

2026 SAUGEEN SHORES MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE SURVEY

Section 2: Partnership with the BIA

BIAs are local boards of Council. A productive relationship between the BIA, Council and municipal staff can help identify challenges, develop solutions and ensure municipal decisions reflect the needs of the business community.

QUESTION 7

How do you see the municipality working with the BIAs to encourage meaningful participation and collaboration with First Nations, heritage organizations, arts and cultural organizations and other community partners?

Brian Putman (Not Putnam)

Mayor

Dialogue is essential in moving toward and maintaining a truly harmonious relationship with our rights holders in Saugeen Shores. I intend to encourage open and productive dialogue, seek consensus on issues that arise and to endorse publicly achievements made and efforts underway.

Jeffrey J James

Mayor

I would build on the proven and successful collaboration already demonstrated between the Town and the BIAs on projects like the High Street reconstruction and the artwork and mural by Saugeen First Nation artists, ensuring these groups are partners from the start on planning that involves heritage, arts, and Indigenous communities. As an artist myself I would like to include all the local artists in helping beautify our surroundings.

Luke Charbonneau

Mayor

I am very pleased to have been part of the effort to settle the long standing land claim and to have signed the Friendship Accord with the Saugeen First Nation during my time as Mayor. This work has opened the door to joint action on economic development between the SFN and the Town. The joint tourism strategy that the Town has recently developed in partnership with the Saugeen First Nation has created a great opportunity for enhanced collaboration between the BIAs and the First Nation business community. I am eager to lead the municipality in facilitating those efforts. The Town works closely with many community groups and organizations, I believe that we can encourage and facilitate productive collaboration between these groups. I was able to lead such an effort in organizing the Town's 25th anniversary celebration in 2025. I know that we can do even more of that in the future.

Diane Huber

Deputy Mayor

An annual or a bi-annual community group/organization/BIA townhall meeting or workshop could help build collaborative potential. The Municipality is working with SON on a joint tourism initiative that I believe will include a focus on trails development and linkages. Trail connections are not evident right to 'Main' Street and are generally along streets/sidewalks that go toward the Core. The BIA might start mapping these connections and encourage the strengthening of these routes as a way with connecting to the joint tourism initiative and to building connections with SON and Town staffers participating.

Odette Bartnicki

Deputy Mayor

I have learned that meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples should reflect the principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility. This means sharing information early, welcoming participation, and celebrating events and artistic contributions, such as the Powwow, evening market, and Bell Building artwork.

Arts and culture also have tremendous potential to build community and increase foot traffic for local businesses. Council, the BIAs and community partners should improve coordination and promotion, using both social media and public electronic bulletin boards so residents who are not online can learn about upcoming events.

It would be great to see the BIAs host an event celebrating our local First Nations peoples, with their singers, drummers and dancers invited to participate. They must drive what is appropriate and meaningful. The recent elections on SON with Sonya Roote becoming Chief may provide an opportunity to reach out too.

Don Matheson

Vice Deputy Mayor

I think it starts with talking to people and listening.

We have First Nations, heritage groups, arts and cultural organizations and other community groups that have a lot to offer.

The Town and the BIAs should be reaching out to these groups, listening to their ideas and looking for opportunities to work together.

The Council representative on the BIA can help make those connections and keep the communication going.

For me, it's pretty simple. Get the right people around the table, listen to what they have to say and see what we can accomplish together.

Jordan MacKinnon

Port Elgin

As already discussed, communication and relationship building is the key. If the relationship between these organizations and groups is strong, then the participation is already occurring before projects get underway.

Patricia Corrigan-Frank

Councillor Port Elgin Ward

Once again, the BIAs should have a seat at the table of all downtown cultural and heritage projects. Event coordination with the SON is important. The Town should encourage joint Tourism Marketing strategies.

Rachel Stack

Port Elgin Ward Councillor

The Town can act as a conduit between First Nations communities and local BIAs and encourage events that seek to bring together different cultural groups with our BIAs.

Tamara McDonald

Councillor- Port Elgin Ward

I would like to see us build on these relationships by bringing these groups into conversation earlier and creating more opportunities to work together on projects. The municipality can help by bringing these groups together, support their ideas, remove barriers where possible and ensure that different perspectives are part of our decision making as we continue to grow.

Eric Tolton

Saugeen Ward Councillor

The municipality should work with the BIA's as a facilitator, bringing businesses together with other community organizations. This process was evident through the development of the joint Tourism Strategy. The town can help build these partnerships through joint initiatives, coordinating resources and supporting funding opportunities that strengthen our business districts and the broader community.

Neil Sarginson

Saugeen Ward Councillor

There are many ways BIA's, Municipalities and First Nations can work together. I believe Saugeen Shores and SON are already working well together. I truly believe Arts and Culture are great equalizers and offer an open and balanced area where we can gain greater understanding. One possible way is to partner with local arts organizations to activate vacant storefronts for activities such as pop-up galleries and temporary studios.

Brenda Reeves

Southampton Ward councillor

I see our Municipality as a connector and supportive partner. It should bring BIA's, local First Nations, heritage, arts and cultural organizations and other community groups together early enough to help shape events, public spaces and main street projects. Respectful relationships, shared planning and joint grant opportunities can create initiatives that honour our history as well as celebrate and strengthen the whole community.

Cathe McIntosh

Councillor, Southampton Ward

In reviewing the Southampton BIA site, I see there are initiatives that bring First Nations art, culture and storytelling into the downtown. These are great! I would like to build on these initiatives by supporting the BIAs in their ongoing collaboration with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON). I would support joint downtown projects that bring together heritage and arts and culture organizations with the BIA, and advocate for municipal support to bring those projects to life. As Saugeen Shores grows these initiatives are going to be even more important to build and maintain – we cannot lose our downtown core areas to development; they are key to a strong and connected community.

Cheryl Grace

Southampton ward councillor

Over the last five years or so the Town has developed a positive working relationship with our First Nations neighbours, as economic development and tourism initiative partners, holding joint Council meetings, etc. I hope that trend will continue. During the public consultation for the Cultural Heritage Amendments to the Official Plan in 2024, the Town reached out to all of the groups mentioned above as stakeholders in that consultation. This year we've see several examples of the Town, the Southampton Arts Centre and the Southampton BIA supporting each other during the unveiling of public murals by First Nations artists, and in Port Elgin, the Town has invested in public art done by local artists to beautify the downtown. The possibilities are many and should continue.

Harry Mazmanian

Southampton Ward

Council needs to adopt an all encompassing approach to community projects by involving all and any people or groups who wish to be part of the process. I assume the other community partners that wasn't mentioned here refers to is residents.

John Divinski

Councillor, Southampton Ward

Saugeen Shores and Saugeen First Nation are working on a tourism strategy to make the entire region, a destination point. The Southampton and Port Elgin BIA's already feature are work by First Nation artists. It's expected more will come of the tourism partnership in the future.

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