



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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PRESS RELEASE

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Tribal Gaming Commission Orders Unlicensed Casino to Close

Akwesasne Territory -- On Friday January 20, 2012, the Saint Regis Tribal Gaming Commission issued a letter to the Three Feathers Casino, ordering it to close its doors and cease gaming operations. "Under Tribal Law, there are only two licensed gaming properties in Akwesasne," said Tribal Chief Mark Garrow. "They are the Mohawk Bingo Palace and the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino. Any other gaming facilities are unlicensed and operating illegally."

The closure order states, (in part) that Class II and Class III games are lawful, "if operated by the Tribe as a Tribal Enterprise or by any other person or entity authorized by the Tribe. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has not authorized licensed or designated as agents, any person(s) to operate the Three Feathers Casino."

The two legal tribal gaming enterprises operate with regulatory oversight by the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Gaming Commission along with the National Indian Gaming Commission. The Akwesasne Mohawk Casino is additionally regulated by the New York State Racing and Wagering Board, as required by the New York-Saint Regis Mohawk Compact.

The unregulated and unlicensed gaming operation has been a concern to Tribal Council. "We're not sure just exactly who is involved as financial backers," said Randy Hart, Tribal Chief. "We know for sure that they are not part of the Tribal-State Compact which permits the legal operation of Class III Indian casinos in the Akwesasne Territory." The unlicensed facility, its employees, gaming equipment suppliers, the operators or financiers have not undergone any background checks in order to operate gaming in that facility. "Those background checks are integral to maintain the integrity of Indian Gaming," Hart added. Without those checks, it's not possible to determine whether any of those entities is eligible for gaming licenses.

The Akwesasne Mohawk Casino and the Mohawk Bingo Palace operate for the benefit of the tribal community, by providing funding to over 100 programs. These programs include health services, education, prevention programs, a senior's center, the fire department and the environment department, to name a few. This unlicensed casino has no oversight from the Saint Regis Tribal Gaming Commission, which ensures the fairness of the games and protects the gaming public. Further, it does not undergo an audit conforming to the National Indian Gaming Commission's standards. Therefore, it's not possible to know how much money is coming in or where it's going. "One of the big questions is 'Who benefits from

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the proceeds of unlicensed gaming?” asked Tribal Chief Ron LaFrance. “It’s very clear who benefits from the proceeds from the tribally-operated casinos. That is the people of Akwesasne. No matter what the operators of the unlicensed facility may say, we have seen very few tangible benefits in terms of community support.”

The closure order further states, “The St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Gaming Commission has not issued Three Feathers Casino a gaming facility license, nor have individuals been licensed to conduct gaming activities in the facility. The operation is therefore in violation of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe’s Gaming Ordinance. Accordingly, you are hereby ordered to cease and desist operating...”

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council, as the federally recognized representative of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, is the only entity that has the authority to legally regulate gaming operations located within the reservation. This authority can be confirmed through the National Indian Gaming Commission, the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Furthermore, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe is the only governing body in Akwesasne who is a signatory to the gaming compact, a requirement to conduct Class III gaming under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

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