

" A tree has roots in the soil  
and reaches for the sky "

# Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Strategic Plan

2022-26





# Acknowledgements

This development of this 2022-26 Strategic Plan was made possible through the contribution of the Akwesasne community members, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, management and employees.

MCA would like to thank all who contributed to the strategic plan. It took the collaboration of the Chiefs in Council, the Steering Committee, input from Community, Directors and Employees.

The process was guided by a2z strategic consulting, as an offer of reconciliation.



## Note: Covid-19

Circumstances of the Covid-19 international pandemic certainly influenced our strategic work. We were required to work both virtually and later in person. Thank you all for your flexibility and availability to ensure your voices were heard.






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# Our Shared Vision for Community

## Message from the Grand Chief & Council

We are pleased and excited to present the 2022 Mohawk Council of Akwesasne renewed Strategic Plan. Over the last several months, our Council has approached strategic renewal in a more inclusive manner than ever before, bringing many voices to the table to ensure the upcoming years meet our community needs.

Unlike previous plans, we know the previous two years of a global pandemic have certainly shifted how we deliver services and changed how we were required to conduct our business. The pandemic also exposed vulnerabilities across our people and systems which were the root of many of the strategic discussions for the future of Akwesasne. As the pandemic settles down into what is now a new way of life, the timing for deep reflection on our future was more critical than ever.

The Council undertook a comprehensive process to review the principles and fundamentals from previous strategic plans and the Community Comprehensive Plan to identify community priorities in



order to build our renewed plan. In addition, the Strategic Plan was strengthened by the knowledge we learned throughout the pandemic about our services and supports.

Though the many collaborations, a clear theme emerged for our strategic vision through the metaphor of a strong tree. A tree has roots in the soil and reaches for the sky. Our roots are our ancestors and our history as Mohawk people. Our vision is hopeful and reaches out from the trunk and branches of this tree. It is ever changing, based on the needs of community. And our tree, with its strong roots, thrives above all storms. With the seven priorities that were defined being the tree's branches. Like a tree, this plan will be a living document to be developed and elaborated on a regular basis.

I encourage you to take a moment to review the plan and to keep an eye out for progressive updates as we begin implementation. Let us continue to grow and build together as a community.



# MCA Council



Abram Benedict  
Grand Chief



Vanessa  
Adams



April  
Adams-Phillips



Jacqueline  
"Jackie" Benedict



Cynthia "Cindy"  
Francis-Mitchell



Ryan "Duck"  
Jacobs



Julie  
Phillips-Jacobs



Edward  
Roundpoint



Sarah Lee  
Sunday-Diabo



JoAnn  
Swamp



Dwayne  
Thomas



Vincent "Vince"  
Thompson

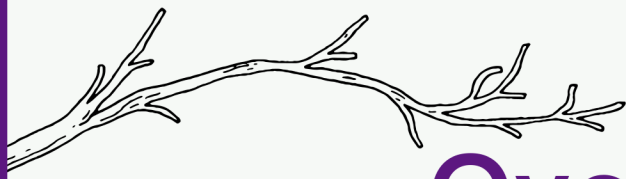


Tim "Dooley"  
Thompson

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# Overview of Mohawk Council

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's vision and mission was set by its leadership and staff several year ago, and remains true in this plan. Together these statements of declaration guide the approach to our work and activities of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne as we serve the People. The vision and mission statements for the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne are as follows:



## OUR VISION

"Tsi nén:we  
wa'kwarihwaiéntáhkwen  
Our Future – Our Responsibility"



## OUR MISSION

"With a good mind it is our responsibility to protect and exercise our inherent rights while creating sustainable partnerships and building a strong community for future generations."



## OUR VALUES

Family and work are about relationships. Success in life is tied to the quality of our relationships and how much spirit we put into them.



## OUR PRINCIPLES

The Principles of:  
Sken:nen (Peace)  
Kanikonriio (Good Mind), and  
Kasestensera (Strength) guide us.



# Our Strategic Journey

Bringing Many Voices to the Table



## A collaborative approach

The Council wanted to ensure that we brought as many voices to the table as possible to build this next chapter of a strategic vision for our community. We hosted an in-person kick-off session in November 2021 to begin building the priority framework with the Council and Management team. In early 2022 several in-person and online sessions were held. In addition, in June 2022, we hosted Community validation meetings in each district. These sessions allowed the Community to provide input and ask questions to Council, the Directorate team, and the consultants. The result is the document that follows.

