



# Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Barbara A. Lazore  
Chief James W. Ransom  
Chief Monica M. Jacobs  
Sub-Chief Stacy A. Adams  
Sub-Chief Ronald LaFrance Jr.  
Sub-Chief Pamela D. Brown

## PRESS RELEASE

For release:  
Ennisko:wa/March 26, 2009

For more information:  
Public Information Office  
St. Regis Mohawk Tribe  
Tel: (518) 358-2272 ext. 286 or  
Fax: (518) 358-9675

### IDENTITY OF LARGE WOLF-LIKE ANIMALS DETERMINED

**AKWESASNE TERRITORY** - On March 5, 2009 the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Environment Division, Tribal Police Department and Animal Control Officer met with representatives of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) to review findings related to an investigation into the identify of wolf-like animals found roaming the Frogtown Road, North Road and White Road areas of Akwesasne in April 2008.

Tribal Police had responded to reports on Onerathtokha/April 27 and 28, 2008 that community members saw several large wolf-like animals in their yards. Two were eventually shot and killed. One whole animal was taken directly to Ward Stone, NYSDEC, Wildlife Pathology Unit in Delmar, NY for identification. Tissue and hair samples were collected from the pelt of the second animal and submitted to NYSDEC. Coincidentally, one more animal similar to the ones found in Akwesasne were sighted and killed in the Adirondack foothills, near Parishville, NY. This animal was later found out to be related to the ones in Akwesasne. The USFWS became highly interested in the animals out of concern for possible Endangered Species Act (ESA) violations because the animals had strong wolf characteristics.

It was determined by the USFWS and the NYSDEC labs that the animals shot and killed in Akwesasne were wolf/dog hybrids, which are not protected by the ESA. The animals shot and killed in Parishville were also wolf/dog hybrids. Additionally, all these animals were found to be related to one another. Preliminary analysis indicated wolf parentage of the animals was from the Alaskan wolf population. Alaskan wolf population parentage of these animals suggested hybridization or domestication because it is unlikely that a wolf from the Alaskan population would migrate to this part of the country. There are three (3) distinct wolf populations in North America, Alaskan, Rocky Mountains and Great Lakes. The USFWS spent considerable time in conducting further genetic tests to ensure thorough and conclusive analysis. The results of this more detailed analysis indicated the presence of domestic dog markers. Still unknown and not likely ever to be known unless someone steps forward is the origin of these hybrid wolf/dogs. One can only speculate that that these animals might have

412 State Route 37  
Akwesasne, New York 13655  
Phone: 518.358.2272  
Fax: 518.358.3205

been brought to this area to be bred or kept as pets. Since the original incident, in Ennisko:wa/March of 2009 the Tribe encountered another possible wolf/dog hybrid and is working with USFWS and the USDA-Animal Plant Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services to capture the animal so that it can be tested.

The incident raises several issues and concerns that the community should consider. First, it is possible wild wolves could migrate into this area from populations in Canada and future encounters could occur. The first reaction may be to kill the animals out of fear or for want of a trophy. Indiscriminate killing of these animals is of concern because wolves are protected by Federal law under the Endangered Species Act and could result in prosecution. A conviction under the ESA is punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000 and up to one year in prison. Another concern is that wolf is a Mohawk Clan and that rather than destroying a Clan animal one should consider themselves privileged to have a rare opportunity to see one in the wild. In general all wildlife should be protected unless taken for good reason, such as during hunting season. Also, because Akwesasne is a Native American community there are likely to be strong feelings toward wanting to harbor wolf/dog hybrids because of the cultural significance of wolves. Unfortunately, having wolf/dog hybrids as pets may not turn out as expected and result in their escape or even deliberate release because they are difficult to care for safely or become unmanageable for when fully grown.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe is currently proposing an Animal Control Ordinance. The ordinance in addition to controlling domestic animals includes provisions for controlling the possession of any wild animals which includes wolves or any type of hybrid wolf. The ordinance is intended to protect the Akwesasne community from dangers associated with domestic or wild animals.

If anyone encounters a wild animal in residential areas the first thing they should remember is to leave it alone, it will eventually return to its habitat. Normally, a wild animal will avoid human contact. However, if a wild animal is seen and you have concerns, please notify the Tribe's Environment Division at (518)358-5937 or the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Animal Control Officer Derek Comins at (518) 358-2272. For those interested in or wanting additional information on endangered species you can visit the USFWS website at [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).