

so, you want to run for council?



A Support and Orientation Handbook
for the Citizens of Champagne
and Aishihik First Nations

acknowledgements

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CHAMPAGNE and AISHIHIK First Nations

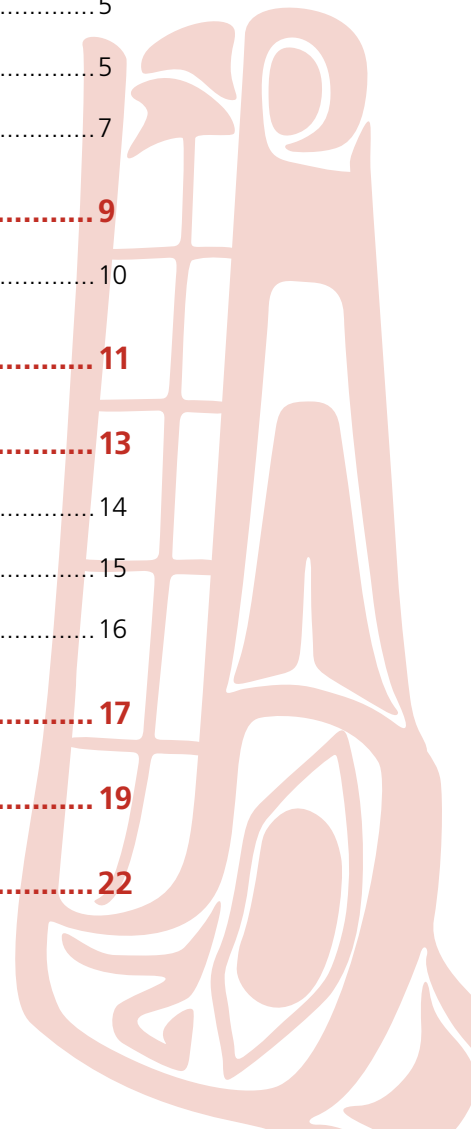
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so, you want to run for council?

A Support and Orientation Handbook for the
Citizens of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (CAFN).

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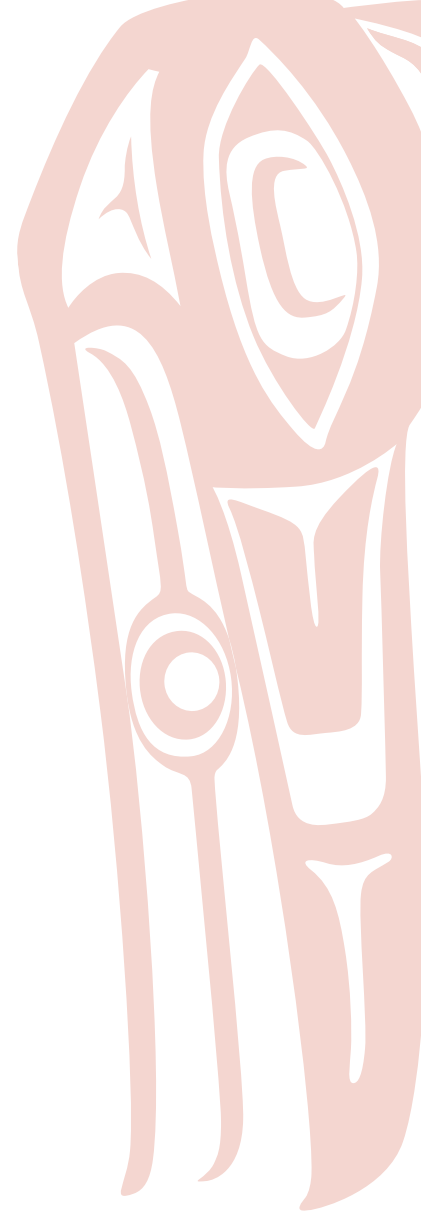


so, you want to run for CAFN council

If you are thinking about running for CAFN Council, this handbook is for you. It has been written to help you identify, understand and think about the issues connected with being a Council member.

This handbook is provided to support you as you decide whether to run for Council by assisting you in learning about being a Council member. We've included some questions you may want to ask yourself. They may help you figure out whether you are prepared to meet the challenges that come with being on Council.

Reviewing this information now will assist you in making the decision whether or not to enter CAFN politics as a candidate for Council.





If you decide to be a candidate for Council, reading this booklet will give you a basic understanding of the work you would do on Council.

