

KAWENNÍ:IOS

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Akwesasne Indigenous
Fashion Show

Community Development
Fund Report

Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen;
Words before all else

Akohserà:ke | Winter 2025

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Introducing the new Acting Director of Communications



Shé:kon Sewakwé:kon,

My name is Mose Herne and I am proudly serving as the Acting Communications Director for the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT). I grew up in Akwesasne and spent the last thirty years working in a number of capacities, i.e., active-duty military, teaching and doing research at Boston University, and more recently in the federal service with the Veterans Health Administration, Indian Health Service (IHS), and the National Institutes of Health. I also served as the Public Health Director for Franklin County Public Health and Chief Executive Officer of an IHS hospital in northeastern Arizona. I have a B.S. degree in Psychology from Clarkson University, M.S. degree in Neuroscience from Brandeis University, and an M.P.H. degree in Environmental Health Sciences from the Boston University School of Public Health. I concluded my federal service in May 2024 and returned home to Akwesasne to serve my home community. My wife and I have been together for nearly thirty years and have had to move many times for work, so we are very happy to have finally settled in the one place we can truly call home. We have five adult children between us and they live across Turtle Island.

Niawen'kó:wa | Thank you,

Mose A. Herne, MPH, MS, Acting Director of Communications

Chief's Note

Reflecting on 2024: Celebrating Community Progress and Looking Ahead to 2025

Greetings All,

I hope that everyone has enjoyed a great 2024, and are looking forward to bigger and better things in 2025.

As we close the year, I want to review and share some major accomplishments that we have achieved over the past year by working together for the benefit of the community.

Tribal Council recently hosted the 2nd Tribal Chiefs gathering in the Maple Room at the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino. The first was held in 2019 and we were honored to enjoy the company and share a meal with former Chiefs for a second time. All in attendance shared their wisdom and experience from their time on Council. We expressed our deep gratitude to former Chiefs for laying the groundwork for progress that we all enjoy today. Chief Paul Thompson once told me, "When I was young, you could tell where the reservation started as that was where the old houses and junk cars were. It's not like that today." I remember what Paul told me that day since it is a visual example of progress and pride in our community, something former and current Chiefs and community members alike have all worked for. Akwesasne now has a highly educated workforce, many with trades certifications and college degrees, as well as newer homes and cars and beautiful green and open spaces for the community to enjoy. We will always be thankful for the work of former Chiefs that brought us to where we are today.



We were gratified to watch as the new "Teionkwarihwaienawà:kon" Community Services Building recently opened. Three years ago, Tribal Council saw an opportunity to use a portion of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to address the long-standing need to renovate the former IGA building. We had one chance to do this and make it work for our community, our employees, and our local ironworkers, tradespeople, and vendors. We were excited to get this project moving, and happy to move our Tribal employees out of rental facilities and into an appropriately designed, modern office building. Everyone deserved that upgraded work and community space, and we were very proud of that major accomplishment.

During the year, Tribal Council met with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). We met with NYSED on building a new Mohawk Elementary School on Tribally-owned land on State Route 95. Tribal Council is thankful to the NYSED, as well as the Salmon River Central School District for their collaboration on this project, aimed at educational equity for our Akwesasne elementary students. The meetings with NYSDOT have focused on holding the State accountable for maintaining roads that cross Tribal land. Discussions continue to yield progress in this area.

Tribal Council was happy to provide additional support to our local heroes in the Hogansburg Akwesasne Volunteer Fire Department (HAVFD), with funding of \$1 million for two priority purchases. The first is for a new truck to tow their fan boat. The second is for a replacement fire truck, which will take time to build. Tribal Council is always proud to provide support to help keep our community safe, especially when our volunteer firemen and women are called into action. The HAVFD welcomed us for a visit early last year, expressed their upcoming needs to us, and we responded.

Tribal Council also toured the new Akwesasne Freedom School work site. Two years ago, we supported the new construction project with an initial \$2 million donation. After touring the site this past year, Tribal Council approved an additional \$800,000 to help complete the project. Tribal Council is committed to our support of language and culture initiatives, including the Akwesasne Freedom School and its students.

There has also been progress on several referendums. The Land Claims referendum from 2005 enabled Tribal Council to sign the final settlement on December 11, 2024. The National Grid exit referendum of 2009 resulted in a dedicated employee working to advance the initiative. The referendum approving the proposed Community Recreation Center is also moving forward. These initiatives are important to the community and we have made significant progress in moving them forward, honoring the will of community members who voted in each of the referendums.

From all of Tribal Council, we wish every one of you all the best in 2025, and encourage all to keep a good mind when engaging on social media as our kids and grandkids are watching, reading and learning from all of us.

