



# Staff Report to Council - for Direction

**Title:** Saugeen Anishnaabek Engagement Circle

**From:** Aaron Stauch, Director Government Relations

**Date:** June 5, 2025

**Report Number:** GR-2025-013

---

## Staff Recommendation:

That the Saugeen Anishnaabek Engagement Circle approach be endorsed.

## Report Summary:

This report presents a joint governance approach through a Saugeen Anishnaabek Engagement Circle. This shared approach is essential in address the commitment made in Goals 1.4, 2.4.5, and 4.2.2 in the Saugeen Anishnaabek Reconciliation Pathway and Action Plan.

## Background/Analysis:

In the Summer of 2024, at a Special joint meeting of County Council with Council members from both the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, Saugeen First Nation, and Bruce County, County Council endorsed the [Saugeen Anishnaabek Reconciliation Pathway and Action Plan](#). This Pathway and Action Plan made a specific commitment around engagement of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation as outlined in:

- Goal 1.4: Include Saugeen Anishnaabek and First Nation representatives in Bruce County planning and decision-making processes.
- Goal 2.4.5: Establish an advisory committee with Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, Saugeen First Nation, and Saugeen Ojibway Nation and County Council representation to activate work on creating a DownieWenjack Legacy Space that will help build a safe and welcoming place for conversations about Indigenous history and reconciliation in Bruce County.
- Goal 4.2.2: Establish advisory groups that are inclusive of Saugeen Anishnaabek to support Bruce County departments on program and service planning, design, delivery, review, monitoring, and evaluation.

In addition to these specific goals, the overall Pathway and Action plan has several commitments that involve the integration of Saugeen Anishnaabek voices in guidance County work and informing decisions. This level of engagement of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation could

place an undue burden of time and resources on Saugeen First Nation (SFN), Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation (Nawash), the Saugeen Ojibway Nation Environmental Office (SON EO), and the Saugeen Anishnaabek people.

In keeping with the principles outlined in our Pathway and Action plan: truth, respect, recognition, responsibility, and collaborative relationships; staff are proposing a joint governance structure, the Saugeen Anishnaabek Engagement Circle, that will provide a coordinated and resourced approach to engagement of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation to ensure there is no undue burden, and that Saugeen Anishnaabek voices are active in County work aligned with the Pathway and Action Plan, and ensures that we can continue to walk together.

**Proposed Structure:**

The following outlines the high-level approach to the joint governance structure through the Saugeen Anishnaabek Engagement Circle:

- Members would be comprised of:
  - Saugeen First Nation Appointed Member
  - Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation Appointed Member
  - Two Bruce County Council Appointed Representatives
  - Two Saugeen Ojibway Nation Elders/Knowledge Keeper (appointed by SON)
  - Two Saugeen Ojibway Nation Youth (appointed by SON)
  - Two Non-Indigenous Youth (appointed by Bruce County Council)
  
- Meeting Frequency & Logistics
  - The Saugeen Anishnaabek Engagement Circle will meet quarterly at mutually agreed upon dates.
  - Bruce County staff will take care of meeting logistics within mutually agreed upon standards (locations, agenda, etc.).
  - Bruce County staff will engage SON EO in developing agenda to ensure both Bruce County and SON items are represented on the agenda.
  - It will be ensured that the meetings are structured and held in a manner that is consistent with SON's traditional knowledge.
  - Stipends will be paid to members that do not have engagement as part of their official role

To ensure the Engagement Circle is grounded in shared intention and mutual understanding, Bruce County proposes to convene co-creation workshops to establish its initial framework, after this joint meeting of Council endorses the high-level framework.

In addition to the commitments made in the Saugeen Anishnaabek Reconciliation Pathway and Action Plan, the proposed Engagement Circle represents a meaningful and coordinated approach to deepening our government-to-government relationship with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. The Engagement Circle will serve as a foundation for building trust and respect, where SON perspectives, values, governance, and priorities are weaved into Bruce County's planning, service delivery, and decision-making.

The proposed structure goes beyond formal meetings by prioritizing long-term relationship-building, co-creating space for shared dialogue, and aligning with SON priorities. It also creates opportunity for collaborative work on land use and resource planning, and for integrating environmental sustainability considerations into our shared future.

**Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:**

There will be stipends paid to members of the Saugeen Anishnaabek Engagement Circle that do not have engagement as part of their roles (i.e. SON Elders, Youth, etc.). These have been accounted for in the 2025 budget already.

**Interdepartmental Consultation:**

Approached developed in consultation with the Office of the CAO.

**Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:**

Community and Partnerships - Build a strong and inclusive community

Community and Partnerships - Enhance and grow partnerships

**Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:**

NA

**Report Author:**

Aaron Stauch, Director of Government Relations

**Departmental Approval:**

Aaron Stauch, Director of Government Relations

**Approved for Submission:**

Christine MacDonald, Chief Administrative Officer

**Attachments:**

Presentation of the Saugeen Anishnaabek Engagement Circle approach