



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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

NEWS RELEASE

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

Tribal Chief LaFrance and Sub-Chief Conners Take Oaths of Office

Akwesasne, NY- On Tuesday, July 1, 2014 the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe hosted the annual ceremony to Swear-In incumbents Chief Ron LaFrance, Jr. and Sub-Chief Michael Conners, Jr. Honored guests in attendance included Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Chief Brian David who gave words of support and an affirmation of the re-elected Council members. Guests in attendance were privileged to have the Opening Address delivered in Mohawk by ten-year old Rakwirahes Pembleton.

Sub-Chief Eric Thompson spoke on behalf of Chief Paul Thompson, “Ron provides perspective from community members; Michael has a keen analytical mind and together, their leadership has contributed to the tremendous growth of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe.”

Chief Beverly Cook shared her appreciation for how both men “open their homes and their hearts,” referring to their families who have been and continue to foster children in our community. “This speaks to their integrity and where their interests really lie in our future.”

The Oath of Office was delivered by Chief Judge P.J. Herne. In their address to the audience, both leaders recognized honored guest in attendance, but most importantly paid special tributes to their families seated in the front row.

The Swearing-In was followed by Sub-Chief Conners and Chief LaFrance directing the audience to the former IGA building, where the ceremony was held. Conners shared, “one of the best initiatives to be part of is right behind you.” In late 2012, Council advertised a Request for Proposal to re-use the former IGA building for some type of family entertainment center that would enhance the casino operation. After the RFP closed, a local group started to diligently work on a business plan. Council reopened the RFP again early this year, and last week officially awarded the project to Matt Rourke and Casey Jacobs to develop a family entertainment center. “This has been one of the most exciting initiatives to be part of. Together, we are all working toward building a better tomorrow for all of Akwesasne.”

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In his speech, Chief LaFrance hits home the importance of economic development and its importance to *Akwesashró:non*, “Our local businesses are the backbone of our economy and we as Tribal Council need to ensure that they not only survive but thrive.” Referencing future opportunity, he stated, “We need to stop talking ourselves out of possibilities because we are afraid to succeed or scared to death to fail. We owe it to our children and young adults who make the commitment to further their education by providing them with the opportunity to return home with a competitive wage.” Specifically discussing land claims efforts, he said “I would like to see a day when all the things that divide us, will one day unite us.”

Special guests from surrounding counties included Billy Jones, Chairman of the Franklin County Legislature, Gordon Crossman, Franklin County Legislator, Mary Scharf and Louise Taylor, Town of Malone Council, Michael Maneely, Village of Malone Trustee and Karen St. Hilaire, St. Lawrence County Administrator.

Following the ceremony, a barbeque meal was served by Big E’s Catering. Cakes were made by Andrea Cook, flowers by Cook’s Greenery and Blooming Beauty ensconced the podium and head tables. Services were provided by Fosters Tent Rental and the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino Resort. In the spirit of a renewed commitment to the environment, the Tribe’s Solid Waste Program proudly set up Zero Waste tent which will be seen at future tribally sponsored events.

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