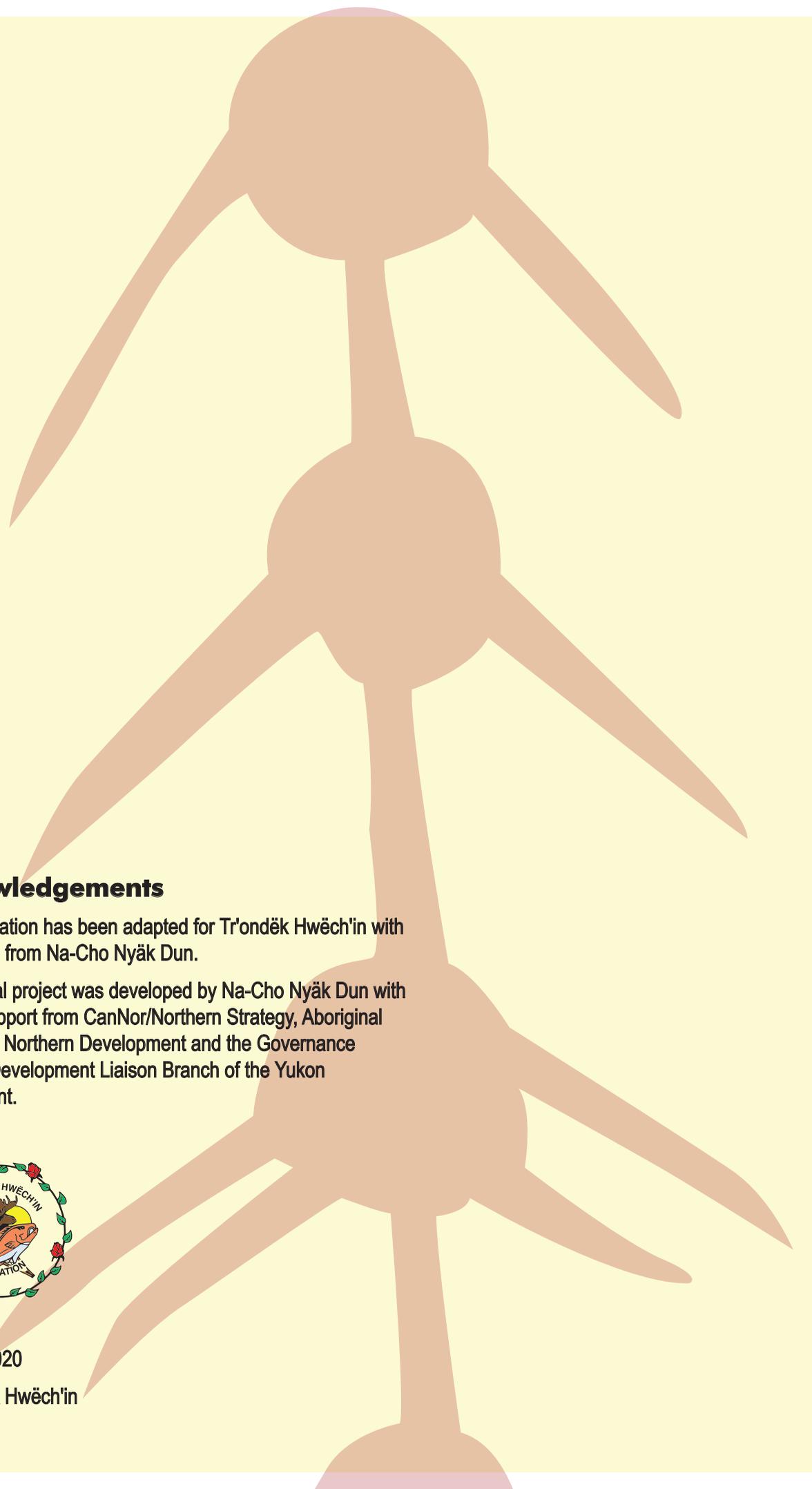


So, you want to run for Council?



**A support and orientation handbook
for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens**



acknowledgements

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So, you want to run for TH Council

If you are thinking about running for TH Council, this handbook is for you. It has been written to help you identify, understand, and think about the issues related to being on Council and support you in your decision whether or not to run as a candidate in the TH election. We have included questions you should ask yourself to help you decide whether you are prepared for the challenges that come with being on Council.

