

CHIEFS AND COUNCILS SAUGEEN OJIBWAY NATION



Chippewas of Saugeen, RR 1, Southampton ON N0H 2L0 519-797-2781
Chippewas of Nawash, 135 Lakeshore Blvd, Neyaashiinigiing ON N0H 2T0 519-534-1689

Construction halted on Clarendon Street residence by Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport

SOUTHAMPTON, ON – After many letters and meetings, a Saugeen Shores landowner has received a Stop Work Order from the Ontario Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Construction on the Clarendon Street residence has stopped for the time being, until the Saugeen Ojibway Nation's concerns about the cultural and historical significance of the site can be properly addressed.

Prior to construction, the land was a known archaeological site that hosts an Anishnaabe (Ojibway) ancestral burial ground. The Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON) was aware of the presence of burials on the vacant property, as evidenced by historical record and oral tradition. Therefore, in August of 2017 when staff noticed trees being cleared from the property, SON asked the Town of Saugeen Shores if any building permits had been issued or if the land had been purchased.

At this time, the Town was notified that burials exist on the property and archaeological investigation would be required to find the exact location of the burials without disturbing the site. The investigation would also recommend strategies to avoid any disturbance of significant sites on the property. The Bruce County planning staff were also notified of the burials and informed that SON should be alerted if an application related to the property came through their department. In September of 2017, neither the Town nor Bruce County knew of an application for a building permit or an application to build.

In November of 2017, SON staff drove by the property and saw it had been cleared of trees and construction of a foundation had started. SON contacted the Town and restated their position about the burials, requesting immediate follow up due to the urgency of the situation. Work stopped at this time and a meeting was set with the landowner, SON reps (Chiefs and technical staff), Town officials and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS). At this meeting, SON was informed that the property was zoned back in 1978 when archeological assessments were not required. At this time, the Town of Saugeen Shores does not require archaeological assessments for building permits.

All parties present at this meeting agreed that a process needed to be put in place before any further work could happen on the site, regardless of policy loop holes. SON created a plan

supported by MTCS, drafted a letter and sent it to both the Town and landowner, with no response provided by either. Another letter was sent in December of 2017 from MTCS reiterating SON's position and that the Town and landowner should agree to a process. This letter also received no response.

On December 20th, 2017, SON staff noticed construction trucks on site and that workers were pouring the footings and walls for a foundation, despite every reasonable effort to reach an agreement on a process to proceed. At this time, SON sent a Cease and Desist Order to the landowner, stating that if work did not stop immediately, they would take the necessary action to protect the site until a process was in place. This letter received no response. MTCS reached out to the Town and landowner again and told them work should stop until it was confirmed whether burials had been disturbed. They informed the landowner, if they didn't comply, the MTCS would react accordingly.

Work temporarily stopped. SON was already set to occupy the site due to of the lack of correspondence and continuation of work. At this time, SON learned the landowner had every intention to continue building, regardless of the situation.

On January 17th, 2018, SON spoke with MTCS and delivered a notice that by the end of day, SON leadership and community members would be building a sacred fire and occupying the site. SON was then advised by MTCS that a Stop Work Order was being signed by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Eleanor McMahon.

Since the Stop Work Order was issued, all construction has stopped on the site. SON staff, along with the MTCS and Ontario Heritage Trust, are currently working on a plan for a thorough archaeological investigation of the site.

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Collectively known as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash First Nation make decisions about our shared Territory through the SON Joint Council. We engage with government and proponents about projects, decisions and conduct in our Territory that could affect our community's rights, culture, resources, land and water.

For more information, contact:

Doran Ritchie



Land Use Planning Coordinator
Saugeen Ojibway Nation Environment Office
(519) 374-9210
d.ritchie@saugeenojibwaynation.ca
www.saugeenojibwaynation.ca