This booklet may help you decide being on Council is not the right thing for you. This handbook can help clarify what your motivations and strengths are, leading to you having a better idea of which path would be right for you. Thinking about these things now may keep you from the heartache of making a decision that

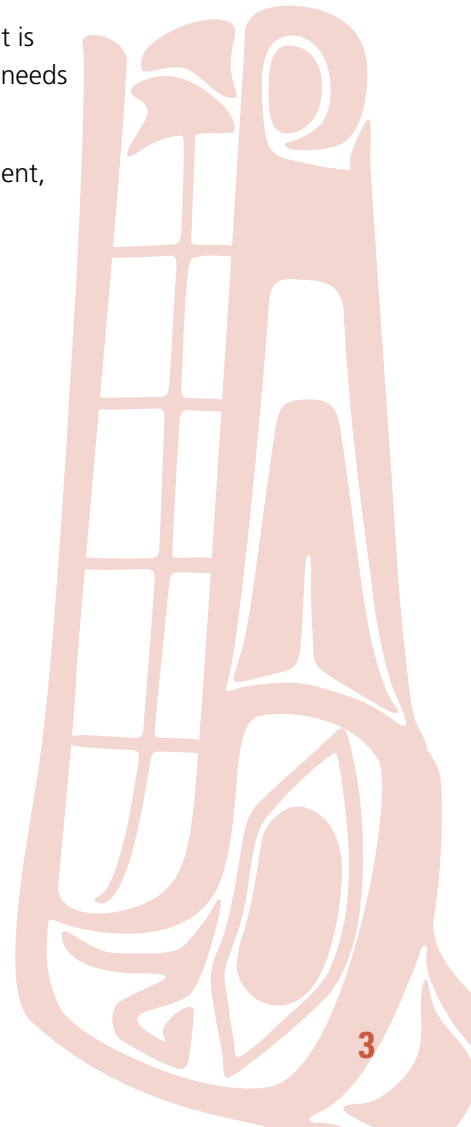
isn't right for you. If serving your community and First Nation is your main reason for being a Council member, you may find that there are other, better ways to help your community and First Nation. You may also decide to get more experience first and run for Council at a later election.

introduction

Being a member of Council is important work. If you are elected, you will be taking on a highly complex role which requires you to deal with very important and demanding tasks.

Those tasks include:

- Political work in the community — serving the needs of the community.
- Provide direction for government departments — ensuring the government is meeting the needs of the citizens and fulfilling all the tasks a government needs to complete.
- Intergovernmental work — understanding what it means to be a government, interacting with other governments while following intergovernmental protocols.



Being on CAFN Council includes being familiar with political, administrative and legal situations. These situations involve the CAFN communities, the interests of individuals, families, businesses and every facet of community life. Council is also required to work with other governments and interests outside CAFN.

Because the work of Council often touches on subjects that are at the very heart of the communities, emotions play a key role and must be handled with care. Council members have to listen to all points of view, consider the many things about the situation and make decisions that are in the best interests of the CAFN government and CAFN citizens. This can be very difficult when different CAFN communities or citizens want different things. This often happens. It can seem like there is a constant stream of challenges for each Council member and the Council as a whole. This, of course, will affect many areas of your life.

At the same time, your willingness to be

a candidate for Council is an important sign of your willingness to work to benefit the CAFN government and to benefit CAFN citizens. While you will benefit from the growth you will achieve by being on Council, you will also be helping the community in a valuable way. You will be sacrificing some of your private life in order to help your community strengthen and prosper.



why run for council?

