

# SERPENT RIVER FIRST NATION

195 Village Road  
Cutler ON, POP 1B0



Telephone: (705) 844-2418  
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SRFN Chief and Council Meeting  
Council Chambers, 195 Village Road, Cutler ON POP 1B0  
**Thursday, January 8, 2026**  
**6:00PM**  
**Approved Minutes**

**Chair:** James Owl

**Council:** Erin Carne, Justin Urquhart, Nicole Pelletier, Angela Trudeau, George Coughlin, Rebecca Csaszar

**Regrets:** None at this time

**Director of Operations (DOO):** None at this time

**Staff:** Madelaine O'Neill, POLEA

**Recording Secretary:** Madelaine O'Neill, POLEA

**1) Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Remarks:**

- The duly convened Chief and Council meeting of Thursday, January 8, 2026 was called to order at 6:11pm - Opening prayer by Councillor Urquhart
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**2) Adoption of Agenda**

<b>MOTION: 2026-01-08-01</b>	
That Chief and Council adopt the Agenda for the Council Meeting of Thursday, January 8, 2026 as presented	
<b>Moved by</b>	Nicole Pelletier
<b>Seconded by</b>	George Coughlin
<b>CARRIED</b>	By Consensus

**3) Declaration of Conflict of Interest:**

- None declared
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**4) Community Presentations:**

- None at this time
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**5) Approval of Previous Minutes:**

<b>MOTION: 2026-01-08-02</b>	
That Chief and Council approve the previous Council Meeting Minutes of Thursday, December 11, 2025 as amended	
<b>Moved by</b>	Rebecca Csaszar

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2026-01-08 CHIEF AND COUNCIL APPROVED MINUTES		Motion of Approval	2026-01-22-02

<b>Seconded by</b>	Angela Trudeau
<b>CARRIED</b>	By Consensus
- Item 10 b) Governance Manual Adoption <b>MOTION: 2025-12-11-05</b> is null/void, will need to change all subsequent motions	

**6) Business Arising From Previous Minutes:**

<b>MOTION: 2026-01-08-03</b>	
<b>That Chief and Council approve the 2026-2031 Community Strategic Plan – Request for Proposals (RFP) as amended</b>	
<b>Moved by</b>	Angela Trudeau
<b>Seconded by</b>	Erin Carne
<b>CARRIED</b>	By Consensus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic plan – draft RFP for a 2026-2031 Community Strategic Plan discussed which will be a road map for the rest of the term, accepted with changes (need to change the demographics on page two to include “two-spirit”)</li> <li>- Serpent River First Nation has grown significantly over the past decade and with expansion, there are increased challenges in ensuring that programs and services are delivered in a manner that meets the needs of our membership and that they remain sustainable</li> <li>- Governance, Infrastructure, Health, Education, Housing and among the programs areas that require ongoing planning and evaluation</li> <li>- Serpent River First Nation has not completed a Community Strategic Plan in some time. Some work has been started towards that completion of a Comprehensive Community Plan, a Capital Planning Study and Our Community Story, however, those documents remain incomplete and would benefit from the guidance derived from the community input and direction that a Strategic Plan will provide</li> <li>- Successful communities plan together, implement their plans and measure success</li> <li>- A Community Strategic Plan will provide the Serpent River First Nation Leadership with a blueprint to follow in planning and budgeting for upcoming years</li> <li>- Funding remains available through the CDWAI program for Governance Planning</li> </ul>	

**Continued:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Management letters: three years of audits sought. One found, two are pending analysis and solution planning before sharing with the community</li> <li>- Strat Plan RFP: Plan to issue an RFP for both auditors and legal advisors to ensure continuity, fair pricing and quality of service</li> <li>- Task teams: New task forces to be posted, modeled after other rapid response teams being established to address pressing issues quickly. Welcome letters to individuals will be shared and have a list provided to community</li> <li>- Governance Manual Adoption: current procedures rely on old regulations until new manual established</li> <li>- Framework for External Partnerships Policy: policy under review due to lack of community input, but the aim is to facilitate external partnerships</li> </ul>	
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- Emergency Contact numbers: emergency contact numbers were delivered to community for the Christmas shut down