## Steering Committee

The MCA Strategic Planning Steering Committee was the working group that advised MCA in the development of the MCA 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

### **Chairperson:**

- Abram Benedict, Mohawk Government, Grand Chief

### **Mohawk Government Members:**

- Corine Francis, Executive Assistant
- Chelsea Francis, Government Support Manager

### **Mohawk Council Members:**

- Tim Thompson, District Chief
- Vanessa Adams, District Chief
- Heather Phillips, Executive Director

### **Department of Health:**

- Amber Montour, Director
- Ryan King, Health Communications Officer

### **Department of Social Service:**

- Caroline Peters, Community Support

### **Department of Education:**

- Donna Lahache, Director of Education

### **Employees:**

- Gina Thompson, Program Manager Housing
- Mae (Allison) Lazore-Green





## Collaborating with MCA Management

A session was conducted in November 2021 with the management team to review the current state of the MCA and its services. Through lengthy discussions and targeted activities guided by the consulting firm, we reviewed our current services and identified 7 key priority areas for the future. In the weeks that followed these priorities were detailed into goals and the corresponding outcomes for each goal.

## Working with MCA Employees

Once Goals and Outcomes were drafted, departmental consultations were organized in order to bring more voices to the table and provide feedback on the emerging vision. Strengths and challenges for each service area were identified and the plan was refined.

## Listening to Community

Once the plan became more defined, it was time to bring it forward for feedback to the entire Akwesasne Community through three district meetings. MCA wanted to ensure that the upcoming strategic vision was in-line with community concerns and moreover, community vision for continued growth.

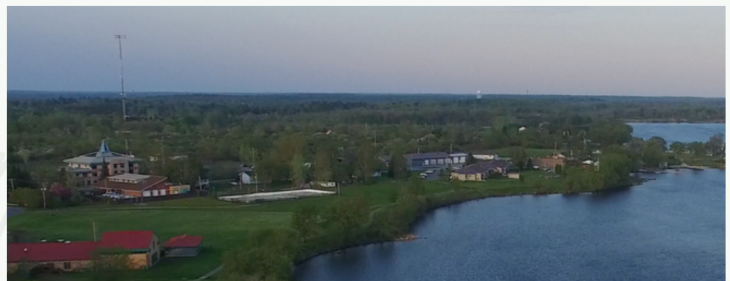
### Sessions were held:

June 6th at the Kawehno:ke Recreational Center

June 8th at the Kana:takon School

June 9th at Tsi Snaihne Recreational Center

Feedback was gathered and the plan was refined some more.



## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Our Strategic Plan is a living document that will guide the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne administration in developing annual work plans that support the new Mohawk Council of Akwesasne strategic vision. In these MCA department Strategic Action Plans, projects and programs will be detailed and defined to ensure their contribution to the overall strategic plan and priorities.

Our Council will support the MCA departments with political advocacy and interventions where needed to facilitate the implementation of the strategic plan.

We will also be holding internal workings sessions to identify the elements specific to the Chiefs so that we can have an overall political advocacy plan to move key initiatives forward for the community.

## Communicating Updates

We will regularly report to you at the General Meeting and on social media as we move along on this renewed path.







# Reading the Strategic Plan

## Tree Metaphor

The metaphor of a tree emerged during the many strategic visioning sessions. This was chosen to unify our understanding of the plan, one that is solidly rooted in our past and grounded by community needs; has a firm trunk, which represents our core services and the teams that work to maintain these; and a seven main branches which are our strategic priorities. The leaves on these branches represent the services and programs required to maintain a thriving tree. And like the leaves of a tree, these leaves will adjust as the branches grow over the years.

### Tree Metaphor

The plan is structured as follows:



### Strategic Plan Tree Metaphor

A tree is solid and has a clear structure, a tree gets its strength from its roots (our ancestors, community, our past). The Core of a tree is its trunk (Council, Management and Employees). The tree has larger branches that grow from the trunk (our priorities) and smaller branches (goals and their outcomes) and finally little branches and leaves (projects and programs) and they fit together as one growing and thriving tree.

