

Smoke Signals

Lhut Beh Nehudanih – They Told Us By Smoke



Volume 6, Issue 04

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**Community Connections & Growth:
April 2026 Update from Council
Member Melanie Labatch**

**Help Us Reach You Better: Saik'uz First Nation
Communication Audit**

**Spring Renewal &
Sovereignty: Governance and
Land & Resources Update**

**Saik'uz First Nation
Career Fair 2026**

Governance and Land & Resources Department Update

Is everybody ready for spring? We are thrilled to give a warm welcome to our newest team member, **Darian Goertzen**, who joins us as **Assistant Manager**. Darian will be providing vital support to Kasandra in her role.

Field Operations & Environmental Monitors

Our field crew and environmental monitors remained active throughout March with several key initiatives:

- Erik and Caleb continue to hunt furbearers for

Rodney, who is preparing displays for the new Cultural Building.

- These pelts will be made available for tanning if community members are interested in learning the skill.
- The team is currently undergoing training on a new portal designed to store our environmental data.
- **Fisheries & Healing:** Neil and Jimmy recently attended fisheries meetings in the

lower mainland, while James continues to support healing fire events and the Governance TGOC teams.

Governance & Jurisdiction

We are continuing our efforts to reclaim jurisdiction over our children and move toward the co-management of our territory. Our goal is to build a Saik'uz governance system that integrates Elected Leadership with Traditional Governance.

- **Land Package:** The Land Package is now complete! A



limited number of print copies are available—please reach out to Kelsey if you would like one. We are currently developing a communication plan for a future education program regarding the package.

- **Balhats Book:** The Balhats Book has been sent out for formatting and printing bids. We expect this to take approximately six weeks, with digital and print copies available for clan members soon.

Community Engagement: Thank you to everyone who attended our March 12th update meeting. We covered Traditional

Governance work, the Clan & Balhats work, and provided a TGOC update. If you missed the meeting and want to catch up, please contact Amber or Kelsey.

Traditional Governance Oversight Committee (TGOC)

The TGOC is a group of Saik'uz family representatives who use their knowledge of the territory and traditional practices to guide the elected government and the Land and Resources department.

- **March/April Update:** The TGOC did not meet in March, as the team is focused on planning a meeting for April.

- **Find Your Rep:** If you would like to know who your family representative is on the committee, please contact Amber Teed or Kelsey Antoine.

- **Water & Fish Forum:** We are busy planning a forum to discuss issues regarding our Water and Fish. The format will be similar to our previous Hunter's Forum—stay tuned for dates and agenda details!



SAIK'UZ
FIRST
NATION

AGA

Annual General Assembly

2025 - 2026

July 8th, 9th, and 10th



Guide our Economic Future!

We are seeking member and non-member individuals to join the boards of SFN's economic development corporations, **Tin Toh Forest Products** and **Tagi Resources**, and our Business Accountability Committee.



Seeking Roles For

- Community Position
- Industry Experience
- Business Development

Board members receive stipends and are covered by professional liability insurance.

Saik'uz member submissions will be considered for all roles.

Only Saik'uz status members are eligible for the Community Position.

What You'll Do

- Ask questions and provide insight
- Ensure decisions support the best interests of Saik'uz and the region
- Guide progress in a good way aligned with Saik'uz values

How to Apply

Send the following to **edo@saikuz.com**:

- Your full name & contact info (phone + email)
- If you are a status member of Saik'uz First Nation
- A detailed summary of your background and relevant experience

Deer

The SAIK'UZ territory is home to a very large deer population but is not utilized to the same extent as moose and elk.

Deer hide (Yests'ezuz) is used for traditional dress, footwear and drums.

Meat is dried and used for making sausage and peperoni. Sinews of the animals were used for bow strings, fish line, and thread; brains were used for tanning and bleaching.

