

Smoke Signals

Lhut Beh Nehudanih – They Told Us By Smoke

Volume 6, Issue 08



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2026 Annual General Assembly Highlights: Key Updates from Days 1 to 3

A short recap of departmental reports, governance & membership initiatives, major project developments, and community priorities.

Council Updates: Key Developments on Energy, Housing, and Community Programs

Back-to-School Community Gathering Set for September 22

Saik'uz Hosts Overdose Awareness and Sobriety Walk on August 31

Job Opportunities: Seeking Applicants for Multiple Community Roles

Say Their Name Project Awareness Photoshoots Coming This September

Free Community Skill-Building Courses Offered at the Band Office

Cover Image: Fingerlings at the hatchery
Photo submitted by Melanie Labatch

Editor's Note:

In the July 2026 issue of Smoke Signals, we incorrectly attributed the performances during the Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations to Joel West. The performance was actually by Grant West, Sam Holden & Playing for Keeps. We sincerely apologize for this error and any confusion it may have caused our readers..

SAIK'UZ FIRST NATION ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2025-2026 (Day 1 - 3)

Recap & Key Takeaways

Day 1: Community Services, Finances, and Member Questions

Day 1 focused on reports from Chief & Council, departmental updates, and questions from members. Discussions covered leadership, finances, services for youth and Elders, and community safety. Members also learned that the annual financial audit was not yet ready for presentation and will be shared at a future "Day 4" AGA session.

Several important updates were shared. Construction continues on the new Health Centre and Fire Hall, Dahut'en (the Saik'uz First Nations app) has reached 188 registered users, and 92 Chief and Council meetings, 52 community engagement events, and a workforce of 113 employees were reported. The Nation's membership remained at 994 members, with approximately two-thirds living off reserve.



From top left: Chief Priscilla Mueller with Councillors Jason Alexis, Rodney Teed, Robbie Antoine, Regina Carlson, Melanie Labatch and Marolyn Antoine.

Members raised concerns about Elder wellness checks, housing policies, school bullying, water quality, adult education opportunities, recreational facilities, and summer employment opportunities. Leadership also discussed ongoing Prevention Department deficits and the steps being taken to strengthen financial oversight and improve long-term sustainability.

Day 2: Governance, Membership, and Economic Development

A key theme of the day was accountability and transparency. Governance survey results showed strong support for increased member access to information and stronger governance processes. Members also approved motions supporting enhanced Elder programming, homelessness supports, and a feasibility study for a future community hall.

Leadership also introduced the upcoming Membership Code project, which will explore how Saik'uz determines its own membership separate from federal Indian Status rules. Community engagement is expected to continue through 2026, with a potential vote in 2027.

Members were encouraged to stay informed and participate, as approval would require at least 50% voter turnout and majority support from those who cast ballots.

Day 3: Major Projects, Stewardship, and Future Opportunities

Day 3 featured presentations from partner organizations, service providers, and industry representatives working with Saik'uz on major projects across the territory. Discussions focused on economic development opportunities,



Day 1 report presentations led by (from top left) Maria Sullivan and Shawnee Young (Education, Training & Employment), Lynda Derryman (Daycare), Desiree Thomas and Lesley Raphael (Housing), and Lindsay Antoine (Health).



Andreas Krebs with Michelle Ossi of Resonant Strategic presenting the Nechako First Nations Membership Code



Lisa Krebs presenting the Saik'uz Governance Manual and hosting for day 1 and 2 of this year's AGA.



Jason and Virginia from Innergex sharing project updates and outlining next steps for Saik'uz guidance on upcoming initiatives.



Day 2: Jasmine Thomas presenting an update on the Economic Development corporate structure.



Kasandra Turbide (Lands & Resources) taking the stage on Day 3 to highlight critical work in stewardship, reconciliation, governance, monitoring, and forestry.



Rebecca Broadbent and Ashley Raphael of UFFCA taking the stage on Day 3 to share key organizational activities and updates.



TC Energy taking the stage on Day 3 to deliver their report and updates.

environmental stewardship, infrastructure investments, and long-term community benefits. Updates were provided on Coastal GasLink, the Helhst'i Wind Project, Blackwater Mine, fisheries monitoring initiatives, and the Ne Too Infrastructure Project.

Members learned that the Helhst'i Wind Project was not selected in BC Hydro's 2025 Call for Power, but Saik'uz retains its 51% ownership interest and partners intend to pursue future opportunities.

Updates on Blackwater Mine highlighted both employment opportunities and environmental monitoring activities.

