



MCA & SRMT Joint Release

For Immediate Release:

Seskehkó:wa/September 3, 2026

MCA and SRMT Oppose Renaming of Lake Ontario

AKWESASNE — (Seskehkó:wa/September 3, 2026) The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) and Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT) stand together in opposition to the recent Executive Order issued by the current United States administration seeking to rename Lake Ontario as “Lake America.”

The name Ontario is widely understood to be derived from an Iroquoian word, often transcribed as ontarí:io, or similar spellings in historical records. The word has been interpreted as meaning “great lake”, “beautiful lake”, or “sparkling water”.

More importantly, the name predates the creation of Canada and United States. European explorers adopted an existing indigenous name for the lake and the name was later applied to the province when Ontario was established in 1867.

For the Kanien’kehá:ka, however, the lake is known as Kaniatari:io, often translated as “Beautiful/nice lake.” This name reflects our own language, worldview, and enduring relationship with the lake.

These names are not simply words on a map to our people. They carry our languages, histories and responsibilities to the lands and waters since time immemorial.

For Akwesasronon, the international boundary is a present-day reality that came long after our ancestors’ presence here. Akwesasne territory extends across both Canada and the United States, and is a stark reminder that our people were here long before either country was established. Replacing a name derived from one of the original languages of these lands with one intended to assert a modern national identity disregards that Indigenous history.

What has carried meaning for generations should not be rewritten to satisfy the politics of a moment.

Governments and administrations will change. Our language, our history and our relationship with these lands and waters will remain.

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe will continue to recognize the history and Indigenous origins of Lake Ontario and uphold the Kanien’kehá relationship with Kaniatari:io.

No act of government can erase that relationship.

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To stay up-to-date on the Tribe and MCA please visit:

www.srmt-nsn.gov or www.akwesasne.ca