



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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

NEWS RELEASE

For release:
Onerahtohkó:wa/May 28, 2014

For more information:
Communications Department
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe
Tel: (518) 358-2272 ext. 286

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Has Land Settlement in Sight *MOU signed with State, St. Lawrence Co.; Support sought from Franklin Co.*

AKWESASNE, NY – In a move that brings a decades-long land settlement closer to resolution than ever, leaders from the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with officials from New York State and St. Lawrence County today.

The agreement outlines terms of a settlement agreement that would provide the Tribe the opportunity to return identified lands to its reservation and provide the county and local governments significant economic benefits in return. The agreement also provides all parties resolution and clarity on jurisdictional matters.

“Our Tribe and our people have worked toward this agreement for 32 years,” said Chief Beverly Cook of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council. “Our Council is carrying the work from our past leaders forward; we’ve built on each other’s efforts, and we remain committed to a negotiated settlement that benefits our Mohawk people and our neighbors.”

According to the MOU, a final settlement agreement would permit the Tribe to acquire, only from willing sellers, identified lands in St. Lawrence County and return them to the Tribe’s territory. In exchange, local governments will receive payments from New York State covering any lost property taxes for the lands the Tribe is able to acquire. St. Lawrence County will also receive one-time payments of \$2 million and \$1.5 million from the State and the Tribe, respectively, as well as annual payments of \$4 million from New York State to be paid in perpetuity. The funds would be unrestricted, allowing the County to use them as it sees fit. The agreement also clarifies matters related to jurisdiction and building codes.

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The payments outlined in the MOU are in addition to the local share of casino revenues generated under the Tribe's gaming Compact with New York State. Under the existing distribution formula, the estimated annual payments include approximately \$1.45 million for St. Lawrence County and \$725,000 each for the Towns of Brasher and Massena.

The identified lands in St. Lawrence County which the Tribe can attempt to acquire include approximately 3,440 acres in the Town of Brasher and approximately 1,360 acres in the Town of Massena.

In exchange for the right to acquire and return identified lands to its recognized Reservation, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe will also receive annual payments from the New York Power Authority (NYPA) of \$2 million for 35 years; up to nine megawatts of power and energy at NYPA's lowest rate to meet the needs of the Reservation; and free tuition and fees for enrolled Tribe members who qualify for admission to any State University of New York (SUNY) institution of higher learning.

"This is a historic time for our Mohawk people, which has been born of the hard work, vision and dedication of many of our leaders over several years," said Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council Chief Paul O. Thompson. "The terms to which we agree today not only repair our past by allowing our Tribe to recover our lands, but they also provide opportunities for our future generations through education. As Tribal leaders, that is our commitment and responsibility – to ensure that our future generations have the opportunities they need, and that the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe needs, to succeed and flourish."

While the MOU, which is also supported by the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs, outlines terms and benefits for St. Lawrence County, the Tribe has also been working to resolve boundary matters with neighboring Franklin County. A final settlement cannot be enacted without support and sign-on from Franklin County, followed by local, state and Congressional approval.

"We are proud to stand here with our neighbors from St. Lawrence County and we hope that our friends from Franklin County will also come to the table," Chief Ron LaFrance of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council said. "The settlement of our land matters will benefit our entire region, just as the benefits of our Tribe's economic expansion have reached far into our neighboring communities."

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The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe is one of the North Country's leading economic engines. The tribe currently employs more than 1,600 people at its various enterprises, including the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino, with an annual payroll of \$47 million. More than 65 percent of the tribe's employees live in Franklin County and 33 percent live in St. Lawrence County. In addition, the tribe has also worked with 244 vendors from Franklin County and 281 vendors from St. Lawrence County, thereby supporting hundreds of local jobs.

The Akwesasne Mohawk Casino Resort attracts more than 1.3 million people to the region each year, and has generated more than \$86 million in exclusivity payments to New York State since 2005, a portion of which is shared with the local community, in accordance with the tribe's Compact agreement with the State.

"Shared economic success and friendship know no boundaries," LaFrance added. "We have invested more than \$100 million in local planning, infrastructure and construction projects over the past three years. We have worked together to build our business and improve the quality of life across our communities. This is our home – forever. No single issue holds more importance to our people than restoring our territory. Our hope, our energy and our focus is on working through this matter in a continued spirit of partnership."

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