



COUNCIL TRAVEL REPORT

For Immediate Release:

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CHIEFS OF ONTARIO TRI-COUNCIL MEETING ***CHIEF TESHA ROURKE***

Tsi Snaihne District Chief Tesha Rourke recently attended the Tri-Council Meeting held in Toronto, Ontario, on May 10, 2025. While Chief Rourke attended the meeting, Kawehno:ke District Chief Lisa Francis-Benedict joined virtually via Zoom. Both Chiefs represent Akwesasne on the First Nations Women's Council (FNWC).

The meeting was hosted by the Chiefs of Ontario, this gathering brought together members of the Tri-Council — including the First Nations Women's Council (FNWC), the Ontario First Nations Young Peoples Council (OFNYPC), and the Knowledge Keepers Council (KK Council) — to collaboratively address shared priorities centered on Indigenous identity, cultural integrity, and policy development.

DISCUSSIONS FROM THE MEETING:

The Tri-Council Meeting featured in-depth discussions and presentations focused on affirming First Nations nationhood and refining policy language grounded in Indigenous perspectives. Members worked together to strengthen collaboration among the councils and finalized a joint Tri-Council Statement, which will be presented at the upcoming June Assembly. This milestone gathering marked the first time all three councils met collectively, setting the tone for strong intergenerational partnerships and a unified commitment to cultural advocacy.

NETWORKING & COLLABORATION:

- **Knowledge Keepers Council Engagement:** Held focused dialogue on respectful terminology, emphasizing that each Nation be recognized by its own name rather than the generalized term “Indigenous.” Discussions reinforced the importance of honoring distinct governance systems and knowledge traditions.



- **Youth Empowerment Focus:** A shared priority was to ensure youth are educated about their inherent rights, especially regarding the Second-Generation Cut-Off, with an emphasis on cultural awareness and advocacy.
- **National Gathering of Elders:** The Council highlighted the upcoming National Gathering of Elders taking place in Edmonton, Alberta, from September 29 to October 2, 2025.
- **Tri-Council Alignment:** Members clarified mutual goals and how each council can support one another, reinforcing transparency, communication, and shared leadership.

KEY TAKEAWAYS & NEXT STEPS:

- Akwesasne's representatives will report back to community leadership on the outcomes of the meeting and the finalized Tri-Council Statemen.
- Continued collaboration among the FNWC, OFNYPC, and KK Council will ensure sustained momentum and accountability.
- Updates will be provided to the community regarding next steps from the June Assembly and future Tri-Council activities.
- Emphasis will be placed on cultural preservation, youth education, and policy advocacy rooted in each Nation's unique identity.

As part of honoring community connections and representation, Chief Rourke proudly wore a ribbon skirt made by Laura Thompson, a talented artisan from Akwesasne.