

ONKWE'TÀ:KE

THE MOHAWK COUNCIL OF AKWESASNE NEWSLETTER

Volume 14 Issue 1

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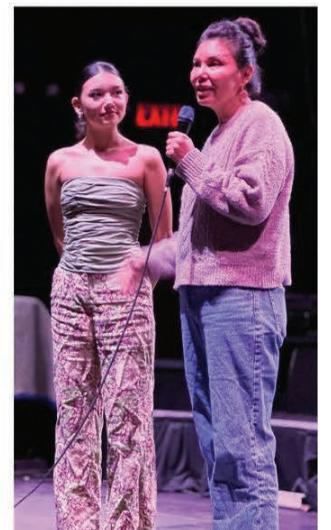
Tsiothohrhkó:wa/January 2025



2024



Year in Review



As we continue into 2025, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne proudly reflects on the incredible achievements and milestones of 2024. These successes were made possible through the hard work and dedication of MCA staff, council and our community members. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to making 2024 a remarkable year. We look forward to the opportunities and accomplishments the new year will bring. Wishing our community a joyful, healthy, and prosperous New Year!

UPCOMING MCA MEETINGS & SPECIAL DATES:

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

February 27, 2025 · 6 p.m.

Tsi Snaihne School Gymnasium

The MCA General Meeting will be a hybrid event (in-person and virtual).

To receive the Zoom link, please email
meetings@akwesasne.ca



MOHAWK COUNCIL OF AKWESASNE 2024-2027

Grand Chief
Leonard Lazore

Kana:takon District

Chief Fallon David
Chief Cindy Francis-Mitchell
Chief Theresa Jacobs
Chief Teresa Oakes

Kawehno:ke District

Chief Vanessa Adams
Chief Lisa Francis-Benedict
Chief Lacey Pierce
Chief Vince Thompson

Tsi Snaihne District

Chief Scott Peters
Chief Tessa Rourke
Chief Sarah Lee Sunday-Diabo
Chief JoAnn Swamp

Administration

Shannon Roundpoint
A/Executive Director

Heather Phillips
Director

Dept. of Finance & Administration

Leslie Papineau
Director

Dept. of Infrastructure, Housing & Environment

Cactus Cook Sunday
Director

Dept. of Justice

Valerie Cree-Cook
A/Director

Dept. of Community & Social Services

Amber Montour
Director

Department of Health

Donna Lahache
Director

Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education

Ranatiostha Swamp
A/Chief of Police/Director
Dept. of Public Safety

Kylee Tarbell
Director

Dept. of Economic Development

WAT'KWANONHWERA:TON/GREETINGS

She:kon and welcome to the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's community newsletter, Onkwe'tà:ke, which means "For the people." The primary goal of this publication is to deliver MCA's news and updates straight into the hands of community members. Below is a speech provided by MCA's Acting Executive Director at the MCA Holiday Celebration:

"It's great to see all of you here tonight at our first MCA Holiday Christmas party in many years. We actually don't know when the last party was but it's a good chance it was not in this century. It's exciting to see the MCA team here together in this casual and informal setting, away from work and the buildings we come in and out of every day. I truly hope that everyone is able to unwind, be themselves, and let go of the every day stresses of work.

Because...you deserve it. Your commitment to your job, to showing up every day, is on its own an honourable achievement. We thank you for being a part of the team that moves this big ship forward. Those of you who go above and beyond showing up and put all your heart, passion and skill into your work, thank you. You raise the bar and help us all strive to achieve more and be better. Those of you who have been with us for many years, thank you for sticking through the many changes you've experienced, enduring and persevering. Your community is better off because of you. Those of you who are new at MCA, we want this to be a place you're proud to work at and as a team we can work toward being better. Thank you for giving us a chance.

This year has been truly amazing, filled with many accomplishments. We launched new initiatives, like telehealth medical services. We celebrated the grand opening of a new splash pad and playground at the arena. We served more than 700 children with new snowsuits. We recently decided to increase the heating assistance program to \$1500 per household, to offset rising costs of living. We helped release baby snapping turtles so they could survive. We brought back the Green Food Program, providing healthy food at a low cost. We created Broadway-worthy shows and entertainment for our elders at Tsionkwanonhso:te and lakhihsohtha. We survived power outages... a bear..., a wildcat, and a wild election season. We did all of these amazing things and so much more. You are all part of this talented and successful team, whether you're at the forefront or behind the scenes. Be proud of what we've done and what we will continue to do.

As we look forward to the year ahead, I wish each of you a positive and productive year. Let's continue to thrive off the pride we feel serving the Akwesasne community. Let it empower and motivate you, so that you leave work every day a little more fulfilled than you were when you arrived. Let's treat each other well, support one another, work as a team, and be respectful of our differences, so that we all return home to our families, at the end of the day or at the end of our career, with healthy minds and spirits.

Thank you to everyone for attending tonight, and a special thank you to the committee who worked hard to bring us all together. Nia:wenkowa, enjoy the evening, and happy holidays."

— MCA A/Executive Director Shannon Roundpoint

YEAR IN REVIEW

MCA AND CBSA ANNOUNCED PERMANENT DOMESTIC LANE AT CORNWALL POE TO IMPROVE TRAVELLER EXPERIENCE

In January 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) announced that the Domestic Lane at the Cornwall port of entry has been made permanent following a successful two-year pilot project.

Recognizing the particular geography of the Cornwall port of entry, the Pilot Project was launched in late 2020, which designated a lane specifically for domestic travel. Since its launch, travellers have benefitted from a smoother border crossing experience at the CBSA Cornwall port of entry, including shorter wait times and reduced congestion.

The now permanent Domestic Lane is accessible to travellers who have not entered the United States. It includes those who are travelling directly to and from Kawehno:ke (Cornwall Island). Domestic travel include Akwesasne residents and non-residents and signage at the port of entry clearly indicates which lane is for domestic travel only.

The Domestic Lane was developed as part of the Border Collaboration Initiative, a joint effort by the CBSA and MCA to improve the daily lives of all who travel through the Cornwall port of entry. The CBSA is committed to working in collaboration with Indigenous partners in providing integrated border services that both support national security and public safety priorities and facilitate the free flow of admissible people and goods. As part of its commitment to Reconciliation, the CBSA has been working with Indigenous Peoples and communities on border mobility to build a relationship based on respect, partnership, and recognition of Indigenous rights.

