



# St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **TRIBE AND AMERICAN LEGION POST SPONSOR *OPERATION RECOGNITION***

#### *Vets Receive High School Diplomas*

**Akwesasne Territory**— The U.S. military veterans of Akwesasne were honored at a ceremony on Veteran's Day, November 11<sup>th</sup> at the Mohawk School in the Akwesasne Territory. "The event we held here in Akwesasne is the largest gathering of American Indian veterans participating in *Operation Recognition*," noted Janique Odjick, one of the event's organizers. "We had 47 Akwesasne vets participate, along with their families. The oldest vet honored today was Edgar Jock, who is 87 years old." American Legion Post 1479, Auxiliary Unit 1479 and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe sponsored the event, which was hosted at the Mohawk School.

Janique Odjick served as the emcee and Alma Ransom gave a traditional welcome in the Mohawk language. Barry Montour, Director of the Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education and retired Marine Corps Lt. Colonel Ronald Faucher addressed the veterans and the audience. Tribal Chief James Ransom was also on hand to greet the veterans and recognize them for their service. He also thanked the event committee and the American Legion Auxiliary for their hard work in organizing the event.

Each of the veterans received their high school diplomas from Salmon River School District Superintendent Jane Collins and a special commemorative coin from Todd Conners. The coin was based on the branch of service in which each veteran had served. Most veterans had served in the U.S. Army, followed by the Marine Corps and the Navy. Tribal Chief James Ransom, Sub-Chief Stacy Adams, Barry Montour and Legion Commander Todd Conners each provided descriptions of the coins and what they symbolized.

Former New York State Governor George Pataki signed legislation creating *Operation Recognition*, originally developed to grant high school diplomas to all students who left school prior to graduation to serve in the military during World War II. Later legislation expanded the program to include vets from the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts. Military service interrupted the education of many veterans, including many Akwesasne vets. They were awarded high school diplomas in recognition of their service to their country and the sacrifices they made, both in terms of their time in the service and disruption of their lives. American Indians have the highest proportion of military service when compared with any other group in the U.S., with 99 percent of eligible Indian males signing up for military service during World War II.

Tribal Chief James Ransom noted, "We feel that Veteran's Day, also known as Remembrance Day in Canada, is always an important observance in Native Communities, given the high rate of participation of Native men and women in the armed forces." This event was the largest assembly of American Indian veterans in the U.S. to participate in *Operation Recognition*. Approximately 300 people attended the event in the school's gymnasium and concluded with a light lunch in the school cafeteria.

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The St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Council is the duly elected and federally recognized government of the St. Regis Mohawk People.

**Helping Build A Better Tomorrow**

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