

Province's highest court orders new chief election on George Gordon First Nation

Written by Dean Bear
Friday, 07 April 2017 17:23 -



Chambers of Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. □ Image courtesy of Saskatchewan Court of Appeal website.

The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal has ruled there should be a by-election on the George Gordon First Nation for the position of chief, but not for band council.

The initial Court of Queen's Bench challenge of last year's disputed election was initiated by band member Solomon Cyr, who cited numerous allegations of election wrongdoing.

The Queen's Bench justice found no fraud, but concluded there were 31 ballots that were unaccounted for and could have changed the election outcome. As a result, the court ordered a new vote.

Cyr says the judgement from the Court of Appeal was something that had to happen in order to bring importance to the idea of democratic rights of people, despite the jurisdiction that you are from.

"It doesn't matter whether you're from a First Nation, whether you are participating in a provincial election, federal election or at the municipal level. This gives a voice to the silent

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majority," he says.

Cyr says he is happy with the decision that came down today, but says there are still some questions that need to be asked in regard to procedures for the First Nations election.

George Gordon opted into the federal First Nations Election Act in 2014.

Cyr says there needs to be clearly defined rules on impartiality for who is the electoral officer and those working the election.

"Indian Affairs suggested that the director of operations for the band be appointed as the electoral officer in the case of a new election or a by-election, but that person is a first cousin of the Chief (Bryan McNabb)," he says. "So you can see the suspicion that would rise when a bureaucrat suggests something like that."

No date has been set for the by-election. McNabb was unavailable for comment.

Officials from the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs were also unavailable for comment.