



## Saik'uz Election Code Amendment Backgrounder

This document outlines the process for developing proposed amendments to the Saik'uz First Nation 2017 Custom Election Code and the amendments being put to vote. These changes aim to enhance the electoral process, ensuring greater transparency and fairness for all voters and candidates.

### Key Themes of Proposed Changes:

- **Council Composition and Rules:** The proposal includes increasing the size of the council to help manage the large workload and better represent the community. This change aims to ensure that it reflects the demographics and values of Saik'uz members. Please note that eligibility requirements will be clarified to ensure that all candidates have a fair opportunity to participate.
- **Nomination Process:** The proposed nomination process will require candidates to submit a prepared nomination package. This approach will create consistent timelines for declaring candidate eligibility, making the process more efficient and accountable for all involved.
- **Voting Process:** To ensure all members can participate in the voting process and stay informed, the proposal introduces trusted online voting methods and online notifications to keep all Saik'uz members informed. Clear rules will be established for the notification process and official community votes (plebiscites) to ensure consistency. Also, a proposed vacancy period—like a probationary period in the workplace—will allow for the prompt swearing-in of the next eligible candidate with the highest votes if an elected council member cannot serve due to unforeseen circumstances.

### Key Dates for Amendment Process

#### Amendment Vote

Saik'uz members can vote on election code amendments in one of three ways:

- In-person at the Saik'uz Band Office on **December 3, 2024, between 8am and 8pm.**
- Online from **October 28** through **December 3, 2024 at 8pm.**
- Mail-in ballots which must be received by **December 3, 2024.**



## **Proposed Changes:**

### **1. Clarifying Existing Code**

The current code will be revised for internal consistency and clarity in keeping with the spirit of the code and as per recommendations from legal counsel. The specific changes are available for review in the Background Document for Ballot Question 1 in this package.

### **2. Council Composition**

The proposal is to expand Saik'uz Council to include one Elder representative, as, and one Off-Reserve representative.

### **3. Council Residency**

Members of Chief and Council – except for the Off-Reserve Councillor -- will be required to reside in the Saik'uz traditional territory. If, upon assuming office, a Chief or Councillor does not reside within Saik'uz Traditional Territory, they will have 90 days to establish and prove residency in Saik'uz Territory. If this residency requirement is not met, their seat will become vacant.

### **4. Saik'uz Employee Eligibility**

If a Saik'uz employee is elected to a position on Council, they will either have their position held for one (1) term, or be required to step down.

### **5. Campaign Rules**

If a Saik'uz employee runs for a position on Council, they will be prohibited from using Band resources for their election campaign, including campaigning while at work.

### **6. Complaints and Appeals Board and Conflict of Interest**

The conflict of interest definition pertaining to the Complaint and Appeals Board (CAB) will be amended to define a conflict of interest between a member of the CAB and a candidate relating to an appeal as a family relationship limited to “parents/children, spouse, sibling, or grandparent/grandchild”.

### **7. Nomination Package**

Candidates will be required to submit a Nomination Package at the nomination meeting that includes a Criminal Record Check, the nomination fee of \$100, two (2) signatures from Saik'uz members endorsing the candidate's nomination and any other necessary documentation as required by the election code.



## **8. Criminal Offences**

The criminal offences that disqualify a candidate from running in a Saik'uz First Nation election shall be defined as:

- Any civil judgements or criminal convictions involving theft, fraud, bribery, or misuse of property in any jurisdiction.
- An indictable offence involving sexual assault or assault against any individual under the age of 18.
- Any indictable offence in the previous ten (10) years unless:
  - Granted pardon
  - Conviction was directly related to the recognized assertion of Aboriginal Rights or Title.
- Not been convicted of an impaired driving offence in any jurisdiction in the previous (10) years
- Not ever been removed from an elected office.

## **9. Governance Training**

All candidates will be required to complete governance training to be eligible for office.

## **10. Election Notices**

All election notices and notices related to community votes will be shared at the Saik'uz Office, via the Saik'uz website, social media, and in the Saik'uz newsletter.

## **11. Online Voting**

Saik'uz elections and community votes will include a secure online voting option.

## **12. Community Votes**

All official community votes, including for amending the election code, will follow the same rules as a Saik'uz Chief and Council Election

## **13. Vacancy Period**

If, within 90 days of the last election, a newly elected Chief or Councillor vacates their seat for any reason, the candidate with the next highest number of votes will be deemed to have won that seat and be sworn in.

## **14. Chief Experience Requirement**

The current election code requires candidates for Chief to have experience on Saik'uz council for at least one term, and this requirement will be put to vote.



## Amendment Process

### Community Oversight

The Election Amendment Oversight Committee (EAOC) was formed to ensure fairness and transparency. It comprises the former Complaints and Appeals Board and other Saik'uz members interested in participating. The EAOC guides the election amendment process and is at arm's length from the Chief and Council.

### Survey

A survey was open from **August 8 to October 16, 2024**, to gather feedback from Saik'uz members on proposed changes to the electoral process. Thank you to everyone who participated; your input was essential in shaping the amendments to align with Saik'uz community's values and needs. We received over **90 responses!** Your responses will help us improve fairness and transparency in future elections.

### Community Engagement

Members were engaged frequently throughout this process. We attended community meetings in Saik'uz and Prince George to discuss our efforts and gather feedback. In addition to these meetings, we held two workshops—one in Prince George and one online via Zoom. We also attended the Annual General Assembly (AGA) on October 9 and 10 to connect with community members. At all of these events, we collected feedback to help shape the amendments and the overall process.

### Questions? Contact Us!

- Email [elections2024@saikuz.com](mailto:elections2024@saikuz.com) or call the Saik'uz Administration Office at (250) 567-9293.
- You can also refer to [www.saikuz.com/election](http://www.saikuz.com/election) for more information.
- Keep an eye out for updates!

These amendments will contribute to a more equitable and efficient electoral process!