things to consider before becoming a candidate

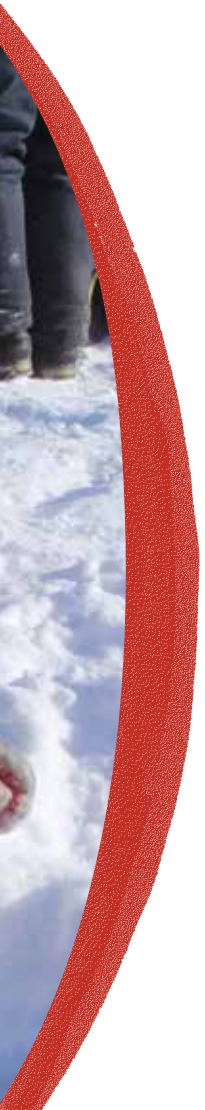
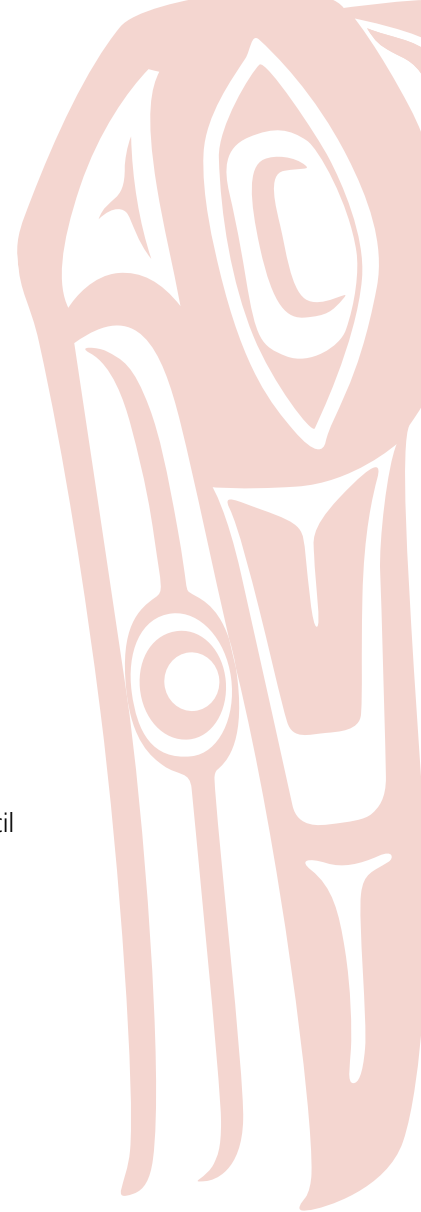
It is good to have a clear understanding of your reasons for wanting to be a Council member before becoming a candidate. Here are some of the most common (both positive and negative) reasons people choose to get into politics.

what are good reasons to run for council?

Strengthening the First Nation

If you feel that one of your primary goals in running for Council is to strengthen your First Nation, then this is a strong reason to consider going ahead.

As a Council member you are well-positioned to help CAFN become more self-reliant by supporting and encouraging the blending of traditional ways with modern self-governance. You will be in a position to assist all CAFN citizens in the political process, including Youth and Elders. This is an important part of being on the Council.



Improving CAFN Communities through Government

Having a sincere desire to improve the quality of community life by contributing to CAFN governance is one of the most important reasons for running for Council. Good governance creates quality programming and services, and supports strong leadership, which will improve the overall standard of living within the community.

If you feel inspired about strengthening the community and you believe that a strong commitment to government process is the best way to move CAFN forward, those feelings will help you meet the challenges you will face if elected to Council.

Having strong reasons to be on Council will help you to stay in tune with the communities and citizens when on Council. This is important and will help you make good decisions when on Council.

Improving Government

If you feel that government should be fair, open and accountable, and you want to contribute to creating and maintaining such a government, then this is also a very good reason to consider running for Council.

Creating good government requires a willingness to learn about the government structures and processes which are designed to keep things fair, open and accountable. This means Council members must learn and follow those processes.

This requires a certain sense of objectivity and a willingness to understand why the modern system is the way it is, what the requirements for effective participation are, and how you can contribute to making it best for CAFN citizens and the CAFN government.

Desire to Be a Good Role Model

If you are in good health, free of addictions, have a positive attitude towards government process and community growth, and have enough energy and family support to contribute the energy that is needed to do Council work, you are the right kind of person to be on Council. Being a Council member will inspire others, and your actions and words will be respected by the community. It would support the CAFN Constitution and land claim agreements in a strong and very positive way that helps others see a future path for themselves.

You Have Good Skills and Experience to Contribute

Perhaps you have a strong background in finance, business or management, or you are very well acquainted with the communities and citizens and the issues that need attention. Maybe you are a great communicator and mediator. If you feel you have good skills that would allow you to be effective as a Council member, this is another good reason to run for Council.

You Are Willing to Learn

If you are truly interested in government process and community well-being you may want to learn everything you can about how it all works and what can be done to become more empowered through the system. This can be a great motivator and give you the passion needed to do a great job.

what are poor reasons to run for council?

Sometimes people decide to run for Council for reasons that may feel right to them, but are not helpful to the citizens who are served by Council. Some of these include:

Desire for Personal Power

Because there is a certain sense of status given to those who are on Council, it is common for people who want to gain a sense of personal power to run for Council. This is a frequent mistake because the power you gain by giving your energy to public service is very different from self-interested power, or the kind of power that some feel when they think of themselves as having power over others.

It is the job of Council members to make Council function at its best on behalf of the citizens. Council members are entrusted with the responsibility to direct the CAFN government in ways that will best serve the citizens. Council members are not there to have power or authority for their own benefit.

