



## COMMUNITY NOTICE

For Immediate Release:

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### **COURT DECISION MARKS IMPORTANT VICTORY FOR JAY TREATY STUDENTS**

On September 1, 2026, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York struck down a U.S. Department of Education policy requiring eligible American Indians born in Canada to obtain additional immigration documentation, such as a Green Card, to access federal student financial aid. The decision marks an important outcome for Akwesasró:non and carries broader significance for the treatment of American Indians born in Canada under United States federal law.

Mohawk student plaintiffs Rourke-Rodriguez et al., known as the “Jay Treaty students,” filed the legal challenge after the U.S. Department of Education changed its longstanding process for determining eligibility for federal student aid. The students were notified of the Court's decision on September 2, 2026.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT), through its Legal Department and team, played a central role in bringing the challenge forward and advocating on behalf of the students throughout the case.

At its core, the case raised concerns about imposing immigration requirements on Akwesasró:non born in Canada despite protections recognized under United States federal law. For our community, these issues carry particular importance as Akwesasne and our people existed long before the international border divided our territory.

Recognizing the broader implications for Akwesasró:non, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) filed an amicus curiae brief in support of the student plaintiffs. Through the work of the Akwesasne Rights and Research Office (ARRO) and MCA's legal team, the brief provided the Court with the historical and legal context surrounding the cross-border rights of Akwesasró:non born in Canada.

The outcome of this case extends beyond the individual student plaintiffs and will benefit other Jay Treaty students who may have otherwise faced the same barrier to accessing federal student financial aid.

“We commend the students who had the courage to challenge a barrier to their education, as well as the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and its legal team for bringing this matter forward. We also recognize the work of our Akwesasne Rights and Research Office and all those who contributed to this effort. This decision is an important victory for the students and carries broader significance for Akwesasró:non,” said Grand Chief Leonard Lazore.

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne congratulates the student plaintiffs and recognizes the collective efforts that contributed to this important decision.