



Sun Times photo

INDIAN FARM OPENS — The Saugeen Indian Reserve is officially in the farming business as of Saturday. Above, left to right, Chief James Mason, Councillor Roy Wesley and Grey Bruce MPP Eddie Sargent cut a ribbon to mark the occasion. The band is running a

100-acre, cow-calf operation on a farm about a third of a kilometre east of the reservation. The Indians said that the band could be the first reserve in Canada to use land off the reserve in a business operation.

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Saugeen Indians in cattle business

By JOHN WRIGHT
Sun Times Staff

ELSINORE — The Saugeen Indian Reserve is officially in the cattle business.

Calling it an historical occasion, Chief James Mason Saturday helped cut the ribbon to open the band's 100-acre cow-calf operation located off the reserve.

"This enterprise is going to be both a trial for us and a challenge," said Mason.

The chief said the Saugeen band must not fail because both Indians and whites "are going to be watching us."

He said the government has been trying for 100 years to make Indians agrarian and now "they've succeeded here."

Approval of band capital funds for the purchase of off-reserve lands was announced May 1 by Hugh Falkner, minister of Indian affairs and northern development.

The band went outside the reserve and paid \$75,000 for a nearby farm in Bruce County.

The purchase was not without its problems.

In a reserve press release, the band council revealed "restrictions on the purchase were echoed by the department of Indian affairs and northern development and Bruce County in that Indian bands are not considered legal entities and could not enter into such a purchase."

For that reason, the purchase of the farm was registered in the name of Chief James Mason.

The release stated the band took out a \$52,000 mortgage and the balance was made up of band funds.

The release claims that the Saugeen may be the first reserve in all of Canada to use land off the reserve as an economic base.

While about 18 head of registered Herefords grazed on the hills, a sacred Indian sweet grass ceremony over an open fire was held below the official red ribbon to herald the event.

The band has about 40 head of registered cattle and the reserve is out for more funding to install extensive drainage work on the reserve for pasture land.

Plans call for about 1,000 registered head to be

raised on the reserve in conjunction with the farm.

Obe Rozendall, a federal government specialist, said the idea to purchase off the reserve was to insure that if the enterprise did fail, the reserve could recoup the money from the sale of the farm.

He said the farm will also be used to employ and train about 10 reserve residents each year in the practices of beef farming.

Rozendall said the band has an application into the ministry for money to hire a full-time farm manager.

The enterprise is being aided to some degree by the federal government.

Velma Hart of the Owen Sound Manpower office said Indian residents training on the farm are being paid a large percentage of their wages through a Manpower industrial training program.

The farm is located on Highway 21, about a third of a kilometre east of the reserve.

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