



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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NEWS RELEASE

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SRMT Continues Pursuit of Boundary Resolution *Tribal Council Confident Cuomo Finishes Negotiations*

Akwesasne, NY - On May 28, 2014, New York State, St. Lawrence County and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe signed a Memorandum of Understanding, a historic step in the tribe's determination to resolve the decades-old boundary issue that impedes both land ownership and jurisdictional issues. Upon a final settlement agreement, the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators has authorized the Chair of the Board to sign the land claim.

"Tribal Council commends the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators resolution to authorize the Chair of the Board, Jonathon Putney, to sign, upon final settlement agreement," stated Chief Ron LaFrance. "We're confident Franklin County, too, will negotiate similar terms with the State".

The MOU signed between New York State, St. Lawrence County, the New York Power Authority and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe was a pivotal moment in the tribe's determination to resolve the decades-long boundary fight. The community has felt the loss of the lands, reserved within the 1796 Treaty, since the unlawful sale of lands to the State. However, due to the violation of the 1790 Non-Intercourse Act, the Mohawks have been able to file a land claim to revisit these losses. A common misconception is that the Saint Regis Mohawk land claim in any way implicates a broader claim for other aboriginal lands. This land claim is framed and bounded by the 1796 Treaty with the Seven Nations of Canada, which delineates the boundaries of the original reservation. The tribe has brought claims arising under this treaty and none other; the Tribe cannot speak to any other claims outside of this treaty. The return of the land has always been at the forefront of Tribal Council's considerations.

Attempts to settle the land claims date back to 1978 when the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne filed the first federal complaint based on the illegal purchases of 1796 treaty land and islands in the St. Lawrence River in 1982. The Tribe and the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs filed suit in 1989. The negotiations have included former governors Pataki, Spitzer and now the current Governor Andrew Cuomo. In 2005, an agreement that nearly settled collapsed.

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The MOU has deliberately been negotiated with intentions of protecting landowners and local governments. The land claim and its interpretation of terms outlined in the MOU are complex, but the intended result is to bring clarity and certainty to the boundary, and to end the dispute in a way that is mutually beneficial, addressing all parties concerns.

“The Tribe is aware that resolving our long-standing boundary issues will impact our neighbors, but the benefits are significant to both Akwesasne and our surrounding counties. We want a resolution that provides our Tribe the opportunity to return land to our territory and access to higher education by enacting a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees at all SUNY schools. St. Lawrence County worked in a collaborative fashion. It is our hope that Franklin County will do the same,” affirmed Chief Beverly Cook.

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