

SERPENT RIVER FIRST NATION

195 Village Road
Cutler ON, P0P 1B0



Telephone: (705) 844-2418
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SRFN Chief and Council Meeting
Council Chambers, 195 Village Road, Cutler, ON P0P 1B0
Thursday, January 22, 2025
Approved Minutes
6:00PM

Chair: James Owl

Council: Erin Carne, Justin Urquhart, Nicole Pelletier, Rebecca Csaszar, George Coughlin (zoom), Angela Trudeau (zoom until 7:45pm)

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 22, 2026 was called to order at 6:01pm
- Opening prayer and smudge by Councillor Urquhart
- The Chief reminded community members to utilize the established methods of communication when contacting the Administration Office(s). It was noted that staff are unable to respond to inquiries on Facebook Messenger (Social Media Use Policy), and community members were encouraged to follow the appropriate channels

2) Adoption of Agenda

MOTION: 2026-01-22-01

That Chief and Council adopt the Agenda for the Council Meeting of Thursday, January 22, 2026 as presented

Moved by	Nicole Pelletier
Seconded by	Erin Carne
CARRIED	By Consensus

3) Declaration of Conflict of Interest:

- None declared

4) Community Presentations:

- None at this time

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5) **Approval of Previous Minutes**

a) **Thursday, January 8, 2026**

MOTION: 2026-01-22-02	
That Chief and Council approve the previous Council Meeting Minutes of Thursday, January 8, 2026 as presented	
Moved by	Justin Urquhart
Seconded by	Erin Carne
CARRIED	By Consensus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was suggested that in-camera minutes be formally approved at an open duly convened meeting, subject to receiving a legal opinion. An update at the next duly convened meeting - It was noted that Serpent River First Nation is currently experiencing challenges accessing the members only portal and related passwords due to continuity gaps. Until portal access is restored, approved minutes are to requested to Executive Assistant to the Political Office at madelaine.oneill@serpentrivern.com 	

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

- None at this time

7) **Reports:**

MOTION: 2026-01-22-03	
That Chief and Council approve the Chief’s Report dated January 22, 2026 as presented	
Moved by	Rebecca Csaszar
Seconded by	Justin Urquhart
CARRIED	By Consensus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During this reporting period focus has continued on stabilizing operational matters within all areas of administration, supporting Directors and responding to imminent issues. Measures to improve efficiency for C&C meeting preparation have been implemented with the roll out of a task management system (Monday.com) that streamlines collaboration and information sharing. Directors will soon be on boarded, and follow up from C&C meetings will be expedited, improving accuracy and reducing bottlenecks - Onboarding for vacant positions and project supports is underway. There are currently 11 positions to be filled and we are hopeful to complete most onboarding by March 31 - Budget preparation packages are out to all departments with a timeline to work through reviews, edits and revisions in time for Council Review and approval at or before the March 26 Council Meeting - Weekly Directors meetings are ongoing with regular feedback and updates from departments. The process is being streamlined to ensure consistent communication flow and opportunities for ongoing improvement - A property management application for Housing and Infrastructure has been purchased and is in the data input phase. This app with inventory all properties and components operated by the department and provide a central file management system for tenancy files, inspections, rental fees and emergency and preventative 	

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maintenance work orders. There is also a Tenant App that allows the viewing of files associated with leased housing units, or community facility