**7) Reports:**

**a) Chief's Report**

<b>MOTION: 2026-01-08-04</b>	
<b>That Chief and Council approved the Chief's Report dated January 8, 2026 as presented</b>	
<b>Moved by</b>	Rebecca Csaszar
<b>Seconded by</b>	George Coughlin
<b>CARRIED</b>	By Consensus
<p>- Chief provided community and Council an update on external meetings, internal staffing, project files and community events, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial Distributions: 1,060 of 1,250 members received funds. Gift cards distributed to 181 on-reserve and 385 applications for off-reserve members, with some logistical delays due to credit card issues.</li> <li>- RHTLF Meetings: Discussed distribution of legal fees, interest, and future use of funds for language retention and community benefit.</li> <li>- CDW &amp; CHRT Projects Funding &amp; Capacity: Unused capacity development funds identified; efforts underway to hire a CDW Project Navigator and maximize available resources.</li> <li>- Project Recovery: Several key projects (Mount Lake Cultural Facility, Community Roundhouse, Social Services Admin Building) were at risk due to over-scoping and missed deliverables. Efforts are being made to downscale and revive them.</li> <li>- Hydro One Corridor &amp; Waasmoowin Energy Project Engagement: Council to increase planning and community engagement for economic opportunities (e.g., supply contracts, equipment rental, capacity building)</li> <li>- Funding: \$1.2 million available for capacity-building; community urged to take advantage of opportunities.</li> <li>- Christmas Events: Well-attended parties for elders, children, and staff; recognition for long-serving staff. \$65,494 Secured for 3 LNHL teams that include 25 families attending. Events to be planned for those not attending – in the works</li> <li>- \$16,750 has been secured for SRFN Communications App. It will send out immediate notices and can improve communications and close some gaps</li> </ul>	

**b) ELNOS Report**

<b>MOTION: 2026-01-08-05</b>	
<b>That Chief and Council approve the ELNOS Report dated December 2025 as presented</b>	
<b>Moved by</b>	Justin Urquhart
<b>Seconded by</b>	Angela Trudeau
<b>CARRIED</b>	By Consensus
<p>- Community member, Shirley McLeod provided Chief and Council a written report regarding the ELNOS Board meeting dated December 2025, as follows:</p>	

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- ELNOS is and Economic Development Corporation established in 1992 to stimulate economic growth through new business and investment. Their mandate is to improve the long-term economic prosperity of the region by assisting business which creates wealth and jobs
- The communities that are part of the ELNOS board are as following: Elliot Lake, Serpent River First Nation, Spanish, Blind River and the Township of the North Shore
- ELNOS board meets monthly. The board reviews financial statements, updates on the clients and review any new documents for new clients wanting assistance in developing a business
- All ELNOS board meetings are confidential
- ELNOS audit financial statements for the year are reviewed in August and a letter and a BCR is sent to each community
- Council appoints the member to be on the ELNOS board, a community member can be appointed
- A resume, credit check and an interview are required to be on the board
- Serpent River First Nation has always received donations for the Powwow among other donations
- Contact information was provided for William Elliot, ELNOS General Manager at 705-848-0229 (www.elnos.com)

**c) Zah-geh-do-win Report**

**MOTION: 2026-01-08-06**

**That Chief and Council approve the Zah-geh-do-win Report dated December 2025 as presented**

<b>Moved by</b>	Rebecca Csaszar
<b>Seconded by</b>	Justin Urquhart
<b>CARRIED</b>	By Consensus

- Community member, Shirley McLeod provided Chief and Council a written report regarding the Zah-geh-do-win Board meeting dated December 2025, as follows:

- Za-geh-do-win-is an Information Clearinghouse that provide healing and wellness resources to Aboriginal group, client and other stakeholders. The resources are available in a variety of ways printed brochures; borrow books from the library, videos and online sources etc. email@zah-geh-do-win.com

- Za-geh-do-win also provides outreach services in terms of workshops, presentation. The Library has infonnation dealing with health healing, bullying and family violence, lateral violence, Autism/FASO etc., fell free to contact the above email

- Board of Directors meets Quarterly, you don't have to be a Councillor to be on the Board, you can be a Community member but you have to have BCR approved by Council each year before Za-geh-do-win's Audit

Day One:

- Quarterly report from the Executive Director
- Review and approve budget for 2026
- Financial statement
- Correspondence from Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS)
- Currently working on Brain Health Assessment Bundle Dementia-Project

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- Received funding to continue the Wellness Series-Finding Balance in an Unbalanced World
- Posted for a Research and Event planner for the conference, hopefully to have the Brain Health Dementia Conference in 2026 waiting to hire a Research and Event planner
- Zah-geh-do-win has a book club that will be starting in January 2026

Day Two:

- Policy Development
- Approval of the Finance Policy and Collection Policy – December 2025
- Review and work on the I.T Policy and Business Continuity Plan (to be approved in the spring of 2026)

8) **Doodem & Committee Minutes & Reports:**

- None at this time

9) **Standing Items:**

**a) Audit Update**

- The revised timeline anticipates completion of the 2024-25 audit in the first week of February
- Subject to completion, a possible Annual General Meeting (AGM) may be scheduled for the end of February

**b) Community Safety Update**

- New pager system for the Fire Department (Who’s Responding” app) implemented for better emergency response coordination
- Ongoing Provincial Police Liaison expressed their willingness to attend community events, provide training ie. Anti-trafficking, Taser, canine demonstrations

10) **New Business:**

**a) Youth Employment Fund**

**MOTION: 2026-01-08-07**

**That Chief and Council establish a dedicated fund for youth employment, with funds from Chief and Council honorariums and apply a 3% donation requirement on all contracts awarded by Serpent River First Nation to be paid to the Youth Employment Fund**

<b>Moved by</b>	Angela Trudeau
<b>Seconded by</b>	Rebecca Cszaszar
<b>CARRIED</b>	By Consensus

