. Vicaire will be our regional contact specific to any work with the Native American Direct Loan Programs.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe celebrated the signing of this MOU at the American Legion Post 1479 in Akwesasne on Saturday, December 7, 2013. Chief Ron LaFrance signed the official MOU and stated it was "an absolute honor to be able to share this occasion with our veterans. It is very difficult for us to get a mortgage on the reservation. This will allow our Mohawk veterans to be able to apply for a bank mortgage, build a home for their family, and receive the same competitive rates people living off Indian land are eligible for."

The Honorable P.J. Herne shared a profoundly touching view of exactly what this MOU means today, but especially what it may mean to a young *Akwesashró:non* tomorrow. "What will the 'rest of the story' involve? We cannot predict such things, but what is certain is that in the future, a young man or woman from Akwesasne is going to be sitting down with an Armed Forces Recruiter. As they review the benefits of enlisting, let us hope that the VA/ Saint Regis MOU will be noted. And should that young person from Akwesasne ask 'What is this for?' Let us hope someone can tell them: 'because, Kenneth Herne crossed the Ganges River in India with the Army Engineers, because Charlie Cook weathered storms on bleak Iceland, because Johnny Cook saw all of Europe through a B-24's nose gunner's blister, because Barney Rourke rode into Tienstsin with the first Marines, because of them, and hundreds of them before you, you have the opportunity to receive assistance from the VA in acquiring a home on the Saint Regis Indian Reservation'."

*Continued*

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Veterans who have earned the VA home loan benefit can now take full advantage of the no-down payment home loan program for properties on Indian land. This includes re-finance options to receive competitive interest rates.

The VA may make direct loans to any Native American Veteran if their tribal organization has signed this MOU with Veteran's Affairs. Director of Housing, Retha Herne, stated "The Akwesasne Housing Authority (AHA) was proud to work towards the goal of attaining veterans housing opportunities. The hard work and research of Judge P.J. Herne and former Chief Randy Hart secured the right connections to fulfil the first step in providing these services to our Mohawk veterans. The AHA will work with our VA agency representatives to bring the necessary training to our staff, tribal departments and our community. We are going in the right direction and I congratulate our deserving veterans and currently enlisted native warriors."

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

Top: Tribal Chief Ron LaFrance Signs MOU

Middle: Mike Frueh, National Director of Loan Guaranty Programs Signing

Bottom: Chief Judge PJ Herne, American Legion Post 1479 Commander Mike Cook, AHA Director Retha Herne, Tribal Chief Ron LaFrance, Former Tribal Chief Randy Hart and VA Mike Frueh.