- The HR Task Team (4 Members) has met twice and has recommended an HR Audit Consultant be engaged to provide a quick but thorough analysis of our risks and deficiencies within our HR Processes and files. Weekly meetings are ongoing with an 8 week timeline targeted
- The Finance Task Team (3 Members) has met once and has focused on providing feedback and options for financial reporting formats and timelines to improve our accountability to members. High level discussions included, software options, audit timelines, confidentiality measures and structure of the Finance Committee. Weekly meetings are ongoing with an 8 week-timeline targeted
- Welcome letters have been sent out to all who applied for the Off Reserve Task Team (13 Members). We expect to send out a poll for meeting dates targeting next week for the initial meeting
- In meetings with the finance team a dedicated person has been engaged to expedite the follow-up of outstanding reports. Maybe of these reports have entered the stage where funding is being withheld and cash-flow will be effected
- The Cutler Acid site project is approaching the tender phase (Feb 6). We are working closely to ensure that SRFN has improved economic opportunities during these project including employment, materials supply, equipment leveraging and administration/site monitoring
- Re-engagement of the CHRT 41 Projects that were planned initially during the 2019-2021 Council Term has been a priority
- There is constant activity focused on preparing for opportunities with the Hydro One-Waasmoowin Hydro Line Project with many online meetings preparing for the costing phase. Discussions continue with the pre-qualified contractors as well as potential industry partners in attempts to maximize opportunities for Serpent River First Nation
- With ratification of the FNFCs Ontario Final Agreement, focus is on ensuring that we evaluate our state of readiness and prepare for a shift in funding regime
- Meetings attended: Elliot Lake Council/Serpent River First Nation Meet and Greet
- Upcoming meetings: North Shore Tribal Council (NSTC) Meeting – January 27, 2026, Waasmoowin Procurement Board, January 29, 2026

8) Doodem & Committee Minutes & Reports:

- None at this time

9) Standing Items:

a) Audit Update

- The 2024/25 audit remains on track for completion in mid-February, first to Chief and Council for approval followed by an Annual General Meeting (AGM)

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b) Community Safety Update

- Councillor Carne has been in contact with the OPP regarding potential task force training and emergency response team training within the community. OPP representatives inquired whether Serpent River First Nation would be open to hosting the training, contingent upon the availability of suitable venues. Potential locations have been shared and Serpent River First Nation is awaiting confirmation to schedule next steps
- Community camera system work is ongoing, with potential funding sources being explored. However, bandwidth limitations remain a significant barrier to implementation. Considerations will also be required regarding privacy implications. Due these factors, full implementation is expected to take time

c) Governance Manual Adoption

- Council has been reviewing the 2021 Governance Manual that was previously approved in principle, with the intent of moving toward formal adoption
- Legal counsel (Nadijwan Law) has recommended revisions to certain procedural sections to ensure alignment with current legislative requirements and operational practices
- The goal is to finalize the outstanding adjustments so the document can be formally adopted with the understanding that updates may be made periodically through community consultation as required

d) Quarterly Meetings

- Council discussed aligning quarterly community meetings with the seasonal solstices moving forward. The proposed dates for 2026 are:
March 21
June 20/21
September 20/21
December 20/21
- It was agreed that a finalized schedule will be prepared and presented at the next duly convened meeting for formal approval and calendar integration

e) Community Communications App

MOTION: 2026-01-22-04
That Chief and Council authorize the signing of the Band Council Resolution authorizing Aviva Inc. with formal endorsement to upload the Serpent River First Nation Community Communications App onto Apple Inc. App Store platform

Moved by	Erin Carne
Seconded by	Rebecca Csaszar
CARRIED	By Consensus

- Serpent River First Nation Administration has engaged the services of AIVIA Inc. to develop a Community Communications Application on the Communikit platform. A number of First Nations in Canada have successfully improved their ability to reach their membership through the use of similar applications
- AIVIA is nearing completion of the Serpent River First Nation Community Communications App and preparing to present the solution to Serpent River First Nation. In preparation for formal launch, AIVIA is requesting a BCR from Chief and Council, which is a requirement for Apple Inc. to place the App on their download platform

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- Serpent River First Nation’s existing website and social media platforms both provide opportunities for some level of communication, but present a number of limitations and challenges in effectively reaching the highest number of members possible
- Once uploaded, there will be no cost to Serpent River First Nation members to download and utilize the app

