

Smoke Signals

Lhut Beh Nehudanih - They Told Us By Smoke



Volume 6, Issue 07

Shen whu·niz ʔə ʔə July

**Saik'uz Celebrates Milestones:
Empowering Tomorrow's
Leaders and Breaking Ground
on the New Fire Hall**

**Governance and Land and Resources
Updates: Governance Update:
Reclaiming Jurisdiction & Community
Forest Field Trip Success**

**Council Update: Strengthening
Our Families, Shaping Strategy,
and Moving Jurisdiction Forward**

**Welcome to the Team:
Adam, Devon, and MD!**

**Vibrant Celebration
of Culture and
Community:
National Indigenous
Peoples Day**

**Chief and Council Welcome
Members to Council
Galleries: Attendance
Requirements and Deadlines**



Reflecting on **May and June**

Youth Governance Workshop - May 26, 2026

Saik'uz youth took an exciting step into leadership at a Youth Governance Workshop held on May 26th as part of the Governance Manual project.

With support from the Governance Manual Oversight Committee (GMOC), Community, and Council, 10 youth gathered in the Gathering Place for a hands-on and interactive learning experience. Council member Rodney Teed was in attendance, helping create a meaningful connection between youth and leadership.

Participants explored key governance topics such as meeting processes, decision-making, conflict of interest, and due diligence. Learning was brought to life through engaging activities, including "Kahoot!" quizzes and a mock council meeting held in Council Chambers. During the session, a youth participant was chosen to act as "Chief," leading the group as they worked through two mock decisions—putting their new skills into action.

A big highlight of the day was the enthusiasm for creating an ongoing Youth Council. Youth



shared their interest in meeting regularly from September to June and identified priorities such as recreation, youth programming, and learning more about Saik'uz Keyoh, language, and culture.

A proposal to establish the Youth Council will be presented to leadership in July 2026.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who helped make this workshop a success: Claudia Johnny-Martin, Desiree Thomas, Deanna Patrick, Mar Paulo Montejo, Shawnee Young, Governance Manual Oversight Committee members and Council.

Fire Hall Groundbreaking Ceremony - June 1, 2026

We are thrilled to share a momentous milestone for our community. On June 1, 2026, leadership, staff, community members, and Marmot Builders gathered together for the official groundbreaking ceremony of the new Saik'uz Fire Hall!

This brand-new, modern facility marks a massive step forward in strengthening our emergency services, protecting our land, and, most importantly, keeping our families safe.



Economic Development Survey Success

A massive thank you to everyone who took the time to participate in our recent Economic Development Survey! Because of your incredible turnout and active voice, the initiative was a massive success.

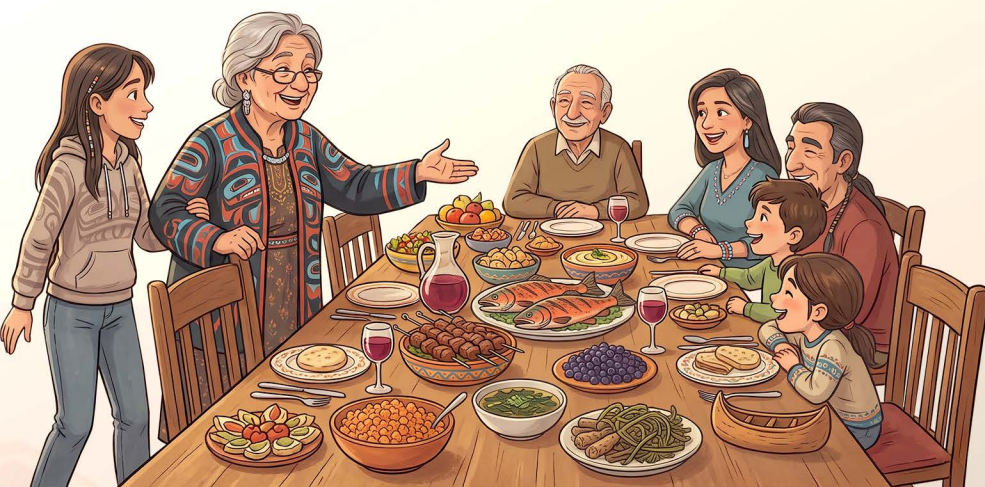
To help us shape the future of our community's economy, we teamed up with Monogram Communications to shake things up. Instead of a standard, dry questionnaire, we used interactive and fun survey formats to gather your insights—and your creative energy did not disappoint!