QUOTES:

"The Domestic Lane demonstrates what's possible when we listen to one another and work together," said CBSA President Erin O'Gorman. "By reducing wait times and speeding up processing, the Domestic Lane has improved the experience at the Cornwall port of entry for Akwesasne residents who need to cross regularly for school, work, shopping and healthcare. We're committed to ongoing dialogue and collaboration with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne as we continue to build a path to support this community."

"The Domestic Lane is an example of improvements that have been made, and will ideally continue to be made, to improve the border crossing experience for residents of Akwesasne," said former MCA Grand Chief Abram Benedict. "We continue to work with the CBSA to ensure the concerns of our community members are heard. Through our partnership, we will continue to find modern solutions to address the historic complications created by the drawing of the international border."



YEAR IN REVIEW

ELDERS DAY OUT AT LUCKY STRIKE LANES

In January 2024, MCA's Health Promotion and Prevention Program (formerly Wholistic Health & Wellness Program) held an Elder's Bowling outing at Lucky Strike Lanes in Malone, N.Y., part of their Elder Enrichment Programming. The elders were on a roll at Lucky Strike Lanes as they enjoyed some friendly competition, laughs, good food and tons of fun!



Niawenhkó:wa to the MCA Health Prevention and Promotion Program for hosting a wonderful event. Everyone had a ball!

TETEWATA'THERÍ:KE — WE ARE FILLING OUR BASKET

In January 2024, the Tetewata'therí:ke ("We are filling our basket") concluded their five-week programming with the support of the Akwesasne Child and Family Services (ACFS) Traditional Support Unit. The circle included ten female youth between the ages of 13-17 where they met twice a week over the course of a five-week period working together to expand their cultural knowledge, learn teachings, make new friends and create lasting memories.

The concept of Tetewata'therí:ke was based on filling our "life" basket with positive, healthy, productive and culturally sound life-skills. Although some of the things we carry in our basket are positive, there are times that what we carry in our baskets is not pleasant. Sometimes, we have individuals or families that need to "unpack" their baskets first. They need help to remove those traumas, heartaches and unhealthy coping skills.

Each young lady began by crafting a utility basket under the guidance of Basket Maker, Glenn Swamp. Glenn shared with the weavers that "the first splint represents you, then as you weave around yourself, you have your parents, your grandparents, your community...everything begins with you in the center."

Participants also utilized journals for self-reflection, sewed their own ribbon skirts and created vision boards and goal setting. Apryl Thompson led a modern hoop style beaded earring class. Chazy Cook taught the young women different hair braiding styles and Colleen Nolan facilitated a moc-

asin making workshop. This group of young women took the initiative to begin a lifetime journey of learning, adding to their medicine bundles, learning about themselves, their culture, and the importance of their presence in the world.

Niawenhkó:wa to all individuals that helped teach within our circle!



YEAR IN REVIEW

COMMUNITY SKATE WITH FIRST RESPONDERS

In January 2024, the Akwesasne Child and Family Services hosted a First Responders Skating event for families to come and skate with our local First Responders at the A'nowara'ko:wa Arena. It was great to see our First Responders come together outside of duty, lace up their skates, and have fun with community members on the ice.



Niawenhkó:wa goes out to Akwesasne Child & Family Services, Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service, Akwesasne Mohawk Ambulance, Hogansburg Akwesasne Volunteer Fire Department, Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police, and Canada Border Services Agency for making this event possible!



2024 AKWESASNE WINTER CARNIVAL: MCA VS. SRMT BATTLE ROYALE

In February 2024, after a long hiatus, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne once again faced off against the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe for the 2024 MCA vs. SRMT Battle Royale. This epic showdown marked four years since the last Battle Royale was held due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

MCA and SRMT shared laughs and witty banter in this friendly competition that displayed participants physical prowess and mental competence. After exciting and very close competitions in volleyball, cornhole, broomball, puzzles, kickball and tug-of-war, SRMT was deemed the winner with a score of 4-2. Although MCA came up short for the overall win, everyone in attendance enjoyed a fun day of Akwesasne team building and camaraderie.

MCA congratulated the Tribe in showing up with

great enthusiasm and talent. We will be ready for you in 2025 year SRMT!



YEAR IN REVIEW

IAKHIHSOHTHA CELEBRATED THE SEASON WITH IN-HOUSE WINTER CARNIVAL FESTIVITIES

In February 2024, Iakhihsohta Lodge hosted a series of fun activities and events for their in-house Winter Carnival for residents, family and friends. The festivities kicked off with a crowning of the carnival royalty, as Robert Lazore and Marion Cook were announced King and Queen! The elders were treated to a relaxing spa day with the help of Tisha Thompson, Mya Tarbell Buffham of Nia:wen Massage, Katy Tarbell, and Babes Thompson.

The residents enjoyed the various events held, from a friendly match of Ace-to King, Valentine Luncheon,

Sweetheart Bingo, and Staff Cook-Off to name a few. The festivities concluded with an entertaining Sadie Hawkins dance for residents and their families. Roger Mitchell and Joe Herne rocked the Lodge with their throwback hits that had the Totas movin' and groovin'.

It was a great week of celebrations, full of fun, laughter, and good company. Niawenhkó:wa to the Iakhihsohta staff for a great lineup of family-friendly events. It was certainly enjoyed by all in attendance.



YEAR IN REVIEW

AKWESASNE COMMUNITY ATTENDS SPECIAL SCREENING FOR EPISODE 1 OF AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER

In February 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's (MCA) Land-Based Healing Program, in collaboration with Akwesasne Child & Family Services, and Netflix, planned two special screenings for the community Akwesasne for Episode 1 of the series, Avatar: The Last Airbender at the Port Theatre. Akwesasne actress Kiawentiio, who is a main cast member and plays the role of "Katara," also made a special appearance at the screenings.

The first screening was held for Mohawk immersion students from the Akwesasne Freedom School, Kana:takon School, and Tsiakwawennatónhe'ts School. Kiawentiio was a Mohawk immersion school student herself, having attended the Freedom School, and wanted to give back to the Mohawk language programs through the special screening. The students all cheered for Kiawentiio as she came on stage to introduce the episode. Kiawentiio told the students she was just like them, and was raised just like them, immersed in Mohawk language, and she became teary-eyed while looking back at the young fans who listened intently at Akwesasne's newest star.