Strong community interest was shown in protecting water, fish populations, and the environment while ensuring major projects deliver meaningful benefits to members. Leadership encouraged members to identify themselves as Saik'uz Whut'en when applying for jobs connected to Nation partnerships and to seek support from the Education Department when needed. Tracking employment outcomes helps ensure project partners are fulfilling their commitments and creating opportunities for Saik'uz members.



Adam Thomas, FireSmart Coordinator, introduces himself and shares key goals during his first Annual General Assembly.



Recreation Manager Jeremiah Prince presents the ballpark plan, committee members, and grant funding updates on Day 1 of the AGA.



General Manager Tracy Appel presenting Day 1 updates on restructuring and ongoing projects.

Council Updates: Key Developments on Energy, Housing, and Community Programs

Insights from the North Central Transmission Line meetings, local housing initiatives, and upcoming summer events.

Hadih all, I start this submission with prayers to bless JR's soul and to continue to surround the family with love and support after his passing.

We are now full-blown into summer. Our long days keep the sky bright at night, and you can constantly hear the birds. The berries have been so abundant! When the rain comes, I think of how good the water is for the bush and also all the gardens, etc., and the flowers all look so good. We are blessed while other parts of the province are fighting fires, and we pray for safety for all and quick rejuvenation.

Here are some of the council workings that I've been participating in...

We had a community meeting at the beginning of June for the North Central Transmission Line (NCTL), where representatives from BC Hydro came to share their plans for the section from Prince George to the other side of Stella. The Province of BC has grouped Saik'uz in with Lheidli, Nazko, Nadleh, and Stella as part of Section One of the NCTL development from Prince George to Prince Rupert. All the nations signed on in January, stating they were signing under duress, as the agreements were not as the nations wanted. The agreement will see some benefits to the communities and some economic development while the twinning of the large powerlines

is built and electricity is transported. I am glad for the voices of the Yinka Dene-led review of projects like this and that many environmental issues were brought forward for the province to take heed of. The Yinka Dene Water Law is also acknowledged and part of the workings of the agreement.

The Governance Manual is still being developed by Lisa Krebs and the oversight committee. The committee also welcomed youth to attend, and there was a youth meeting to hear from youth about the governance work. This led to a discussion about a youth council, and I am very pleased to share that a youth council will be developed for youth 13–18 years old. Keep your eyes out to learn what will happen with that.

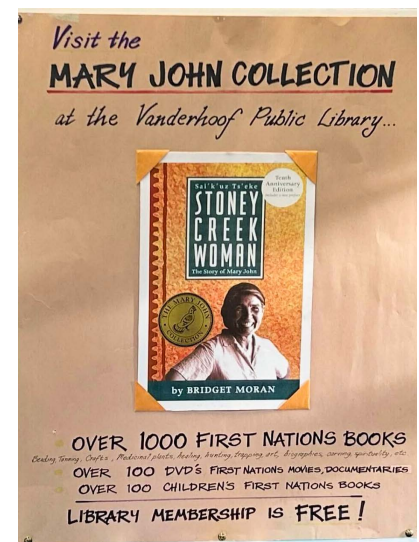
The membership code is in the development process, where Saik'uz will have a custom membership code to guide who will be eligible to belong to our nation. This process will be ongoing over a year. We have had one off-reserve meeting where about 10 off-reserve members came to participate, and it was also discussed at the AGA. Keep your eyes open to be heard and use your voice.

There was a boarding class action presentation in early June to educate and apply for the class action suit. This is for any persons who were

boarded away from home to attend school. This is not for the school itself, but for the boarding portion. Many had already applied for the class action, and it was good to be aware of this class action.

I was able to attend the June Healing Fire in Prince George, but not July's as our AGA was on the same date. It is usually the second Wednesday of the month by the courthouse. Everyone is welcome to share some food and have connection time.

NVSS saw our grads complete their Grade 12. I gave the welcome as part of council and shared this poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson: SUCCESS "To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the beauty in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier



Mary John Collection poster.



July 1st Annual Mary John Walk

because you lived here. This is to have succeeded." I wish for everyone to succeed.

June 11th also saw the reopening of the Mary John Collection at the Vanderhoof Public Library. This collection hosts Indigenous books from over the decades. Much work by Craig Hooper and George LaBrash went into the evening. It was a beautiful celebration, and I am grateful for all those who supported the work.

Nak'azdli hosted an open house to tour their timber-built house. The house was designed



Image from the recent National Indigenous Peoples Day.