Survey boards prepared by Monogram Communications.



The team from Marmot Builders present at the Groundbreaking Ceremony.



PHRASE OF THE MONTH

'Awet nats'oodai.

Let's eat now.
(three or more people)

Jasmine Thomas 2nd

Ashley Antoine 4th

Chantel Murray 9th

Joel Cromarty 10th

Amber Teed 12th

Sandy Hackl 13th

Ursula Ho lem 18th

Samantha David 19th

Albert Raphael 25th

James Vickers 11th

Desiree Williams 30th



JULY CELEBRANTS

Governance and Land & Resources

Department Update

As the days get hotter with summer arriving, please remember to stay hydrated and drink plenty of water!

Field Operations & Monitors Program

Our environmental monitors and field crew stayed busy throughout June with the following initiatives:

- **June 1–11:** Monitors conducted extensive LiDAR plotting.
- **June 10:** Held a collaborative Field Day reviewing LiDAR plots with Chelsea from Tanizul.
- **June 12:** Monitors participated in the Traditional Governance Oversight Committee (TGOC) field trip.
- **June 15–19:** Jimmy Vickers attended the ALP gathering.
- **June 19:** The Lands Team supported and participated in Indigenous Peoples Day activities.

Governance Overview

We are continuing our vital work to reclaim jurisdiction over our children and to co-manage decision-making within our traditional territory. Together, Elected Leadership and Traditional Governance are building a unified Saik'uz governance system that ensures greater community involvement.

Clan meetings and the Traditional Governance Oversight Committee (TGOC) are central to this mission. We are still in the early stages of this journey and warmly welcome community participation.

Please Note: Kelsey shared that no jurisdiction meetings have been held recently, and there are currently no meetings scheduled for the month of June.

TGOC & Keyoh Meetings

The Traditional Governance Oversight Committee (TGOC) is composed of Saik'uz

family representatives who hold deep knowledge of our traditional territory, our people, and our cultural practices, as well as those eager to learn and participate.

The purpose of the TGOC is to bring traditional governance into active practice. The committee collaborates with the elected government and the Land and Resources Department to provide guidance, support, and traditional knowledge regarding Saik'uz territory.

We are always open to community feedback and input on family representation. If you would like to know who your family representative is, please contact **Kelsey Antoine**.

June Report: Community Forest Field Trip

On June 12th, the TGOC joined Nechako Lumber for a field trip to the Vanderhoof community forest. The group inspected Nechako's first commercial thinning block, featuring a tree

stand that is 39 years old.

During the visit, Nechako representatives explained that commercial thinning is not a profit-driven initiative. Instead, it is a necessary ecological practice to ensure the long-term health and longevity of the forest. As trees grow, they naturally begin to crowd one another. Without proper intervention, dense stands can choke out vital nutrients, severely impacting the lifespan of the trees. Commercial thinning opens up the canopy, creating the necessary space for continued, healthy growth. Through these collaborative efforts, we hope to see more of our forest saved for the future!



Clan & Balhats Work

Balhats Book Update

The Balhats Book is currently undergoing final edits and is being prepared for its very first review. Stay tuned for future updates on when the book will officially go to print!

Clan Night Returns!

We are excited to announce the return of our community Clan Nights!

Date: July 22nd
Topic of Discussion: Double Headers

We highly encourage everyone to come out, participate, and learn together.

