



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Randy Hart
Chief Ron LaFrance Jr.
Chief Paul O. Thompson
Sub-Chief Shelley Jacobs
Sub-Chief Michael L. Connors
Sub-Chief Eric Thompson

PRESS RELEASE

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Ironworkers Complete and Compete

Complete Tribe's Hotel Frame and Compete in Festival

Akwesasne Territory. From Friday July 20 through Sunday July 22, 2012, the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino was the site of two memorable events. Ironworkers, tribal and casino officials conducted a topping off ceremony as they installed the last piece of steel into the frame of the casino's new resort hotel. This is a tradition among ironworkers when the steel frame of a construction project is completed. Tribal officials, casino officials and construction workers signed the beam which was decorated with a pine tree and flags. The familiar pine tree, symbolizing the "white roots of peace," accompanied the final raised beam to the top of the multi-story structure. Over 200 people attended the topping off ceremony.

Newly re-elected Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Chief Paul O. Thompson went up top to connect the last steel beam. He is a 51-year Local 440 journeyman ironworker and the veteran of many construction projects across the United States and Canada. Chief Thompson remarked, "This was my final ironworking job and I am proud to have been a part of this project. After this I am turning in my union book."

At 7:00 p.m. on Friday the opening ceremonies of the 10th Annual International Ironworkers Festival followed the topping off ceremony. Tribal Chief Ron LaFrance provided words of welcome to the attendees. He recalled his father's experiences as an ironworker, "He came home tired and dirty," said Chief LaFrance. "He had burns from welding sparks and told me, 'This is not something I want you to do. I want you to get your education.'" Tribal Chief Paul Thompson also provided welcoming remarks, along with Union 440 members Mike Swamp and Bill Sears. Sears recounted some of his experiences in the ironworking trade as well as remembrances of those ironworkers who had passed away during the past year.

The Ironworkers Festival kicked off on Saturday July 21, 2012 and the competition began at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday. The event featured the spud throw, knot and rod tying, the bolt throw, the rivet toss and the most dramatic event – the column climb. Competitors came in from Michigan, Florida, New York City, New Jersey and Pennsylvania as well as Montreal, Ottawa and even Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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Last year's Ultimate Ironworker Eric Costa again repeated and defended his crown against Chris Prophet. Eric also broke the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino record for the fastest climber at the Column Climb event. He smashed the old record of 6.4 seconds coming in at 6.09 seconds. Other winners included Al Staley, Retiree Overall Champion, and Travis Thompson, Apprentice Overall Champ. Other notable wins included Ella Arquette at Women's Packing Competition. The competition also featured another repeat winner in the Chicken Wing Contest for Fort's Brickhouse. When asked why he comes to this event yearly, Chris Prophet stated, "This is a brotherhood and family. I come back year after year because of the wonderful people here in this community. They are welcoming and the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino has always put on the best show of the summer for us."

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