The primary species in the SAIK'UZ territory is the mule deer with a smaller population of white-tailed deer. Mule deer are a medium sized animal with very large (mule like) ears and antlers that are divided into two branches. Like the moose the antlers points are not a reliable way to tell age, but yearlings almost always have two points on each side. Two-year old's grow large forks that have three points and older bucks can have four five and even more points with a small tine or eye guard near the base of the antlers. They have a distinguished, black-tipped tails and the coat colour can be reddish brown to greyish brown.

The males can reach 167 cm in height and weigh up to 155 kgs while the female (doe) is smaller 40-90 kgs. Deer communicates with the use of several glands acting as scent aids located on the outside of the lower leg, inside of the hock and between their toes.

They can create scents that indicate danger or leave trails for travel. Violent clashes can occur during the rutting period and bucks can lock antlers leaving them stuck together.

Yearlings are capable of breeding, but larger stronger bucks cover much of the herd.

The gestation period is seven months and usually one or two fawns are born in late spring or early summer weighing only 5-6 lbs. Fawns have no scent and are often left in covered grass areas while the females graze.

If ever you find a fawn do not disturb it. The mother is likely very close and will come back for it.

White - tailed deer are the larger deer species in the territory. Adult males stand about 90 cm tall and weigh 68-102 kgs, with females 45-73 kgs.

Their coat is a reddish brown in summer but changes to a darker grey in the winter with a large contrasting white belly and inside of the legs, undertail around the eyes and on the chin and throat.

The most distinguishable feature to this species is its triangular foot-long white fringe tail. When a whitetail runs its tail sticks straight up and bobs from side to side.

The most distinctive feature is the antlers which has a main beam the rises from the top of the head curves slightly backward then turns out and forward over the face.

DAKELH

Yests'e

Each main beam holds one to several unbranched tines (points). Rutting season starts in November when the doe enters their first estrus period and may have up to three if they are not bred.

Bucks eat very little during this time and lose a lot of their body weight fighting for breeding opportunities. Once bred the gestation period is 195-210 days and twins are very common with triplets being possible as well.

The fawns are covered in reddish coat and dappled with white spots and weigh only 3kgs. With no scent they are easily hidden in grasses but remain quite close to their mothers in the first few months. When they become stronger, they venture out further losing their spots in September and are weaned in October.

The average lifespan of a whitetail is about ten years falling prey to hunters and predators including wolves, bears, cougars' lynx, and coyotes. Many herds exist in populated regions and are lost in vehicle and train collisions but given premier living conditions this species can live to twenty years of age.



ELK

Even though Elk have populated the Saik'uz region in preglacial times the recent reintroduction of the species has introduced the Saik'uz people to harvesting the animal. The moose meat alternative has been welcomed by many families as the meat is very similar and preferred over deer.

The largest of the deer family these animals have repopulated British Columbia through migration and human redistribution.

Adult males stand about 140 cm high at the shoulder and can weigh 265-410 kgs with cows less at 130 cm and 190-270 kgs.

Their brownish coat is accompanied with a dark mane and white rump.

Their coats are very different throughout the seasons and the spring molt in May and June can leave the animals looking very ragged.

The bulls have large, forked antlers with ivory tips and can reach 160 cm in length and sweep upward and back over their shoulders. In addition to the tip there is five other pointed tines that are shaped up and forward. Unbranched spikes are formed on yearlings, a rack of three to four points on each side are on two-year-olds and by the time they reach three years old they can grow a heavier set with four or five points. The antlers are shed from late February to early April.

Large upper canine teeth known as Elk Tusks exist in both sexes. Very much like caribou these large mammals form large social groups and have grown to numbers in the hundreds if conditions are right. The hierarchal social group functions peacefully for most of the year but during the rut in mid-September the antics of the bulls has them quite aggressive to intimidate.



DAKELH

Yezih

They have a unique bugling sound that includes low chest roars and ends in high bugle and grunts. Breeding occurs in late September by the four- and five-year-old bulls.

Gestation period is eight months birthing a single calf (twins are very rare) in late May and June.

The calf is about 13kgs, and the cow will hide them for about three weeks before they introduce them into the herd.

Elk are wary and very secretive and primarily nocturnal.

They host an elaborate system within the herd that has scouts sending messages to the herd of nearing dangers.