## Priorities

Priorities were first determined through the November 2021, strategic session for the MCA. Priorities provide the focus for Council and Management to know where to put energies and monies based on the identified needs. Through different activities, participants were able to provide information, ideas, and concerns. This information was reviewed, and preliminary priorities emerged. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee reviewed these priorities and then the 7 priorities were used in the different consultation sessions in 2022.

## Goals

The 2022-2026 Strategic Plan has goals that are ambitious forward-looking targets with the intention of ensuring that our community is not only sustained but also strengthened for future generations. Goals are written in a way to develop collaboration by removing barriers between the different departments. Thus, MCA aims to work more efficiently and less in silos.





Each department is being challenged to contribute their creativity, skills, and effectiveness to ensure that MCA reach the goals in the Strategic Plan. The goals were determined through conversations with the MCA Management group and refined through department meetings and community meetings.

## Outcomes

Outcomes create a clear portrait or snapshot of success required to meet the goal. Outcomes tell us what we are intending or want when we succeed or attain the vision set by the identified goal. Each goal can have several outcomes. Each of these outcomes help the move the organization closer to reaching the goal. Outcomes are written to create the portrait of what we are targeting. Essentially the outcomes create a vision of what success will look like.

## Strategic Action Plan: Projects/Initiatives, Programs

Once the strategic plan is put into motion, it is referred to as the strategic action plan. In other words, it becomes the operational plan. The work towards achieving the outcomes are called projects/initiatives or programs. Each department will develop projects/initiatives and programs that allow them to contribute positively towards reaching the stated goals within each priority branch. Collaboration between departments will be strongly encouraged and required to meet our lofty goals.







# Monitoring the Implementation



## Implementation plan

The 2022-2026 Strategic Plan implementation will be mandated to the Executive Director of MCA to put into action with the Directorate team. From this work will emerge the Strategic Action Plan with clear plans for each service sector. Each department will identify projects, initiatives, and programs that will ensure that the outcomes and goals are attained. Each department will plan with their employees the projects and initiatives (start/end date; deliverables, tasks, etc.). Thereby putting their plans into action.

## Monitoring the plan

Progress towards strategic goals will be monitored on a regular basis based upon a timeline and procedures that are to be established by the Executive Director and the Directorate team. Adaptations in the organization of work within the MCA will be made where necessary to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation and achievement of expected results by the end of the strategic plan. Departments must report on the level of completion of the projects/initiatives (on deliverables). Directors will communicate this information in a formalized manner.

## Evaluation of results

It is essential for Council to **regularly monitor the progress and status of the each of the goals in the 7 priorities and to report back to the community.** This will be accomplished by having a bi-annual strategic plan review system put in place where the MCA administration will monitor the completion rates of projects and initiatives as well as provide key information to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will then report back to Council on strategic plan implementation progress. In turn, Council will communicate with Community.

## Presenting the Strategic Plan

In the following pages we are pleased to present to you the Strategic Plan. The plan is presented under the 7 Key Priorities (Branches) and their related Goals and Outcomes.











# Strategic Community Priorities

## Priority 1: Governance/Politics

Akwesasne is on its journey towards self-determination and self-government. This process is well on its way in Akwesasne. MCA, through its different departments, already embodies many facets of self-governance. These aspects will continue to be strengthened in a way that respects our Akwesasro:non history, culture, and traditions. The roles and responsibilities within the MCA structure need to be actively communicated to community members and solidified through community feedback. Current laws and regulations need to be integrated into the everyday life of Akwesasro:non. As the community continues to move through the process of self-determination towards autonomy with various external governments, new elements of self-governance or self-determination will need to be refined. Over the years, Community will help clarify priorities for self-determination and through active participation, they will help shape how this is done. An active and involved community sends a strong message to non-first nations governments in terms of the community's readiness for self-determination.