This booklet will also provide you a basic understanding of Council's role and help clarify your motivations and strengths. Thinking about these things now may keep you from a decision that is not right for you. If serving your community and First Nation is your main reason for being a Council member, you may find there are other, better ways to serve. You may also decide to get more experience first and run for Council later.





Introduction

Serving on Council is an important role. If you are elected, you will be taking on complex responsibilities which require you to deal with crucial and demanding tasks.

Those tasks include the following:

- Serving the needs of the community.
- Ensuring the government is meeting the needs of the citizens and fulfilling the tasks a government needs to complete.
- Representing TH with other governments and political leaders.





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

Because the work of Council often touches on subjects that are at the very heart of the community, emotions must be handled with care. Council members have to listen to all points of view, carefully consider the situation, and make decisions in the best interests of the TH government and TH citizens. This can be difficult when

different citizens want different things. It can seem like there is a constant stream of conflicting challenges and priorities for individual Council members and Council as a whole. This, of course, will affect your personal life.

At the same time, your enthusiasm to be a candidate for Council is a sign of your willingness to work for the benefit of the TH government and citizens. Being on Council affords you the chance to help 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?

It is good to have a clear understanding of why you want 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 some good reasons to run for Council?

Strengthening the First Nation

As a Council member, you can help TH 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 TH citizens navigate the political process, which is an important part of being on Council.

Desire to Be a Good Role Model

If you are in good health and free from addictions, have a positive attitude towards government process and community growth, and have enough energy and family support for Council work, you are the right kind of person to be on Council. Being a Council member can inspire others, so it is important to remember your actions and words will be scrutinized by the community.



Improving Government

The desire to create and maintain an open and accountable government is a good reason to run for Council.

Government structures and processes are designed to keep things fair. 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 and what the requirements for effective participation are.

Improving the TH Community through Government

Having a sincere desire to improve the quality of community life by contributing to TH governance is an important reason for running for Council. Good governance creates quality programming and services, which improves the overall standard of living for TH citizens.

Being inspired to strengthen the community and a strong commitment to government process 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 community and citizens when on Council. This is important and will help you make good decisions when on Council.

You Have Skills and Experience to Contribute

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

You Are Willing to Learn

An interest in learning about government process and community well-being is a great motivator and can inspire the passion needed for the job.



What are some poor reasons to run for Council?

Desire for Personal Power

Because of a certain sense of status given to those on Council, it is common for people interested in personal power to run for Council. But the power gained from public service is very different from the power some feel when they think they have power over others. It is Council's job to work for what's best for the government, not their own sense of power or authority.

Each Council member is just one of a group who cooperatively steers the government. If elected, you will quickly realize that, in many respects, you and the rest of the Council are employees of the community.

Desire to Obtain Perks and Benefits

Council members need to be strong in their personal health, ethics, and vision to act on behalf of TH. If your heart and soul are not engaged, the demanding nature of the work will far outweigh any perks and reduce the most important benefit: personal growth and meaningful contribution to the community.

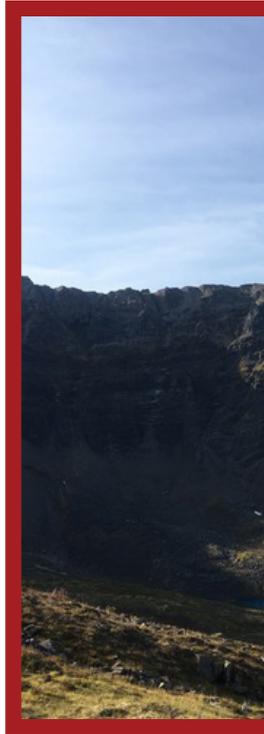
Someone who feels they need the perks of being a Council member for their personal well-being should probably not run for Council. Council members should feel confident enough to give their energy and focus to the work they are doing for others. Council is meant for people who can take care of themselves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

These are just a few of the reasons for people to enter politics. Explore your own and be clear to yourself why you want to be a candidate for Council. The experience will be productive and satisfying, for you and the community, if your decision to run comes from a sincere desire to make a contribution.





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 considering running for Chief.