They are quick to move if they sense any risks and therefore can be difficult to hunt.

Farmers frequently express frustration with large elk herds as they can decimate crops and seeded fields as well as destroy haystacks by climbing on top and urinating which deters any cattle from eating it.

Governance Manual Update

We continue to meet regularly as the Governance Manual Oversight Committee to discuss topics including: Council Roles, Responsibilities, and Structures. These outcomes will be shared with community at upcoming Community Meetings in both Saik'uz and Prince George in May, details will be shared on Facebook and in the next issue of Smoke Signals.

We would like to congratulate Maureen Thomas for winning the Community Governance Survey draw for a \$500 Visa giftcard! There will be future draws at upcoming Community Meetings.

If you have not yet filled out the survey, you can scan the QR code below for an entry into the draw.



Community Connections & Forward Planning: March 2026 Update

This month's update from Elected Council member Melanie Labatch covers a range of vital community initiatives, from advocating for federal funding to upcoming local events:

Hadih all. Welcome to my April contribution as a council member for the Smokesignals. I start this note with condolences to the family of Dave Fleur for the loss of a husband, father, grandpa, family member, and friend. May your family be comforted with beautiful memories in your grief.

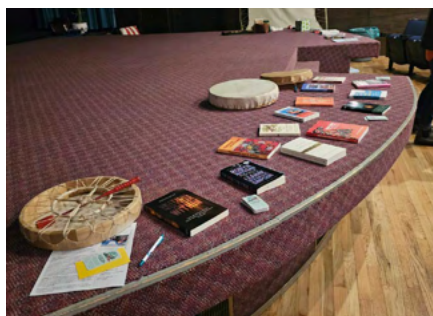
Youth and Education

As a council member, I attended the capstone project presentations at NVSS. Every graduating student must complete a capstone project where they present on experiences in their lives and goals for their future. It was very interesting and great to see so many youths growing and understanding who they are. I made sure to tell a couple of these youth to thank their parents when they get home for

all the opportunities and experiences they afforded them.

I was happy to see many working towards their goals. Those thoughts also made me think of our youth: What goals do they have? What foundational supports do they have? Our jobs as parents and family members are so very important. In our traditional ways, children were held in the highest esteem and grandparents played a major role in raising them with love and knowledge, while parents worked to support life.

There has been much



trauma that has affected our ways of life that we continue to work through. May each of us continue to do the work we need to be healthy and raise healthy children. As Gabor Maté says, the best thing we can do for our children as a parent is to work on ourselves. Remember to remind our children and youth that they are loved, wanted, needed, and cared about.

Post-Secondary & Lifelong Learning

- Encouraging the Journey: Years ago, Anzel wondered what universities her cousins and friends would attend. I told her to ask them to get them thinking about it. Maybe we could have an evening where we ask children what they want to do when they grow up and help

support them on those journeys.

- **Education Programs:** March's community meeting highlighted the areas members are studying. Education is for everyone! Reach out to the education department if you want to expand your learning or start from scratch.
- **CNC Brainstorming:** I attended a meeting at CNC looking for ways to increase learning initiatives. We need adult basic education for those who didn't complete high school. It is good to highlight these needs and brainstorm how they can be addressed.

Community Projects & Updates

- **Ballfield Project:** We met with the recreation committee, council, and Bob Radloff & Associates to discuss steps to refurbish the ballfield. We are looking forward to a space where all can play ball.
- **Governance:** The meeting for the governance manual development had to be rescheduled. Keep your

eyes open for the new date

- **Artemis Agreement:** A summary for community members regarding the Artemis participation agreement is forthcoming.

Healing & Culture

I attended the Healing Fire in PG on March 11th. These occur on the second Wednesday of every month. I hope everyone is taking care of themselves and meeting their needs in healthy ways.

While there, I saw Tina Alexis from Lhooskuz, who is working on her



PhD. She is planning a grease trail trip in June, and anyone is welcome to join. This is a vital part of our historical trading ways. Aba is one of her key elder advisors, and I hope to have Tina share some stories with us soon.