- Over the years, Serpent River First Nation has relied heavily on Federal and Provincial funding initiatives to budget for youth or summer student employment
- From time to time, Chief and Council have identified other sources of funding to help in subsidizing additional students
- Chief and Council consider youth employment a high priority and are committed to fully supporting skills development and continuum of learning opportunities to strengthen our community for generations to come

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- Applications are currently underway for the summer employment opportunities program (Ontario) and the Canada Summer jobs program (Canada) for summer 2026
- Each year, funding limitations result in qualified students being turned away
- Successful communities are best developed by investing in their members and building measurable and sustainable capacity
- Installing work ethic and progressively building employment skills to augment formal education is essential in preparing youth for long term, meaningful careers
- Discussion on the creation of a sliding scale, with the criteria and structure of the scale to be determined at a later date

**b) 2026/27 Budget Preparations**

- Serpent River First Nation has grown significantly over the past decade and with expansion, there are increased challenges in ensuring that programs and services are delivered in a manner that meets the needs of our membership and are fiscally responsible
- Budget preparation and monitoring must start well before the beginning of a fiscal year and be monitored at regular intervals throughout the year
- Approved budgets are key in planning and monitoring finances
- Serpent River First Nation Administration is working on compiling and distributing budget preparation documents to all departments with a draft budget anticipated to be presented to Chief and Council by March 2026 for review

**c) Quarterly Meetings**

- Discussion took place regarding scheduling quarterly meetings around solstices or major community events to align with cultural practices and maximize community participation
- To remain on the agenda

**d) Staff Vacancies and Recruitment**

- There have been a number of staff vacancies that were on hold for recruitment until after the 2025 Election. Following the election, some new vacancies were created. At the senior level, it is essential to begin recruitment for the following positions:
  - Director of Operations
  - CFO or Finance Director
  - Human Resources Manager
- Other positions that are currently vacant include:
  - Environmental Monitor, Cutler Acid Site Project
  - Family Well Being Worker
  - Mental Health Worker
  - Special Projects Liaison, CDWAI
  - Project Liaison, Waasmoowin, HONI
- Serpent River First Nation members must have opportunity for employment and adjustments to posting procedures and language within job postings is required to ensure that barriers are not created

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- Succession planning should be at the forefront in all hiring and when positions are hired where the capacity wasn't available within the community, mentorship opportunities must be explored
- Serpent River First Nation will proceed forward with filling staff vacancies to restore full services with careful planning and consideration for hiring members first where possible

**e) Waasmoowin Energy Project – Update**

- Chief and Council to increase planning and community engagement for economic opportunities ie. Supply contracts, equipment rentals, capacity building etc.
- \$1.2 million available in funding for capacity building initiatives, Council emphasized the importance of promoting opportunities to the community

**f) RHTLF Meetings**

- Chief and Council discussed the distribution of the legal fees, interest and future use of funds for language revitalization, community benefit, etc.
- Question was raised on an LMC seat for Serpent River First Nation and it was clarified that Wilma-Lee Johnston still holds that seat

**g) NSTC Board Appointment(s)**

**MOTION: 2026-01-08-08**

**That Chief and Council do hereby appoint James Owl and Angela Trudeau to the North Shore Tribal Council Board of Directors for their 2025-2029 Council Term, effective January 8, 2026**

<b>Moved by</b>	Nicole Pelletier
<b>Seconded by</b>	Erin Carne
<b>CARRIED</b>	By Consensus

- Serpent River Chief and Council confirms the removal of Wilma-Lee Johnston and Michelle Owl from the North Shore Tribal Council Board of Directors, effective January 8, 2026
- Serpent River First Nation Chief and Council do hereby appoint James Owl and Angela Trudeau to the North Shore Tribal Council Board of Directors for their 2025-2029 Council Term, effective January 8, 2026

**h) Task Forces:**

- Council discussed the establishment of task forces in the areas of Human Resources, Off-Reserve engagement, Finance and Community Safety to address pressing issues in a timely manner
- A welcome letter will be shared with individuals appointed to the task forces, and a list of members will be provided to the community
- Discussion took place regarding the Community Advancement Fund (CAF) with community members(s) requesting clearer information and understanding of how the fund works, its purpose, application process and access
- Additional information will be brought forward

**i) Doodems:**

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- Personal invitations will be issued to existing Doodem/committee members to continue for the current Chief and Council term as well as a call-out for new members to be communicated

**11) Community Questions and Answers:**

- No questions at this time  
 - Community member expressed appreciation for Council’s transparency and hard work, especially regarding the recent financial distributions – also acknowledging the hard work of the Serpent River First Nation Finance Department during this time

**12) Next Meeting Date(s):**

- Thursday, January 22, 2026

**13) Adjournment:**

**MOTION: 2026-01-08-09**  
**That Chief and Council adjourn the Chief and Council meeting of Thursday, January 8, 2025 at 9:34pm.**

<b>CARRIED</b>	By Consensus
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