10) New Business:

a) Sault Ste. Marie Urban Housing Development Update

MOTION: 2026-01-22-05	
That Chief and Council approve the engagement of a professional business evaluation monitor to work to provide recommendations to minimize risk, identify opportunities for external funders, and to provide recommendations on the move forward	
Moved by	Erin Carne
Seconded by	Angela Trudeau
CARRIED	By Consensus
<p>- Project background, provided by Consultant, Ryan McLeod: “Serpent River First Nation has committed to support the on-going need to provide off-reserve housing solutions to members. The project is designed for 51 townhouses with 2-bedrooms and baths each with a single garage and 2 – 49-unit (98 units in total) apartment buildings. The project is located on Sinclair Dr. between Dacey Rd. and Queen St. and the estimated cost to construct is \$57,520,887.68</p> <p>- Townhouses (Phase 3): The project has incurred costs to date of \$7,867,741.03 Remaining budget estimated to complete \$7,865,385.40</p> <p>- The foundations have been poured for 46 of 51 townhouses. The last 5-plex will be poured in late spring with the further development of the apartment’s property</p> <p>- Apartment Building (Phase 4) The project has incurred costs to date of \$4,809,439.30 Remaining budget estimated to complete \$23,658,321.95</p> <p>- The site service work is currently in position for next phase of construction of the apartment buildings. The subdivision agreement commitments for road servicing are in place with the City of Sault Ste. Marie and currently working with the city engineering department and PUC with CENLO engineering to get road acceptance for phase 3 and 4</p> <p>- Target is to have acceptance by mid-January</p> <p>- All materials are onsite to complete site service for next spring. Engineering for the apartment buildings is ongoing</p> <p>- Serpent River First Nation have been pursuing funding and grant opportunities with CMHC and expect to be pursuing new funding opportunities through the upcoming Build Canada Homes (https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/bch-mc/index-eng.html) programs</p> <p>- CMHC application process is slow, and Ishita (CMHC rep) has indicated the affordable program is near capacity</p>	

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- BMO has supported the urban housing developments with a line of credit of \$13.5M which is to be paid down as the units become rentable to allow for the work to continue progressing. Currently, between the Sault Ste. Marie and Elliot Lake projects, the line is drawn to \$9.98M with additional funds being supported from the RHT account until the takeout mortgages/financing is put into place on the project upon construction completion
- Initial discusses have taken place with BMO regarding arranging take-out financing for the townhouses upon completion of each block if CMHC or Build Canada Homes
- Initial discussion with the Chiefs of Ontario (Sam Abtahi) have taken place as they have funding for urban housing development. Further updates be provided as information is made available
- Letters for funding support were issued to Ontario and Canada, but we have not received a response yet”
- Chief and Council engaged in discussion regarding the housing development
- Concerns were raised about the feasibility of the housing development project(s) and whether they remain a prudent course of action moving forward from the previous Council term
- It was suggested that further due diligence may be required, including consideration of an independent analysis, engaging professional business services to evaluate the project and completion of a comprehensive feasibility study
- It was noted that construction has not commenced on the Elliot Lake housing development. To date, the project has advanced to lot development only with no building activity initiated
- This matter will be reviewed further and additional information will be brought back to the Council table

b) Boards and Committee Delegation(s)

MOTION: 2026-01-22-06

That Chief and Council approve the Council Portfolio Holders for the 2025-2029 Chief and Council Term as presented

Moved by	Nicole Pelletier
Seconded by	Rebecca Csaszar
CARRIED	By Consensus

- Council approved the Council Portfolio Holders for the 2025-2029 Chief and Council Term, as follows:

Internal Committees of Council:

- Bear (Health and Social) – Nicole Pelletier
- Deer (Language and Social Events) – Justin Urquhart
- Loon (Governance and Membership) – George Coughlin
- Eagle (Education) – Rebecca Csaszar
- Crane (Communications and External Relationships/Treaty) – James Owl
- Marten (Lands and Resources/Economic Development) – Angela Trudeau
- Turtle-Fish (Restorative Justice, Safety and Security) – Erin Carne

Sub-Committees:

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Child Well-Being Committee: Justin Urquhart
 Finance Committee: Angela Trudeau
 Youth Advisory: Rebecca Cszaszar
 Elder Advisory: George Coughlin
 Cannabis Working Group: James Owl/Angela Trudeau
 Land Claim Committee: Vacant
 EOCG: Nicole Pelletier
 Housing and Infrastructure: James Owl/George Coughlin

External Committees:

North Shore Tribal Council (NSTC) Board: James Owl/Angela Trudeau
 SRFN LP Board: James Owl
 Nogdawindamin Board of Directors: Erin Carne
 ELNOS Board of Directors: Angela Trudeau
 Zah-geh-do-win Clearinghouse: Nicole Pelletier
 Missisauigi Park Foundation: Rebecca Cszaszar
 Robinson Huron Treaty Litigation Fund (RHTLF): James Owl
 3 FN MOU (Serpent River, Mississauga, Sagamok): James Owl
 Waasmoowin Opportunities Consultation Council (WOCC): Justin Urquhart
 Town of Spanish/SRFN Joint Task Force: Justin Urquhart/Rebecca Cszaszar
 City of Elliot Lake/SRFN Joint Task Force: Erin Carne/Angela Trudeau

c) Elders Governance Funding

MOTION: 2026-01-22-07	
That Chief and Council approve a contribution of \$10,000 from the December 2025 Business Profit transfer from the Serpent River First Nation Limited Partnership, and that the Council of Elders provide a quarterly report on activities and spending. Further, the Council of Elders be invited to provide guidance during all Serpent River First Nation community planning sessions	
Moved by	Erin Carne
Seconded by	George Coughlin
CARRIED	By Consensus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customary Governance practices of the Ojibway of the Great Lakes, and more specifically, the Serpent River First Nation relied heavily on the guidance of Elders within the community. As the Indian Act came into effect, shifting from Customary Governance practices to a colonial system was essentially forced - Through the years there have been numerous attempts to reintroduce concepts of past governance practices, with minimal success. - During the 2003-2005 Council term, a Governance Manual was drafted in collaboration with community members and adopted through a motion of the sitting Council - Motivated members of SRFN have established a Council of Elders who meet monthly to learn together and discuss issues important to them and the community as a whole. To date, this group has been self-funded 	

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- The Council of Elders has a vision to formally exercise their responsibilities and help guide SRFN through the sharing of their knowledge and understanding of the practices of our ancestors
- The SRFN Governance Manual 2021 outlines objectives of Good Governance and contemplates continues improvement and a gradual merge of Modern Governance practices with our past Customary Governance practices
- SRFN Council has a responsibility to create the space and opportunity for SRFN to empower its people to create a return to Traditional Sovereign Governance (GM 6.3)

d) Youth Governance Funding

MOTION: 2026-01-22-08	
That Chief and Council approve a contribution of \$10,000 from the December 2025 Business Profit transfer for the Serpent River First Nation Limited Partnership to support the Council of Youth; that the Council of Youth, through Serpent River First Nation Administration, provide quarterly reports on activities and expenditures. Further, the Council of Youth be invited to provide guidance during all Serpent River First Nation community planning sessions	
Moved by	Rebecca Cszaszar
Seconded by	Justin Urquhart
CARRIED	By Consensus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young people, as many in our community recognize including the Youth themselves play a vital role in shaping a future that is both prosperous and meaningful. From our traditional Anishinabek perspectives, we understand that sustaining a strong and healthy community requires Youth to be actively engaged in First Nation governance today, so they can be prepared to address the challenges that will arise tomorrow - In previous years, Youth in our community made efforts to establish a Council, but those attempts did not reach their goals. Much of this was due to internal matters that needed attention before meaningful planning for a Council could move forward - While there is currently no Council of Youth in place, the current Chief and Council advocate for the renewal of a process to support our Youth in establishing a Council that will not only provide an opportunity for capacity development, and succession planning, but will also outline a formal process for their input into the advancement of our community - The SRFN Governance Manual 2021 outlines objectives of Good Governance and contemplates continues improvement and a gradual merge of Modern Governance practices with our past Customary Governance practices - SRFN Council has a responsibility to create the space and opportunity for SRFN to empower its people to create a return to Traditional Sovereign Governance (GM 6.3) 	

e) Serpent River First Nation Quarry Consultation

MOTION: 2026-01-22-09	
That Chief and Council direct Administration to work with the Council and Serpent River First Nation Limited Partnership Board of Directors to engage the services of a firm experienced in First Nation’s community	