Advocacy & Support

I recently spoke with a member who has difficulty maintaining a connection with her children. It is difficult to ask for help when it seems no one is listening, but please—keep talking and keep asking.

We have a Child Welfare Committee where concerns can be brought for support and direction. Kids need healthy time with parents; even if they cannot live together, they can still maintain a healthy connection.

Upcoming in April

- **Community Meeting:** April 9th (second Thursday) with Wildfire BC providing information.
- **The Brain Project:** Running April 13–26 in Nadleh. This project educates on how the brain is affected by behaviors like using TikTok or drugs, versus cultural activities like

drumming.
**Personal Sharing &
Connection**

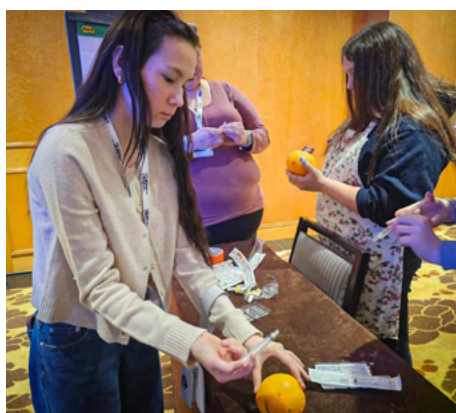
I recently hosted a “Brownies & Bravery” workshop at the Gathering Our Voices youth conference in Vancouver. I taught youth how to make raspberry sauce for homemade brownies while also teaching them how to recognize an opioid overdose and administer naloxone. It was wonderful to run into our Saik’uz youth group and others like Haden Teed while there.

I have also enjoyed the Tuesday evening beading and women’s time at the log building. It is so nice to sit and chat over tea. I encourage everyone to go have a tea or coffee with someone new this month or visit someone you’ve been meaning to check in on. Community connection makes us stronger.

Peace to all, and may we all see some joy within and around us.

