

Smoke Signals

Lhut Beh Nehudanih – They Told Us By Smoke

Volume 6, Issue 02

oonun ts'uzyen nats'udutsun ᑭᓄᓂ ᑭᓄᓂ (February)

AGA Annual General Assembly 2024-2025

**Marrying Tradition with
Modernity & Strengthening
Our Community Connections**

Education, Training & Employment Updates
Upcoming Events: Community Meetings, Cultural
Days, and Important Reminders for Families

**Annual General Assembly
Building Our Future on
Sovereignty and Tradition**

**Updates on Traditional Laws,
Territory Monitoring
and the Hunter's Forum**

SUMMARY

Governance and Land & Resources Department Update

Hoping you are all staying warm.

Field Operations and Monitors Program

The work of the environmental monitors and field crew in December included:

- **Erik and Caleb** are hunting furbearers for Rodney to prepare displays for the new Cultural Building.
- **Monitors** are cutting trails and providing wood for Elders in the community.
- **Erik and Caleb** worked on predator management.
- **James** is supporting healing fire events and the Governance TGOC teams.

Governance Overview

We continue our work to gain back jurisdiction over our children and to co-manage and make

decisions about our territory. Together, Elected Leadership and Traditional Governance are building a Saik'uz governance system with greater community involvement in decision-making.

The Clan meetings and the Traditional Governance Oversight Committee (TGOC)—a group of Saik'uz family representatives—are key to this work. We are in the early stages, and we welcome community participation. Kelsey is currently participating in the Jurisdiction meetings.

Clan & Balhats Work

Balhats Book

The Balhats Book has reached its final approval stage, and we are so happy to report that it has now completed its last step of Chief and Council approval! Thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to get it across the finish line.

We are now consulting media companies to format it and prepare it for print. Stay tuned; the digital copy will be ready soon, and in the new year, we will have it in printed form!

TGOC & Keyoh Meetings

About the TGOC

The Traditional Governance Oversight Committee (TGOC) is a group of Saik'uz family representatives who have knowledge of the traditional territory, Saik'uz peoples, and our practices, and who are interested in participating and learning. The purpose of the TGOC is to:

- Bring traditional governance into practice.
- Work with the elected government and Land and Resources Department to support and offer guidance.
- Provide traditional and current knowledge about Saik'uz territory.

We have sought input on who would like to join the committee as their family representative, and we continue to be open to your feedback. Please contact **Amber Teed** or **Kelsey Antoine** if you would like to know who your family representative is.

January Report

The TGOC did not meet in January due to overwhelming schedules. In February, we will return to our regular monthly meeting schedule. Highlights for January included the team presentation at the Annual General Assembly and preparation for the upcoming Hunter's Forum.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our Harvester Calendar. Kelsey will be compiling all the information you provided, and it will be available at the Hunter's Forum.

Upcoming Events: Hunter's Forum

Dates: February 3 – 5, 2026

The forum will focus on:

- Identifying values on the land.
- Priority areas for protection and restoration.
- Access for trails and cabins.
- Gathering input on hunting protocols from a Saik'uz perspective.

For more information, contact Kelsey Antoine at 250-567-9293.



The poster for the Hunter's Forum features a brown, textured background. At the top left is the Saik'uz First Nation logo. The title 'HUNTERS FORUM' is prominently displayed in large, bold, black letters. To the right of the title is a large, stylized target symbol. Below the title, a paragraph describes the forum's focus: 'Identify values on land, priority areas for protection and restoration, access for trails/cabins, input on hunting protocols, provincial regulations and allocation from a Saik'uz perspective'. Below this text are two checkmarks with corresponding information: 'Members harvesting animals off the land' and 'Join us at the Band Office Gym February 3-5, 2026'. A black button with white text says 'SHARE WITH US'. At the bottom left, a phone icon is next to the text 'MORE INFORMATION KELSEY ANTOINE (250) 567-9293'. On the right side of the poster is a photograph of a man in a black jacket and cap kneeling next to a large moose head in a forest setting.



Education, Training & Employment

Below, you'll find a roundup of our upcoming events designed to support and inspire you.

FEB

12

2026

THURSDAY

Community Update

Mark your calendars because the Education Department is officially hosting this month's Community Update!