BEAVER

DAKELH: TSA

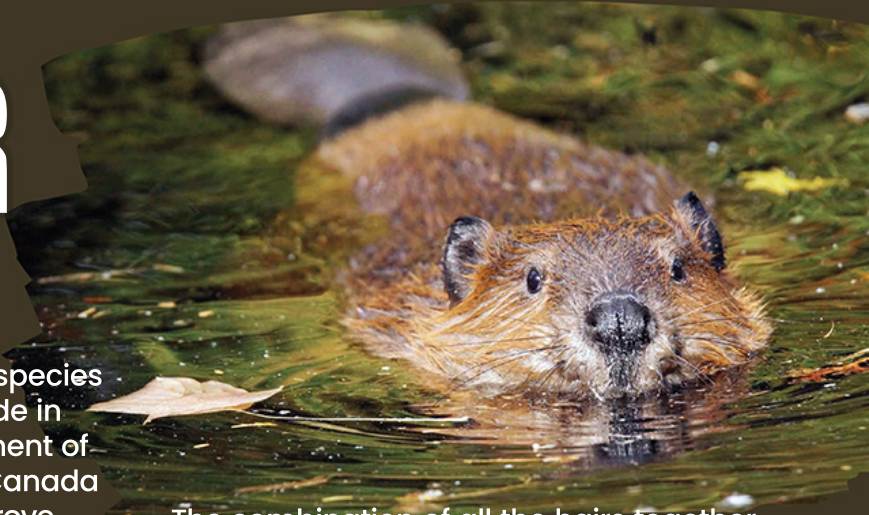
The beaver known as a keystone species was an integral part of the fur trade in Saik'uz territory and the development of the region. The largest rodent in Canada is a national iconic symbol and drove exploration and the country's development as well as the need to build indigenous relations in British Columbia and across Canada.

Saik'uz people have utilized this animal for both food and culture. Dried beaver meat (tsak'ai) was utilized all winter as a solid food source and the delicacy of beaver tail (tsache) was shared. The Fur is waterproof so was used for gloves, hats, coats, and footwear. It is still used today for decorative additions to gloves and hats.

A long-time practiced legend included the use of shaking a beaver pelt to make it snow or rain.

The North American Beaver is a heavily muscled animal about 120 cm in length and weighs 16-39 kgs. Its signature feature tail is 32 cm long and up to 18 cm in width. The tail is a fat storage and an indicator of health and good habitat. The razor sharp open-rooted incisors grow constantly and are only shortened through constant chewing.

The front feet are very capable of digging and are great for moving fast through the water. The hind feet are webbed and aid in rapid movement through water. The second hind-toe has a split nail that is used to aid in grooming. The beaver coat is brown to almost black in colour and has a greyish undercoat that insulates the body and has long guard hairs that protect the undercoat from soiling.



The combination of all the hairs together creates a useful soft fur that resulted in its prized procession.

Many trappers would spend months on their keyoh hunting and then would sell and trade at Fort St James home of the Hudson's Bay Company starting in 1806.

Items traded included guns, ammunition, manufactured goods, and food. Beavers are "ecosystem engineers" creating dams and maintaining wetland environments which host many others including fish, amphibians, waterfowl, and large mammals.

Beavers stabilize watersheds by slowing the flow of water allowing water to settle into the groundwater system thereby mitigating the effects of drought, reducing flood risks, creating natural firebreaks, and improving water quality by creating natural filter systems.

They prefer muddy shores without a lot of gravel and rock, in winter months a stable accessible supply of vegetation is required for food.

The water must be at levels that prevents ice jamming the access to food and escape from predators. Stands of popular both aspen and cottonwood within 50 meters of the lodge are ideal locations for beavers to thrive.

In summer beavers will feed on grasses, forbs, leaves of shrubs and aquatic plants but bark and twigs of deciduous trees are essential to the beavers' survival.

Shaping Our Future Together: June 2026 Councilor Melanie's Update

I hope you are all well and feeling peaceful and healthy. Here is my council share for the past two months...

So many kids and families came out to the Easter Egg Hunt at the Multiplex in April. Snachalhuya to all those who brought this event to life for the community. There were many smiling faces that day!

Council and staff worked on a strategic plan for Saik'uz. For three days, we worked together to form this plan, which will be brought to the membership for input as well. Please keep an eye out for this sharing time.

Work on the governance manual continues, and there have been community meetings for the membership, as well as one meeting specifically for youth to contribute. Please share your thoughts and input on this governance manual. Completion is set for the end of summer.

We continue to develop jurisdiction with Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS). Jurisdiction is our inherent right as Indigenous peoples. We have appointed CSFS as our Indigenous Governing Body to work on our behalf to create a jurisdiction law that will replace the current law under which the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) operates. Many members have been attending the community meetings regarding this law development, which builds upon the extensive work our Elders have done in the past toward keeping our children safe.