**Niawen'kó:wa | Thank you,
Chief Michael Conners**

HONORING TRIBAL CHIEFS PAST AND PRESENT

By Katelynn Delormier, Communications Specialist

On December 11, 2024, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council hosted the second Tribal Chiefs Gathering, a special honorary dinner for former Tribal Chiefs and present Chiefs to recognize past and current accomplishments paving the way for a brighter Akwesasne. The gathering has not been held since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Jim Ransom, former Tribal Chief from 2003 to 2010, added, “The number of staff, the beautiful buildings that we have today, the programs that are in place is a tribute to the hard work of so many Chiefs over the years.” Former Chiefs Monica Jacobs (2008-2011), Alma Ransom (1996- 2003), Harold Tarbell (1987-1990), and Eric Thompson (2015-2021) added to those sentiments, sharing their own words of wisdom acquired through their years of service to the community. Former chiefs commended the present Tribal Council on their work and offered advice to present leadership as well as aspiring leaders of Akwesasne.

Since the inaugural “Gathering of Chiefs” in 2019, we are saddened to have said a final farewell to five former chiefs who have passed on. They were pillars of strength for the community and are remembered for their unwavering service and many notable accomplishments. We recognize their important contributions and send our heartfelt condolences to their families:

- Norman Tarbell (Tribal Chief from ‘87- ‘96)
- Phil Tarbell (Tribal Sub-Chief from ‘93-’93, and Tribal Chief from ‘94-’97)
- Paul Thompson (on Tribal Council from ‘98-’15)
- Maggie Terrance (Tribal Chief from ‘02- ‘05)
- Lawrence Pyke (Tribal Chief from ‘83-’86)

Tribal Chiefs cheerfully reunited with former colleagues and shared fond memories and experiences, while enjoying a delicious meal prepared by the staff at the Maple Room Steak and Ale. The dinner was well attended by former Chiefs, as well as SRMT staff and present Tribal Council.

Barbara Lazore, Tribal Chief from 1997 to 2000 and 2003 to 2009, remarked, “It’s wonderful to come back and see the people that remain on the reservation accomplish so much to move the Tribe forward.”



Photo contributions: Austin Herne

Financial Wellness: Empowering You for the Year Ahead

By Katelynn Delormier, Communications Specialist

It’s February 2025, and now’s the time to start the new year on a clean slate! I consulted with Homeowner’s Assistance Fund Manager Alexandra David to bring you her three tips for reaching your financial goals. Whether it’s budgeting, paying off debts and establishing credit, or planning for emergencies, we’ve got you covered!

The first tip is to create a monthly budget. If you are new to budgets, that’s okay! The First step is to write down everything you spend money on—electricity bills, dinner dates, groceries, gas, etc. for a minimum of 30 days, don’t forget to add in your “take home” pay (how much you make after taxes, if applicable). You can create your budget once you know your monthly income and expenses. If you’re an impulse spender, make that a line in your budget and allocate a dollar amount within reason. Don’t completely cut out treating yourself. The likelihood of significant and more impulsive spending increases if you don’t allow yourself and your family some fun every once in a while.

The second financial tip is to create an emergency fund. You never know when a disaster will strike, but you will be glad you saved up for it. A simple way to pad your finances in an emergency is to create a separate account specifically for emergencies, and deposit \$50 per month (or \$25 each check if you’re on a biweekly pay schedule). In 10 months, you’ll have saved \$500! The emergency fund is there for the unexpected flat tire or the ever-rising cost of living.

The third tip covers how to improve your credit score. Whether you are just starting out or have made one too many unnecessary purchases that put you in debt, there are ways to help yourself. Getting approved for a loan to lower interest rates is an important step to improve your credit score. Start by getting your credit reports by visiting annualcreditreport.com and download for free. Next, reduce the amount you owe. To get those credit card balances down, Alex shares, “start with the highest interest rate and work on getting those cards paid off first, review your budget and allocate a dollar amount each

month to pay a little extra on your credit cards. That will cut down on the number of payments and the amount of interest you will pay.” Don’t forget: 35% of your credit history is your payment history, so be sure to pay your debts on time! If you’re looking for a personalized plan check out Greenpath Financial Wellness at greenpath.com. They offer free financial services.

Now that you know more about budgets, saving, and paying off debts, you’re ready to take control of your finances!



Photo contribution: Katelynn Delormier

***Please note: The Office of the Family Advocate and the Home Owners Assistance fund can help if you need financial assistance due to unforeseen circumstances. Please call (518) 358-2272 for more information.*

Madison Breen,
Communications Officer

Understanding the “Winter Blues”

“By incorporating these strategies, you can enhance your mental resilience and enjoy the winter season more fully. Remember that it’s okay to seek support if you feel overwhelmed—professional help can be beneficial and is a sign of strength. Stay warm and take care of your mind always remember that spring will return!”