Venue: Saik'uz Band Office • The Gathering Place

Time: 5:00 PM

MARCH

17-18

2026

TUESDAY - WEDNESDAY

ICBC Mobile Office

ICBC will be back in community offering a range of services to Saik'uz members and their families, whether you live on-or off-reserve.

Venue: Saik'uz Band Office • Meeting Room

Time: 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

FEB

6 - 7

2026

FRIDAY – SATURDAY

Cultural Day • Najaz̓ Dzen

Cultural Day on February 6 to 7 will be both an indoor and outdoor event. It is a day filled of fun games and culture.

Venue: Saik'uz Band Office • The Gathering Place

Time: 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Reminder for NVSS Parents



For NVSS students (grades 7–12), the incentive program remains tied to both attendance and academic performance. Parents are reminded to contact Nechako Valley Secondary School to excuse their child when absent or late, as student work must align with their attendance record to remain eligible.



SAIK'UZ
FIRST
NATION

F E B R U A R Y

Cultural Days

Najaz Dzen-Snow Days

February 6 and 7

10AM-3PM

**The Gathering Place
(Saik'uz Band Office)**

135 Joseph Street

Everyone Welcome!

Indoor
&
Outdoor
Activities!

Lunch
Provided

Competitions
&
Prizes!

Have Questions? Contact:

education@saikuz.com

250-567-9293

Council Happenings & Governance

Hadih all, I will start with my council happenings. I start again with navigating how to “marry” our traditional governance systems and ways with our Indian Act elected government. The end goal is always the same: to be thankful for all we have and hold within us and around us, and to continue the work to fight injustices and help create opportunities for wholeness—individually, collectively, and with our environment, health, and healing. This is a continued challenge within, and I am thankful I have a voice to use.

Community Updates & Land Stewardship

The AGA was a good time to connect with the community and listen to all that is going on with band work. Before I was elected to council, I wasn’t fully aware of all the work that happens at the band level. I love the work for the land and all the people taking courses and pursuing education—that makes such a difference. Kudos.

I was surprised more questions weren’t asked about the financials. One person told me that people don’t know how to read the audit report, so I wonder if that is a barrier? Financial responsibility is a major responsibility of elected leadership, and I am glad there are audits that membership can review and ask questions about.

I liked hearing membership ask for support to be on the land. I am very thankful for the land access that is provided by staff; I want to explore how members can be supported on their own. This is a good direction to work on. The Lands Department highlighted all their work—it’s one of



the biggest departments in the organization. Our culture, our ways, and our identity are so much tied to the land; it is something that touches all of us. I encourage you to participate, ask questions, and do all you can to speak for the land.

Child Wellness & Jurisdiction

Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) gave a presentation about their services to membership. One cited article from their presentation is the *Don’t Look Away* report by the Representative for Children and Youth (RC&Y). The RC&Y is an independent provincial oversight body established in 2007; they have a number of reports that you can find online.

The recommendations from the *Don’t Look Away* report (an investigation

into the death of a young boy who was in care—may God bless him) are to:

- Focus on child well-being
- Support families
- Address violence
- Be accountable
- Support jurisdiction

This flows into our prevention program. Our Child Wellness Committee has been operating since the 1970s! Our grandmothers came together to advocate and help support Saik'uz children. It's such strength that this continues. Our prevention program is built around it, and many of our families are supported through it. The prevention program is funded by the amount of people who reside on-reserve (there is advocacy that it should be funded by the total population, not just those on-reserve).

We have met a few times with CSFS as they update the community service plan. The next steps are:

1. A workplan template engagement with prevention leadership
2. A workplan budget draft by Mary Teegee to Chief and Council
3. Engaging in a

community needs assessment

4. Community safety plan discussions

We will also be meeting with CSFS to discuss jurisdiction development. We have appointed CSFS as our Indigenous Governing Body (IGB) to develop legislation that will supersede the current legislation directing the Ministry of Children and Family Development. CSFS has been working for the past three years to develop this legislation. More community input is needed; documentation from our Elders who have gone before us, as well as current Elders, has helped guide this work. More community engagement to come!

Natural Resources & Industry

Saik'uz signed the participation agreement with Artemis (Blackwater Gold). I'll share more of a summary in the next newsletter from my understanding.