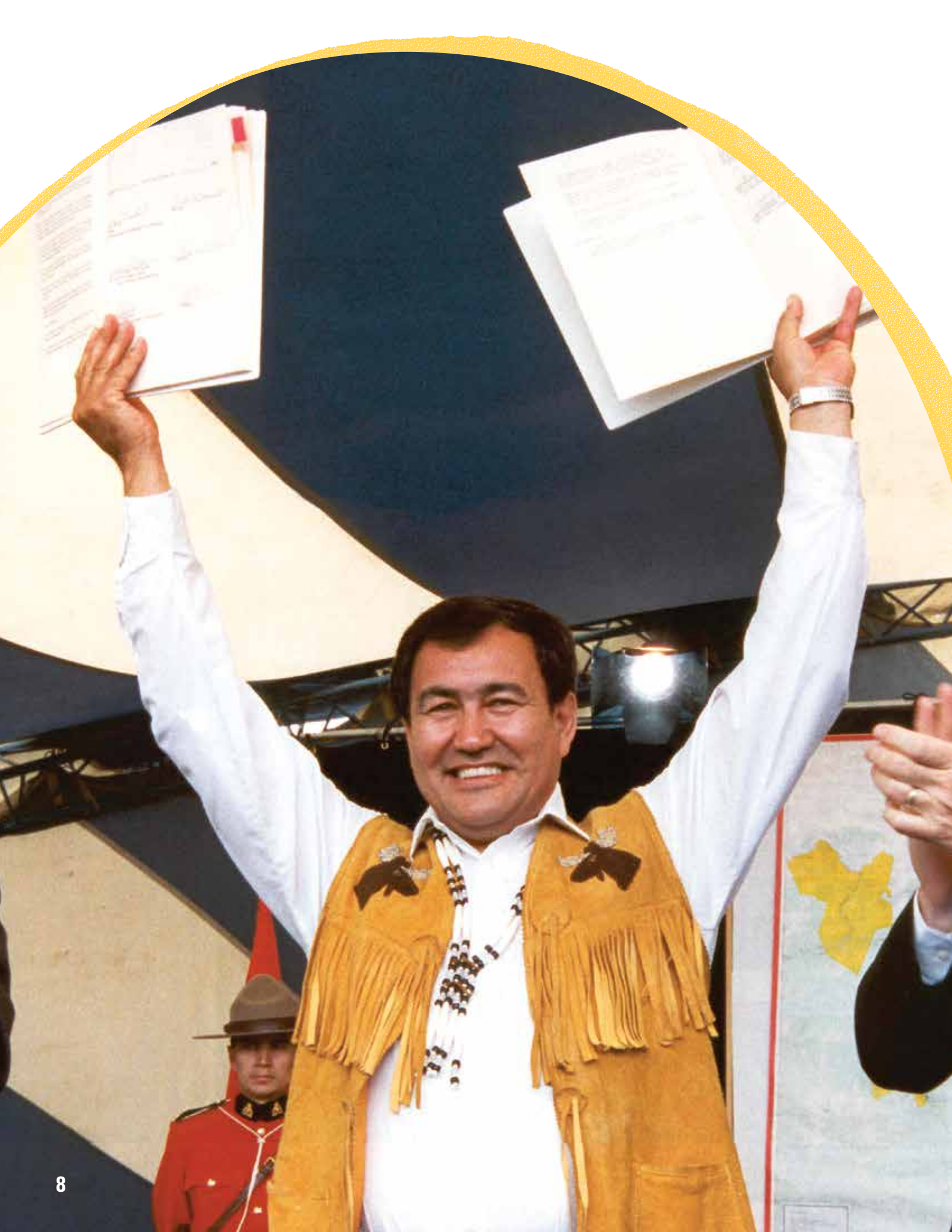
Council members must work cooperatively, as a team, to direct the government. Each Council member is one of a group which cooperatively steers the government. If elected, you will quickly realize that, in many respects, you and the rest of the Council are the employees of the community.

Desire to Obtain Perks and Benefits

Being on Council to get perks and benefits takes the heart and soul out of Council work. Council members need to be strong in their personal health, ethics and vision to act on behalf of CAFN. If your heart and soul are not engaged in the job, the demanding nature of the work will far outweigh the perks - and reduce the most important benefit, which is personal growth and meaningful contribution to the community.

Someone who feels they need the perks of being a Council member for their personal well-being should probably not run for Council. Council members should feel self-sufficient and confident enough to be able to give their energy and focus to the work they are doing for others. Council is meant for people who can take care of themselves, and still have energy left over to help others. It is not about helping yourself.