-Claire Alai-Grasso- Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe
Acting Mental Health Director, LMHC

In the colder months, many experience what is known as the “winter blues,” which include sadness, lethargy, and malaise from shorter days and colder temperatures. The winter blues are also commonly referred to as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a type of depression that typically occurs due to a change in seasons, and symptoms include difficulty concentrating, changes in sleep patterns, and a loss of interest in once-enjoyed activities. Experiencing SAD or the winter blues can significantly affect one’s quality of life, but effective strategies exist to manage them. By adopting a proactive mindset and embracing activities promoting physical and mental well-being, you can transform the winter into a time of vitality and happiness by staying active, connected, and fulfilled during the colder season.

The first key strategy in treating Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is light therapy. Light therapy involves sitting briefly in front of a lightbox each day to compensate for the reduction in sunlight, a contributing factor that increases the risk of SAD. If you do not have a light box, dress warmly and seek out sunny spots to bask in natural light, which can help regulate your sleep patterns and overall well-being.

Cognitive behavioral or talk therapy is another effective strategy to cure the winter blues. Cognitive behavioral therapy is the practice of identifying your negative thoughts and combating them with behavior changes. This includes talking with friends or loved ones and regular physical activity. Exercise releases endorphins, which help elevate your mood and energy levels. Whether you engage in indoor workouts, take up winter sports like skiing or ice skating, or simply enjoy brisk walks in the fresh air, staying active is essential.

Cultivating a daily routine is another effective strategy for maintaining positivity during winter. Routines instill a sense of structure and normalcy, allowing you to incorporate self-care, hobbies, and relaxation into your day. By exploring new hobbies and planning enjoyable activities, you can further enrich your winter experience, ensuring that each day holds something to look forward to.

Embracing these strategies doesn’t just help combat the winter blues, it transforms the season into an opportunity for personal growth and creating a refreshing perspective. By staying connected, active, and engaged in fulfilling activities, you can successfully navigate the winter months ensuring that the season is not a time of gloom but a time of warmth and joy.



NIAWEN’KÓ:WA CONNIE THOMPSON

By Madison Breen, Communications Officer

As we gather to bid farewell to Connie, we reflect with deep gratitude and respect on her remarkable 39-year journey with us.

The impact Connie has made on the Alcoholism and Chemical Dependency Program, the staff, and the community is truly immeasurable. Throughout her time here, Connie has navigated the field’s ever-changing landscape with grace and resilience. She continuously evaluated and improved our services, ensuring they reflected a holistic approach to healing. Her unwavering commitment to providing quality care has not only set a standard that inspires us all but also reassures us of the program’s future excellence.

Connie’s dedication goes beyond her direct responsibilities; she has been a vital presence in our community, actively participating in various boards, coalitions, and committees. Her efforts in building positive relationships have fostered a collaborative spirit in Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery, enhancing the continuum of care for everyone involved.

Among her many contributions, Connie has educated and advocated for reducing the stigma surrounding addiction. She passionately believes in the power of teamwork and has cultivated an environment where staff can flourish, honoring the unique strengths that each team member brings.

One of the most cherished aspects of Connie’s leadership is her ability to infuse joy into our work. Whether she broke into a spontaneous song or delighted us with her playful antics, Connie reminded us that amidst the challenges, we must find joy and camaraderie. Her ability to foster such an environment is truly inspiring and motivates us to continue her legacy.

For almost 40 years, Connie has made it her mission to help people heal, and her dedication has touched countless lives. As we say goodbye, we take the values she championed and the spirit she embodied, committing to carry on her legacy.

“Niawen’kó:wa, Connie. Your departure leaves a void that will be deeply felt. Thank you for being an incredible leader and mentor. Your influence will be felt for years, and you will be dearly missed. Kanonronkwa.”

-Melerena Back



Photo contributions: Madison Breen

RAQUETTE RIVER BOAT LAUNCH & ACCESS SITE

By Katelynn Delormier, Communications Specialist

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Mission Statement:

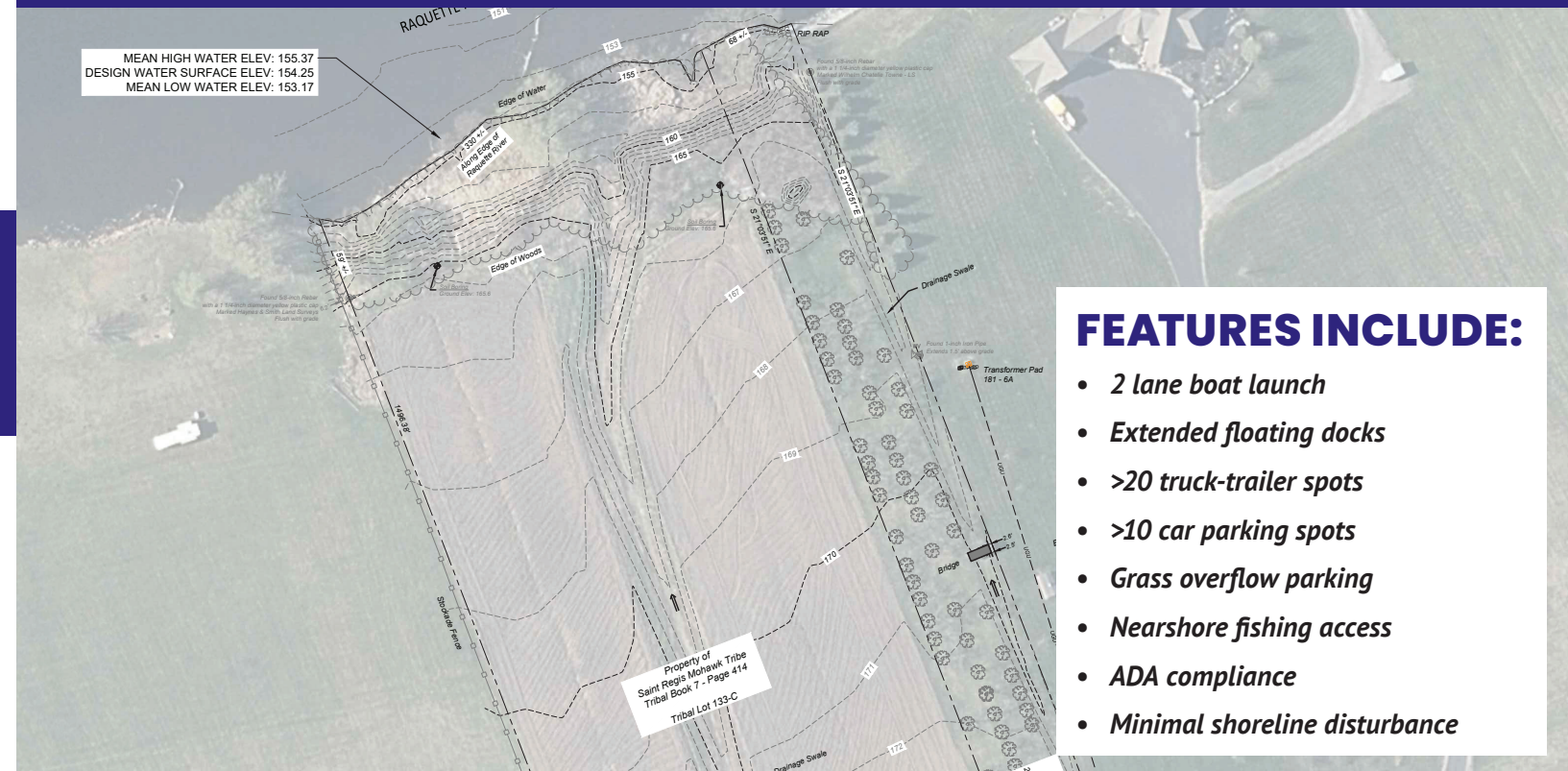
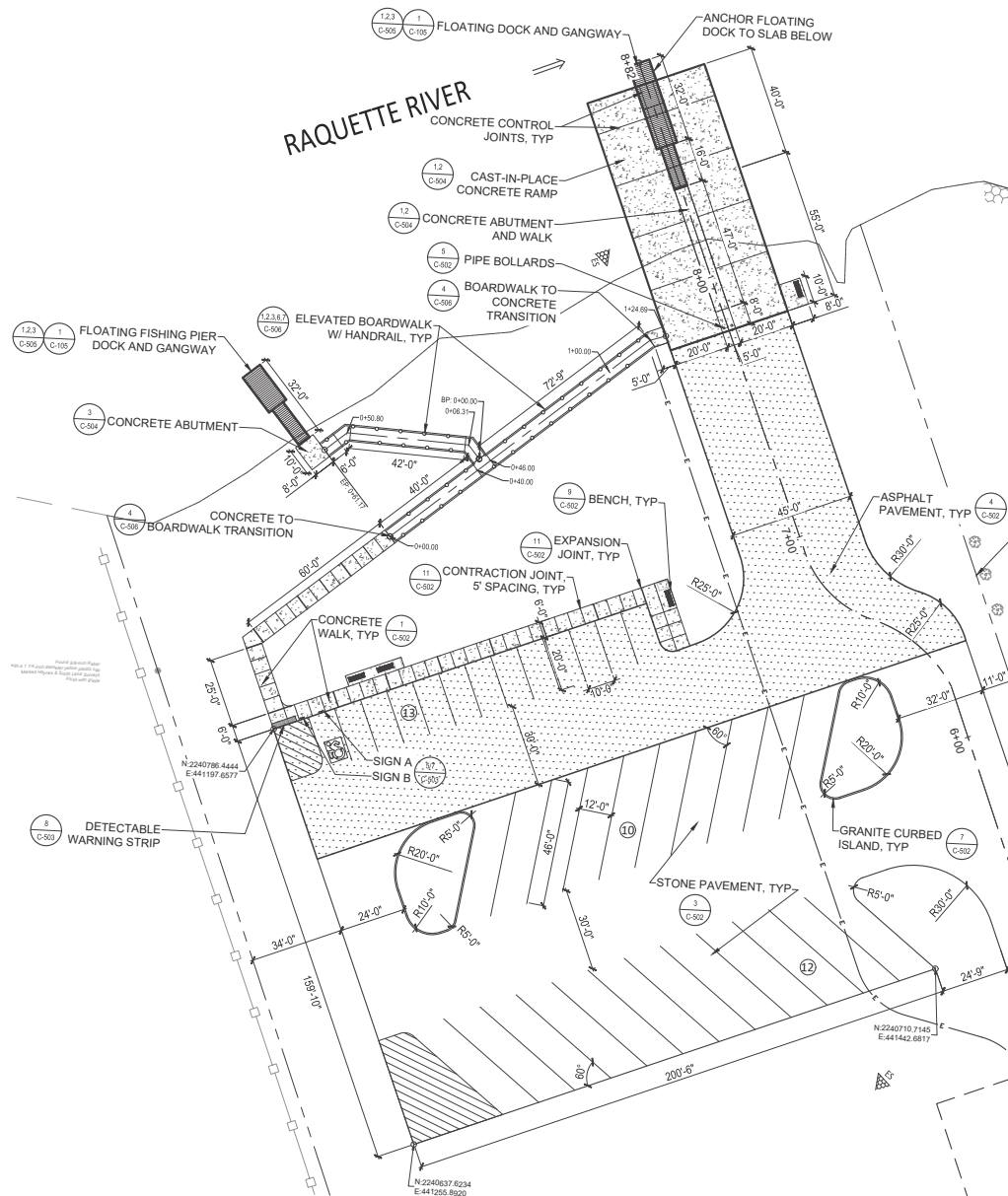
Building the path through which community development can be fully realized now and in the future—SRMT Strategic Plan 2017-2027

