



For Immediate Release

April 4, 2014

Saugeen First Nation Wins Long-Running Sauble Beach Case

Ontario Superior Court declares that the entirety of Sauble Beach is and always has been part of the First Nation's reserve.

Saugeen First Nation, Ontario: On Monday April 3, 2023, Justice Susan Vella of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled that the entirety of Sauble Beach belongs—and has always belonged—to Saugeen First Nation. This decision is the culmination of more than thirty years of litigation and brings closure to a dispute that stretches back nearly 170 years.

“This is a huge victory for our community and our people,” said Saugeen Chief Conrad Ritchie. “We have been fighting to have the beach recognized as part of our reserve for generations. The beach is central to our way of life and, out of all our vast traditional territory, this is the land our ancestors chose to reserve for their future generations. And finally that has been confirmed by the Court – the judge was clear that the entire beach is and always has been part of our reserve.” Chief Ritchie explained “this win truly belongs to our whole First Nation – without our people’s unwavering commitment to this fight for nearly 170 years, and without our people’s fundamental belief that this was always their land, this victory would not have been possible. This has been a long fight, over many decades, but the hard work has paid off and we have achieved a huge victory.”

The Court also declared that the federal government breached fiduciary duties and Saugeen First Nation’s treaty rights by failing to protect and preserve all Saugeen First Nation’s reserve lands after the signing of Treaty 72 in 1854. The Court held that the Crown improperly surveyed the reserve in 1856. The federal government recognized its error in the 1970s and subsequently supported Saugeen First Nation in its claim to Sauble Beach, which was filed in 1995. The lawsuit was opposed by the Government of Ontario and the Town of South Bruce Peninsula.

“We appreciate that the Court acknowledged our proper reserve boundaries were not being respected and that the problem had to be fixed,” said Chief Ritchie. “Justice Vella acknowledged that the *status quo* is unacceptable and that to achieve reconciliation means the *status quo* has to change. That is a powerful message. And while the Court recognized the importance of

Sauble Beach to our people, we recognize that it is important to others as well, including as a tourist destination. We look forward to working with all our neighbours to keep it a special place as Saugeen First Nation resumes our traditional stewardship over our entire beach.”

Traditional Saugeen territory spans over two-million acres and includes the entire Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula. The lands subject to litigation included a strip of beach west of Lakeview Blvd that extends between Main Street and 6th St N.

-30-

Media enquiries:

Robert Rice
Communications Officer
Saugeen First Nation #29
E: robert.rice@saugeen.org
T: (519) 797-2781 Ext. 1138

Court File No. 03-CV-253768-CM3