These are just a few of the reasons people may choose to enter into politics. These reasons are mentioned to help you make your decision, so you may be clear about your reasons for being a candidate for Council. The message here is that the experience will only be productive and satisfying, for you and the community, if the decision to run for Council comes from a sincere desire to make a contribution to CAFN.



running for chief vs. running for council

The questions for you to consider when thinking about running for Council carry even more weight if you are thinking of running for Chief.

The Chief must provide leadership and direction to the Council, government and CAFN as a whole. This means the Chief has significant additional responsibilities, on top of those of a regular Council member. The Chief is the principal spokesperson for the First Nation. Being the spokesperson includes providing the clear voice of leadership within the government, as well as the community, and beyond. The Chief is responsible for leading CAFN, ensuring CAFN rights, titles and interests are represented and protected in all processes and decisions. Often this involves negotiating with other governments and speaking with radio, newspaper and television reporters.

The Chief must act as the main communicator, or liaison, between Council and other governing bodies, the administration and the General Assembly. The Chief is like a communication conduit between all of the governing bodies, and also to the community.

Council decisions are provided to the Executive Director and the rest of the CAFN government. Council is briefed on administrative matters by the CAFN government staff. The Chief also reports to the General Assembly.

strong leadership skills

Because the role of the Chief is so important, it requires a person who is familiar with and able to lead the First Nation as it builds strength through self-governance. To do this, the Chief must be able to understand and handle many complex and difficult situations at once.

A person considering running for Chief must strongly believe in him or herself, have a high level of skill and knowledge, be able to manage complex and difficult situations, and be able to determine what needs to be said and done (and know why) in challenging situations.

All of this requires the ability to focus and a willingness to act. The Chief has a great deal of responsibility and must be willing to both speak up and answer for government decisions and actions decided upon by Council. In some cases the Chief may not agree with Council decisions, but as the Council's spokesperson, the Chief must support Council decisions.

For these reasons, it is very important to consider your skill level, and your understanding of government processes. Also, think about your relationship with the CAFN community and citizens and your ability to handle complex, difficult situations. You must consider all this very carefully before you decide to run for Chief. As Chief, the supports and skill level required of the regular Council member are magnified and multiplied, so the challenges are even greater. For example, a Council member needs to understand government process, but the Chief needs to know government

processes inside and out in order to lead the Council, the government staff and other governing bodies. Every aspect of the Council member's role is taken a step higher for the work of the Chief.

In other words, running for Chief is something for existing leaders to consider doing. You need to be a leader in order to have what it takes to do the job of the Chief.

On the plus side, the contribution you will make to the community by taking on the role of Chief is also greater than other roles. If you feel you have the skills and knowledge to do a good job as Chief, then this may be the right time to challenge yourself, to grow in directions that your skill level indicates you are ready to take on.

Discuss the idea with your friends, family and other supporters and ask yourself the tough questions about why you want to do it, and if you are ready. The same questions asked earlier in this handbook about running for Council should be reviewed with an eye to the even larger responsibilities and powers of the Chief. Again, taking time to answer and think through these questions now will help clarify your interests and give confidence, regardless of which direction the process takes you.

supports you will need

Behind every good Council member stands the support of friends, family and community. Deciding to run for Council is a decision that will affect your personal life, and those who are close to you.

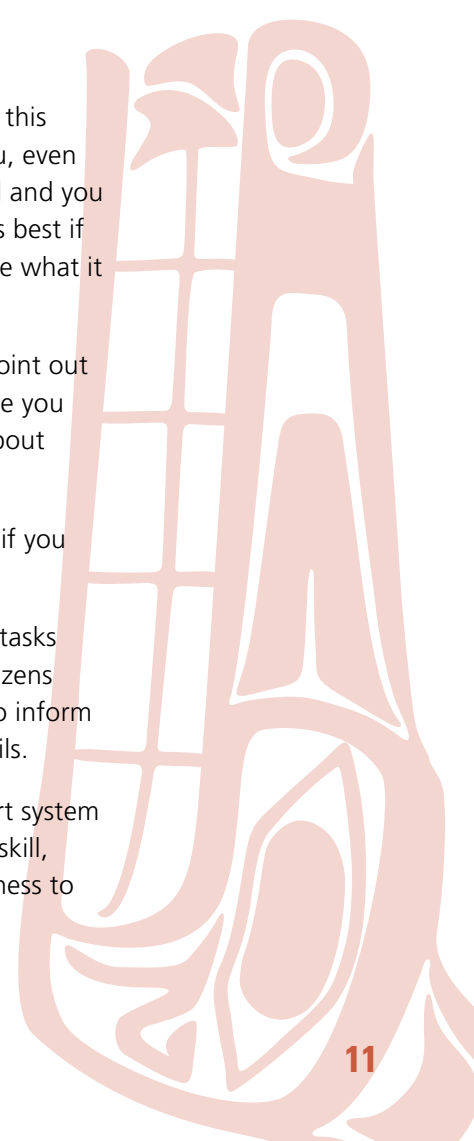
It is important to be confident the people in your life support you to take on this role before you run. Spouses, friends and family will need to be there for you, even though there will be many times the nature of your work will be confidential and you will not be able to discuss it with them. This is a challenging situation, so it is best if your life is in relatively good shape and the people close to you feel they have what it takes to handle the ups and downs of political life.