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe is excited to announce the Raquette River boat launch project is expected to break ground this summer. The project will be the first free water access site in the community and will increase public access to waterways for recreation, enjoyment, and fishing. The new boat launch will also serve as a critical access point for emergency services and first responders.

The Raquette River boat launch is an enhancement and restoration project funded through the St. Lawrence Environment Trustee Council (SLETC). The SLETC is comprised of the SRMT as lead trustee, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the US Fish & Wildlife Services (USFWS).

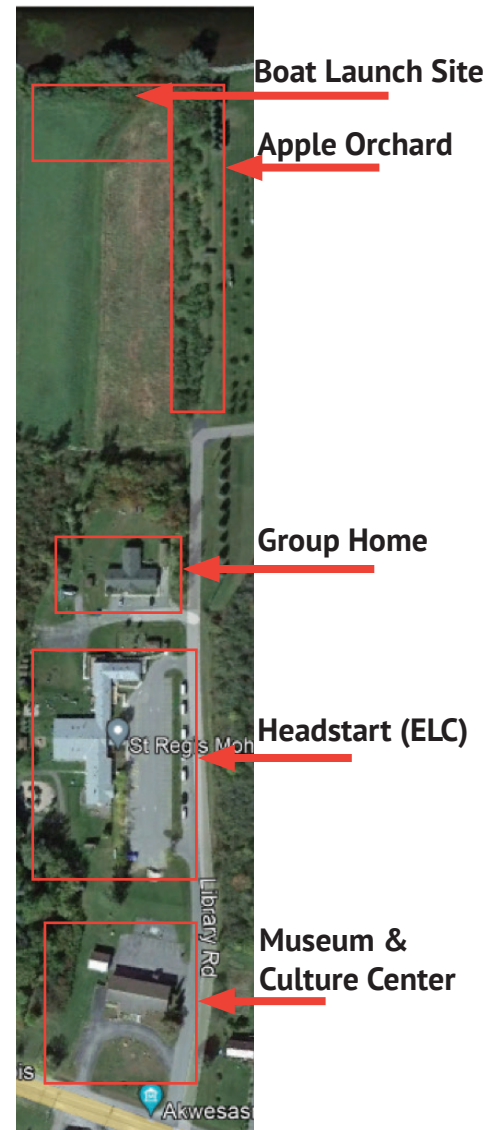
In 2013, a public presentation and comment period put forth by the SLETC took place regarding the St. Lawrence Restoration and Compensation Determination Plan (or Plan). The Plan identified various types of injuries caused by Alcoa and General Motors, and created a fund to implement preferred restoration projects, including enhancement of water recreation access.