Over 200 community members were in attendance the following night for the public screening. The evening was hosted by 97.3 CKON Radio's Reen Cook, who welcomed the crowd and led a brief Q&A with Kiawentiio prior to the screening. Kiawentiio's mother, Barbara Tarbell, also came on stage to thank the community for all their support.

Akwesasne was very excited to share in the celebration of Kiawentiio's success and we thank her for inspiring our youth to follow their dreams. Also, thank you to her family for helping to bring the screening to our community.

We'd also like to thank the following programs, services, and individuals who assisted in planning this special occasion for the community of Akwesasne:

- MCA Land-Based Healing Program
- MCA Department of Health
- MCA Communications Unit
- Akwesasne Child & Family Services
- Netflix: Lindsey Scully and Lauren DeRush
- The Port Theatre: Larry Sylvain and family
- Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service (AMPS)
- Cornwall Police Service
- Reen Cook
- Security Team: Andrew Lazore, Cst. Norm King, Cst. RJ Swamp, Cst. Kahetonni Mitchell
- The family of Kiawentiio, Corey and Barbara Tarbell

Congratulations to Kiawentiio and we look forward to watching her on many more projects!



97.3 CKON Radio's Reen Cook did a brief Q&A with Kiawentiio prior to the screening.

YEAR IN REVIEW

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH REORGANIZED FOR BETTER HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

The Department of Health was proud to announce a strategic reorganization, marking a significant step toward elevating healthcare services and aligning with the evolving needs of our community. This initiative underscores our commitment to continuous improvement, cultural competency, and community-centered care, all while cultivating an environment of adaptability, kindness, respect, and mutual support.

Key Highlights of the Reorganization

1. New Leadership:

We proudly introduce key leaders who bring not only many years of expertise, but also a deep commitment to empowering each other. Their leadership will play a pivotal role in steering the department towards our goals while embracing change. We welcome the following to their new Associate Director role:

- Karole Mitchell - Community Health Services
- Wennietanoron Oakes - Mental Health & Wellness Services
- Brigitte Pulice - Clinical Care Services
- Chelsea Swamp - Continuing Care Service

2. Sector Realignment:

Responding to the dynamic healthcare landscape, the department has strategically realigned its sectors to provide more client-focused and targeted services. The new structure includes:

- Health Administration (Sector 1): Strategic leadership focusing on administrative aspects of health services.
- Community Health Service (Sector 2): Dedicated to community-based healthcare programs and services.
- Mental Health & Wellness Services (Sector 3): Prioritizing mental health, addiction services, land-based healing, traditional medicine and wholistic well-being.

- Clinical Care Services (Sector 4): Overseeing medical clinics, chronic disease management, and patient navigation with a commitment to cultural competency.
- Continuing Care (Sector 5): Specialized services for the elderly and long-term care.

3. Program Enhancement:

Each sector will now have dedicated leadership who will be overseeing and enhancing specific programs critical to our community's health and well-being. This includes a heightened focus on kindness, respect, support, and ensuring that we uplift one another throughout our healthcare journey.

4. Improved Collaboration:

The reorganization aims to encourage greater collaboration among different sectors, resulting in a more integrated approach to healthcare service delivery. Community focus and mutual support will be the cornerstone of our collaborative efforts.

What This Means for the Community:

Enhanced Services: The reorganization will streamline operations, resulting in more efficient and effective healthcare services.

New Leadership: The community is invited to join us in welcoming our new leaders, whose wealth of experience will contribute to our continued success, integrating compassion and respect into our services.

Focused Approach: The realignment ensures a more focused and targeted approach to addressing the diverse healthcare needs of our community.

The Department of Health is committed to ensuring a seamless transition during this period of change. For more information, contact Health Communications Officer Ryan King at ryan.king@akwesasne.ca.



KAROLE MITCHELL
Associate Director, Community Health Services



WENNIETANORON OAKES
Associate Director, Mental Health & Wellness



BRIGITTE PULICE
Associate Director, Clinical Care Services

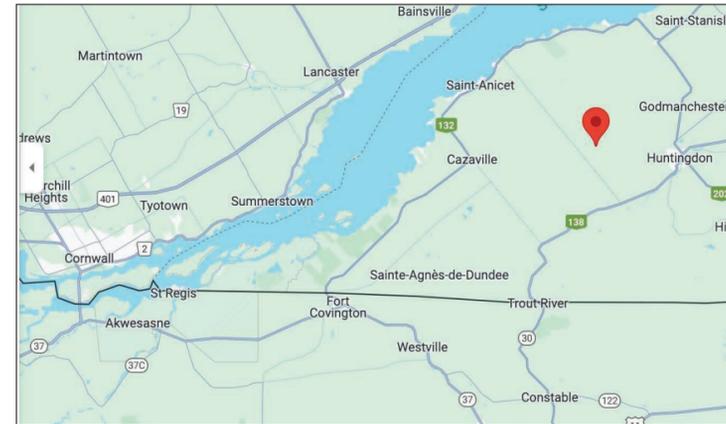


CHELSEA SWAMP
Associate Director, Continuing Care Services

YEAR IN REVIEW

3.7 MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE FELT IN AKWESASNE

In February 2024, a 3.7 magnitude earthquake occurred during the early morning. The epicentre was near Huntingdon, Quebec, just east of Akwesasne.



MCA CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



3RD ANNUAL AKWESASNE SEED EXCHANGE

In March 2024, the 3rd annual Akwesasne Seed Exchange was held at the Akwesasne Cultural Center Library.

It was a great turnout of community members who enjoyed a morning of presentations on topics like seed sovereignty, composting processes and more. Following the presentations, the MCA Environment Program awarded \$5,000 to various youth as part of Akwesasne Native Biodiversity For The Future; these youth submitted proposals centered on climate change and will be using these funds to complete their projects within the community!

The day ended with more information sharing and a seed exchange. Nia:wen to the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Environment Division, MCA Environment Program, and all the attendees for making this event possible!



YEAR IN REVIEW

AFWP HOSTED HANDS-ON TRAINING FOR FRONTLINE WORKERS

In March 2024, the Akwesasne Family Wellness Program held a hands-on training for frontline workers at the Best Western Conference in Cornwall.