Your voice is important. I'd like people and families who have been or are "in the system" (many youth in the system are with MCFD, and many files are already with CSFS) to share what has been beneficial and what

Editor's Note: This council update was originally prepared for the June edition of Smoke Signals. Due to high submission volumes and tight production deadlines, it is being proudly featured in this July update to ensure Melanie's full report reaches the community.



areas have gaps that need to be addressed. Educate yourself on this, share your thoughts and ideas, and be involved.

As parents, remember the best thing we can do for our children is to do our own work. Find support and meet your needs in a healthy way so you can be present to nurture your children. Be a healthy a'kai, a'tai, a'bysian, at'soo, and at'siyan. All children are precious and deserve to be nurtured—just as you yourself have always deserved to be nurtured and loved. We all know trauma and how it affects lives, and each of us has the power to work on ourselves.

That leads into prevention. Saik'uz receives primary prevention funding for on-reserve members. These funds are to support children and families to strengthen bonds, promote parenting support, meet holistic needs, and work to keep families together. When a child is placed in another home for safety reasons, the funding to support this goes through

MCFD. CSFS has an agreement to take these children under their care; they receive the funds to support these children and youth and provide resources to the families who are caring for them.

A few council members and staff participated in the minute-taking course offered by UNBC in April. The course was split over two days, and we learned how to take minutes (record what is being said in meetings) and plan meeting agendas. It's good information to have and understand so that proper documentation is recorded.

The Brain Project was in Nadleh in April. It featured a dome built in their gym where a film was shown on brain development and the effects of substances and screen time (TikTok, social media, etc.) on the brain, as well as the positive effects of drumming and connecting with nature and culture. While Saik'uz didn't contribute financially, we did contribute in-kind. Since NVSS had students participating in the program, I arranged for the harm reduction team from the FNHA to join me and two medical students to host a harm reduction space at NVSS. Youth were able to get some hands-on practice with harm reduction and received information on available supports. We also went to Nadleh and set up during one of the late afternoon sessions. This in-kind support was shared so Saik'uz members could also participate, and we had quite a few youth able to attend.

Congratulations to the members who completed their course at CNC. I was grateful to witness their graduation; it's so awesome to see the learning. Pictures of many of the students are included here to celebrate. I also attended the UNBC convocation on May 29th in Prince George. Congratulations to Samantha Teed and Patrick Stubbington on earning their degrees! Alicia Quaw is also graduating with her diploma this month, and Jasmine Thomas is graduating with her MBA. There may be a few more completions, so I'll congratulate them as soon as I hear confirmation.



Val at the CNC program graduation.



Lloyd at the CNC program graduation.



Jessie at the CNC program graduation.



Vickie at the CNC program graduation.

We continue our quarterly meetings with the District of Vanderhoof Mayor and Council. We met on May 11th and discussed the upcoming anniversary events in Vanderhoof. July 4th and 5th will see a big celebration at Riverside Park, featuring Saturday musical performances by Tom Cochrane, Trooper, and the Headpins. We also chatted about the Vanderhoof community forest north of town and some plans the District wanted to discuss.

We had a community meeting on May 12th, hosted by the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) as part of the community needs assessment. The Band has received funding in previous years to build a new daycare. This meeting was to seek input from the community on what they would like to see for all children aged 0–8 and their families. This vision is broader than a building solely for daycare; it encompasses a space to meet all the needs of young families, whether the children attend the daycare or stay at home with parents. Many ideas were generated, and planning will continue for this new, larger space. More community input will be requested, so keep your ears open and think about what is needed to provide holistic support.

While I'm on the topic of BCACCS, I'll share that I attended a conference with them in Vancouver at the end of May. They presented on the political aspect of jurisdiction over childcare and providing support for young families. Chaylean Alexis was our youth delegate for the conference. As part of her participation, she created a poster reflecting what she heard during the sessions—it was really insightful and perfectly captured the messages of the conference. Pictures of her and her poster are included alongside another Dakelh youth delegate from Nee Tahi Buhn, Carlee Erickson. The youth gave great presentations, and it was wonderful to hear. We also connected as a northern group to discuss available funding opportunities. I'm looking forward to ensuring we can access these funds to support young families. Some

of this funding is available to support off-reserve families as well, so keep your ears alert.