Raquette River Boat Launch will feature a two-lane boat launch, floating docks, approximately 20 Truck-trailer and 10 car parking spots, grass overflow parking, and accessible nearshore fishing.



FEATURES INCLUDE:

- 2 lane boat launch
- Extended floating docks
- >20 truck-trailer spots
- >10 car parking spots
- Grass overflow parking
- Nearshore fishing access
- ADA compliance
- Minimal shoreline disturbance



The SRMT purchased the land from Dr. Solomon Cook in 1995. Dr. Cook intended the use of property for improvement of community recreational opportunities. Presently, the property features an undeveloped shoreline and a community apple orchard located on Library Road in Akwesasne.

SRMT Environment Division Director Tony David shared, “Our rivers are a tremendous natural resource. This new boat launch fills a void for free public access with a modern facility.”

In July 2023, following a decade of searching for an appropriate location, the SRMT Environment Division introduced the Raquette River Boat Launch to the community during a monthly tribal meeting. Following in March of 2024, a Restoration Plan and an Environmental Assessment 30-day public comment period was released, with no comments received in opposition to the project. The SRMT design review team incorporated fleet standards to ensure use by first-responders. The design also complies with standards for accessibility.

The boat launch is in the final design stages and is expected to go to bid for prospective construction companies this spring, and construction to follow in the summer of 2025. The SRMT Environment Division will release updates on the project’s progress to members as they become available.

AKWESASNE INDIGENOUS FASHION SHOW



Photo contributions: Austin Herne



Building on the momentum of the past year's success, the Akwesasne Indigenous Fashion Show is set to return in 2025 on an even bigger stage. On October 12th, 2025, the event will be held at the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino & Resort. This move not only signifies growth but also reflects the increasing recognition and appreciation of Indigenous fashion within and beyond the community.

The Akwesasne Indigenous Fashion Show is a celebration of the past, present, and future of Indigenous culture. It is a powerful platform that honors tradition while paving the way for new expressions of Indigenous identity in the fashion world. As anticipation builds for this year's event, the community looks forward to once again coming together in celebration.

Celebrating Culture & Creativity

By Austin Herne, Publications Manager

The Akwesasne Indigenous Fashion Show, a vibrant celebration of culture and creativity, took place on Saturday, December 7th, at the Tsi Snaihne Recreation Centre. The event turned the local gym into a stunning winter wonderland, complete with a runway where models showcased the latest in Indigenous fashion. The show featured 15 talented designers and approximately 100 models, each bringing unique elements of Indigenous artistry to life, merging tradition with style.

The fashion show was more than just a display of clothing; it was a powerful expression of Indigenous identity and heritage. Each piece presented on the runway was imbued with cultural significance, drawing inspiration from traditional symbols, patterns, and techniques passed down through generations. The use of natural materials, vibrant colors, and intricate beadwork highlighted the rich tapestry of Indigenous craftsmanship.

Despite the challenging weather conditions, over 300 enthusiastic attendees filled the venue, demonstrating strong support for the event. The rapid sell-out of online tickets underscored the community's eagerness to celebrate and uplift Indigenous culture through fashion. The success of the show was a testament to the dedication of the organizers, designers, and models, who all worked tirelessly to create a memorable experience.



Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen; Words before all else.

By Katelynn Delormier, Communications Specialist

The 16th-century practice of loom beading has come back in a big way. Fire Loom Creations has revitalized this ancient practice to bring to life the thanksgiving address, Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen, or words before all else.

The belt symbolizes all elements of creation, starting with the people, earth, waters, fish, grasses, medicines, roots, vegetables, fruits, bugs, animals, trees, birds, thunder and lightning, the sky beings, brother sun, grandmother moon, stars, four dancers, and creation itself. We give thanks to these beings because of the essential and integral role each plays in sustaining life.

Kelly Back, mother of three and co-owner of Fire Loom Creations, shared:

“It was always a dream of mine to not only create this belt but to have this specific piece in our local Akwesasne Cultural Center Museum for our children and the future generations of our family to go and visit.”



Photo contribution: Austin Herne

Fire Loom Creations is a family-owned business operating out of Akwesasne. Kelly and her husband Tyson breathe life into every creation using homemade and natural materials. Their latest creation uses all-natural leather and quills. Additionally, Kelly collected homemade sinew and dyed moose hair from Tyson’s recent hunting trips to include in the impressive 6-foot-long belt.

The Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen belt won the **“Best of Show”** in the **2024 Art Market & Juried Art Show** this past July. The show, hosted by Akwesasne Travel, attracted over 2500 visitors from Akwesasne and surrounding areas and featured pieces from a broad range of media reflective of Indigenous culture.

This spectacular event continues to grow every year and Akwesasne Travel is excited to bring yet another celebration of culture and Indigenous artistry. The date for the **4th annual Art Market & Juried Art Show** is set for **July 26, 2025**, so mark your calendars.

Photo contribution: Akwesasne Travel

The Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen belt is now on display at the Akwesasne Cultural Center Museum and Library located at 321 NY-37 Akwesasne, NY. The Cultural Center has remained the hub of cultural knowledge since its inception 53 years ago. It remains open for visitors looking to view the beautiful belt in person, purchase local Mohawk art, check out current publications, or take a self-guided tour around the museum. For more information on business hours or to get in touch with the museum staff visit the Cultural Center’s website. (<https://akwesasnecculturalcenter.org/>)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND REPORT

By Jori Rourke, Chief of Staff



Photo courtesy of the Friends of the Akwesasne Freedom School



Photo contribution: Austin Herne

In June 2017, the Tribal Council established the “Intellectual Property Project,” (TCR 2017-36), ultimately resulting in the Tribe receiving total net patent revenue in the amount of \$22,832,418.00 from September 2017 to August 2019. In December 2017, the Tribal Council established a Tribal “Community Development Fund” (the “Fund”) for the patent revenue to fund community development projects that the Tribal Council identifies.

The Tribal Council has adopted several Resolutions regarding the Community Development Fund since it was established (TCR 2020-15, 2020-29, 2021-19, 2021-41, 2022-07, 2022-39), where projects and priorities were identified and approved.

The projects and priorities approved in TCR 2022-39 are now completed, which included the Generations Park Phase I expansion, Kahrhaká:ion Walking Trail project at the new Housing Improvement Program development on the reacquired 1796 Treaty lands (former Wuersching property), and the Council Endowment Scholarship investment for the “Minerva White Graduate Scholarship” in preferred fields of Health and Medicine, Finance, Education, Law, and Leadership, and the “Theresa Gardner Memorial Nursing Scholarship” for students seeking a degree or certification in nursing.

Following the November 2024 Tribal Monthly Meeting, the Tribal Council passed Tribal Council Resolution 2024-49 to:

1. Approve additional monies to the Akwesasne Freedom School to assist in completing its capital project for a new school, in the amount of eight hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000.00);
2. Formally approve funding for the Skèn:nen Park Project in the amount of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00) to start repairing the former Hogansburg Hydroelectric Power Dam (see architectural rendering to the right);
3. Approve \$1,000,000 commitment to the HAVFD for its purchase of a new fire truck and an ice and water rescue truck rapid response unit, radios and lighting;
4. Formally approve the pledge of \$500,000 to the Haudenosaunee Nationals Development Group to be distributed over ten (10) years;
5. Formally approve \$1,500,000 in startup funds for the Tribal Police Defined Pension Plan;
6. Approve \$2,000,000 for land acquisition to expand the Tribe’s land base and for strategic land purchases within the Reservation boundary;
7. Approve \$750,000 for the Community Boat Launch’s Emergency Response Lane, storage, and security needs.



The Community Development Fund assigned balance now amounts to \$18,186,654 and the available balance of the Fund is now \$5,145,764.



Candidly: Celebrating Community Spirit

Several heartwarming events brought us together, each offering unique opportunities to spread cheer and kindness. Let's take a look at the memorable moments that made this holiday season special.



Each event brought people together, and made the season brighter for everyone involved. Let's carry the warmth into the new year and continue to *work together to promote and build a better tomorrow.*

INTRODUCING: THE MINERVA WHITE GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The Minerva White Graduate Scholarship is an endowment scholarship created through the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Community Development Fund. The scholarship provides financial support to full- and part-time students pursuing advanced degrees in preferred fields of health and medicine, finance, education, law, and leadership that pays homage to Minerva.

Mckenzee Lazore is 24 years old from Akwesasne, and she currently lives in Fort Covington with her fiancé and their dog, Thor. She graduated from Massena Central High School in 2018 and earned her undergraduate degree from Niagara University in 2022. She enjoys playing volleyball, pickleball, traveling, and reading. In May 2024, she decided to pursue a master's degree in childhood education at SUNY Potsdam and hopes to become an elementary school teacher by the Fall of 2026.



