



Chief Lisa Francis-Benedict

Kawehno:ke District

ONKWETA:KE REPORT

Submitted Onerahtókha/April 4, 2025

PORTFOLIOS

Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education
(AMBE)
Department of Infrastructure, Housing and
Environment (DIHE)
Akwesasne Justice Department (AJD)
Entewatathá:wi Nation Building (NB)

COMMITTEES

Internal: Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA),
Governance, Iroquois Caucus (IC), Youth, Elders,
Culture and Language (YECL)

External:

Chiefs of Ontario First Nations Women's Council
(FNWC)
Chiefs of Ontario Chiefs & Technical Committee on
Languages and Learning (CTCLL)
COO Ontario Bilateral Education and Learning
Table (OBELT)

My First Six Months as District Chief



As I have been stating in my monthly reports, I am still “learning the ropes” of a District Chief. Attendance at my Portfolio Meetings fills up the calendar. As an example, for the DIHE Portfolio there are three (3) separate meetings that includes Infrastructure, Housing and Environment. There are several different meetings of Entewatathá:wi/Nation Building Portfolio as well. There are also the Committee meetings. While in attendance at the committee meetings of the COO, I find there is information that is beneficial for myself and the departments. I am also trying to schedule some one-on-one meetings with the Directors of my portfolios to discuss and gather additional information on their programming. So yes, there is a lot of learning going on, and work to be done. I believe Council should have had a strategic planning session at the beginning of the term to set out priorities

that align with the strategic plan of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA). A date is presently proposed to possibly take place at the end of the Onerahtókha/April. I look forward to this as it will assist me to identify what my goals and tasks will be over the course of my term. Of course, there are also other challenges faced, on top of time and stress management. It is also important to take care of my mental health, as there are challenging decisions to be made at the Council table. There will be discussion on portfolios at the Council Meeting of Onerahtókha/April 7, 2025. I would like to continue with the Portfolios

and Committees that I presently sit on. I am still learning and may consider a change up for the next review of portfolio selections. Other areas that I want to make a difference in is in “language and culture”. I look forward to continuing to learn and hoping that I can continue to be efficient in my work and make a change that everyone has stated they want to happen.

Council participated in Governance Training on Enniska/February 4-6, 2025. Training took place at the Kawehno:ke Recreation Center and facilitated by Carol Hopkins, Lenape Nation of Moraviantown, Ontario. This training should have taken place closer to the start of the term. The areas covered included: Basics of Governance, Fiduciary Responsibility, Governance Challenge, Managing Change, Responsibilities and Roles. As a Council, we are responsible for “*acting in the best interests of the community, rather than for personal gain or for the benefit of other organizations, groups or individuals.*” One clear message that I received was that “not one Council member will make a decision on behalf of Council.” This is also my belief, and I will work toward a team approach in my work and decision making.

General Meeting of Enniskó:wa/March 27,2025

The meeting started at 6pm and ended at 8:30pm. There were approximately 40 community members in attendance.

- **Youth Council Introductions**



Youth Council members were introduced. Congratulations to the newly formed Youth Council. On Enniska/February 21, 2025, a swearing-in ceremony took place to welcome the members. The Youth Council will consist of five (5) members. The vacancy will be filled soon.

Members included: L-R Cayde Lazore, Starlyn Mason, Iiokonhahes King, and Taylor Day

- **Entewatathá:wi “We Will Govern” | Nation Building**

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne’s Entewatathá:wi (Nation Building) is looking for the community’s input. They are conducting a survey to better understand the best way to educate the community about the Entewatathá:wi Self-Government Agreement. Survey is open until Onerahtohkó:wa/May 8, 2025.

Weekly prize draws for participants! Staff will be conducting surveys in the community, be sure to participate!

- **Chief Electoral Officer Update**

CEO was unavailable. Executive Director provided an update and confirmed that the petition submitted at previous meeting calling for an amendment to the Akwesasne Election Law Section 16 accordingly. The petition was verified and the process to begin work for amendment is underway.

