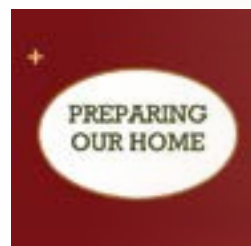




**PREPARING
OUR HOME:
WORKSHOP
Akwesasne**





Preparing our Home is a community-based resilience planning program. The program enables Indigenous youth to reach their potential in becoming emergency preparedness leaders in their communities.

preparingourhome.ca

“The Preparing Our Home project allows for youth to interact and engage in an area of self-awareness and growth. The combination of emergency preparedness and the mental health wellness that this project provides goes beyond the standard to developing good leaders. Preparing Our Home definitely helps to prepare our youth for their future”.

Chief Connie Lazore,
The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne

Text: Mia Francis, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Youth Council Member
Photos: Mia Francis and Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Youth Council
Design: Preparing Our Home program (with input from the World Meteorological Organization/Global Water Partnership Associated Programme on Flood and Integrate Drought Management).

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PREPARING OUR HOME

WORKSHOP HAZARD AWARENESS & REDISCOVERING RESILIENCE WITHIN THE CULTURE

AKWESASNE “LAND WHERE THE PARTRIDGE DRUMS“

The Mohawk of Akwesasne have a very unique history. Located on the majestic St. Lawrence River, Akwesasne borders the countries of Canada and the United States of America; the Canadian Provinces of Ontario and Quebec; and the American State of New York. Some have called us the most stubborn Native Community in North America, not only for our enduring commitment to our Ancient Mohawk Territories and Resources, but also for the strong positions we maintain over the Aboriginal Rights of our Community and our Kahniakehaka (Mohawk) Nation. On a Community level, we persistently battle to maintain the integrity of this Mohawk Community amid external government interference. Despite the very real and apparent difficulties of this multi-jurisdictional location, our community of about 13,000 people, has worked hard and responsibly to build and manage our Infrastructure, Health and Social Services, Education, Judicial and Law Enforcement System, Environment and Conservation, and Housing and Economic Initiatives. Our People have many gifts, talents, knowledge, experience and expertise in a wide spectrum of fields and interests.

COMPLEX BACKGROUND

- St. Lawrence Iroquoian – Pre-Contact to Early Contact
- Haudenosaunee (Kanien’kehá:ka) – Pre-Contact to Present
- Seven Nations of Canada – New France/British North America
- Mohawk Nation – Pre-Contact to American Revolution; 1888 to Present

COMPLEX IDENTITY

- Mohawk – mixed views, philosophies, and understandings
- Beliefs – Christian/Traditional
- Language – English/Kanien’kehá:ka
- Leadership –
 - Mohawk Council of Akwesasne – Canada Recognized Band
 - St. Regis Mohawk Tribe – U.S. Recognized Tribe
 - Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs – Haudenosaunee Recognized Nation

COMPLEX ISSUES

- Political Identity – Local, Regional, Federal, National and International level
- Border – Location, Application and Security



PREPARING OUR HOME

WORKSHOP HAZARD AWARENESS & REDISCOVERING RESILIENCE WITHIN THE CULTURE

JUNE 14TH, 2019

A'NOWARA'KO:WA ARENA: TURTLE ROOM

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Purpose:

The workshop brought elders and leadership together from the community of Akwesasne to develop a community-based resiliency plan looking at:

- What are community strengths?
- What is around the community?
- What can harm the community?
- How can YOUTH lead and help?
- Potential Solutions

Attendees:

15 Community Youth, 1 Community member, 3 Community Leadership, 3 Emergency Personnel



Outcomes:

Youth participated in a community discussion around What is Emergency Management and Why it Matters? Taking the geographic location of our community into account, youth were then asked to brainstorm:

- What Are Community Strengths?
- What is around the community?

We then took a Community Tour to the Hogansburg Dam to hear stories of past community disasters such as the Ice storm of 1996 and the Flood of 2018. We also heard stories of Community reaction and resilience from community elders, volunteers, and EMTs and Volunteer Firefighters. Youth were asked to reflect: What did we learn from past experiences? How can we grow to help better future circumstances?

(Even during our community tour, never leaving our own community of Akwesasne, we had to go through American Customs, where it took a big chunk of our time because we were all over the age of 18, using a school bus; a daily struggle of Akwesasronon)

After lunch, we were lucky enough to have a presentation by Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Emergency Measures Officer, Regina Jacobs. All of the youth were gifted with 72 Hour emergency preparedness bag.

To end the day, the youth participated in Hazard Mapping & Assessment of Akwesasne looking at: What are potential solutions? And how can youth lead and help?

Top Strengths:

Community support and Togetherness
 Traditional Medicines
 Access to both US and Canada

Top Weaknesses:

Factory dumping
 Loss of Culture
 Dams/Water/Location

Both:

Boarder
 Bridges
 Water

Top Reaction Trends

Community support
 Learning and training
 Changes in fish and waterways

Top Resilience Trends:

Youth workshops
 knowledge sharing and planning
 Community support

Hazard Assessment Top Hazards

1. Grasse River (GM, Alcoa Factory)
2. Both Bridges
3. Evacuation of Kawehno:ke
4. Flooding is Hogansburg
5. Flooding, Power Outage, and Evacuation of Kana:takon
6. Flooding, Power Outage, and Evacuation of Tsi Snaihne
7. Evacuation of Raquette Point

Potential Solutions:

More youth leadership workshops
 Volunteering
 Community togetherness
 Youth Environment Initiative
 More Community Clean-ups



Mohawk Language:

Teachings of a Good Mind: **Kanikonhriio'htshera**
 Cooperation: **Tekaienawa'kho'ntshera**
 Responsiveness: **Attokha'htshera**
 Responsibility: **Karihwaienta'hkwen**
 Trustworthiness: **Kaniahese'ntshera**
 Grand River: **Kahionha ko:wa**
 Freezing Rain: **iowiso'n:tion**
 Hurricane: **kawerenha':wi**
 Lightening: **tewanine'karawa'nion**

Akwasasne Youth Reflections:

“Our world is rapidly changing due to the effects of humanity and global warming – it is important to include youth in disaster planning, response and recovery efforts as they will be the ones growing up and being directly affected in the future.”

The Preparing Our Home workshop held in June 2019 was a great first step in enhancing our resilience as a community and preparing the future generation. A lot of the workshop seemed like common sense to many in attendance, but it was refreshing to give our youth a voice to share their ideas and concerns about emergency preparedness in our community. From mapping safety concerns throughout Akwasasne to a site visit of a recent flood, it was empowering for our young people to see the impact and opportunities they can create for themselves and others when disaster strikes.”



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