



## GENERAL NEWS RELEASE

### **POLICE ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO ADDS FIRST INDIGENOUS POLICE ASSOCIATION MEMBER**

#### **Ahkwesahsne Police Association Becomes the 47<sup>th</sup> PAO Member Association**

TORONTO, June 21, 2019 / CNW / -- The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) is pleased to announce the recent joining of the Ahkwesahsne Police Association (APA) to our membership. On April 1, 2019, APA became the first Indigenous police association to join the PAO and our 47th member association. Today, in conjunction with National Indigenous Peoples Day, we celebrate APA's affiliation to the PAO and their community's rich culture and contributions to Canada.

National Indigenous Peoples Day is celebrated on the summer solstice, the longest day of the year and a time when many Indigenous groups have traditionally celebrated their culture and heritage. National Indigenous Peoples Day is an opportunity to learn about and celebrate the unique Indigenous Peoples in the community and region.

Representatives from the PAO's member associations recently had the opportunity to learn more about the Ahkwesahsne community during our Annual General Meeting held in Ottawa. There, Michael Kanatakeron Mitchell of the Wolf Clan – Special Advisor and Elder to the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and former Grand Chief of the Mohawk Council of Ahkwesahsne – spoke to police association leaders about the challenges their community faced from a policing and public safety perspective over his thirty plus years as Grand Chief. It was clear from the engagement in the room that his words left a lasting impact on all members in attendance.

When the APA reached out to the PAO about potential affiliation, it was clear they were seeking additional support and resources for their sworn and civilian members. Their police personnel are employed by the First Nations' Ahkwesahsne Mohawk Police Service, and the APA serves as the bargaining unit and local representative body for their 41 members. They are fully regulated by the Province of Ontario and trained at the Ontario Police College, but unique as their Service has jurisdiction and authority in parts of Ontario and Quebec. PAO membership allows APA to further ensure their members' collective rights and interests are protected and advanced at the provincial level, and also provides them with access to ongoing training and networking opportunities with other member associations across the province.

After APA officially joined the PAO on April 1, 2019, PAO President Bruce Chapman was quick to remark that "...we welcome the Ahkwesahsne Police Association to our membership. The PAO is proud to be the provincial representative of over 18,000 sworn and civilian police personnel across Ontario, and having a First Nations partner and member will broaden our opportunities to learn from each other and unify the policing profession further."



Since their affiliation, APA President Pat Pyke has commented that they sought PAO membership because the association believed their members' contracts "should reflect the 'norms' across the province, and in order to ensure that, it [was] necessary to affiliate so that we provide the best service to our members." He also added that APA members have "felt instantly welcomed and appreciated" by the PAO, and they "look forward to continued affiliation and membership."

Ahkwesahsne Police Association may be the first Indigenous member of the Police Association of Ontario, but we hope they are not the last. The PAO looks forward to engaging in discussions with other First Nations police associations about their potential for affiliation. We are dedicated to advocating for the interests of Ontario's professional police, and we are stronger together.

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### About the Police Association of Ontario

The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) is the official provincial representative body for 18,000 sworn and civilian front-line police personnel from 47 local police associations across Ontario. A unifying voice for advocacy in policing, the PAO provides its member associations with representation, resource and support.

### Contacts:

Bruce Chapman, PAO President  
[Bruce.Chapman@pao.ca](mailto:Bruce.Chapman@pao.ca) | 905.599.4813

Sarah Coulter, Communications Manager  
[Sarah.Coulter@pao.ca](mailto:Sarah.Coulter@pao.ca) | 416.569.7577

**Website:** PAO.ca  
**Twitter:** @PoliceAssocON  
**Facebook:** @PoliceAssociationOfOntario