## Priority 2: Economic Development

Economic Development provides the structure whereby the community can build growth and prosperity. Many different First Nations in Canada have found innovative ways to do this that respect their traditional and cultural background which then helps strengthen their community's financial situation in a culturally respectful manner. In Akwesasne, present effective economical activities need to be identified and preserved. These will be the foundation for future economic development. Businesses and partnerships that are not flourishing may need to be, after careful review, encourage to adapt/change their processes or focus in order to meet a continually changing need in society. Organizations that aim to meet the basic needs of the community will be prioritized in terms of active financial support as well as the creation of effective support programs for different community members (gender, age, at risk, etc.) so that they can become more active in building the community. Local business will be encouraged to use/develop new technologies and to form innovative partnerships with outside groups/businesses/government to create sustainable success.

## Priority 3: Culture and Language

We know that preserving and revitalizing our Akwesasro:non Culture and Kanien'keha Language is essential to us for our present and future success as a viable First Nations community. Recent consultations have determined that we need to increase ways to integrate our language and culture into our daily lives. Whether it is by having our children educated totally or partially in Mohawk, to using our Thanksgiving Address to help focus our mind and spirit or by taking Mohawk language courses through work and leisure activities—the integration of our language and culture needs to be a priority for every community member. New technologies are being used to preserve and share the language and cultural knowledge so that it is accessible to all. Akwesasro:non learning resources will continue to be created locally so that they can support the language learning of children, students and adults in the different centers, schools and places of work. Fluent Mohawk speakers need to be encouraged to lead in the teaching and integrating of Mohawk. The responsibility for language will be shared between individuals, families, districts, and government. Everyone must do their part in order for the Akwesasro:non Culture and Kanien'keha Language to flourish.

## Priority 4: Health and Wellbeing

Health and well-being remain a challenge for community, due to past traumas and many other factors. Akwesasne will continue to be supported and grow to be an inclusive and welcoming community that takes care of all its members, including its most vulnerable. We will work towards having responsive support systems available to community members throughout their healing journey. Akwesasne members need to be supported in their health journey both within the community and at times, outside the community. We want to work towards building our internal capacity, with professional opportunities for our own community members provided to encourage our people to become health sector workers in Akwesasne. This would help the community be less dependent on outside services and provide support that is meaningful and responsive to our needs and varied contexts.

## Priority 5: Social Development

Community needs opportunities to socialize with access to infrastructures that are inclusive and accessible to everyone in the community. Community members of different gender, age and interests have varied needs in physical activity, in community and cultural activities as well as in the positive development of themselves as individuals, as families and active community members. The focus is to expand our ability to provide leisure and community-based activities for all ages as well as to develop the value of volunteerism and providing opportunities within the community to participate in volunteer-based activities. These volunteer-based activities provide the opportunities for community members to not only participate but to also, lead. Leadership activities are very fulfilling and help develop the value of giving back. These activities need to be held in safe, accessible, and appropriate buildings and places. These activities need to occur in all three districts of the community. A community that can effectively engage in positive social activities will be healthier and happier.

## Priority 6: Environment & Infrastructure

The Akwesasne Community has worked hard to maintain its land, and to negotiate land agreements to regain its rightful lands. To protect its land, we must be in continuous communication with many different levels of governments (municipal, 2 provinces, the federal government, the Tribe, and the US government). This interaction complicates the process in terms of gaining back land or when trying to address environmental issues. Housing remains a priority in upcoming years with youth wanting to stay on territory and families growing, we need to work towards a plan to accommodate these emerging needs. With a finite area of land available and the consciousness of preserving the precious land we have, MCA will move ahead with caution in terms of building housing, managing present and future road systems, sewage systems, etc. Land management will be conducted with a 7 generations mindset of making decisions today that make sense today, but will also protect our generations in the future. Effectively managing the environment and infrastructure is essential for the community and it is very closely linked to the community's future well-being.

## Priority 7: MCA Service Efficiency

MCA delivers important and essential services to the Community as well as being the largest local employer. We strive to continually and consistently deliver quality services in an efficient and effective manner. We will work with our employees to ensure that they provide equitable and efficient services and treat community members well while performing these services. Investing in the continual development of our staff will ensure that our services remain up to date and innovative while remaining true to our roots and beliefs. MCA management must lead the workplace to create a safe environment so that their employees' energy can be properly focused on the community. The more effective MCA becomes at delivering quality services, the more the community members will be able to focus on the well-being of their families and of themselves.