- **Business From the Floor**

Staffing at MCA

Akwesasne Review Commission

Board, Commissions, Authorities, etc., Members’ List

Council Strategic Planning

Data on Stats from ACFS

Governance Documents of Council

Recommendation ~ Kawehno:ke Recreation Building Working Task Group

Special Needs Concerns

- **General Meeting Minutes dated Enniska/February 27, 2025**

Minutes were accepted.

Next General Meeting is scheduled Onerahtókha/April 24, 2025, at 6pm at the Kawehno:ke Recreation Center. The Audit and Budget will be presented.

Weekly Council Meetings

Weekly Council Meetings are scheduled to review Mohawk Council Resolutions (MCRs), hear presentations and discussion items. Action items from previous meetings and information on Council Invitations are also reviewed. I attended meetings on Enniskó:wa/March 3, 10, 17 and 31, 2025. I was not in attendance at the meeting on Enniskó:wa/March 21, 2025 (not feeling well).

- Presentations made throughout the month of Enniskó:wa/March included: Canada Post, Fishing Regulations, PCB4, Residential School Survivors.
- Some key issues discussed over the course of the month included: COO First Nations Child and Family Services Reform, Duty to Consult and Accommodate, Onkwe Nation to Nation Food Sustainability Conference, Dog Issues, Meeting with Cornwall Community Hospital, Transportation Canada Land Deposition Meeting, Ottawa Leadership Cohort Tour of Akwesasne, Jay Treaty/FAFSA (funding), Water Connection to St. Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT), Akwekso:wa Port Lands.
- Weekly updates are provided from the Governance Committee on the progress of moving the weekly Council Meetings to a live format. The projected date is Ohiri:ha/June. The boardroom also needs to be reconfigured to accommodate the required equipment, etc. MCA Communications Unit and IT staff are diligently working out the bugs to assist with the implementation date.
- Executive Director also provides weekly updates.

Monthly District Meeting

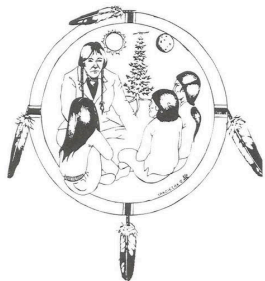
I did not attend the monthly District Meeting held on Enniskó:wa/March 24, 2025 (not feeling well). *The next meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha/April 14, 2025.*

Other Meetings Attended

On Enniskó:wa/March 6, 2025, I attended a meeting at the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Re: FAFSA (funding) Guidance and Information on the Immigration and Nationality Act, Jay Treaty and Rights American Indians Born in Canada. Presentation on New FAFSA Guidelines, Overview of Creation of Record Process. Council members are scheduling community sessions, dates to be determined.

Portfolio Updates

Ahkwesahsne Mohawk Board of Education



Mission: Ie thi ha hon:nien ~ We make the road for them.

AMBE consists of the three District Schools ~ Ahkwesahsne Mohawk School, Tsi Snaihne School and Kana:takon School, Akwesasne Zero to Six, Akwesasne Child Care and Iohahi:io. Check out the Facebook page for more information on events and activities.

▪ **AMBE holds monthly Public Meetings.** The first part of the meeting is reserved for parents, community members, and Totas to participate. **Next meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha/April 15, 2025, on Kawehno:ke (Building Blocks Office) starting at 5:30 pm.** Get out and meet members of the Board of Trustees to discuss concerns, receive updates, etc.

- **Portfolio Meeting** was held on Onerahtókha/April 4, 2025. Updates were provided by the Director of Education and Portfolio Chiefs. Presentation was made on the Akwesasne Education Agreement. *Education agreements are tailored agreements that outline the design, implementation, and management of education systems, particularly for First Nations. They ensure that base education funding is comparable to provincial systems while considering factors like remoteness and socio-economic conditions. As of April 2024, 10 education agreements have been signed, with discussions ongoing for more agreements to advance education goals. These agreements are administrative in nature and do not confer law-making powers or remove First Nations from the provisions of the Indian Act. AMBE will be moving in this direction.*
- **Have you seen or used iMohawk yet?** iMohawk is AMBE's interactive website where you can learn Kanien'kéha anywhere and at anytime. Click the link <http://imohawk.ambe.ca/> and use password: skah123 to log in.