The Provincial Natural Resource Forum was in Prince George in January. Chief Priscilla—along with Stella, Cheslatta, and Rio Tinto Alcan—was on a



panel discussing the Ne Too project. They played a clip regarding the history of Alcan Kemano and how the government decided to flood the land and reroute water. This flooded out the Cheslatta people; they had almost no notice and were forced to leave their lands. They have gravesites underwater.

It was a decision made without respecting Indigenous people or the unceded territory we are stewards of. To have those historical facts played was an important reminder. The panel then spoke to plans to work together to increase the flow of the Nechako to give life back to the river. Water is life. I had a difficult time seeing the “push” for resource development without giving voice to the detriment to the land and water. There needs to be a balance, and I know I stand more on the traditional side.

Band Operations & Planning

There are some staff changes within the band, and I want to acknowledge all the work I've witnessed while on council. I am thankful for the knowledge workers share and wish those changing or leaving positions luck holistically in life. We are all more than the positions we hold. Regarding advanced planning, a community member encouraged me that we could all make a will. Lesley at the band office has templates for wills if you are interested. Please remember two current initiatives:

- Strategic Planning: Setting goals for our community over the next few months.
- Governance Policy: Work on the Chief and Council policy with the oversight committee.

Upcoming Events & Community Announcements

- We Are Fierce Youth Conference: March 20–23, 2026 (for ages 10–14).
- Women's Wellness: April (dates TBD).
- Men's Wellness: May

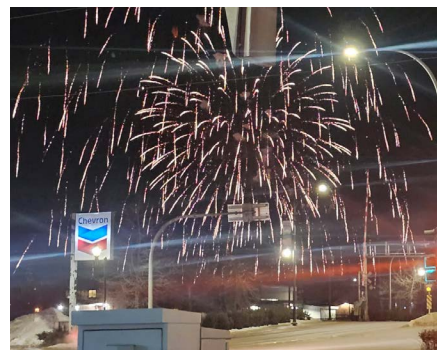
(dates TBD).

- CSFS Elders Conference: Sept 22–24, 2026. This will include the book launch for the Elder's Knowledge Book.
- Saik'uz & Settlers Play Viewing: The Good Neighbors Committee (GNC) is looking for volunteers (4–6 hours/month) to help organize a viewing of the 2011 play at the Grand Reo Theatre. Contact info@gnc-nechako.org.
- Vanderhoof Centennial: Vanderhoof marked its 100th birthday with fireworks; events will continue throughout the year as we work toward reconciliation.

Personal Reflections & Community Care

I want to share more pictures of smiling faces. I remember a local commercial my granny loved because it just showed people smiling. It's great to see people laughing; I hope we all have moments of freedom and unexpected laughter.

We recently went to Exploration Place and the kids loved it! A couple of months back, the Saik'uz Parents Club supported



family connection time there. I was surprised at how busy it was! When I go, I feel like sitting and beading by the displays of traditional work, but I usually end up running after the babies (which I absolutely love).

I also want to congratulate Geraldine on her



retirement after over 20 years in the schools! Thank you for being there for the kids. I also love that our youth formed a volleyball team and have been practicing diligently; movement is medicine. Finally, I'd like to give my condolences to Michael Antoine and our neighboring villages who have lost loved ones. We can hold space for one another in this traumatic time. Please keep them in your prayers.

I challenge you to get out and visit someone or check in on them. Community is important and we are stronger together.

In wellness
Melanie Labatch
Grouse Clan, Elected
Council



**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

Vera Antoine • Feb. 3rd
Crystal Franks • Feb. 19th
Shawnee Young • Feb 25th
Kerri Palmer • Feb 25th

Happy birthday, Octavia!
Beautiful girl turns six.
Have a fun day—love you
with all my heart! Love,
Grandma and Uncles

Happy birthday going out to my brother, Eli Quaw! I wanted to let Saik'uz know it was your birthday on January 29th. Wishing you many more bro and love you! From, your big sister.

AFFECTED BY BC MILL CLOSURES?

**START YOUR OWN BUSINESS,
OR SCALE YOUR SIDE GIG**



Vanderhoof/Fort St. James – Intake Now Open

Build Your Own Future (BYOF) is a fully funded, business startup program for skilled trade workers and technicians who have been affected by a BC mill closure or curtailment.