## Branch 1: Governance and Politics



### **MCA maximizes its autonomy and authority in self- governance**

- Negotiations are effective and efficient between MCA and the external Government enforce MCA Authority
- Laws protect our People, and preserve our Akwesasne:non culture and way of living
- Increased authority and clear jurisdiction enhance the delivery of our programs and services

### **MCA refines and strengthens governance practices that serve as a compass for leadership**

- MCA clarifies and approves Charters for ABCT (Authorities, Boards, Commissions, Tribunals)
- Policies provide clear and consistent direction for decision making
- Clear mandates for personnel and elected officials ensure MCA's efficiency and effectiveness
- Governance structures ensure transparent and effective leadership

### **Community and Council work effectively together to ensure a safe and prosperous community**

- Consultation policy and process permits the efficient development of laws that are clear, accessible, and beneficial to the Community
- MCA uses innovative practices to engage community in having an active voice

### **Community Laws enhance quality of life in Akwesasne**

- Community laws guide the efficient, safe, and structured growth of Akwesasne
- Community laws are effectively communicated to ensure the understanding and cooperation of the community
- The legal system supports the enforcement of community laws



## Branch 2: Economic Development



### **Akwesasne is a self-sustaining and supportive community**

- MCA has a clear portrait of community needs
- MCA has a clear plan for sustainable economic and diverse development
- Akwesasne has diverse opportunities that maintain its people on territory (grow population, home of choice, job opportunities)
- Akwesasne has quality diverse product and service offerings within the community

### **Akwesasne invests in entrepreneurship to create and develop a competitive edge**

- Entrepreneurs are supported throughout their journey
- Youth are aware of the possibilities of entrepreneurship in their career path
- Special programs exist to support vulnerable groups

### **Akwesasne prioritizes investing in innovative opportunities that benefit the community**

- MCA has impactful partnerships that contribute to the growth of the community
- Akwesasne has its own certifying college and custom programs that meet our education and employment needs
- Technology enhances our service offerings
- Growth in Akwesasne tourism provides diverse opportunities for the community





## Branch 3: Culture and Language



### **Akwesasne is a bilingual community**

- Akwesasro:non are immersed in Mohawk Language and culture in their daily lives
- Community has access to language and culture training

### **MCA captures and preserves Mohawk Language and Culture**

- Elders and language speakers are recognized as keepers of Mohawk Language and culture ensuring preservation revitalization and sustainability
- Technology facilitates the creation and access to language and cultural resources for today as well as tomorrow

### **MCA honours and celebrates Mohawk cultural traditions**

- Traditional culture and practices are a collective priority for the community, local governments and educational institutions
- Akwesasro:non are empowered to maintain their role as keepers of the earth



## Branch 4: Health and Well-being



### **Akwesasne is an inclusive and welcoming community that takes care of its vulnerable members**

- Akwesasro:non have access to equitable services and have their basic needs met
- Supportive infrastructures provide emergency shelter and safe zone
- Vulnerable populations have supportive programs throughout their lives
- Community-wide education programs help create empathy for the vulnerable

### **MCA offers community members various medical and support services throughout their healing journey**

- Healing (traditional/non- traditional) approaches are adapted to different needs
- Akwesasne members are supported psychologically, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually
- Enjoying nature has a positive impact on community members' health

### **Akwesasro:non are guided in their health journey**

- Akwesasro:non are guided in their medical needs
- Patients are cared for until they have fully recovered

### **Akwesasne has Akwesasro:non health professionals**

- Opportunities to pursue higher education in the health sector are encouraged, available and accessible
- Micro credentials are available to fill the various employment gaps in the health sector







## Branch 5: Social Development



### **Recreational activities are diverse and evolving**

- Akwesasro:non are engaged in positive social and cultural activities and events
- Akwesasro:non are physically active
- Elders have opportunities to network
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion are prioritized

### **MCA prioritizes infrastructure to provide the best facilities for the community**

- Facilities/infrastructure for a variety of social and cultural activities and events
- Facilities/infrastructure for a wide variety of physical activities exists in all 3 districts
- Internet access and equipment is accessible to everyone



## Branch 6: Environment and Infrastructure

### **Akwesasne land and territory are protected from environmental degradation**

- MCA exercises its jurisdiction on its land and territory
- Strong partnerships are created between Akwesasne and outside governments/agencies
- MCA is provided with data that informs their decisions related to managing and protecting the environment