Enniskó:wa/March 31 is recognized as National Indigenous Languages Day and an opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada to recognize and celebrate the very rich and diverse heritage of Indigenous languages. Indigenous languages embody Indigenous cultures and histories. AMBE offered varying events in the school that involved and promoted the language.

- **Be sure to check out the FB page Ahkwesashne Mohawk Board of Education for additional information on events, activities, etc.**

Board of Trustees

Kawehno:ke District: Kathleen Papineau ~ Chair, Kuy Chaussi ~ Co-Chair

Kana:takon District: Cecelia King, Elizabeth Sawatis

Tsi Snaihne District: Josephine Herne, Mary Terrance

Nation Building ~ Entewatathá:wi “We Will Govern”



Mission: To negotiate a self-government agreement with Canada that recognizes expanded jurisdiction and authority and protect the Aboriginal rights and title for the Mohawks of Akwesasne.

Vision: To implement the inherent right of self-government of the Mohawks of Akwesasne through the Akwesasne-Canada Entewatathá:wi Self-Government Agreement.

What is the purpose of the Entewatathá:wi Self Government Agreement (ESGA)?

The purpose of ESGA is to achieve legal recognition by the Government of Canada of the jurisdiction, authority, and institutions of the Mohawks of Akwesasne. Once the ESGA is ratified, Parliament will adopt legislation that will give ESGA the force of law. The legislation will be binding on the Government of Canada and the provinces. The legislation will terminate the application of many of the provisions of the Indian Act which represents a colonialist vision of limited self-government that is inconsistent with the inherent jurisdiction of the Mohawks of Akwesasne.

- All working tables are on hold until the election is completed due to the upcoming federal election. The federal government is in **“caretaker” mode** during the election campaign. It will remain in this mode

for weeks following. This means public servants must act in a mutual way and all government activities related to policies are on hold until the caretaker mode is lifted.

- The team will focus on the **community survey**. There will be in-person survey sessions, meetings with groups. The survey will be launched at this month's General Meeting up to Onerahtohkó:wa/May 8, 2025. There will be weekly prize drawings. *Your input is valued, be sure to participate in the survey.*



CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE The Mohawks of Akwesasne and Canada acknowledge that the draft Akwesasne-Canada Entewatathá:wi Self Government Agreement is still under negotiation and therefore, is of a confidential nature. This information is shared by Mohawk Council of Akwesasne for the sole purpose of allowing Akwesasne members to participate meaningfully in community consultations and shall not be disclosed outside of the membership.

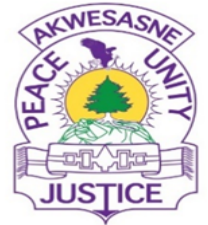
Elders Advisory Council

Bernice Lazore, Laura Francis, Nadine Jacobs, Lucy Papineau

Akwesasne Justice Department

Mission: *Equity, fairness and respectfulness. AJD employs the principle of natural justice to empower the community to safeguard collective rights, primarily, and individual rights for Akwesasró:non, while remaining respectful of the community's heritage and culture.*

The **Akwesasne Justice Department (AJD)** is recognized as a first in Canada as a justice system that is based on customary laws which incorporate traditional restorative principles in the three (3) main responsibilities of government: Law Making, Adjudication and Enforcement.



- **Portfolio Meeting** took place on Enniskó:wa/March 13, 2025. Updates were provided on department funding, strategic planning, service overview, legislative services. The department will be conducting surveys to gain input on what type of services the community would like to see. More information will be announced. The Department is presently reviewing and developing a strategic plan. *The next meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha/April 10, 2025.*
- Attend meetings of the **Oversight Committee on Legislative Development (OSC)**. The next meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha/April 10, 2025, at 4pm. The Committee will be reviewing the Terms of Reference of the OSC.
- As part of the OSC, I sit on the **Eniethihswanon:na Child's Rights Law and Fire Law Working Task Groups (WTG)**. The working task groups review and discuss the development of community laws and meet every two weeks.
- The next meeting of the **Eniethihswanon:na WTG was held on Onerahtókha/April 1, 2025**. The WTG will be reviewing and making the effort to learn the Kanienké'ha words that are included in the law. The Law will be going into the next phase of law development that will include community consultation. The process is defined in the Akwesasne Law Enactment Procedure Regulations (ALEPR). Stay tuned for dates for community consultation. A copy of the ALEPR can be found on the MCA website ~ History and Resources ~ Akwesasne Law Registry. Copies of all Laws can be retrieved as well.