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engagement and environmental monitoring to complete a comprehensive review of the project, including a full community consultation component and present a complete report that considers all risks, mitigation measures and opportunities	
Moved by	Justin Urquhart
Seconded by	Rebecca Csaszar
CARRIED	By Consensus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serpent River First Nation has been approached in recent years by numerous proponents interested in developing a partnership to process and supply aggregate from the SRFN west end quarry to various markets. Recently, through engagements with Waasmoowin Energy Inc. a potential opportunity has been identified with the Hydro One Waasmoowin Energy Inc. Project potentially requiring up to 1,000,000 tonnes of aggregate yearly over the duration of the project - Evaluated in 2003/2004 by DST Consulting, the SRFN quarry site has the potential to produce 90,000,000 tonnes of aggregate material. If the entire deposit was extracted, it could provide aggregate for approximately 90 years. The aggregate could be sold locally for community roads, building projects, the Huron Central railway line, and other provincial and possibly international markets - The quarry has been inactive for a number of years, however, it was not fully decommissioned. Some rail infrastructure remains as well as stockpiles of various grades of aggregate as well as the initial blast face - There are outstanding historical land claim issues to settle on the roadway leading into the quarry, as well as a possible Veterans Land Act entitlement to evaluate. These outstanding land issues combined with potential revenue generation opportunities, present an opportunity to fully explore the area and provide closure to land tenure issues, while evaluating possible benefits and/or risks to the community - The newly elected Council of SRFN prioritizes meaningful and informed community consultation leading to free, prior and informed consent by a majority of the community for all major developments - Furthermore, founded on our connection to the lands, waters and living creatures, Council places a high priority on ensuring that thorough, independent environment assessments are completed in order to fully understand all possible impacts on the environment and on the inherent rights of our members today and for generations ahead - Funding is available through a successful Fednor Grant for proper a consultation and environmental review processes - As stewards of the environment, SRFN holds a responsibility to ensure that developments that may impact our lands, waters and natural environment are investigated and mitigated, or do not proceed - Economic prosperity is a pursuit that we strive for and Council also holds a responsibility to develop opportunities that will improve the quality of life for our members now and in the future - Land tenure issues are important to fully understand, and may pose legal challenges 	

f) Darien Quarry Community Consultation

MOTION: 2026-01-22-10
That Chief and Council direct administration to work with the Council/Serpent River First Nation Limited Partnership Board of Directors to engage the services of a firm experienced in First Nations community

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engagement and environmental monitoring to complete a comprehensive review of the project, including a full community consultation component

Moved by	Justin Urquhart
Seconded by	Rebecca Csaszar
CARRIED	By Consensus

- Rankin Construction Inc., also known as Darien Aggregates, had been pursuing an impact benefit agreement with Serpent River First Nation since 2011
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in August 2018 under the Three First Nations Protocol, involving Sagamok, Serpent River, and Mississauga. Letters of support from each community designated Serpent River as the primary point of contact for this endeavor
- Serpent River First Nation Limited Partnership was appointed in 2023 to negotiate on behalf of Serpent River First Nation the terms of an Impact Benefit Agreement (IBA) within Serpent River First Nation Territory
- Darien/Rankin purports that the project to generate revenue, create jobs, facilitate training and foster prosperity for SRFN, Mississauga, and Sagamok over the next century
- A BCR for the support of the IBA was signed on September 23, 2025. The IBA was signed on September 29, 2025
- Serpent River First Nation is the closest Nation to the proposed quarry site (within 3km), and could experience direct impacts on its Reserve and Traditional Lands. A number of community members have continually expressed concern over impacts to the watershed and wildlife and although they acknowledge that there were information sessions over the years, they have continually signaled that concerns have been brushed off, and what the proponent viewed as consultation was inadequate and more of a formality
- Serpent River First Nation secured \$180,000 through a FEDNOR grant to facilitate a comprehensive and thorough consultation process related to the project. This funding was sought to support essential engagements, including: community meetings, legal reviews, financial assessments, and environmental studies as required
- To date \$20,000 has been spent for the legal drafting of the Impact Benefit Agreement (IBA)
- Funding was available for some time to carry out proper consultation and environmental review processes
- As stewards of the environment, Serpent River First Nation holds a responsibility to ensure that developments that may impact our lands, waters and natural environment are fully mitigated, or do not proceed
- Economic prosperity is a pursuit that Serpent River First Nation strives for and Council also holds a responsibility to develop opportunities that will improve the quality of life for our members now and in the future
- There are legal risks in rescinding the IBA that must be thoroughly evaluated

g) CHRT 41 Projects Update

- Serpent River First Nation with the assistance of NFCS initiated the planning of 3 construction projects that were identified as priorities for the community over the years