Participants gather for the annual Mary John Walk on July 1st, traveling together from Saik'uz to Vanderhoof in community spirit.

to stand twice as long as a traditionally built home. They had a grant to design and build this show home. The design has laminated 2x4s to create the walls and roof. The vapor barrier is on the outside of the wood, and it was finished with concrete siding for fire resistance. It was great to see innovations like this. The following day, Regina and I attended a presentation on a housing tool that is being developed. This tool can be used by nations to help streamline the process of building houses—from first thoughts to funding to building the finished homes. The tool gives steps to take to meet all the milestones to complete homes. It was very educational and definitely had us brainstorming. Along the housing theme, there is a grant coming out for 'shovel-ready' projects to build homes. We are looking into how Saik'uz can benefit from this. There is also a grant for building or purchasing a home off-reserve to help with member housing needs. Some definite potential there. We will keep investigating to see if we

can utilize these programs.

Indigenous Day celebrations on June 19th were great! So many smiling faces and lots of activities for all. Great work to the team that came together to host the event. Definitely a celebration day.

Economic Development had a survey and findings project to see what members wanted for economic development. This information will help guide the path we take in business and building own-source revenue. There was also a presentation at the AGA for economic development. Part of that presentation was community information on the Participation Agreement (PA) for the Artemis Blackwater Gold project. Remember, the mine itself is not on our territory, but the power lines and access are. Our territory is definitely affected by this mine, and the agreement presentation was for band members only to listen to.

Northern Health (NH) hosted a virtual meeting to share some of their work and open discussions for strategic planning. These will be ongoing. NH is currently building a primary care building on the site of the old hospital (the former CNC building by the hospital). They are searching for a name and have reached out for direction from Saik'uz. It will be a Dakelh name as it is on Dakelh territory. We also discussed the importance of local art in the building, so keep your ears open for some opportunities for artists. A photo of the build was submitted to the Ministry of Health, and it was unfortunate they didn't invite



Children enjoying the bouncy castles during the Vanderhoof Centennial celebration festivities.

Chief Priscilla to be part of it. We need to keep those reminders heard. We have to learn to work together better. NH provides for our members' health as well.

I participated in a webinar on small-scale First Nations electricity creation grants that will be opening soon. The webinar was province-wide to share about the program and to have nations start to think about smaller-scale projects for power creation. There may be some opportunity there. We met with the school district as part of the Local Education Agreement (LEA) that we signed. We brought up the need for good learning, safety, inclusivity, and connection. We all need to support education for our grade school and secondary learners. This will be a regular table to keep the school district accountable and to have some collaboration to help students succeed.

July 1st saw a wonderful turnout for the annual Mary John Walk from Saik'uz to Vanderhoof. Over 100 people came to walk, bike, and connect on the walk to town. Renee, as always, drove behind the group and gave anyone a



Having fun at Vanderhoof Centennial.

ride if they needed it. It was really good community time. I am grateful for the walk every year.

The Vanderhoof centennial weekend saw a great music festival at Riverside. Chief Priscilla gave a very good speech at the opening on Saturday. She reminded us of our history and the relationship that has existed between

Over 100 people came to walk, bike, and connect on the walk to town.

Vanderhoof and Saik'uz. She also reminded us of the tragic loss of Corine Thomas and her baby during Vanderhoof's 50th-year celebration, and while there has been much improvement in working together, more is needed. We are on unceded land, and that needs to always be acknowledged.

We signed our CSFS yearly service delivery agreement. CSFS is our provider for health and children and family services. CSFS will come present to the community during one of the monthly community engagement sessions on the second Thursday of the month. We will post when they will be presenting. CSFS is also our Indigenous Governing Body (IGB) for our children, youth, and families. They are currently working, in collaboration with member nations, to create our own legislation to take the place of MCFD. There have been community engagements, and there will continue to be opportunities for members to have their voices heard regarding the creation of this law. Keep your eyes open for these opportunities.

CSFS will host a one-day AGA on Monday, Sept. 21st in Prince George. Then, immediately following, there will be the CSFS Elders Conference Sept. 22–24, 2026, in Prince George. Please keep your eyes open for details and how elders can sign up to participate. The Elders Conference will also feature the book launch for the collaboration between CSFS and UNBC for the Ts'iyewh Ts'hilhtus: Strength For All book. This is the book I was so fortunate to be involved in with UNBC

to interview elders from around the member nations for the publication.