Before you read over the other information in this guide, it is important to point out that we are not emphasizing the challenges of Council work in order to make you feel overwhelmed and discouraged. Rather, the more you know and think about ahead of time, the more likely it is that you will make the right decision.

Remember that there are other supports in place to help you learn your role if you are elected.

CAFN has orientation tools and materials to help you learn and perform the tasks of being a member of Council. This handbook is the basic tool offered to citizens considering being Council members. Think of it as an introduction booklet to inform and prepare you, as openly and accurately as possible, for what the job entails.

Part of considering being a candidate is reviewing the strength of the support system in your personal life, and weighing this information along with your level of skill, experience and other strengths. That will give you a good idea of your readiness to run for Council.





what the role of the council member looks like

As you may know, there are many sides to being on Council. Although this handbook can give a basic outline of Council member duties and responsibilities, remember that many of the energy requirements you will face on the job will be the kind that cannot be easily described in a handbook.

For example, while briefing meetings may not take up much time, depending upon your level of skill and knowledge, and the kinds of issues involved, being properly prepared to participate in such a meeting might require significant amounts of preparation time before the meeting and a lot of time thinking about those things after the meeting.

Similarly, when Council deals with conflicts or highly charged issues, it will demand personal energy that may take a toll on your family and possibly interfere with other commitments in your life. It is difficult to figure out all these things in advance, but they will take up a lot of your time and energy.

Keep in mind that the following simple outline focuses on parts of the job that are most easily identified, and that they represent only the “tip of the iceberg.” Many of the things listed here will be more or less demanding for different people, depending on the level of skill and knowledge the person has before becoming a member of Council.

The simplest way to arrange the duties of Council is to put them in three sections: what you have to learn; what you have to do and what you have to uphold.

Of course, these sections overlap in many ways. This is just a brief snapshot of what is involved in each of these areas to give you a general idea of the different ways you will use your energy if you are elected to Council.

what you will need to learn

- Government structure, government bodies and their roles and procedures.
- Different rules guiding Council meetings, behaviour and action.
- How to work as a unified, decision-making government body.
- How to interact with different parts of the community as a Council member.
- How to read and understand concepts related to community and organizational planning (such as strategic plans).
- How to interact with other governments and with the media.

- How powers of Council are exercised – procedures for Council, legislative processes, laws, policies and other CAFN government procedures.
- Content, meaning and degree of implementation of CAFN’s Final Agreement and Self-Government Agreement.

In a nutshell:

You will need to understand the basic structures and processes of government, and know how these relate to the work Council does. In particular, you will become very familiar with the CAFN Constitution, legislation CAFN has enacted, and the policies which affect Council processes and procedures. It will be important to understand how Council is involved in developing policies and laws, and how these are then put into action by the government.

You will also need to learn about how Council communicates with and relates to other governments and CAFN staff. Communication and negotiation with other governments and communication with the media will also be important.

Some of this knowledge will be obtained by reading documents. The orientation and briefing provided to the new Council will be a major resource and will provide a basic level of understanding about government structure and processes.

There is a list of some of the other documents you will need to become familiar with on Page 17.

what you will need to do

- Attend Council meetings, the General Assembly and other meetings and events involving different communities and government interests.
- Participate in meetings by listening, discussing issues, and offering points of view with respect, thoughtfulness, and clarity.
- Read documents and information relating to government processes and Council business; prepare for meetings.
- Work with the other Council members in a cooperative way; learn to be part of a well-functioning group and speak with one “voice” as a way of ensuring Council solidarity.
- Abide by rules, policies and procedures guiding Council behaviour.
- Act and speak with the knowledge that you are a role model for the community.
- Make decisions based on fairness and quality (not on the wishes, interests or opinions of family and friends) for the betterment of the whole First Nation (rather than advancing the interests of family and friends).

