



# St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Files Lawsuit**

#### *Challenges New York's Tax Collection Scheme*

**Akwesasne Territory** – The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe filed a lawsuit on August 24, 2010 in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York. The lawsuit challenges New York's newly adopted cigarette tax scheme to collect sales and use taxes on cigarettes purchased by non-Indians on reservations. The suit contends that the state's tax scheme violates the Tribe's right to self-governance in violation of federal law.

"We have valid concerns about this New York State law and how it infringes on our territory and on our self governance," said Monica Jacobs, Tribal Chief. "The intent of this law is clearly to interfere with our internal affairs." The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has the legal right to regulate business in its territory, including the sale of tobacco products.

"The State of New York is forcing the Tribe to carry out and enforce state law and regulations," observed Tribal Chief Randy Hart. "This is in clear violation of the Tribe's rights as a sovereign entity exercising jurisdiction over its territory. The State Legislature cannot force the Tribe to collect state taxes and it cannot lawfully interfere with Tribal internal affairs.

"Our Tribal businesses are the heart of our economy; they generate revenue to support health, law, education and other programs that benefit the community. The state of New York is prohibiting us from continuing our economic development for our territory," remarked Jacobs.

The Tribe is pursuing every viable legal remedy to oppose the state's tax scheme. A preliminary hearing has been scheduled for early January, 2011.

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