- **5 days* Foundational Business Training Bootcamp**
**Thursday - Sunday flexible schedule available*
- **Ongoing coaching, mentorship, and support**
- **Monthly Capacity Building workshops x 7**
- **\$5,000 grant to reimburse business expenses**



 byof.ca

 250-563-2663

 info@northerninnovation.ca

Canada



This program is funded by the Government of Canada
and the Province of British Columbia.

February 2026 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

February 12, 2026
4:30 pm to 7 pm

The Gathering Place,
Saik'uz Band Office

This Month's Update will be from:
Education, Employment and Training
RCMP





Community Announcement: Band Office Leadership Update

We are writing to share some important news regarding our Leadership team at the Band Office.

A Heartfelt Farewell to Cora

It is with a mix of gratitude and well-wishes that we announce Cora's last day of tenure was January 30th.

Cora has been a vital part of our team, and her dedication to the community has left a lasting impact. While we are sad to see her go, we are so incredibly thankful for the heart and hard work she poured into her role. Please join us in wishing Cora nothing but happiness and success as she begins her next chapter.

Interim Leadership

To ensure our services and projects continue moving forward smoothly, Shawnee Young has stepped in to act as our Interim General Manager. We are grateful to Shawnee for her leadership during this transitional period.

Join Our Team

We are now officially searching for a permanent General Manager to lead the Saik'uz Band Office. If you are passionate about our community and looking for a meaningful leadership opportunity, we want to hear from you.

View the Job Posting: [**www.saikuz.com/careers**](http://www.saikuz.com/careers)

Thank you for your continued support as we navigate this change together.

2024-2025 ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AGA Day 1: Strength and Vision: A Story of Our Future

Chief Priscilla Mueller opened the assembly by outlining a plan to make our gatherings more engaging. Future AGAs will be scheduled for the summer and held in two parts: a two-day session for community discussions and department updates, and a separate day dedicated to presenting the financials as soon as the audit is complete. While post-COVID inflation has challenged budgets, projects like the new Clan House are progressing through the design phase with community input.

Council members Robbie Antoine, Regina Carlson, Rodney Teed, Melanie Labatch, Marolyn Antoine (Vickers), and Jason Alexis presented reports focusing on transparency and integrating traditional laws into modern governance. Their highlights included infrastructure improvements like new



AGA Day 1: Chief and Council addressing questions and concerns.



Lisa Krebs presenting the Saik'uz Governance Manual.

streets and health stations, alongside a push for economic self-sufficiency to fund future traditional initiatives. Leadership emphasized that community wellness is driven by land connection, youth involvement, and the vital support of Men's and Women's groups.

Additionally, cultural preservation remains a top priority through the

practice of potlatches and navigating the complexities of Bill C-92.

Lisa Krebs introduced the Saik'uz Governance Manual, a foundational policy designed to guide our leadership while ensuring transparency and accountability as we transition toward self-government. To help shape these leadership standards, members are encouraged to share their feedback via a community survey, which remains open until March 15, 2026.

Our path forward is deeply rooted in our heritage, highlighted by the formal adoption of the Balhats Book by all Clans

to ground our modern governance in traditional laws. The Traditional Governance Oversight Committee remains active on the land, monitoring forestry blocks and ancestral territory to reclaim our jurisdiction. To further this connection, members who harvest from the land are invited to the Hunters Forum at the The Gathering Place (Band Office Gym) from February 3–5, 2026.

General Manager Cora McIntosh celebrated the Nation's success in managing 12 large projects, including a new daycare and health center that created 16 new employment opportunities.

The Language of the Land: "Salmon Song"

Cora beautifully illustrated the connection between culture and expression by sharing that music is a form of language. She presented her original piece, "Salmon Song," which honours the essential role salmon plays in our culture.

Important Note:

The lyrics to "Salmon Song" are included in this newsletter for the

community to enjoy. However, please be advised that this is a personal and cultural work; permission from Cora McIntosh is strictly required for any use, reproduction, or performance of the song.