### **Education curriculum from day care to adult learners include indigenous based environmental learning**

- The Community is empowered to take an active role in preserving the environment
- The Community is empowered to use environmentally sustainable practices

### **Akwesasro:non values for the environments are the compass that guides infrastructure decisions**

- Akwesasne is a well-structured territory with a vision to the future
- Infrastructures are well maintained
- Technology is used to improve energy autonomy and sustainability



## Branch 7: MCA Service Efficiency



### **MCA develops organizational efficient services**

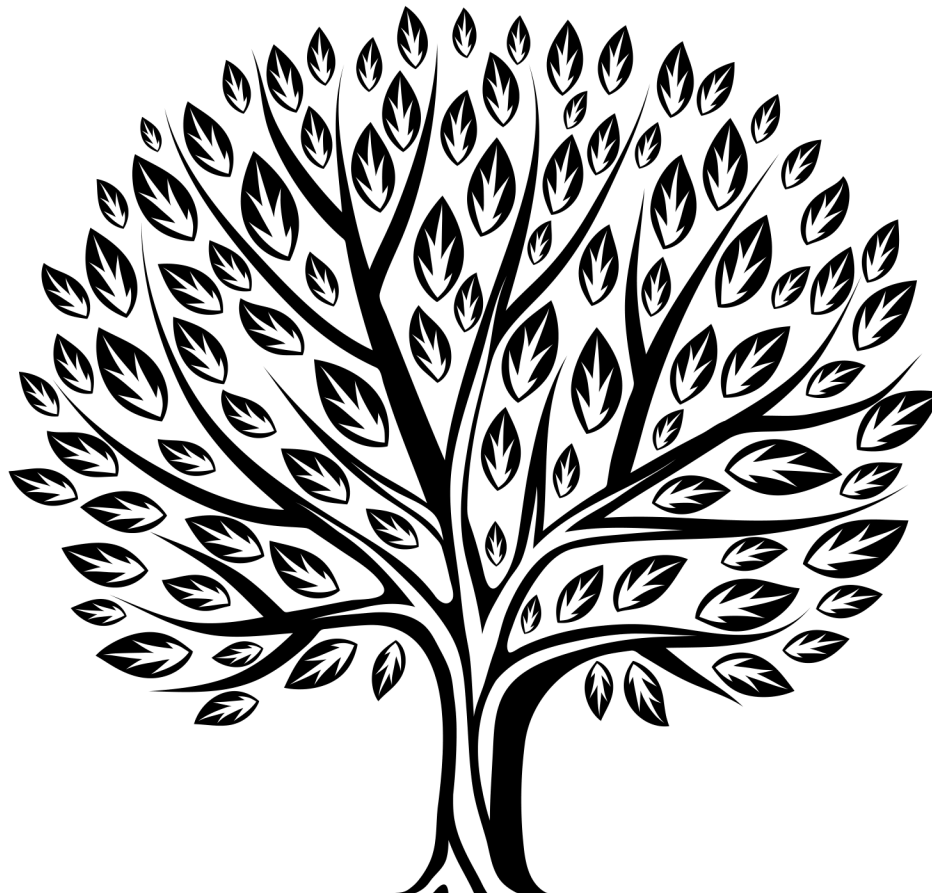
- MCA offers services that reflect the needs of the whole community
- MCA has clear organizational goals and structures
- MCA communicates effectively internally and externally
- MCA recognizes, supports, and adapts innovation and excellence

### **MCA develops safe, effective, and innovative workplaces**

- MCA has clear expectations for its employees
- MCA employees are respectful with each other as well as with the Community they serve
- Collaboration between services areas is prioritized in planning
- Employees respect rules of confidentiality and act ethically
- Employee safety is everyone's responsibility

### **MCA develops effective management systems**

- HR needs are continually updated to ensure that MCA is fully staffed
- Finance has access to relevant data to ensure fiscal health
- Department and program needs are continually updated to ensure success in delivering quality services.
- MCA invests in employee development
- Employees have access to Health and Wellness activities and information
- Employees are hired, oriented, and onboarded in a timely fashion





Mohawk Council of Akwesasne - Strategic Plan - 2022-2026



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