The goal of this training was to create accessible, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed services in our communities.

The three-day conference covered topics such as mental health, substance abuse, survivor-centered healing, supporting youth and parents, and more.

Niawenhkó:wa to everyone who attended and those who assisted in making this conference possible!



AFWP Outreach Supervisor Chantal Vachon and Master of Ceremonies Raienkonnis Edwards.



Singer/Songwriter Bear Fox made an appearance to sing her beautiful melodies.



Akwesasne Family Wellness Program staff members in attendance at the training for frontline workers.

LOCAL YOUTH ENJOYED A DAY AT LE TAZ SKATEPARK

In March 2024, 28 youth attended a trip to Le TAZ Skatepark in Montreal, sponsored by Akwesasne Skatepark and Akwesasne Child & Family Services. Annie Guglia, a Pro and Olympic Skateboarder from Montreal, stopped in offering valuable tips, photo opportunities and even sign autographs. Our local skaters, Tihanna Benedict and Casey McDonald added to the fun by providing free lessons for all participants. Nia:wen to everyone who made this trip possible!



YEAR IN REVIEW

EASTERFEST FAMILY FUN

In March 2024, it was an egg-cellent evening at the St. Regis Recreation Center for Easterfest! Families participated in the various easter-themed activities from an egg hunt to outdoor obstacle course, find the wooden bunny, and getting creative with Easter egg painting and picture frame crafts.

often revolve around sweets, the event organizers wanted to take a healthier approach, offering nutritious snacks, and incorporating plenty of physical activities for everyone to enjoy.

The Easter Bunny made a special visit, which added to the excitement for the children. Easter holidays

Niawenhkó:wa to the MCA and SRMT Health Promotion and Prevention Programs for their invaluable support in making this wonderful event possible!



PATRICK DAVID WAS NAMED WATER OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

In April 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne congratulated Patrick David for being named "Operator of the Year" by the Aboriginal Water & Wastewater Association of Ontario (AWWAO).

Congratulations Mr. David on receiving the Operator of the Year award. Your dedication and hard work are greatly appreciated, and we are thankful for the vital role you play. Keep up the amazing work!

Mr. David is the Operator in Charge (OIC) of the St. Regis Water Treatment Plan, part of MCA's Water/Wastewater Program. As an OIC, he is tasked with maintaining the water plan's water-making ability and flow to the community on a daily basis.

In 2024, Mr. David ensured that safe potable water was delivered to homes throughout the period of unknown water leakage that was eventually located and repaired.

MCA's management and Council nominated Mr. David for the AWWAO's Paul Strohack Operator of the Year Award, and he received the honor at the annual Aboriginal Water and Wastewater Association of Ontario conference held in Sault Saint Marie.



YEAR IN REVIEW

MCA'S DEPT. OF HEALTH HOSTED VIBRANT HEALTH FAIR FOR ALL

In May 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Department of Health, in collaboration with Cornwall Community Hospital and Arrowhead Pharmacy, hosted an informative Health Fair at the Kawehno:ke Recreation Center.

It was an enriching day, offering community members the opportunity to gain essential information about the programs and services provided by the Department of Health and the external organizations present. Various health screenings, including blood pressure checks, cancer screenings, glucose tests, and more, were conducted, empowering individuals with essential health information.

Attendees seized the opportunity to engage in

discussions about common health concerns and issues, while also receiving education on preventative practices and available support services.

Community members were pleased to learn about the return of the Green Food Bags from MCA's Community Health Services: Health Promotion and Prevention Program. Lucky winners were selected to receive Green Food Bags filled with a variety of delicious vegetables. Additionally, attendees had the chance to win some great door prizes by visiting each booth and collecting stamps on their "passport."

Niawenhkó:wa to all those who contributed to the success of the Health Fair, as well as to the community for attending!



YEAR IN REVIEW

NON-INSURED HEALTH BENEFITS UNVEILS NEW MEDICAL TRANSPORT VAN

In May 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Non-Insured Health Benefits Program (NIHB) notified the community of their recent purchase of an updated medical transportation van.

The new medical transport van accommodates up to four wheelchairs and also has a new hydraulic lift for easier wheelchair accessibility. The new van also has upgrades for a smoother and quieter ride for the drivers and clients.

The Non-Insured Health Benefits Program is pleased to announce the new van is on the road and used regularly for their clients!



AMA EMT STAFF EARNED LIFE SAVE AWARD

In May 2024, the Akwesasne Mohawk Ambulance (AMA) proudly recognized Paramedic Ryan Jacobs, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Serena Sunday, and Critical Care EMT Melanie Jacobs for their exceptional work. Their heroic efforts and lifesaving intervention earned them the AMA Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Life Save Award.

On October 28, 2023, Ryan Jacobs and Serena Sunday responded to a cardiac arrest call where CPR was already in progress. They took immediate action, soon joined by Critical Care Technician Melanie Jacobs. Through their combined expertise and dedication, they successfully revived the patient, who was then safely transported to the hospital. After several days of recovery, the patient was discharged home.

This award recognizes a successful Return of Spontaneous Circulation (ROSC), sustained ROSC, safe hospital transport, transfer of care, and the patient's continuation of life after discharge. CPR saves like this are rare, highlighting the critical impact and im-

portance of the lifesaving skills practiced by EMS providers.

This success story is a testament to the team's hard work, resilience, and unwavering dedication to preserving life. Join us in celebrating their remarkable achievement and their commitment to our community's health and safety.



YEAR IN REVIEW

AKWESASNE MOHAWK POLICE SERVICE CELEBRATED POLICE WEEK

In May 2024, the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service marked Police Week (May 11-17, 2024), under the theme "Committed to Serve Together". This theme highlights the vital partnerships within and beyond law enforcement that are fundamental to effective crime prevention and public safety.

The Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service and community partners hosted a week-long of engaging events. From the popular Kids for Fishing event, offering 30 youth and 10 special needs youth a memorable day of angling alongside seasoned professionals, to extending a helping hand during Mother's Day celebrations at Iakhihsotha Lodge and lunch at Tsiionkwanonhso:te Long-Term Care facility. The Tota's were delighted to receive a heartfelt gift in honour of Mother's Day, courtesy of

the ACFS Community Support Program.