In mid-July, I was in Fort St. John for a tour of a compressor station. There were many questions, and it was good to learn about the process. I feel the more we learn about issues, the more questions we can ask. The compressor stations compress the natural gas to increase the flow down the pipeline. One thing that really came to mind is water and the environment. I do understand the pipeline is in the business of transportation of gas and that the production of natural gas extraction is a different part of the business. It is very important to look at the entire picture. I inquired about the use of water and chemicals for production and how much area of natural gas reserves (the pockets underground from which natural gas is extracted) is utilized to create the natural gas that is transported. We need to encourage open discussions for all questions. I appreciated that the company stated they would follow up via email for those unanswered questions. Our environment sustains us, and we have to advocate to take care of all land.

We have had many meetings on the health centre and its future completion after many delays. Here is looking forward to a completed health centre in a couple of months and a move into this space for holistic health. We had a tour walkthrough at the end of July, and it is a beautiful space. I cannot wait for members to be using this building soon! Sometimes community members reach out for support. Remember, we are stronger when we work to support one another. Everyone deserves to be heard and seen. I am thankful to be able to listen and be present when people

need to be heard.

I was introduced to listen to Tara Brach a few years ago. She does good podcasts, and this is a good one: The Honesty Challenge – Getting More Truthful with Ourselves and Our World. You can find this on her website, tarabrach.com, if you want to have a listen.



CSFS Youth Baseball days.

"When you see a good person, think of becoming like her/him. When you see someone not so good, reflect on your own weak points."



Enjoying the summer!

Quote by Confucius: *"When you see a good person, think of becoming like her/him. When you see someone not so good, reflect on your own weak points."*

Prayers for everyone. Prayers for parents to be present, patient, and involved with their children,



Fun at the Culture Week at the Multiplex.



Fun at the Culture Week at the Multiplex.



Tour at the sturgeon hatchery.



Alicia Quaw's grad as a dental hygienist.



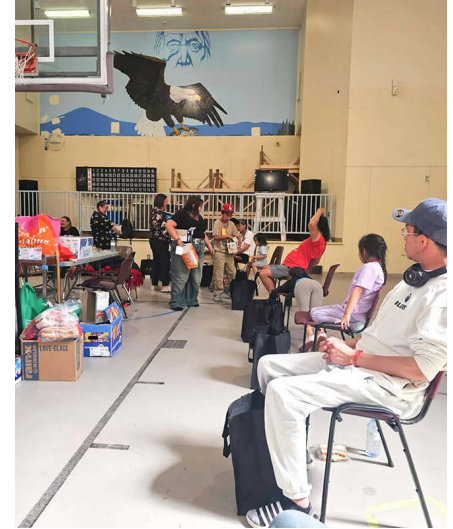
New builds progressing: Fire hall.



New builds progressing: Wood shed.



Beautiful wood carving at Chetwyn.



The open house for the upcoming voluntary/non-voluntary treatment centre for Prince George.

and all children, and to see the inherent gift of children in our lives. Prayers for those who have medical issues, that they will breathe and have peace, and for healing in their bodies and minds. Prayers that each of us is kind to one another and kind to ourselves. Prayers for the air, the water, the land, and all the animals.

In wellness,
Melanie Labatch
Grouse Clan
Elected Council



PHRASE OF THE MONTH

Hadih. Saik'uz whust'en.
<ᠳᠠ. ʔᠰᠠᠢᠭᠤᠰ ᠬᠤᠰᠤᠳᠤᠨ.

Hello. I live at Saik'uz.

Hadih (<ᠳᠠ) - Hello

Saik'uz (ʔᠰᠠᠢᠭᠤᠰ) - Saik'uz

Whust'en (ᠬᠤᠰᠤᠳᠤᠨ) - I reside/live

Priscilla Mueller • 3rd
Georgina Mason • 8th
Lesley Raphael • 11th
Justin James Patrick • 17th
Carla Tumbaga • 21st
Vincent Wickham • 29th



August CELEBRANTS



Join us for a free canning workshop on August 18th at 10am at the Saik'uz Band Office. We will be making Pickled Vegetables and Jam.

Please Contact
Chantel at
250-567-9293
Space is limited

Lunch and snacks will
be provided.



WITH SINCERE APPRECIATION

THANK YOU!

ANNUAL GENERAL
ASSEMBLY 2025-2026

Sincere thanks to our valued sponsors and partners whose generous support made this year's assembly a great success.