In a nutshell:

Along with gaining a good understanding of how government works, Council members need to be fully present and fulfill their role. This means being well-prepared to participate in meetings, making sure you have read, consulted people and researched whatever information might be needed to understand the issues you will deal with.

It also means offering opinions and ideas and listening to others in constructive ways. It is important to act in ways that help build a positive, well functioning Council, while maintaining personal integrity and identity.

Being fully present as a Council member requires being attentive to all aspects of community life and maintaining a level of awareness of how community issues and government process connect. This knowledge and awareness is then directed to fuel government action in a way that truly serves community needs.

what you will need to uphold

There are many aspects of the CAFN Constitution; laws and policies that spell out the rules and guidelines for ethical, legal Council behaviour and action. Council members need to be very aware of these requirements and ensure they uphold them. If you are elected you will be expected to learn all of these procedures, laws and processes and abide by them.

Here are some of the central themes regarding Council conduct:

- Follow the Council procedures and processes.
- Maintain Confidentiality – Council members shall abide by the rules of confidentiality.
- Avoid Conflict of Interest – When a member of Council, or his or her family, finds that they may benefit directly from a matter before Council, the Council member must inform the Council that this is the case. Then, according to the Conflict of Interest Regulation, the conflict needs to be addressed.
- Avoid Unbecoming Conduct – If a Council member's dignity or integrity is questioned because of certain conduct or behaviour, the Council as a whole is affected. Certain situations may require disciplinary or other action.
- Avoid Lateral Violence Behaviours – Lateral violence includes behaviours linked to bullying and harassment that intentionally discourage or make a person feel bad. This type of behaviour is not tolerated by the CAFN government.



In a nutshell:

Council members must maintain a constant awareness that they have been entrusted by the CAFN citizens to perform in their positions of leadership and influence. Council members are NOT there to serve the interests of their families – the focus must always be on the entire community and ensuring equality and fairness for all CAFN citizens.

There must be a dedication to discretion, integrity and adherence to Council processes and procedures. Those are designed to guide Council behaviour, and Council is responsible for ensuring that if conduct becomes questionable, it takes action and, if necessary, disciplines itself. Therefore, it is important for each Council member to live up to the standards required by CAFN laws, policies, traditions and cultural values and to be responsible to Council.

documents you will need to become familiar with

There are a number of documents you will need to become familiar with if you are elected. These include (and are not limited to) the following:

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
Final Agreement

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
Self-Government Agreement

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
Final Agreement Implementation Plan

Umbrella Final Agreement

CAFN Constitution

CAFN acts and regulations
(available at www.cafn.ca)

Dákwänje Nàts'ùal Act (Language Act)

Financial Administration Act

Fish and Wildlife Act

Goods and Services Tax

Government Administration Act

Conflict of Interest Regulation

Election Rules and Regulations

Income Tax Act

Lands Act

Lottery Licensing Act

Traditional Activities Protection Act

Human Resources Policy and Procedures

Finance Policy

Board and Committee Policy

Elders Senate Rules of Procedure

Youth Council Rules of Procedure

Other CAFN policies

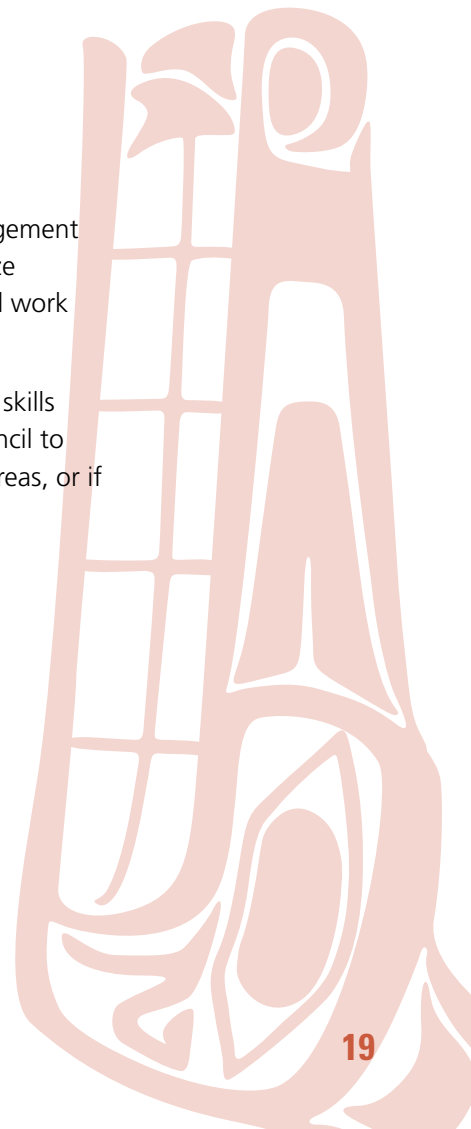


required skills and experience

What kinds of skills are desirable in a Council member? Because Council members are elected, not appointed, they are chosen by the citizens. Therefore, they come to government from different kinds of career and personal backgrounds, and bring a variety of skills and experiences to the Council.