Additional events included a collaboration with SRMT A/CDP Program and SRMTPD providing educational presentation on the subtleties of Hidden Mischief to seniors and elders, outdoor games and activities with Kana:takon School students, a challenging game of kickball between AMPS officers and Tsi Snaihne School students and staff, a social at AMS and the AMPS SAVE Unit shared vital tips on ATV safety at the Spring into Safety event in Tsi Snaihne.

Niawenhkó:wa to the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service for developing a great week of engaging programming and ACFS Community Support Program for your wonderful contributions.



YEAR IN REVIEW

AMBE HOSTED CULTURAL CELEBRATION

In May 2024, the A'nowara'ko:wa Arena came alive as the Ahkwesahsne Mohawk Board of Education (AMBE) hosted its Cultural Celebrations. Students from early years to eighth grade stepped beyond the classroom to honor Mohawk traditions through song and dance during the two-day event.

The days were filled with joy and unity, as the Ratirennenhawi Men's singers set the tone with

their beautiful melodies. A standout moment was the stunning hoop dance performance by Feryn King and her young troupe from Kana:takon School, captivating everyone with their grace and skill.

This celebration was a true testament to the strength of our community spirit and the richness of our culture. Niawenhkó:wa to the singers, drummers, dancers, organizers, and families who made it all possible!



IAKHIHSONHTHA LODGE HOSTED FIRST GOLF TOURNAMENT FUNDRAISER

In May 2024, Iakhihsotha Lodge swung into action, teeing up for their inaugural golf tournament fundraiser! It was a beautiful day at Cedar View Golf Course with a great turnout of community members all geared up to putt their best foot forward.

Thank you to everyone who came out for a good time in support of our elders and niawenhkó:wa to those who sponsored a hole or donated to the Mohawk Auction. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.



YEAR IN REVIEW

MAKING A SPLASH IN WATER ADVOCACY

In May 2024, Tekaherha Logan Lazore, Environment Field Technician for the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Environment Program, embarked on an exciting, albeit lengthy journey to Bali, Indonesia. For Logan, this was not merely a leisurely trip; it was an eye opening and inspiring experience, which delved into her identify as to who she is as an Onkwehonwe, as well as her life-long mission to protect our sacred waters.

As a Youth Delegate representing Akwesasne and Canada, Logan attended the 6th General Assembly World Youth Summit and the 10th World Water Forum. These platforms weren't merely spaces to talk; they were arenas for diverse voices to come together to envision a healthier and happier future for our waters. Despite limited Indigenous representation, Logan stood proud as an Akwesasronon. Attendees representing small and large communities gathered to share not only their challenges, but also to propose solutions. Regardless of where the individuals came from, everyone present had a common purpose: to enhance the well-being of our waters.

Logan's days in Bali were filled with a whirlwind of activities, each leaving a lasting impression. While some moments were inspiring and once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, such as releasing young and adult turtles back into the sea, others were less glamorous. Logan noted how heartbroken she was when she participated in a mangrove cleanup, where every inch of the site was covered in garbage. Regardless if the moments were positive or negative, every encounter reinforced her commitment to her cause.

Throughout the summit and forum, Logan delivered numerous presentations and also engaged in various panel discussions. She spoke of the erosion on Yellow Island, of chemical pollution in the St. Lawrence, and the delicate balance between tradition and modernity. She began each session with an introduction

in Kanienkeha and the Ohen:ten Kariwatehkwen. Logan didn't just articulate her thoughts and ideas, she sang them too. The crowd was treated to her beautiful and melodic rendition of the water song in Kanienkeha. Along with work requirements, Logan also found moments of serenity. As a self-described "fish girl", she found snorkelling mesmerizing. It served as a reminder of the interconnectedness of all life forms, emphasizing that humans are not the center of the universe. This is a message that she also frequently conveyed in her speeches.

Throughout the entire journey, Logan remained connected to Akwesasne. She wrapped herself in her mother's beautiful ribbon skirts, held her father's basket, grasped her brother's rattle, and was decorated by her sister's earrings – a reminder of who she is and the community she represents. And through it all, she emphasized one simple truth: water is sacred, water is beautiful, water is life.



YEAR IN REVIEW

GREEN FOOD BAG INITIATIVE REVITALIZED BY HEALTH PROMOTION & PREVENTION PROGRAM

In June 2024, the MCA Department of Health's (DOH) Health Promotion & Prevention, a program under the Community Health Services Sector, revitalized the Green Food Bag initiative, with staff distributing fruits and vegetables at the Kanonhkwa'tsheri:io Health Facility.

The Green Food Bag initiative offers community members fresh produce for a low cost on a monthly basis. The bags will contain various fruits and vegetables, and at least two seasonal items (depending on availability). Each bag will cost \$20, with bags limited to two (2) per person. Supplies/orders are limited.

Any community members interested in participating in the Green Food Bag initiative can stop in at Community Health Services and pay for their bags via cash, or send an e-transfer to etransfer@akwesasne.ca. When submitting an e-transfer payment for your Green Food Bag order, please ensure to note "Green Food Bag," the month being paid, name and phone number in the message portion of the e-transfer payment. Failure to do so can result in your order and payment not being adequately processed.

If you have any questions regarding the Green Food Bag, please contact the Health Promotion & Prevention Program at 613-575-2341 ext. 3220. Visit www.akwesasne.ca/mca-green-food-bag-program to view the 2025 schedule or follow us on Facebook!



AMA'S KHARLENE GARROW EARNED SPOT ON HAUDENOSAUNEE NATIONALS WOMEN'S BOX LACROSSE TEAM



In June 2024, Akwesasne Mohawk Ambulance employee Kharlene "Bineh" Garrow has made history by being selected to the first ever Haudenosaunee Nationals Women's Box Lacrosse Team!

This is a huge step for women's lacrosse interna-

tionally, and we're honored to have one of our own shining so brightly on the national stage.

Kharlene's dedication, hard work, and passion for the sport have earned her this incredible recognition. We can't wait to see what the future holds for her!

Congratulations to the Haudenosaunee Nationals Women's Box Lacrosse Team on their historic achievement of bringing home the Bronze at the World Box Lacrosse Championships in Utica, NY.

