



Saugeen First Nation

Update to Saugeen First Nation re: North Sauble Beach

This May long weekend, come celebrate Saugeen First Nation's victory in our lawsuit about ownership of North Sauble Beach!

Beach Celebration on Sunday May 21st, 2023

After nearly 30 years of litigation and 170 years of fighting to have our proper reserve boundaries recognized, a judge ruled in our favour on April 3, 2023. The judge ruled that the north part of Sauble Beach is part of our reserve, just like the south part. It is a huge victory that was only possible because of the continued support of all our community members, our elders, and the past generations that never gave up on our rights.

Now that we have proven our case, we have lots of work to do to be good stewards of the land. Here are some of the things that Chief and Council are currently working on:

- **Keeping it open:** Sauble Beach is a treasured space for our community members, other local residents, and tourists from all over. We want the beach to stay open and accessible this summer. That requires careful planning to keep it safe, well maintained, and environmentally sustainable.
- **Keeping it safe:** We hired private security after ecologically sensitive areas of the beach were vandalized by non-Saugeen members immediately following our court victory. Saugeen First Nation will not tolerate threats to our lands or the safety of our members or the public while on our lands. Our highest priority is to keep Sauble Beach a safe space.
- **Protecting the environment:** The beach is part of a natural ecosystem and home to the endangered piping plover, among many other plants and animals. Our people have been stewards of the land for countless generations and we will continue to fulfill our duties to the environment.
- **Expert advice:** We have put together a strong advisory team to assist Council in managing the beach. It includes both traditional and scientific knowledge holders as well as members of our staff who have years of experience managing the south part of the beach.
- **Working with our treaty partner:** We are working closely with multiple departments of the federal government to obtain equipment and resources

necessary to expand our beach management capacity.

- **Working with our neighbours:** We have been in regular communication with the Town of South Bruce Peninsula about our shared interest in good management of the beach. Before we won our case we were often not included in beach management when others were making decisions, but our people have always believed that cooperation with our neighbours is a key element of reconciliation and that has been what we are doing.
- **Fighting appeals:** Chief and Council met with the mayor and other representatives of the Town of South Bruce Peninsula on Friday, April 14, 2023. The mayor offered tobacco to Chief Ritchie and acknowledged that all Sauble Beach should belong to Saugeen First Nation. He stated that the Town did not intend to appeal. Four days later, the Town announced that its Council voted unanimously in favour of an appeal. That shocking reversal was deeply hurtful and the disrespect of the tobacco that was offered caused all of our Council a great deal of distress. We are very disappointed that the Town and the Government of Ontario have since filed formal appeals to keep fighting our ownership of the beach. That is not the spirit of reconciliation. Their fear of what might happen with the beach in Indigenous hands is misguided and wrong. We are very confident that the judge's current decision is correct and will be confirmed on appeal. And our actions, since our ownership of the beach was confirmed, speak louder than words.

A note on the location of our reserve's boundaries:

The Town of South Bruce Peninsula has made frequent public statements about there being some kind of "unresolved questions" about the location of our reserve boundaries under the judge's decision. Those statements are simply not correct. There are no significant unresolved questions about the boundaries. The court was very clear that the north boundary of the reserve is at "the approximate mid-way point of Lot 31," precisely "214.4 metres north" of the road allowance between Lots 30 and 31 (i.e., around 7th Street North), and that the east boundary is "lying to the west of Lakeshore Boulevard North." We embrace the court's conclusion on that point and agree with it entirely: the beach is part of the reserve but no lands east of Lakeshore Boulevard are included, just as we have always said. A formal survey of those boundaries is still required and would be welcomed by Chief and Council, but in the meantime, there is no doubt about where the boundaries are for practical purposes.

We are looking forward to a wonderful summer at Saugeen First Nation's Sauble Beach and we hope to see you there!