Much of what new Council members have learned — such as business, management or people skills — will be valuable when on Council. It is important to recognize that even if you don't have political experience, it is still likely that your life and work experience will prove valuable in your work as part of the CAFN government.

However, people who run for Council need to be aware that there are specific skills and experience required to do a good job on Council. Citizens want their Council to succeed, which is not possible if the Council members are lacking in key skill areas, or if a Council member has pursued the position for the wrong reasons.



Before you decide to run for Council, take some time to answer the following questions to help you decide whether to run for Council. If you have difficulty coming up with positive answers for many of the questions, you may need to do some work in these areas before you run for Council. If you can answer most of these questions positively, and you are willing to work on the areas where you lack skills or experience, then you may be well situated to run for Council.

knowledge of CAFN

How well do you know the CAFN communities and citizens?

How long have you lived in one of the CAFN communities?

How familiar are you with CAFN culture, traditions, and language?

Do you have a sense of how to blend old ways with new ways?

How familiar are you with the history of CAFN government and people?

Are you knowledgeable about the CAFN Final and Self-Government agreements? The CAFN Constitution? CAFN laws?

Have you attended many of the General Assemblies and other CAFN events?

Do you understand the relationship between the General Assembly and the Council?

Do you understand basic government structure and processes, and the role of the General Assembly, and the responsibilities of the Council and CAFN staff?

Do you understand how the role of Council fits into the overall CAFN government picture?

literacy

Are you comfortable reading government documents?

Are you confident about your writing skills?

Are you comfortable speaking to Elders and Youth?

computer

Do you have basic computer experience?

financial

Are you comfortable working with budgets and financial documents?

Do you understand the basic principles of budgeting, balanced budgeting and financial reporting?

working as a team, decision-making

Do you have good judgment? Are you comfortable analyzing situations and making decisions?

Are you a good listener?

Can you speak your mind clearly and respectfully in a group setting?

Are you able to make your point clearly and concisely?

Are you flexible and able to compromise when appropriate?

Are you able to lead a discussion?

Do you understand the concepts of consensus, "council solidarity" and "speaking with one voice"?

problem solving

Are you able to approach a problem logically?

Are you a creative thinker?

people skills

Do you have experience working with different kinds of personalities?

Are you comfortable working with people in different settings?

Are you able to respond to people compassionately as well as objectively?

Are you able to remain calm when people are emotionally upset?

Can you recognize when you are reacting to a situation emotionally instead of objectively?

Do you then know how to deal with a situation without letting your emotions take over?

How do you handle conflict situations?

Do you enjoy working with people?

Have you ever had to make decisions that people disagreed or were unhappy with?

Do you work well in a team environment? Does contributing to a team feel natural for you?

Again, these are just a few of the many questions that could be asked in order to help you consider your skills and experience. The important thing is to think about what your skills and experience are and identify how these could be valuable if you are a Council member. Of course, not everyone has skills and experience in all areas, and most people have gaps in their development that they need to fill. If you know yourself and what you have to offer, you can identify what you will do to improve your effectiveness if you are elected to Council.

As with the previous information in this handbook, if reviewing your skills makes you question your decision to run for Council, talk it over with someone who can give you an objective point of view. You may need to work on some areas before you actually run or there may skills you can develop elsewhere.

Either way, you will be better able to face the future and achieve your goals with the knowledge you have gained by considering these things.

conclusion

There is a lot of material here to digest and consider. We hope that you will find the information valuable, and that the questions asked have helped you to determine what is best for you and for the CAFN government.

Though we have mentioned the challenging nature of being on Council, this handbook is meant to encourage and support you to run for Council if the time is right for you. Just like every government, CAFN needs caring, skilled and motivated people at the helm. It is hoped this information helps you determine if you are ready and able, and encourages and supports you in your decision.

We wish you all the best as you explore the path of public life and reflect on your personal journey. Good luck!







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