



Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Ronald LaFrance, Jr.
Chief Beverly Cook
Chief Michael Conners
Sub-Chief Benjamin Herne
Sub-Chief Derrick King
Sub-Chief Agnes Jacobs

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:

Kenténha/October 17, 2023

Tribal Housing Project Breaks Ground on Reclaimed 1796 Treaty Lands

AKWESASNE - The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe is proud to announce that construction has started on the first tribal housing units on reacquired treaty lands. A groundbreaking ceremony was held on Monday, *Kenténha*/October 16, 2023 at 760 State Route 37 and represents a major step forward in providing affordable housing for Mohawk families.

“It has been our community’s longstanding desire and Tribal Council’s ongoing goal to reacquire lands within Akwesasne’s land claim area for family housing,” shared Tribal Chief Michael Conners. During the groundbreaking event, Chief Conners added, “I am filled with an immense sense of pride in what our team has accomplished today -- to provide homes for our families.”

The Tribe’s effort to provide homes was bolstered in 2018 with the purchase of 240 acres of land set aside for the Akwesasne community in the 1796 Seven Nations of Canada Treaty. Located in an area commonly known as the Hogsburg Triangle, the land is centrally positioned within Akwesasne and provided an ideal location for community housing to be developed.

“I am proud that we have been able to reacquire our lands to provide homes under our own jurisdiction for community members,” said Tribal Chief Beverly Cook. Chief Cook noted, “I am appreciative and grateful for all the effort that individuals have put into making this opportunity available for our families. It is a great achievement by everyone who has been involved.”

Beginning in the Summer of 2022, the Tribe’s Planning and Infrastructure Department began the initial work of clearing and constructing the main roadway leading into the site. Named *Kahrhaká:ion Road* (Old Forest), additional clearing and grubbing was performed in September 2022 by Iroquois Construction, LLC; with both phases providing an opportunity for community members to access free bulk materials; such as trees, wood chippings, fill, and rocks.

Work was accompanied in early-2023 with placement of the Tribe’s water and sewer lines by Perras Excavating Inc., which included their extension from the main roadway along the first cul-de-sac known as *Wáhta* Street (Maple). Some of the installation work was sub-contracted to Iroquois Construction and was successfully completed in August 2023.

It is along *Wahta* Street that two (2) homes are being initially built, with a total of six (6) to eight (8) to be constructed along each cul-de-sac that are planned for the housing development. As many as 48 family homes are envisioned for the entire site when it is fully completed, with each cul-de-sac containing a combination of 2, 3, and 4-bedroom homes for Mohawk families.

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“Our efforts to reclaim and use our lands for the benefit of community members and families have never stopped,” shared Tribal Chief Ron LaFrance. Chief LaFrance noted, “What today represents is not the end of a process, but a beginning. It is a start for two families who do not have a home right now, and as we reacquire more land we will be able to provide more homes.”

At the groundbreaking held on Monday, October 16th; Tribal Council, tribal division leaders and contractors involved in the housing division project turned over soil to start foundation work for the first two (2) homes. The foundation work will be undertaken by Lazore’s Construction for a 3-bedroom (Lot #5) and a 4-bedroom (Lot #2) home; which Mohawk families will be able to own along with the parcel of land.

Following the foundation work, another contractor will be utilized to complete the exterior shells for each of the homes. The home shells are scheduled to be completed by December 31st and will be followed by interior work over the winter months by the Tribe’s Home Improvement Program. The initial two (2) homes are projected to be ready for the Summer of 2024.

Over the winter and into Spring of 2024, an educational phase on home financing will be developed and shared with interested community members. The Section 184 Indian Home Loan Guarantee Program provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will be used to help Mohawk families realize their dream of being a homeowner.

Serving on the Tribal Council during the 2018 land purchase, former-Tribal Chief Eric Thompson joined in the groundbreaking and added, “This endeavor began as a thought to restore some of our lost lands to the Akwesasne community. In doing so, we wanted to provide homes at a reasonable price that Mohawk families can finance and purchase, along with the land.”

Next summer, the field crew for the Tribe’s Home Improvement Division will begin construction for another four (4) family homes along *Wáhta* Street. The cost for their construction, and for future homes along other cul-de-sacs planned for the housing subdivision, will be supported by revenue generated as homes are purchased by Mohawk families.

PHOTO CAPTION: *The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe broke ground on Kenténha/October 16, 2023 for the first set of family homes to be built on reclaimed treaty land. Joining in the event were (front row, from left) former-Tribal Chief Eric Thompson, Tribal Chief Michael Conners, Sub-Chief Benjamin Herne, Tribal Chief Beverly Cook, Sub-Chief Derrick King, Tribal Chief Ron LaFrance, Sub-Chief Agnes “Sweets” Jacobs, Assistant Executive Director Starr Thomas, and Executive Director Tsiorasa Barreiro; (back row, from left) Home Improvement Program Foreman Lawrence Thomas and Calvin Leaf, along with Home Improvement Division Director Jamie Bay.*

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