

WED JUN 7, 2006

Land settlement may not be a done deal

Surprise and concern ran hand in hand last week when South Bruce Peninsula council learned of a land claim agreement (that would give ownership of part of North Sauble Beach to Saugeen First Nations) was about to be settled.

The claim, that has been ongoing for a number of years, is that Saugeen First Nations are the original owners of part of the north beach (just the beach area) from the Sauble Beach sign to Seventh Avenue. The band already owns the south part of the beach.

As well, the federal and provincial government will be giving \$12 million to the band as part of the agreement.

What struck council members immediately was the lack of input they had into the agreement although they do have representation through a lawyer, and while originally council believed it was a done deal, that might not be true.

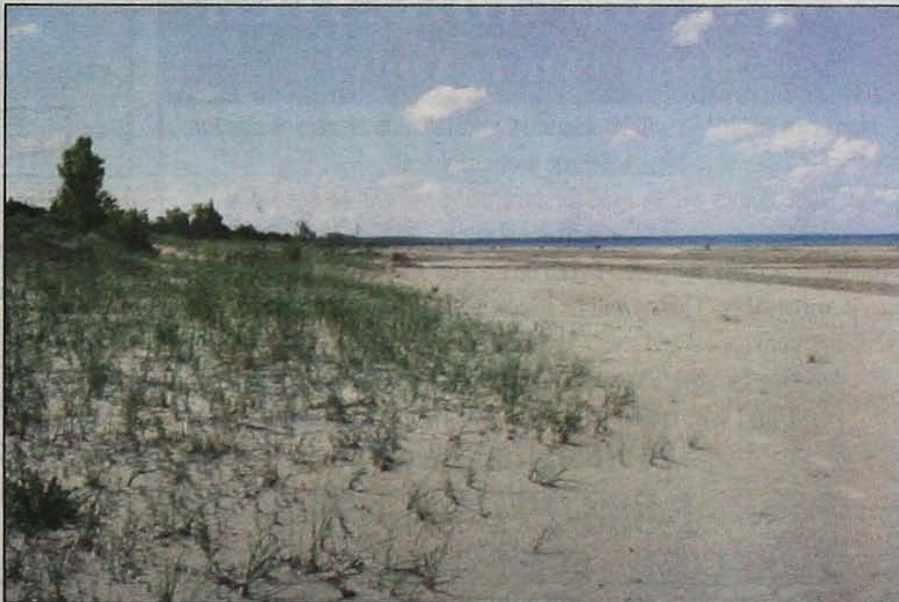
"I have heard that mediation is not a done deal and we have to challenge their claim to the beach. I believe at some point we have to get the information from our lawyer and then give our instruction to protect our interest for everything in Sauble to maintain some sort of infrastructure for tourism and revenue for the town" said Mayor Carl Noble.

However, when it appeared to be a done deal Mayor Noble had this to say.

"My main complaint is that the Senior Levels of Government seem to have two sets of rules, native and non-native. No one can work under that situation. The other problem is deeds which have been purchased, by people such as my late Uncle Perc Noble, do not seem to have any legal standing in the discussions which have taken place at this time. What is going to happen to our assessment on homes and cottages in areas such as Sauble Beach, North of Howdenvale and at Mallory beach. Is this the thin edge of the wedge in having land taken back? If we lose a lot of assessment how will it affect our ability to operate our municipality? Can we charge road tolls on roads which we maintain to the Reserves? In common law if you use a persons land for a period of time (I think ten years) you can claim squatters rights to that land. In our case we have used the land for over 150 years and we get nothing. My only hope is that we do not lose the right to use the beach north of the sign. As we have used it for so many years."

Council was to meet with its lawyer on Monday (too late for Echo deadline) to discuss where they are on the issue.

Lawyer Brian Barrie, who represents the interests of some individual landowners involved in the claim, said he expects it will take years for the claim to be settled.



The north beach area claimed runs from the main entrance to Seventh Avenue.