

FROM THE CHIEF'S DESK

NOVEMBER 17TH, 2026

Aanii Everyone,

It has been a very busy couple of weeks for Chief and Council, with numerous meetings, commitments, and ongoing community matters keeping everyone busy. Due to the number of meetings and other responsibilities that Councillors were attending to, we did not hold our regular Council meeting last week. However, the work of Chief and Council has continued, with Members of Council actively involved in various meetings, committees, and initiatives on behalf of our community.

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Saugeen Ojibway Nation Treaty Claim Update

One of the most significant events over the past couple of weeks was the Saugeen Ojibway Nation community meeting regarding our Treaty Claim and the path forward.
This claim was originally filed in 1994, meaning our people have been fighting for justice for more than 30 years. Many of our Elders and community Members who were part of this journey have since passed on without seeing the full benefits of this fight. It is important that we remember and honour those who came before us and recognize the sacrifices that have been made along the way.

The breach has been established. What remains to be determined is the appropriate remedy for that breach.

We know that many Members are frustrated with how long this process has taken and have questions about what happens next, including whether lands will be returned, what compensation may look like, and how much longer the court process will take. Chief and Council share these concerns.

The Chiefs and Councils of both Saugeen and Nawash continue to work together through Joint Council to determine the next steps. Our position remains that both the return of lands and financial compensation are important parts of a fair settlement. We are seeking the return of publicly held lands only. We have already seen that negotiations can produce positive results, as demonstrated through previous settlements with Bruce County, Grey County, and Saugeen Shores, which resulted in lands being returned.

Since the court's decision, we have made numerous invitations to Canada and Ontario to come to the negotiating table. Unfortunately, both governments have chosen to continue through the courts rather than enter into negotiations.

As a result, Joint Council is beginning to explore additional strategies to encourage Canada and Ontario to negotiate. These include political action, education, improved communications, and greater involvement from the Members of both Saugeen and Nawash.
We are also looking at opportunities to bring our Treaty Claim directly to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations as soon as a meeting can be arranged.

A more detailed plan outlining our next steps is expected to be shared with Members in early 2027. I want to thank everyone who attended the community meeting, asked questions, and shared their concerns. It is important that our Members remain informed and involved as we move forward.

This has been a long journey for our people, and while there is still work ahead, we must continue working together to seek a fair and just resolution to this claim.

Since the community meeting, we received word that Justice Matheson has dismissed Canada's motion for no land back in Phase 2 of our Treaty 72 claim. Land back and compensation is still on the table for remedies. This is very positive news for our Nations!
We will continue to provide updates and opportunities for community involvement as this important work progresses.

Zaag'idiwin One-Year Anniversary

November 17th marks the one-year anniversary of Zaag'idiwin! This is an important milestone, and I would like to acknowledge everyone who has been involved in the work and development of Zaag'idiwin over the past year (and more).
Congratulations to everyone involved, and I wish Zaag'idiwin continued success as it moves forward!

Increased Police Presence in Saugeen

Over the past couple of weeks, we have seen an increased police presence in our community. I know that seeing numerous police vehicles, canine units, and even helicopters can be unsettling and stressful for our Members, especially when people are unsure of what is happening.

One of the recent incidents involved a missing person, which resulted in an extensive search by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), including canine units and helicopters. Thankfully, the individual was located safely, and we are very grateful for that outcome.
There has also been an increased police presence related to efforts to locate an individual from Saugeen who is wanted by police. Officers, sometimes accompanied by canine units, have been in the community searching for this person.

Based on the most recent information shared with us by police, the individual has not yet been taken into custody. As a result, we may continue to see an increased police presence in the community until the matter is resolved.

I understand that these situations can cause concern, especially when Members see police activity but do not know what is going on. I believe it is important that our community is kept informed as much as possible so that people are not left wondering or relying on rumours.

Moving forward, I will do my best to share timely updates with Members whenever these situations arise, as soon as information is made available to me by police and can be shared publicly.

Our community has experienced enough stress and uncertainty, and I want our Members to know that keeping everyone informed and promoting community safety remain important priorities for me.

Closing Remarks

These are just some of the important matters that Chief and Council have been working on over the past couple of weeks.

I know that there are many challenges facing our community, and while we may not have all the answers or solutions right away, please know that we are committed to working through these issues and doing our best for our Members.

I believe that keeping our community informed, listening to your concerns, and working together are important steps toward building a stronger, safer, and healthier Saugeen.
Thank you to everyone who continues to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas with us.
Your voices matter, and your involvement is important. I hope everyone has a safe and healthy week. Take care of yourselves and one another.

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Chief Sonya Roote