- The Fire Law WTG will require the participation and input from a local Fireman. Individual to be confirmed then a meeting will be scheduled.




OSC Community Members

Kawehno:ke District: Gary Cole **Kana:takon District:** Doris Cook **Tsi Snaihne District:** Vacant

Department of Infrastructure, Housing and Environment

- **Portfolio Meeting ~ Environment Sector** took place on Enniskó:wa/March 20, 2025. Claire McFaul A/Manager provided updates on the following: flood mitigation, aquatics, waste management, environmental assessments, staff training, terrestrial, outreach, remedial action plan, funding. *The next portfolio meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha /April 17, 2025.*
- **Portfolio Meeting ~ Infrastructure** was held on Enniskó:wa/March 25, 2025. Updates were provided on status of capital projects. There are many projects in different phases of construction. Information was provided on the common building stages which include: development and planning/project completion and planning, pre-design/programming, schematic, design and development, development approvals/permitting, pre-construction/procurement of materials and resources, contractor selection, construction administration, post-construction/inspections, deficiencies and final touches, project completion and handover. *The next meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha /April 22, 2025.*

Have You Noticed a Road Issue?

- Help keep the community safe by reporting potholes or road concerns to the Roads Program.
- Main roads are cleared first during winter storms, followed by secondary roads.
- Services Include: Road Maintenance & Repairs, Snow & Ice Removal, Pothole Patching, Signage & Road Markings, Drainage Improvements.
-  14 Regular Work Hours: 8 AM – 5 PM |  Contact: Roads Program Manager at 613-938-5476
-  After-Hours Emergency? Call Central Dispatch at 613-575-2340

The mission at the DIHE Roads Program is dedicated to maintaining safe roads for our community. Through ongoing maintenance, repairs, and improvements, we work to ensure smooth and secure travel for all.

Portfolio Meeting ~ Housing was held on Enniskó:wa/March 26, 2025. Monthly report of the Associate Director was reviewed and discussed. The monthly meeting also includes the Housing Authority members. *The next meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha /April 23, 2025.*

- **Do you require an MCA housing loan?** | Do you know the process to apply for a housing loan? Are you building a new home, buying a home, please contact 613-575-2250, ext. 1052 to get started.

Housing Authority Members

Kawehno:ke District: Jackie Benedict

Kana:takon District: Laura Francis

Tsi Snaihne District: Esther Jock

Committee Updates

- **Governance Committee** (consists of myself, Chief Cindy Francis-Mitchell, Chief Theresa Jacobs, Chief Scott Peters, Grand Chief Lazore)



- The Committee has been meeting weekly and continues to examine the requirements to hold public meetings for the weekly Council Meetings. The Committee will also work on a Terms of Reference/Charter. There is the need to review and update the Council Meeting Procedure Regulations.
- **Youth, Elders, Culture and Language** (consists of myself, Chief Fallon David, Chief Lacey Pierce, Chief Tesha Rourke, Chief JoAnn Swamp, Chief Vince Thompson)
- Meeting was held on Onerahtókha/April 4, 2025. The Committee will be working on the Terms of Reference/Charter and will be reviewing and finalizing the budget. The Committee will also be working with the members of the Youth Council. A meeting with the Youth Council will be scheduled.
- **Chiefs of Ontario First Nations Women's Council (FNWC)** (consists of myself and Chief Tesha Rourke)

The mandate of the Council is to ensure that a gender lens is applied to all the work and initiatives undertaken by the Chiefs of Ontario (COO). Meetings are held on a consistent basis and coordinated by COO staff.