Council attended a one-day session with a lawyer on the topics of council governance and human resources. One takeaway the lawyer shared in conversation was that a majority of legal issues stem from misunderstandings. Wow—that really puts things into perspective. Saik'uz is doing well by creating a governance manual that gives guidelines for Chief and Council, and by increasing communication through monthly community updates. Under federal jurisdiction, we follow Canadian labour laws. We are working on policy development so that clear guidelines drive decision-making for fairness and equality. A lot of work has been done, and there is still a lot that needs to be completed. I am very thankful for the staff who assist with this.

I attended part of the Fish & Water Forum. It was super to hear about the work being completed in the territory and the collaboration with other Nations. We have an amazing team working in and with the Lands Department. I encourage everyone to find out where you come from (your keyoh) if you don't know, and to get out on the land. These forums (the Hunting Forum was in February) are amazing for sharing work and learning.

The Health Centre construction pokes along. R. Radloff & Associates (engineering) have recently come on board for project management to assist us with completing this build. Keep your eyes posted for completion dates and the opening of this new health space.

The new fire hall will have a groundbreaking celebration on June 1st, located right by the Band Office.

Upcoming Date:

July 8th–10th: Annual General Assembly (AGA). Note: Once the audit is complete, there will be a separate day scheduled for financials, likely around October.

On a personal note, we had four students (three medical students and one PhD student) stay with us for over two weeks in May to learn about Indigenous spaces and connect. Shan worked on a deer hide with two of the girls, much to the delight of Buddy, May, and a couple of our other dogs, who patiently sat and waited for any scraps to chew on. We visited Elders who shared stories with the students, and Aba took us out to the cabins on the keyoh. They beaded on moose hide to create Christmas ornaments, and we cooked a community breakfast one morning at the Band Office so people could be nourished and meet the students. I'm grateful to volunteer to host students and share these connections.

Remember, council meetings are open to the membership (only in-camera topics are restricted to council only), so if you want to sit in, you are always welcome. I hope this early summer finds everyone grounded and connected. Check on one another and be kind. Have some outside time daily.

In wellness,
Melanie Labatch
Grouse Clan
Elected Council Member



On the CSFS Wellness Hike on museum trails, all these logs were downed by a beaver.



Tanuyeh McCook (with his hockey teeth) and his dad, Mitch McCook. Tanuyeh is son of Mitch and Marion Erickson, maternal grandson of Susan Erickson and Lawrence Paul and paternal grandson of Yvonne and Ron McCook.



Bluebird at Potlatch House.



Shana, Thea and the invested 'lhi (dogs) while putting deer hide on stretcher.



Shana and Thea with scraped deer hide.

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

Adam Thomas

FireSmart Coordinator



Hadih, Saik'uz community!

My name is Adam Thomas, and I am glad to be stepping into the role of your new FireSmart Coordinator. I look forward to working alongside all of you to help protect our homes, our community, and our land from wildfires.

Over the next few months, I'll be out and about sharing quick FireSmart tips, hosting community events, and dropping by to help you find simple ways to make your property safer and more wildfire-resistant. Keeping Saik'uz safe is something we do together—by teaming up, using practical prevention tools, and keeping our community values and traditional knowledge at the heart of it all.

Please feel free to reach out anytime with questions, ideas, or just to chat about FireSmart. You can also flag me down if you see me around the community!

Email: adam.thomas@saikuz.com

Phone: 250-570-8282

Devon Jantzen

Executive Assistant



Hadih! My name is Devon, and I am thrilled to join the team, bringing nine years of administrative experience supporting office operations and people services. **I have a solid background in managing governance requirements, community events, stakeholder communications, and volunteer coordination.** I look forward to bringing an organized, professional, and community-minded approach to my work here.

Originally from Vancouver Island, my husband, our three kids, and I moved up to Vanderhoof in 2022. Outside of office hours, you can usually find me at the local hockey arenas—either playing myself or cheering on my family! Since diving into our new lifestyle up North, I've also been enjoying learning how to grow and preserve food, tend chickens, and bake sourdough. I look forward to connecting with you all!