Financial transparency remains a priority, with Crystal Franks introducing



Cora McIntosh presenting her beautiful song titled "Salmon Song".

the finance team before a presentation by Sally Layug and Corey Naphtali of KPMG. Their independent audit confirmed that the Nation's financial statements are a fair and true reflection of our operations. The 2024–2025 financial statements are now available on the website at <https://www.saikuz.com/events/annual-general-assembly>.

Finally, our Education team celebrated a banner year, honoring the Class of '24 and '25 post-secondary students pursuing degrees in fields like criminology and psychology. From firefighting certifications to "Healing Through Quilting" sessions, we are investing in the holistic growth and professional success of every member.



Levi Heathcliff, Auntie Tic, and Sara Jones (From left to right).

Together, these reports tell a story of a Nation that is building a future firmly rooted in Saik'uz values and sovereignty. Day one of the AGA concluded with a comedy and entertainment from Levi Heathcliff, Auntie Tic, and Sara Jones.

AGA Day 2: A Journey of Growth and Stewardship

The Saik'uz First Nation Land and Resources Department is currently in a phase of major growth, focusing on revitalizing traditional governance and implementing rights-based stewardship through initiatives like the Ecosystem Restoration Plan and Yinka Dene Water Law. Key forestry highlights include the adoption of new "Best Management Practices" that move away from clear-cutting



Jasmine Thomas on her PFA and NCTL presentation.



Kassandra Turbide on the Lands and Resources Report.

toward ecosystem-based harvesting, supported by a Risk Ranking system and partnerships with industry. Additionally, the department is advancing water sustainability through the Noolhk'ai-Tachek-Tsink'ut Pilot Project and reestablishing community connection to the territory through new trail and cabin initiatives.

Jasmine Thomas shared updates on Pathways Forward and the North Coast Transmission Line, a critical \$2+ billion project beginning construction in 2026 that is guided by a Yinka Dene Led Review to protect community interests. Meanwhile, Tyler Mitchell from Artemis Gold reported that the Blackwater Mine is expanding its operations while fostering an inclusive workplace through a new Elder-in-Residence Program. To ensure the mine's safety, Georgina Farah and Source Environmental Associates are providing rigorous oversight, hiring a tailings expert to address concerns regarding water quality and pond seepage.

On the economic front, SFN EcoDev Manager Vincent Wickham highlighted how the Economic Development Strategy is

strengthening member-owned businesses and securing roles in major local projects.

Colliers Project Leaders presented the Innergex Wind Farm opportunity



Barry Vickers leads the discussion on the Innergex Wind Farm project.

on the second day of the AGA, outlining a 205 MW project that offers Saik'uz 51% majority ownership with zero upfront investment. This partnership is projected to deliver \$218 million in distributions over 30 years while providing dedicated funding for environmental stewardship, community solar initiatives, and local skilled employment.



Vincent Wickham on the Economic Development Report.

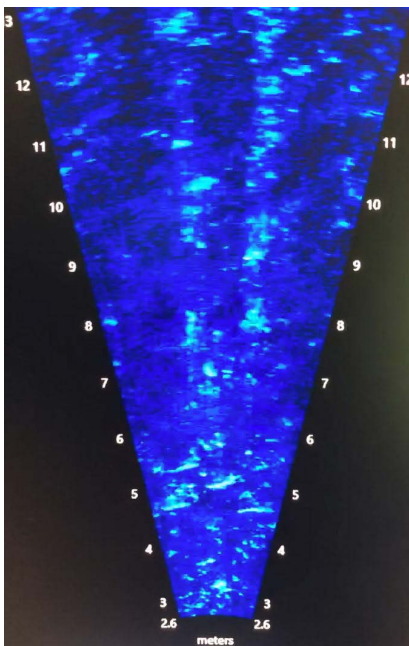
We'd love to welcome our people who transferred to Saik'uz First Nation:

James Duncan's three sons: Ryder Duncan, Kingston Duncan, and Remy Duncan. Their stepbrothers James Bidal, Noah Bidal along with their mother Brenda Matsuda. Ashley Antoine's two children, Kalen Bird and Marianna Bird. Eric Daly's three daughters, Camellia Daly, Zuel Daly and Phire Daly. Shanteah Joseph and her two children Kimberly Elias and Lucas Joseph.

