

## Akwesasne Employment Resource Center Celebrates 10th Anniversary

Finding meaningful employment is often an arduous process for individuals who are returning or entering the workforce for the first time. For Akwesasne residents that process has been made easier thanks to the personalized service provided by the Akwesasne Employment Resource Center (AERC), who recently celebrated their 10-year anniversary on August 16, 2019.

Established in 2009, the AERC began as a partnership between the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's (SRMT) Office of Economic Development and the Akwesasne Area Management Board (recently renamed Akwesasne Career and Employment Support Services, ACCESS), with contributions from the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs. The partnering agencies envisioned AERC to be a "one stop shop" for job seekers in Akwesasne, which it has done exceedingly well.

"The level of commitment and professionalism made finding the job that suited me a great success," wrote Mark Boots about the assistance received from the helpful staff of the AERC. He noted, "I am now an employee of the [New York State] Department of Transportation. Thanks to the staff for all the hard work and follow-up phone calls."

When the Akwesasne Employment Resource Center opened ten years ago, 323 Akwesasne residents utilized its services during its first year to find employment. Since that time, through various outreach and a constant presence at community events, the AERC has become recognized as an employment agency that has continually connected job seekers to the world of work. Their proven track record has helped the AERC to increase the number of job seekers using their services to 2,659 each year.

Following its creation, initially as a pilot project, the employment agency began providing a physical and electronic job board, access to resources for conducting job searches and networking, assistance with developing cover letters and resumes, help with completing job applications, and mock interviews to prepare job seekers. The AERC also began offering employment coaching and counseling sessions, as well as a free three-week Job Finding Club that bundles all of the AERC's services into a condensed workshop for those looking to quickly find employment.

"In the future we are hoping to branch out to reach more chambers of commerce and companies to share with them the



L-R: Wendy Cook, SRMT Receptionist; Leona Francis, ACCESS Employment Development Officer; Susan Rourke, ACCESS Employment Resource Officer; Danielle Salgado, SRMT Office Manager; and James Lazore, SRMT Director of the Office of Economic Development.

workforce we have available in our community," said AERC Office Manager Danielle Salgado. On commemorating AERC's anniversary, Salgado added, "It feels great to have 10 years under our belt servicing the community and we look forward to many more. Thanks to Steve Cook, Linda Lalonde and Dan Garrow for identifying the need and helping create the Akwesasne Employment Resource Center."

For the past 10 years, the Akwesasne Employment Resource Center was located at 611 Route 37 in Akwesasne. With the increasing number of job seekers, they relocated in April 2019 to their current location at 18 Eagle Drive, across from the Heart to Heart Fitness Center, which provided an ideal location for the anniversary celebration. Surrounded by booths of collaborating agencies and businesses, AERC staff offered an open house and a day filled with fun and prizes, as well as food.

"This was an amazing opportunity to give recognition back to the efforts of the staff for helping establish the AERC as a credible source when businesses are looking to recruit in the Akwesasne community," said Office of Economic Development Director James Lazore. Speaking on AERC's increased outreach, Lazore added, "Not only do we assist job seekers, but we work with employers within a 2-hour distance of Akwesasne to fill their vacancies with qualified individuals." ♣

For more information about the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, visit [www.srmt-nsn.gov](http://www.srmt-nsn.gov).