Md Sazzad Hossain

Policy Writer, EOC, FireSmart Coordination Assistant



Hadi, Saik'uz community! My name is Md Sazzad Hossain, and I am excited to join the team as your new Policy Writer, Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and FireSmart Coordination Assistant. I recently completed a one-year Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) internship with the Village of Valemount, which gave me great insight into regional community operations.

To share a bit about my background, I hold a Bachelor of Social Science in International Studies from Jeonbuk National University (JBNU) in South Korea, as well as a Master of Administrative Science (MAS) in Human Resource Administration from Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU) in Vancouver. My background and experiences fuel my dedication to public administration, effective governance, and community-focused policy development. I look forward to working hard for Saik'uz and connecting with you all!



ANNOUNCEMENT

Saik'uz first nation member attendance at council meetings

Saik'uz First Nation Chief and Council warmly welcome **Saik'uz First Nation members** to attend upcoming scheduled Council meetings as part of the gallery. Sharing leadership updates is an essential part of moving forward together, and your presence is highly valued.

To ensure our meetings remain safe, respectful, and productive for everyone, all gallery members are required to review, thoroughly complete, and **sign a Gallery Code of Conduct prior to entering the meeting room.**

Key Guidelines for Attendance:

- **Observation Only:** Gallery members are invited to observe only. To maintain the flow of the meeting, interacting with Council during the session or disrupting the proceedings is strictly prohibited.
- **5-Day Advance Deadline:** The Gallery Code of Conduct form must be completed and submitted to Reception at least 5 days prior to the scheduled meeting date to be permitted entry.
- **Submission Requirements:** A new form must be filled out for every meeting you wish to attend.
- **Completeness:** Forms must be physically filled out completely, legibly, and include your signature. Incomplete or illegible forms will not be accepted.

Thank you for your cooperation and commitment to keeping our community governance respectful and effective. **Forms can be picked up at the front reception desk.**



ANNOUNCEMENT

Saik'uz first nation member attendance at council meetings

This year's Chief and Council schedule:

- July 14, 2026
- August 11, 2026
- September 8, 2026
- September 21, 2026
- October 6, 2026
- October 20, 2026
- November 3, 2026
- November 16, 2026
- December 8, 2026

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Chambers – Saik'uz Band Office

Schedule Flexibility: Please note that meeting dates and times are scheduled in advance but are subject to change depending on circumstances. We appreciate the community's understanding and flexibility.

For more inquiries please call the band office at: **(250) 567-9293**.

National Indigenous Peoples Day 2026

A Celebration of Culture, Community, and Connection



A Vibrant Celebration of Culture and Community: National Indigenous Peoples Day!

What an incredible day of community, connection, and celebration!

This year's National Indigenous Peoples Day brought together people of all ages to honor the rich traditions, diverse cultures.

From the very first cup of coffee to the final dance, the energy was unmatched. Here is a look back at the highlights of our unforgettable celebration:

A Warm Welcome: Community Breakfast

We kicked off the morning the best way we know how—with a delicious community breakfast! It was the



Sariah Parker handles the grill with ease during our National Indigenous Day festivities.

perfect opportunity for neighbors, elders, and families to gather, share a meal, and set a positive, welcoming tone for the rest of the day's festivities.

Captivating Entertainment

The heart and soul of the celebration came alive on stage. Attendees were



Grant West in his Regalia, ready to perform a traditional dance.

treated to mesmerizing, cultural performances by Grant West and Joel West to name a few whose incredible talents engaged the crowd and beautifully showcased the enduring strength and beauty of Indigenous storytelling and artistry.

Interactive Booths & Local Artisans

The grounds were bustling with energy thanks to an incredible lineup of booths and activities. Carrier Sekani Family Services were among the participants in the booths. From stunning handmade authentic crafts and jewelry to vital community resources and educational displays from Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative, there was so much to learn, support, and explore.



Carrier Sekani Family Services in one of the booths.



Chantel, Desiree, and Devon keeping the energy high and managing the door prizes!



Danika covered with cotton candy floss.



Rae, Albert, MD, and Carla



Dancing to the tune performed by Joel West.



Diane, April, Ashlynn, and Amelia enjoying their stage presence.



Darlene and Geraldine.

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
SURVEY



SAIK'UZ
FIRST
NATION

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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