Day two ended with a song-filled presentation from Rodney Teed.

AGA Day 3: Our River, Our Health, Our Families

The heart of our third day began with a powerful update on the Nechako River from Land & Resources Manager Kasandra Johnny-Turbide and Biologist Jason Yarmish. They shared how we are reclaiming the river's health after decades of impact from the Kenney Dam by monitoring water quality and restoring critical fish habitats at "Site 7". This work is about more than just data; by training



Chinook and Sockeye swimming past sonar site.

our youth in sonar and restoration, we are proving that community capacity is truly sovereignty.

Turning toward community wellness, Interim Health Manager Jordan Cranmer highlighted our focus on land-based healing and the growth of programs



Jordan Cranmer delivering the Health department report.

that support members at every stage of life. We are eagerly anticipating the opening of our new Health Centre this fall, an accessible space where members will soon be invited to help choose a name. Jordan also shared a bittersweet farewell, expressing deep gratitude to the community as she prepares to depart her role at the end of the month.

Our commitment to the next generation was echoed by Miranda Louie and Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) in their update on child and family prevention. We are moving toward greater authority through "C3 Delegation," which focuses on keeping our children connected to family and culture under Saik'uz law. Miranda is also transitioning roles to focus on jurisdiction coordination, ensuring our family laws remain rooted in our unique language and values.

Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) is currently providing child and family services while supporting Saik'uz in building the readiness and capacity

needed to fully reclaim that responsibility. Their presentation emphasized that long-term trends show progress in successfully keeping children with their families.

To ensure fair and community-centred decisions, CSFS highlighted the importance of strong governance structures, such as Elders councils and community wellness teams. They also provided critical updates on child welfare reform and Jordan's Principle, which ensures First Nations children can access necessary services without jurisdictional delays. While many applications face long wait times, CSFS continues to advocate for substantive equality in child welfare following recent court decisions. Finally, they highlighted various programs that support youth and families through culturally grounded activities and collaborative service planning.

The day concluded with a vibrant community session where members passed resolutions subject for review, among the resolutions are: increased holiday support, more spa days, and the vision for a new dance hall.



Mary Teegee-Gray/Gwen Cardinal presenting CSFS Child & Family Policy & External Relations.

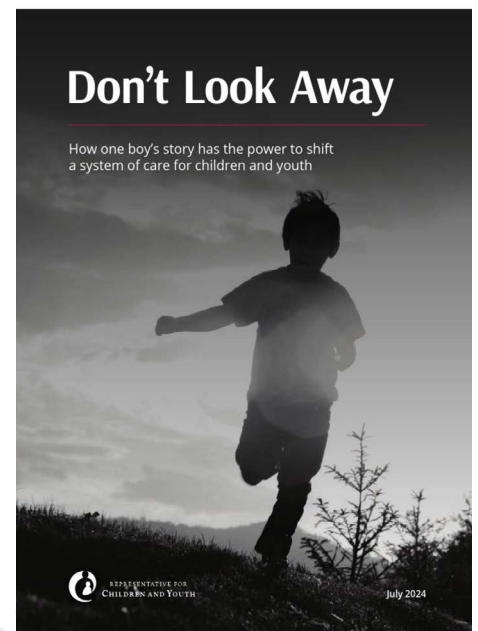


Warner Adam presenting CSFS Health Services.



Mike Bote presenting CSFS Child & Family Wellbeing.

These community-led goals now serve as a roadmap for Chief and Council as we continue to build a safer, more connected village. Every report shared today reminds us that by caring for our land and one another, we are securing a vibrant future for Saik'uz.



We would like to thank everyone who made the Annual General Assembly possible: Chief and Council, Saik'uz staff, our partners, and the community.