Delia Katsitsiaha:wi McDonald is a lifelong resident of the Tsi Snaihne District of Akwesasne. Since childhood, she has aspired to be a nurse and serve her community. Delia graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and has since achieved certifications as a Diabetes Educator and Certified Diabetic Foot Care Specialist. She obtained her Master's Degree in nursing and is pursuing a Doctorate of Philosophy in Nursing at Ottawa University, focusing on culturally safe research methodologies in First Nations communities.

KC Herne, is proudly from Akwesasne, and realized that becoming a physician would allow her to make a significant impact on Indigenous communities. She was accepted into McGill University Faculty of Medicine, specializing in Orthopedic Surgery. Witnessing the transformation of patients post-joint replacement surgeries has inspired her to specialize in this area. As an Orthopedic Surgeon KC's goal is to advocate for Indigenous communities facing healthcare disparities and ensure they receive the quality care they deserve.



Micaelee Horn, was born and raised in Akwesasne. In 2002 she graduated from Saint Lawrence College as a Social Services Worker. In 2009 she obtained her B.A. in Psychology from SUNY Potsdam. Since 2010 she has served as the Healing to Wellness Court Coordinator, which has led to her involvement with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Community Neh Kanikonri:io Council. She has been dedicated to promoting healing and wellness within her community, striving to support individuals in their journeys toward recovery and stability.

Suanne Swamp is from Akwesasne and also known as Konwarihonni:ni, meaning "she is learning from them." After earning her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Ottawa, she joined the Akwesasne Cultural Restoration Program, which deepened her understanding of the Mohawk language and traditional agriculture. In 2020, she began working as a counselor with the Akwesasne Family Wellness Program addressing family challenges with domestic abuse and addiction, while exploring ways she can support and uplift her community.



OASAS & NYS OMH Visit Recap

By Katelynn Delormier, Communications Specialist

The visit in November from the Office of Support and Addictions Services (OASAS) and the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYS OMH) to the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe has fueled conversations on innovative approaches to enhance current mental health services. This collaboration marks an important step towards creating more effective solutions to promote community mental health.

Dr. Chinazo Cunningham, Commissioner of OASAS, and Dr. Ann Sullivan, Commissioner of NYS OMH, alongside Sam Fletcher, Director of Workforce Development OMH, toured tribal health facilities and met with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council, SRMT Executive Director, Tribal Police Chief, Director of Health Services, the Education Division, and Alcohol/Chemical Dependency Program (ACDP) leaders.

Commissioner Cunningham opened the meeting by sharing, “Native Americans are dying at the highest rate in this country and no one talks about that. We need to reach those that are the highest risk in culturally supportive ways. I very much support that. What can we do to help and what can we do to continue to support this work?”

A key focus during the visit was the discussion around youth mental well-being, particularly regarding the positive impact of implementing a “mindful room” in local schools. In collaboration with the Wholistic Life Foundation, Salmon River High School has established a peaceful oasis where students can take a moment to practice mindfulness between classes or engage in full meditation sessions during study periods, fostering healthier and happier students.

In addition to exploring resources for non-profits, the idea of implementing “peer services” was introduced as an enhanced support service for community members.



Peer services can help address problems as they arise and serve as an additional source of support for someone having difficulty. Peer services can also result in more timely access to care from providers and counselors, since peers are often the first to notice when someone is in crisis and can connect a peer to a professional.

Nationwide, mental health and addictions staffing is at critical levels and our community is no different. Mental health and addictions programs navigate staff shortages while continuing to provide prevention and aftercare services, and responding to crisis and intervention services for community members.

As we enter the new year, forging partnerships and creating innovative approaches to promoting health and wellbeing are priorities for the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe. As these and other opportunities emerge, we will continue to share updates and developments. Be well and take care of each other.



Support Local Business

Photo contribution: Austin Herne

By Austin Herne, Publications Manager

In an era dominated by online-shopping and big box stores, shopping local has become a revolutionary choice. Supporting local businesses strengthens our community in a myriad of ways. Here’s why shopping local matters more than ever.

When you shop at local businesses, more money stays in the community. Studies show that for every dollar spent at a local business, a significant portion is reinvested into the local economy. This reinvestment helps create jobs, support public infrastructure, and further community development.

Given our unique history shopping local not only supports our economy, it supports our continuing efforts to build a better tomorrow while ensuring a thriving culture and pride in our community.





JOIN OUR TEAM!

Are you motivated and passionate about serving your community?

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe has openings across our organization!

Visit www.srmt-nsn.gov to learn how you can become part of the SRMT Team!

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

71 Margaret Terrance Memorial Way, Akwesasne, NY 13655

Ska'tne ionkwaio'te ón:wa wenhniserá:te ne sén:ha aioianerénhake ne enióhrhen'ne
Working Together Today to Build a Better Tomorrow