YEAR IN REVIEW

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION DINNER

In July 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne hosted a community celebration to honor Grand Chief Abram Benedict's recent election as the Ontario Regional Chief. This momentous occasion marks a significant milestone as Chief Benedict becomes the first Haudenosaunee individual to ever be appointed to this prestigious position. Chief Benedict's time with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne spans 18 years, including nine years as Grand Chief and an additional nine years as a Kawehno:ke District chief. The event drew an enthusiastic crowd, with attendees sharing funny stories and cherished memories.

The event's guest speakers included former Six Nations Grand Chief and close friend to Chief Benedict, Ava Hill, Chief Yvette Matansinine of the Animibiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek, who nominated Benedict for the role of Regional Chief, and Loretta Landmesser, Director of Canada Border Service Agency's Indigenous Affairs Secretariat. Their presence and speeches added a special touch to the evening.

The celebration featured a traditional meal, heartfelt speeches, and meaningful gifts. Grand Chief Benedict was presented with a symbolic blanket from the current council. The blanket's colors transitioned from purple and white, representing the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, to red, symbolizing the Chiefs of Ontario and his new role. Throughout the evening, council members and guests shared inspiring words, funny stories and reflected on his contributions and leadership.

A notable highlight was the surprise celebration for the late Kana:takon District Chief Tim "Dooley" Thompson, who played a key role in organizing the event. Council honored him with a quilt and kind words in recognition of his retirement. Thompson, who previously served as MCA Grand Chief and held numerous terms as Kana:takon District chief, was visibly moved by the heartfelt tributes. Chief Thompson, along with his signature hat, will be fondly missed by the Council.

The evening concluded with warm congratulations to both Chief Benedict and Chief Thompson. As Grand Chief Benedict steps into his new role as Regional Chief and Chief Thompson begins his well-deserved retirement, please join us in congratulating them and wishing them the best in their future endeavors. Congratulations to both leaders and *nia:wen* to their service in the community.



LAND-BASED HEALING PROGRAM PROVIDED CRITICAL ICE RESCUE GEAR TO HAVFD



In July 2024, the MCA Department of Health's Land-Based Healing Program (LBH) presented three brand-new ice rescue suits to the Hogansburg Akwesasne Volunteer Fire Department at Station #2 on Kawehno:ke.

Thanks to the Land-Based Healing Program's secured funding, the fire department now proudly owns these state-of-the-art suits, which are fully waterproof with watertight hoods, integrated gloves, and attached boots. This essential gear will help to enhance the HAVFD's rescue missions during our cold winter months.

A big shoutout to Deco Stop Outdoor Centre in Lancaster, ON for providing these lifesaving Mustang Survival suits!

YEAR IN REVIEW

MAKING A SPLASH AT THE A'NOWARA'KO:WA ARENA

In July 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne was thrilled to unveil the new playground and splash pad at the A'nowara'ko:wa Arena!

The smiles were shining bright as AMBE's Kawehno:ke Early Years. Summer Camp dropped by for some epic playtime and splash-tastic fun.

The project was a combined effort of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Department of Economic Development and Department of Community & Social Services. Our objective was to enhance the arena grounds for increased safety, outdoor

activity, and community wellness.

The playground and splash pad provide varied play options, promoting physical activity and interaction amongst children in a safe environment. The new amenities help the arena grounds serve as a communal space where Akwesasronon can socialize, engage in physical activity, and spend quality time together.

Overall, these additions contribute to making the A'nowara'ko:wa Arena a more vibrant, healthy, and attractive community hub!

A big *nia:wen* goes out to everyone who joined us for this special celebration and helped make it a day to remember!



GAME ON: FOOTBALL FUN AT THE A'NOWARA'KO:WA ARENA

In August 2024, the Ottawa Redblacks and the University of Ottawa Gee-Gees came together to host an exciting football camp for local youth from Akwesasne and surrounding areas. The event, spearheaded by Ben Maracle — a Tyendinaga resident and quarterback for the Gee-Gees — took place at the A'nowara'ko:wa Arena, aiming to promote football within Indigenous communities.

2024 marked the second edition of the camp, which is a collaborative initiative involving the Ottawa Redblacks, Gee-Gees Football, and various departments of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, including Health, Community & Social Services, and Economic Development.

The camp welcomed around 40 young participants from Akwesasne and the surrounding region, who engaged in skill-building drills, a Q&A session with players, and received a football and a Redblacks t-shirt. The event concluded with players signing autographs and taking photos with the attendees.

On behalf of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the Redblacks and the Gee-Gees for their continued support and for making this camp a memorable experience. Get ready to huddle up for next year!



YEAR IN REVIEW

MCA & AKWESASNE DENTAL CLINIC ANNOUNCED PASSING OF BELOVED DENTIST, DR. DAN



In August 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) and the Akwesasne Dental Clinic were saddened to announce the sudden passing of Dr. Dan Hovsepian, a beloved dentist who served the Akwesasne community for over 17 years. Dr. Dan passed away unexpectedly on July 27, 2024.

with children and always made them feel comfortable and relaxed during their visits. He was also an avid learner who constantly sought to improve his skills and knowledge of dentistry.

Dr. Dan showed a passion for his work in Akwesasne. He often participated in community events and cultural activities, and he respected and appreciated the Mohawk traditions and values. He was a well-known philanthropist, supporting and sponsoring countless good causes in Akwesasne. He forged lasting friendships with many of his colleagues and clients, and he treated everyone with kindness and respect.

We shared in the community's shock and grief over the loss of a great person and passionate dentist. He will be greatly missed.

Dr. Dan joined the Akwesasne Dental Clinic in 2007 and quickly became a cherished member of the community. He was known for his gentle and compassionate approach to dental care, his friendly and humorous personality, and his genuine interest in the well-being of his clients. He had a special rapport

COLOR RUN & BUBBLE FUN AT GENERATIONS PARK

In August 2024, the Akwesasne Coalition for Community Empowerment held their annual Color/Bubble Run was a burst of rainbow brilliance!

Generations Park turned into a kaleidoscope of fun on with a variety of activities to enjoy, featuring a dunk tank, foam party, and inflatable bumper balls for all to enjoy.

Nia:wen to the amazing community members, staff, and volunteers from both sides of Akwesasne's territory who helped make this event possible! Your dedication paints a brighter, more colorful community for us all.