Salmon Song

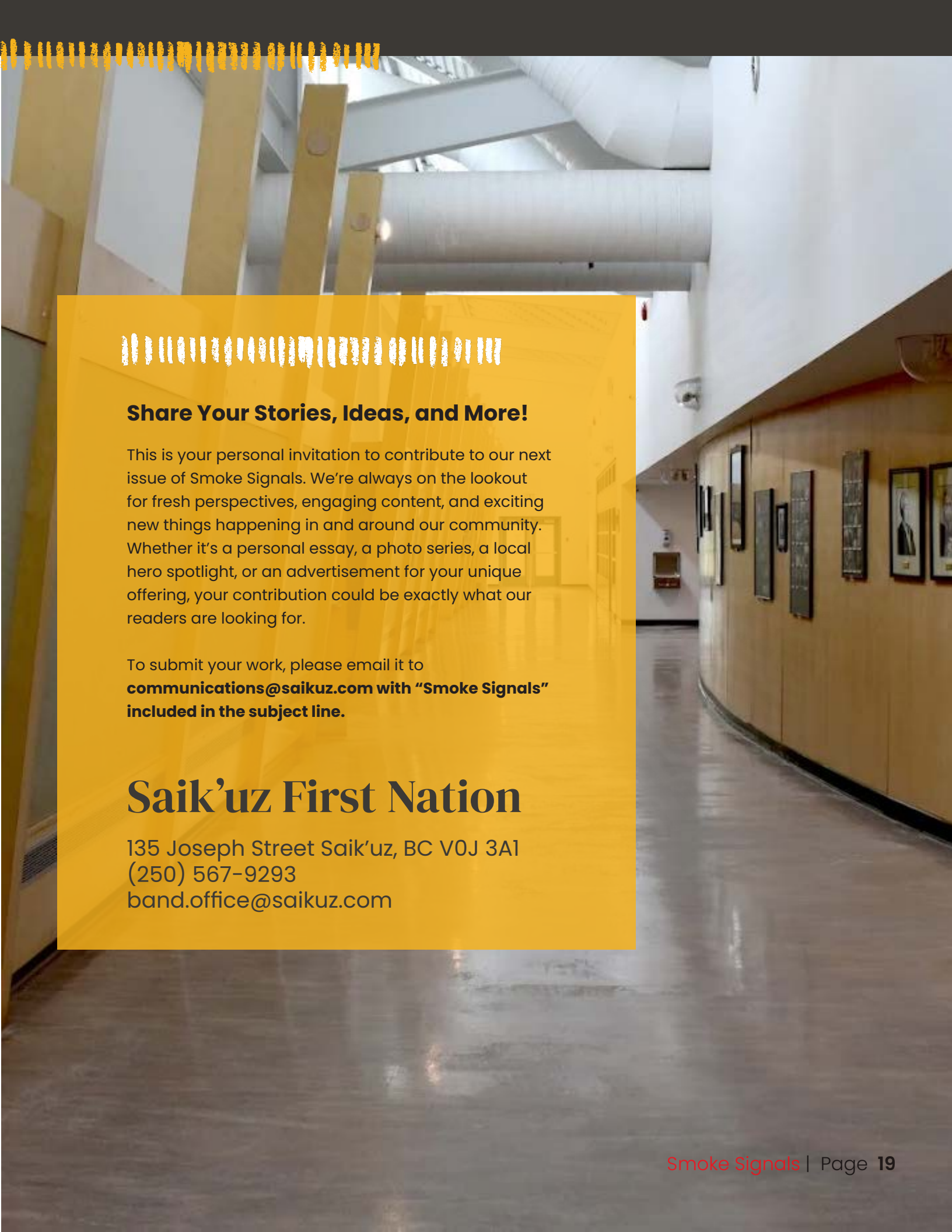
composed and performed by
Cora McIntosh

Talukw nt'se uhintoh
Talukw nt'se uhintoh
Uyah nt'se natudelh
uyah nt'se natudelh
Uyah Hookwunuszun
'uka' nuszun
lhai 'uka'nuszun

Talukw nt'se uhintoh
Talukw nt'se uhintoh
Uyah Uyah Nats'uke
Uyah Uyah Nats'uke
Uyah Hookwunuszun
'uka' nuszun
lhai 'uka' nuszun

Talukw nt'se uhintoh
Talukw nt'se uhintoh
ne'sen soogak hoonti
ne'sen soogak hoonti
Uyah hookwunuszun
'uka' nuszun
lhai 'uka'nuszun

Important Notice: The lyrics to "Salmon Song" are included in this newsletter for the community to enjoy. However, please be advised that this is a personal and cultural work; permission from Cora McIntosh is strictly required for any use, reproduction, or performance of the song.



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