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- With the roll out of CHRT 41, funding opportunities for capital projects focused on improving access to services for Children and Families became available. Three priority projects were pursued, they include:
 1. Community Round House
 2. Social Services Administration Building
 3. Mount Lake Family Cultural Centre
- In August of 2025, letters were received by Serpent River First Nation from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) signaling closure of files due to lack of follow-up in submitted essential project reports and files required to advance the projects to the design phase
- Working with NCFS, Serpent River First Nation has been able to reintroduce the projects, and receive a funding commitment from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to cover the costs of the required geotechnical evaluations and legal surveys to bring the projects back to application readiness. Work has been done to evaluate each project and scale each scope to become fundable
- With the Ontario Final Agreement for FNCS imminent, the timeline to advance these projects to the design stage is tight but achievable
- To reach design by the end of February 2026, a small team of some of the original visionaries, was assembled to assist with rapidly developing the scope of each project. Once the Ontario Final Agreement is ratified, the funding potential will be greatly reduced as First Nations will move into block funding regimes
- Ongoing updates will be provided at each upcoming Council meeting (standing item) and a request for project team members will be circulated once the design phase is achieved

h) Winter Carnival

- Serpent River First Nation Winter Carnival is an annual celebration that takes place every winter. It is a time to celebrate Biboon. We embrace winter as a time for community gatherings and storytelling intertwined with our Culture
- Key staff were given direction to organize events for the Annual Serpent River First Nation Winter Carnival in February of 2026
- Date: Saturday Feb 7, 2026, Location: Lifestyle Centre, Time: 9am-2pm
- Outdoor activities include: log sawing, nail driving contests, maple syrup treats, snow shoe races, minnow race, tug of war, fire building, tea boiling contest, snow ball toss, snow sculpture contest
- Indoor activities include; germ activity, medicine pouches, canteen, chili contest
- Budget provided for Chief and Council review (approx. \$3,100)

i) Creation of a Bursary for the Arts

MOTION: 2026-01-22-11	
That Chief and Council support the development of a Serpent River First Nation Bursary for the Arts and work with Olthuis Kleer Townshend LLP to develop a not-for-profit body and the required procedural parameters to guide a panel of advisors to receive and distribute donations and contributions; and that Council receive a final presentation outlining the operational plan prior to a final approval	
Moved by	Erin Carne
Seconded by	Rebecca Csaszar
CARRIED	By Consensus

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- Community member, Frank Meawasige has approached Serpent River First Nation Chief and Council with the concept of creating a legal body to accept donations and other contributions focused on supporting the arts and artists within the Serpent River First Nation Membership
- Continued support for developing the artistic skills and techniques required to create art pieces and crafts that represent Serpent River First Nation's unique culture must be supported to ensure our generational continuity
- Legal Firm OKT Law has offered to donate \$2500 as well as in-kind legal services to develop of a not for profit body capable of accepting and distributing funds aimed are fostering support for artists outside of traditional educational support structures
- Support for the arts aligns closely with our cultural values and offers career development alternatives to formal institutions of learning
- Serpent River First Nation has members with artistic gifts that may not meet the criteria of academic bursaries

11) Community Questions and Answers:

- Community member suggested that photos of the former Chiefs be obtained (missing three) and that name plates be placed on each frame. Will look into addressing and obtaining these items
- On behalf of the Elder's Council, a community member expressed appreciation to Chief and Council for the \$10,000 contribution
- A question was raised regarding whether RHT related items/updates should remain a standing agenda item. Will remain on agenda moving forward
- Chief and Council were thanked for their attention to detail and acknowledged for their efforts

12) Next Meeting Date(s):

- Thursday, February 12, 2026

13) Adjournment:

MOTION: 2026-01-22-12

That the Chief and Council adjourn the Council meeting of Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 9:08pm.

Moved by Erin Carne

Seconded by Rebecca Csaszar

CARRIED By Consensus

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