YEAR IN REVIEW

SNYE RECREATION UNVEILS NEWLY UPGRADED GROUNDS WITH GRAND CELEBRATION

In August 2024, the Tsi Snaihne Recreation Center proudly unveiled its newly upgraded grounds! Following a series of enhancements during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Recreation Committee is excited to introduce the community to these fantastic new features: a lacrosse box, splash pad, ball field, playground, and an extended walking trail.

houses, lacrosse games, walking trail tours, and lots of fun in the splash pad. Attendees also had a chance to win door prizes and grab some Snye Recreation merch!

A huge thank you to everyone who attended and helped celebrate the revamped recreation area. We invite all community members to come and enjoy these fantastic new amenities. Please remember to respect the grounds and help keep our recreation beautiful for everyone.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was a hit, with community members enjoying a delicious meal provided by the Recreation and Jonathan Lazore of Cheyy's Place. Highlights of the day included bounce



Photo credit: Travis Bonneville



YEAR IN REVIEW

MCA HOSTED SEPTEMBER OPEN HOUSES

In September 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne hosted a vibrant series of Open Houses across all three districts, bringing together community members and MCA staff for a meaningful and engaging series of events.

These events provided an invaluable opportunity for attendees to connect with dedicated staff, learn more about the wide range of services offered by MCA, and strengthen the ties that bind our community. Highlights of the Open Houses

included interactive displays, informative booths, and, of course, the chance to win some fantastic prizes.

Niawenhkó:wa to everyone who joined us! It was heartwarming to see so many familiar faces and to celebrate the spirit of community together. Events like these remind us of the importance of collaboration and connection as we work to support and uplift Akwesasne.



IOHAHI:IO ACHIEVEMENTS HONOURED IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

In October 2024, Iohahi:io Akwesasne Education and Training Institute proudly announced the approval of their organizational review by the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council (IAESC), making them the fifth Indigenous institute in Ontario to be able to develop and offer its own diploma, certificate, and degree programs. Congratulations to everyone involved in this incredible milestone!

We were honoured to welcome MPP Nolan Quinn for his first visit to an Indigenous institute as the Minister of Colleges and Universities. He joined Director of Education Donna Lahache, Associate Director of Post-Secondary & Continuing Education Norma Sunday and Tsi Snaihne District Chief Sarah Lee Sunday-Diabo in celebrating this momentous occasion with warm remarks. Norma also provided a tour of the facilities, showcasing the classrooms, the Akwesasne FabLab, and the brand-new trades building.

Congratulations to the staff of Iohahi:io and the Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education for their dedication and ongoing achievements. Your commitment to education strengthens not only our minds but our entire community!



YEAR IN REVIEW

MCA WELCOMED NEW 2024-2027 COUNCIL OATHS OF OFFICE ADMINISTERED

In October 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne officially sworn-in the newly elected Council for the 2024-2027 term at the Tsi Snaihne Recreation with Justice Alexandra David administering the oaths of office.

MCA is governed by a community-elected 13-Chief Council consisting of one Grand Chief and 12 District Chiefs (four per district). All 13 seats are elected to 3-year terms. The MCA General By-Election was held on September 14, 2024 following successful Appeals to the original June 29, 2024 General Election.

The new Council was welcomed into office by outgoing Acting Grand Chief Cindy Francis-Mitchell and MCA Executive Director Mose Herne, as well as many well-wishing community members.

"This moment is not just a transition of leadership; it is a reaffirmation of our commitment to the values that define us as a community – respect, resilience and renewal," said Executive Director Herne. "To our newly elected Council members, you stand before us as a reflection of our collective hopes and aspirations. Your election is not just a personal achievement; it is an expression of trust and confidence from the people of Akwesasne to advance their interests with commitment, integrity, and vision."

The 2024-2027 Council is a mix of new and returning District Chiefs, as well as the first new Grand Chief in nine years. Grand Chief Leonard Lazore provided words of vision to the community in his first speech.

"Today marks the start of a new day, a new way. Akwesasne has achieved so much, and it's time to take that to the next level," Grand Chief Lazore said. "To the new Council, I commend you all for stepping up. The challenges will be great, and the challenges will be many. To the community, I want to thank you for your faith. Not only in me, but in this whole team. I think we are going to do great things together."



Scan QR code to view the full swearing-in video or visit the MCA YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/MohawkCouncilofAkwesasne

The 2024-2027 Council:

- Grand Chief Leonard Lazore
- Kawehno:ke District Chief Vanessa Adams
- Kawehno:ke District Chief Lisa Francis-Benedict
- Kawehno:ke District Chief Lacey Pierce
- Kawehno:ke District Chief Vincent Thompson
- Kana:takon District Chief Fallon David
- Kana:takon District Chief Cindy Francis-Mitchell
- Kana:takon District Chief Theresa Jacobs
- Kana:takon District Chief Teresa Oakes
- Tsi Snaihne District Chief Scott Peters
- Tsi Snaihne District Chief Tesha Rourke
- Tsi Snaihne District Chief Sarah Lee Sunday-Diabo
- Tsi Snaihne District Chief JoAnn Swamp



Pictured back row L-R: Tsi Snaihne District Chief Scott Peters, Grand Chief Leonard Lazore, Kawehno:ke District Chief Vince Thompson.

Center row L-R: Kana:takon District Chief Teresa Oakes, Kana:takon District Chief Theresa Jacobs, Kawehno:ke District Chief Lacey Pierce, Kawehno:ke District Chief Lisa Francis-Benedict, Tsi Snaihne District Chief Tesha Rourke.

Front row L-R: Kawehno:ke District Chief Vanessa Adams, Tsi Snaihne District Chief Sarah Lee Sunday-Diabo, Tsi Snaihne District Chief JoAnn Swamp, Kana:takon District Chief Fallon David, Kana:takon District Chief Cindy Francis-Mitchell.

YEAR IN REVIEW

MCA RECOGNIZED EMPLOYEES FOR YEARS OF SERVICE & RETIREMENT

In October 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne recognized its dedicated employees at the Long Service Recognition & Retirement Awards ceremony. It was the first time the event was held in person since prior to the pandemic.

MCA's leadership team presented gifts and certificates to employees who have dedicated 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years to serving the community, and also to retirees from the past four years.

The community could not be served without the hard work and commitment of our team, and we are proud to celebrate these accomplishments.