In wellness,

Melanie Labatch
Grouse Clan,
Elected Council

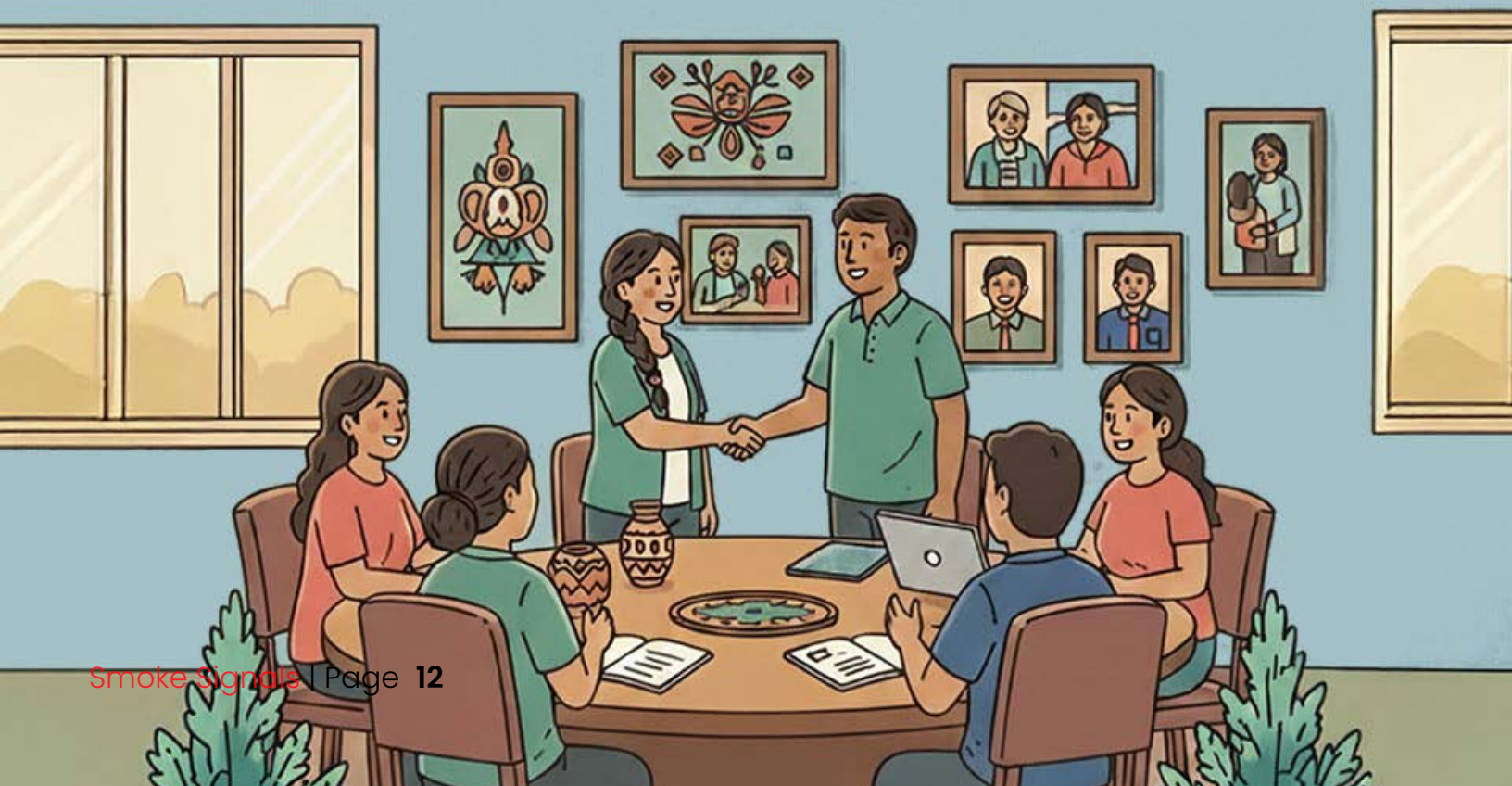


April 2026 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

April 9, 2026
4:30 pm to 7 pm

The Gathering Place,
Saik'uz Band Office

Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan





PHRASE OF THE MONTH

Naꞩusdli.
naꞩusꞩdli • ᑕᑭᑭᑭᑭ
I'm cold.

(lit. "I feel cold.")



Let's listen

Naꞩindli?
naꞩinꞩdli • ᑕᑭᑭᑭᑭ
Are you (one person) cold?
Are you cold?

(lit. "You (1) feel cold?")



Let's listen

Claudia Johnny-Martin • 4th
Darian • 6th
Neil Heron • 11th
Jessica Weins • 18th
Marie Boivin • 20th
Caleb Nome • 22nd
Lynda Derryman • 24th
Sasha Striegler Iannone • 26th

Happy birthday going out to my brother,
Harrison Quaw, on March 28. Hope you
have a wonderful birthday, bro!

Love, your big sister, Lacey



April CELEBRANTS



SAIK'UZ
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EDUCATION DEPT PRESENTS

CULTURAL DAY

April 16, 2026
May 20, 2026
June 10, 2025

3 pm - 7 pm | The Gathering Place
Saik'uz Band Office

Cultural Activities

Light Meals

Everyone Welcome

Have Questions? Contact:
education@saikuz.com | 250-567-9293



Career Fair 2026

This is your chance to meet face-to-face with top employers, industry leaders, and educational institutions all in one place. Whether you are a seasoned professional, a recent graduate, or just curious about what's out there, there is something for everyone. Bring copies of your resume.

WHEN: April 13, 2026 • 10 AM - 3 PM

**WHERE: Saik'uz First Nation • The Gathering Place
135 Joseph St, Vanderhoof, BC V0J 3A1**

For more information, please contact:

Saik'uz Education Department at 250-567-9293

or email **education@saikuz.com**

Saik'uz Education is offering resume support—come refine your resume with us.

Prescribed Burn & Firing Operations Training

Please be advised that BC Wildfire Service, in coordination with local partners, will be conducting a series of prescribed burns as part of the S-219 Firing Operations Training.