Community
Power



Four Rivers



Blackwater
Mine



A DIVISION OF
COASTAL COMMUNITY
CREDIT UNION

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Dimosdzen	Dimosk'elh'az	Whulhnatdzen	Whulhtatdzen	Whulhditdzen	'Utsunts'usyih	Sumdi																								
 <i>August</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

The time of the minor run (of fish/salmon)



SAIK'UZ
FIRST
NATION

SCHOOL SUPPLIES FORMS AND CONSENT FORMS FOR SD91



Collect your forms at the
band office or email
education@saikuz.com
to request the forms

**Learn more
details in this
post description**

Submit forms to the Education Department by August 31



BACK-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNITY GATHERING



When: Tuesday, September 22 • 5 PM – 7 PM

Where: The Gathering Place – Saik'uz Band Office

Contact: education@saikuz.com

Fun activities and meals are provided

SAY THEIR NAME PROJECT

HOSTED BY
WILD & FEARLESS PHOTOGRAPHY
GOOD OMEN BEADING



DAWN BADINE WITH POSTER OF MISSING SAIK'UZ MEMBER JAY RAPHAEL

PHOTOSHOOTS FOR AWARENESS OF MISSING & MURDERED
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

WE ORGANIZE PHOTOSHOOTS AIMED AT RAISING
AWARENESS FOR MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS
INDIVIDUALS IN YOUR AREA.

DURING THESE SESSIONS, A BANNER WILL BE PROVIDED
FOR YOU TO DISPLAY A RED HANDPRINT ALONG WITH THE
NAME OF SOMEONE YOU WISH TO HONOR. THIS BANNER
WILL ACCOMPANY ALL AWARENESS EVENTS AND WILL BE
CONTINUOUSLY UPDATED BY EACH COMMUNITY.

SAIK'UZ FIRST NATION

COMING SEPTEMBER 2026
POTLATCH HOUSE
MUST REGISTER VIA EMAIL OR TEXT TO
250-570-2659
GOODOMENBEADING@GMAIL.COM



SAIK'UZ
FIRST
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OVERDOSE AWARENESS AND SOBRIETY WALK

Fri, August 31, 10 AM

The Gathering Place, Saik'uz Band Office

Walk with us for Sobriety and
Overdose Awareness

Everyone welcome!



We encourage everyone to wear purple and to bring their purple hearts and photos of loved ones lost.

We walk to honour those on the path to sobriety and to remember those we have lost to overdose.





Grow Your Skills, Find Your Path: Join Us for Free in Your Community

Free 1-Day Courses to Build Skills for Life, School & Work

July 14	July 21	August 04-05
Wellness Matters 1 Day Course	Computer Basics 1 Day Course	Digital Fundamentals 2 Day Course
August 11	August 18	
Money Matters For Indigenous People 1 Day Course	Find Your Future 1 Day Course	

To Register Contact:
Mariah Sullivan
250-567-9293 Ext 201
mariah.sullivan@saikuz.com

9am-3pm
At the Band Office
Lunch provided



College of
New Caledonia



CALP PORTAL
COMMUNITY ADULT LEARNING PROGRAM



Join our Team and Serve Our Community!

- **Band Designate Representative**
- **Media Technician**
- **Security Officer**
- **Supported Child Development Worker**
- **Tsiyanne Ghuhinli (NNADAP Wellness Worker)**
- **Youth Support Worker, Interim**
- **Custodian**
- **Events Coordinator, Interim**
- **Firewood Coordinator**
- **Manager, Health**

**SCAN HERE
FOR MORE INFO**



How to Apply

Submit your CV/Resume to:

Email: resume@saikuz.com

(Please specify the position title in the subject line)

In Person: Saik'uz Band Office — 135 Joseph St., Vanderhoof, BC

FUNERAL BALHATS FOR THE LATE



Marie Raphael

August 6, 1959 - July 22, 2025

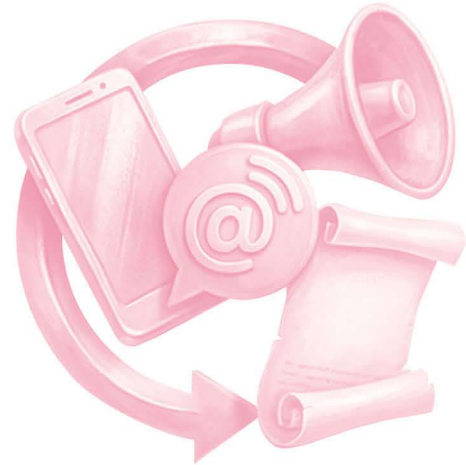


WHEN : 12pm - October 10, 2026

WHERE: Multiplex

Opportunity for Tachek Whut'en to pay back chairs &
Noolhkaih Whut'en to be seated please contact
Albert 778-916-1819 or Karen 250-567-8074
for any information

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 the QR code above to participate in the survey

COMMUNICATIONS
SURVEY



SAIK'UZ
FIRST
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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

135 Joseph Street Saik'uz, BC V0J 3A1
(250) 567-9293
band.office@saikuz.com