Niawenhkó:wa and congratulations to all who have worked over the last several years to bring programs and services to the Akwesasne community.

The following employees were honoured for their work MCA years of service:

10 years:

- Kylee Tarbell
- Leah Mitchell
- Glyniss Bomberry
- Cheyenne Lazore
- Curtis Lazore

15 years:

- Sheri Lazore
- Jon Square
- Theresa Jacobs
- Lee Ann O'Brien
- Kimberly Bush-Jock
- Norman Peters
- Amber Lazore
- Lucy Jacobs
- Charlotte Swamp
- Joyce King
- Venus Gambill

20 years:

- Terry King
- Josephine Herne
- Tessa Jocko
- Venus Gambill

25 years:

- Gary Cole
- Wanda Thompson
- Nola Benedict
- Lori Laffin
- Allison Mae Lazore Green
- Tina Mitchell
- Rosemary Square

30 years:

- Rena Smoke
- Allyson Lamesse
- Deborah Porter
- Connie Hall
- Robin Lazore
- Mark Terrance

35 years:

- Cindy Lazore
- Carol Lafrance

The following former employees were honoured for their retirement. (Due to COVID-19, their recognition was delayed until this ceremony.)

- Lisa Francis-Benedict
- Rosemary Square
- Joyce King

- Lorna Francis
- Sheila Lafrance



YEAR IN REVIEW

HEAL LODGE, MOHAWK COUNCIL OF AKWESASNE, SAINT REGIS MOHAWK TRIBE, AND MOHAWK NATION COUNCIL OF CHIEFS HONOURED PAST AND PRESENT VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

In October 2024, the Haudenosaunee Everlasting Academy of Learning (HEAL) Lodge, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA), the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT), and the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs (MNCC) united to honour past and present volunteer firefighters. The event was hosted at the Tsi Snaihne Recreation Center, with a prepared meal courtesy of Mary Terrance, Arvella Thomas, and Lynne Thompson. The evening's festivities were emceed by Aronia Collective founder, and PhD candidate, Abraham Francis.

SRMT's Tribal Council and MCA's Council of Chiefs were in attendance and volunteered to serve meals to the honourees and their families and guests.

Della Adams of the HEAL Lodge, welcomed all the guests to an evening of relaxation and entertainment. She expressed to the audience the goal of the evening was to honour our firefighters for all their tireless years of dedication to the community of Akwesasne.

"You are the group that is running into the building when everyone else is running out," said Adams. "You risk your lives during every emergency, every fire, every possible worst case scenario. There are no words to express our sincere gratitude for your sacrifices. We would like to have one evening where we celebrate you all for your tireless and unwavering dedication to our community."

The event featured many guest speakers who came to give words of appreciation and encouragement to the volunteer firefighters who were in attendance, including revered elder and speaker, Tom Porter; SRMT's Director of Health, Mike

Cook; and MCA's Mental Health & Wellness Sector Acting Associate Director, Wennietanoron Oakes. Celebrated Indigenous comedian, Don Burnstick, was also in attendance, providing a hilarious comedy set for the evening's entertainment.

Firefighters, both past and present, were gifted an eagle feather wrapped in a hand-sewn protective case for them to take home. The HEAL team and family members spent many hours handcrafting the feather holders.

Local beader, Stacey Rourke, created a mind-blowing, hand-beaded replica of the HAVFD logo, which will go on display at one of the three firefighter stations in Akwesasne.

On behalf of the HEAL Lodge, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, and the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs, we extend our sincerest gratitude to our volunteer firefighters.



YEAR IN REVIEW

VETERANS HONORED AT AMERICAN LEGION POST #1479

In November 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne proudly presented a \$35,000 cheque to the American Legion Post #1479. This presentation took place on Veterans Day in the United States, and Remembrance Day in Canada. The donation will support the paving of the American Legion parking lot, ensuring the facility remains accessible and welcoming to the community. On this special day, alongside veterans, their families, and friends, the Legion also hosted a meal for attendees.

Grand Chief Leonard Lazore remarked how on this day it was befitting to present the Legion with the cheque as "the sacrifices of our veterans allow us to stand here together in peace and unity, and for that,

we owe them a profound debt of gratitude."

Run entirely by dedicated volunteers, Post #1479 is more than just a building—it's a gathering space where community events, from baby showers and softball tournaments, to fundraisers and celebrations, bring us together. This donation reflects our commitment to honoring the legacy of our veterans and the role the American Legion Post #1479 plays in our community.

We were proud to be part of the celebration and hope that this donation helps support their efforts in paving the parking lot.



MCA ANNOUNCES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RESIGNATION & APPOINTMENT

In November 2024, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne notified the community of the resignation of Executive Director Mose Herne, which became effective November 29, 2024. We would like to thank Mr. Herne for the time committed to the MCA organization and wish him well in his future endeavors.

The MCA Executive Committee lead the recruitment and hiring process for a new Executive Director. In

the interim, Council appointed Associate Director Shannon Roundpoint to a 6-month minimum term as Executive Director, effective December 2, 2024.

Services and programs to the community remain a priority and we are confident that the MCA team will continue to provide exemplary service throughout this transition.

YEAR IN REVIEW

MCA HOSTED 2024 COMMUNITY HOLIDAY DINNERS

In December 2024, the holiday spirit is alive and well in Akwesasne! The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne brought the community together for three Community Holiday Dinners, held across the three districts. Families and friends gathered at the local recreation centers to share meals, laughter, and festive cheer.

Each evening featured a delicious meal catered by TNT Deli (Kana:takon), TLC Catering (LaToya Rourke) (Kawehno:ke), and Mona's Catering (Tsi Snaihne), filling every plate with holiday favorites and every heart with warmth. Guests of all ages enjoyed the cozy atmosphere, friendly faces, and the chance to take photos with the one and only Santa Claus!

Niawenhkó:wa to everyone who organized the dinners and to all the attendees who joined us. It was a beautiful way to celebrate the season, reconnect as a community, and create cherished memories. We can't wait to gather again in 2025!





IN MEMORY OF

TIMOTHY "DOOLEY" THOMPSON

MARCH 1, 1959 - DECEMBER 16, 2024









WE ARE HIRING

Join our Team!

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www.akwesasne.ca/employment



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www.akwesasne.ca/textalerts