This project is essential for wildfire mitigation and specialized firefighter training. By proactively burning ground fuels under controlled conditions, we reduce the risk of high-intensity wildfires during the summer months.

What to Expect

Public Health: The Health Centre will be proactively notifying clients with known respiratory illnesses to ensure they are aware of potential smoke in the area.

Indoor Air Quality: Residents are advised to keep doors and windows closed during active burning periods to minimize indoor smoke exposure.

Safety First: These burns are monitored by professional crews. Please do not report these specific plumes to emergency services.

Contact Fire Chief

Erik Johnny-Martin
fire.chief@saikuz.com

Contact Health Centre

health.centre@saikuz.com
(250) 567-9773

Schedule & Location

Kick-off Date: April 23, 2026 

Approximately 9:00 am 

Project Window: April through June 2026 

Location: 16 designated areas situated between Stoney Creek IR#1 and Laketown IR#3 



SAIK'UZ
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Calling all Saik'uz Creatives and Entrepreneurs

by Saik'uz First Nation | Economic Development



The Saik'uz EcoDev team wants to help our creatives and entrepreneurs reach new markets! Whether you are established or just starting out, we want to promote your goods and services. If you're interested but not quite ready, please reach out anyway—we're here to help.

Who Are We Looking For?

To ensure we showcase your goods and services effectively, please provide the following based on your capabilities:

For Our Creatives (Artists & Makers)

- Descriptions: Tell us about what you create and the story behind your work.
- Photos: High-quality pictures of your finished goods.
- Pricing: A general price range for each type of item (e.g., "Beaded earrings: \$40–\$100").

For Our Entrepreneurs (Service Providers)

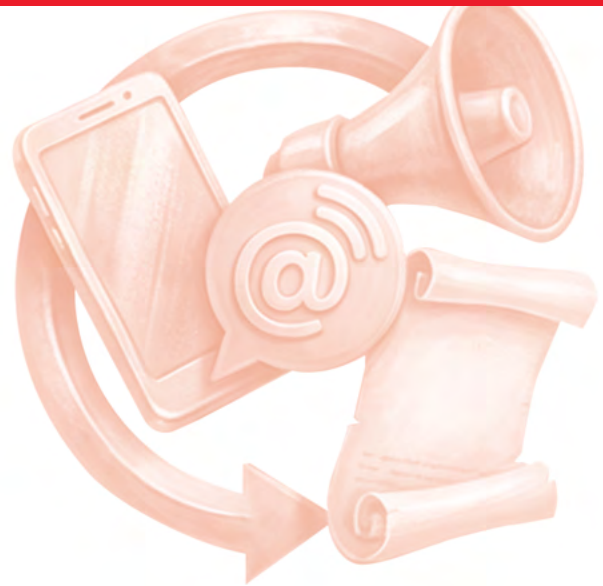
- Descriptions: A clear breakdown of the services you offer.
- Rates: A summary of your pricing or service fees.

Your info may be shared with people looking to procure Indigenous services, such as equipment contracting, diplomatic goods, or other Indigenous-services. You may be contact around Indigenous procurement opportunities.

How to Apply

Submit first and last name, phone number or e-mail address, and the information requested above to edo@saikuz.com.

ARE WE REACHING YOU?



At Saik'uz First Nation, we want to ensure that the information you receive is timely, relevant, and easy to find. This survey is designed to audit our current communication channels—from emails to town halls—to see what's working and what isn't.

Your feedback will directly influence our communication strategy to help reduce digital noise and keep everyone better informed.



SCAN HERE ^

COMMUNICATIONS
S U R V E Y



SAIK'UZ
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Share Your Stories, Ideas, and More!

This is your personal invitation to contribute to our next issue of Smoke Signals. We're always on the lookout for fresh perspectives, engaging content, and exciting new things happening in and around our community. Whether it's a personal essay, a photo series, a local hero spotlight, or an advertisement for your unique offering, your contribution could be exactly what our readers are looking for.

To submit your work, please email it to **communications@saikuz.com** with **"Smoke Signals"** included in the subject line.

Saik'uz First Nation

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