Attended a meeting on Enniskó:wa 21, 2025. Meetings are held monthly. Topics for updates and discussion were as follows: MMIWG2S+ (missing and murdered Indigenous women), anti-racism campaign, request for a youth & knowledge keeps tri-council meeting. *The next meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha/April 25, 2025.*

▪ **Chiefs of Ontario Chiefs and Technicians Committee on Language and Learning (CTCLL)**

The CTCLL is also mandated to provide technical and political advice, recommendations and strategies to the Ontario Regional Chief, the COO Leadership Council and the Chiefs-in-Assembly on all matters related to First Nations languages and learning.

Attended my first meeting on Enniskó:wa/March 6, 2025. *The next meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha/April 3, 2025. I was unable to attend.*

▪ **Chiefs of Ontario Ontario Bilateral Education and Learning (OBELT)**

In November 2020, COO withdrew participation from the Assembly of First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education and the AFN National Indian Education Council. Since then, OBELT (Ontario Bilateral Education and Learning Table) was established as a bilateral partnership on Lifelong Learning between First Nations in Ontario and Indigenous Services Canada. Key priorities include: Governance and Advocacy, Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education (Ontario Technical Table Interim Funding Approach), Post-Secondary Education, Adult Education, Education Partnerships Program, Education Infrastructure. OBELT is a monthly meeting that is separate from the CTCLL meetings.

I participated in my first meeting of the OBELT held on Enniskó:wa/March 26, 2025. *The next meeting is scheduled for Onerahtókha/April 30, 2025*

Monthly Notables

- It is in my monthly plan to stop by and **visit with the Tri-District Elders**. I will strive to include at the very least one visit monthly.

Works in Progress

- **Kawehno:ke District Chiefs Office** ~ Office hours will be held every Friday from 9am to 4pm at the CIA #3 Building on Kawehno:ke. Feel free to stop in for a chat.

Travel and Expenses

Forum, Conference	Registration Fee / Expenses
Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly	Registration Fee: \$450
Tsiothóhrha/December 3-5, 2025	Travel/Gas: \$40
Attended in-person and participated virtually	

Chiefs of Ontario Mental Wellness and Substance Use Conference Tsiothohrhkó:wa/ January 28-30, 2025 Blue Mountain, Ontario	Registration Fee: \$300 Hotel: \$1,816.86 Meals: \$150
National Circle for Indigenous Agriculture and Food WOININA 2025 Enniska/February 12, 2025 Westin Hotel, Ottawa, Ontario	Registration Fee: \$63.11 Travel/Gas: \$80.02 Parking: \$20.00
Truth with Reconciliation: Respect, Restore, Relearn Grandmother's voice Enniska/February 25-26, 2025 Participated Virtually	Registration Fee: \$450.87
Assembly of First Nations National Virtual Forum on Advancing the MMIWG2S+ Enniskó:wa/March 20, 2025 Participated via zoom.	Registration Fee: Free
Assembly of First Nations National Forum on Justice: Revitalization of First Nations Laws and Legal Order Onerahtókha/April 2-3, 2025 Participated virtually	Registration Fee: Free

Upcoming Travel

- **Assembly of First Nations National Forum on Justice: Reform of Justice Systems** scheduled for Onerahtohkó:wa/May 28-29, 2025, in Montreal, Quebec. I will be attending in person.
- **Annual 53rd Annual North American Indian Women's Association (NAIWA) Conference** scheduled for Ohiarí:ha/ June 8-12, 2025, at the Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino, New York. Attendance not confirmed.
- **Chiefs of Ontario 50th Anniversary Special Assembly** scheduled for Ohiarí:ha/June 17-19, 2025, at the Hiawatha First Nation. Attendance not confirmed.
- **Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly** scheduled for Ohiaríhkó:wa/July 15-17, 2025, at the RBC Convention Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Attendance not confirmed.

Some Questions for You

Are you satisfied with how Council is reporting to the community?

Monthly reports are distributed at the monthly General Meetings. Reporting of individual Chiefs will also be included in Onkwetá:ke over the course of the Council term. Travel reports are being prepared.
District Meeting reports are being prepared.

Is there a change or changes you would like to see?

Note: I will away from the office during the week of Onerahtókha/April 22-25, 2025. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions or would just like to have a chat.

~ Lisa

