



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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Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Recognized for Land Negotiations with New York State *Tribe Receives Deal of the Year Award at Native American Finance Officers Association Annual Conference*

Akwesasne Territory - Over the past several years, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe has grown into one of the strongest economic drivers in the North Country of New York State, fueled in part by the development of its dynamic Akwesasne Mohawk Casino Resort. Yet, for more than 30 years, the Tribe has been faced with unresolved issues related to the boundary of its recognized territory.

The Tribe's focus on developing its economic strength and negotiating a resolution to the boundary issues has been praised by a leading national organization committed to growing tribal economies. The Native American Finance Officers Association (NAFOA) presented the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe with NAFOA's Deal of the Year award at its 32nd annual conference in New Orleans. This was a three tribe award, bestowed upon the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, the Oneida Indian Nation and the Seneca Nation of Indians for their respective agreements with the state of New York. These agreements symbolize a comprehensive rebalance of tribal-state authority and jurisdiction; as was noted by NAFOA's President, Bill Lomax, who remarked that these deals were "an extremely promising step in the right direction" and "reinforced the sovereignty of tribal nations".

The award highlights the Tribe's effort to work with New York State leaders to resolve a dispute over casino revenue share payments in 2013 and to use that opportunity to refocus discussions on boundary issues that have been left unresolved for decades.

"Last year was a significant year for Tribal-State relations in New York," said Chief Ron LaFrance of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council. "Our discussions with state leaders were productive on many fronts. Not only did the talks ensure that our Tribe's rights under our gaming Compact were preserved, they also put the resolution of our boundary, and the importance of that issue to our Tribe, to the forefront of our relationship with the State. We feel, for the first time in a very long time, that a resolution is close at hand. We're not at the finish line yet, but we are close." In Chief LaFrance's acceptance speech, he recognized "the perseverance of leadership who laid the framework to resurrect our outstanding land claim settlement. Difficult decisions were made to withhold revenue sharing payments." Formal acknowledgments were made to leaders who have

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passed, “Leonard Garrow, Sally Benedict, Mark Narcissian, Brian Skidders, Julius Cook, Reginald White and his father, Dr. Ron LaFrance, Sr.” Additionally, “the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, past Tribal Council members Jim Ransom, Barbara Lazore, Maggie Terrance, Monica Jacobs, Mark Garrow, Randy Hart and present Council members, Chief Paul Thompson, Chief Beverly Cook and Sub-Chiefs Michael Conners, Shelley Jacobs and Eric Thompson and the Tribe’s General Counsel, Michele Mitchell.”

Tribal, state and local leaders have been working toward an agreement that benefits the Tribe and local governments in Franklin and St. Lawrence counties. The focus of a resolution would permit the Tribe to acquire, only from willing sellers, certain identified lands in Franklin and St. Lawrence counties and return them to the Tribe’s territory. In exchange, the local communities would receive substantial economic benefits. A settlement would provide all parties resolution and clarity on jurisdictional matters.

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, 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.

“Although we are a sovereign nation, we are also part of a larger community,” LaFrance said. “The success of our business enterprises, including jobs and capital investment, does not stop at our territory’s boundary. Likewise, resolving this long-standing issue will require consideration for and cooperation with those governments located adjacent to our territory. That has always been our focus and commitment.”

NAFOA (Native American Finance Officers Association) is a national 501 (c)(3) non-profit which seeks to strengthen tribal economies through its policy work and education initiatives.

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