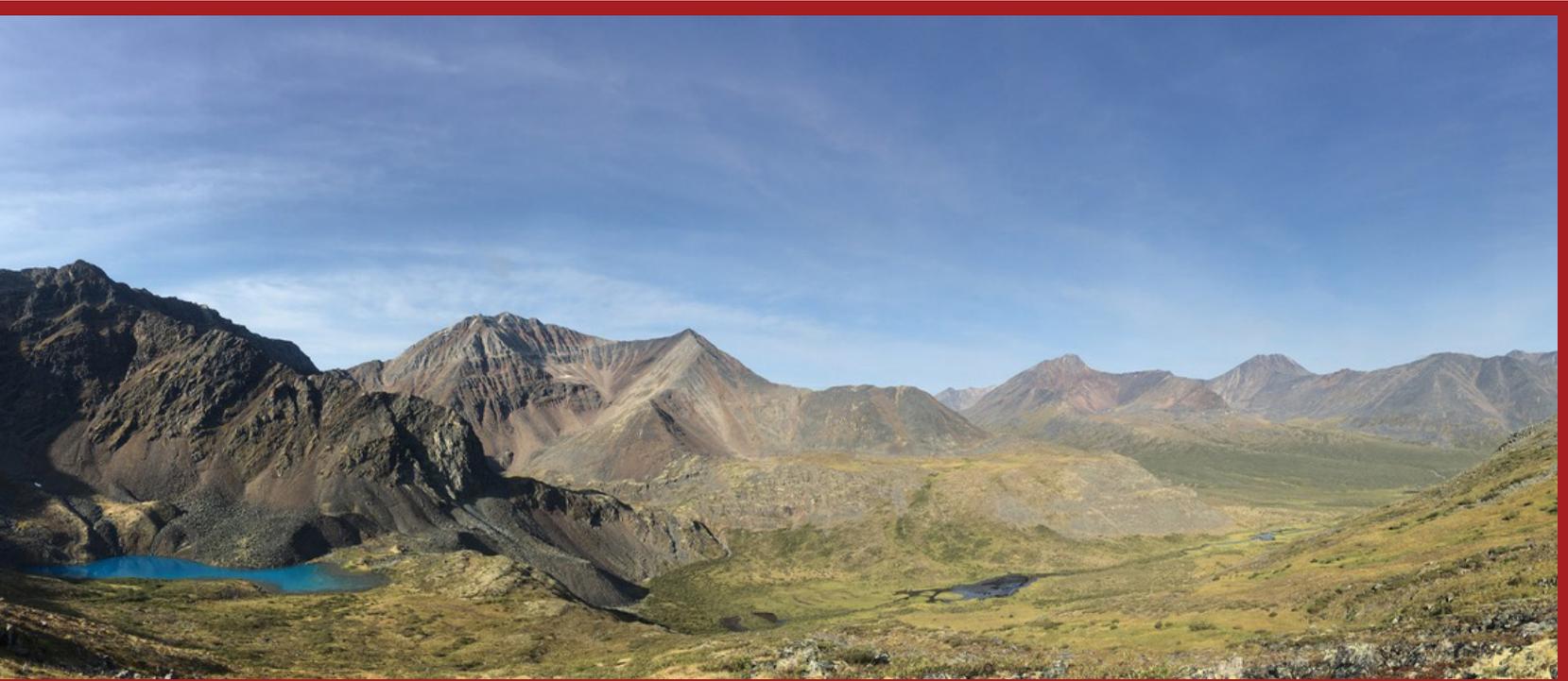
The Chief provides leadership and direction to the Council, government, and TH community. The Chief has significant additional responsibilities on top of those of a regular Council member and is the principal spokesperson for the First Nation. Being the spokesperson includes providing the clear voice of leadership within the government, the community, and beyond. The Chief is responsible for leading TH and ensuring TH rights and interests are represented and protected in all decisions. Often this involves negotiating with other governments and speaking with radio, newspaper, and television reporters. The Chief is the main communicator, or liaison, between Council and other governing bodies, the administration, and the General Assembly. The Chief is a communication conduit between all of the governing bodies and the community.

Strong leadership skills

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

A person considering running for Chief must believe in their leadership skills, have a high level of skill and knowledge, and be able to determine what needs to be said and done 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 answer for government decisions and actions decided upon by Council. In some cases, the Chief may not agree with Council decisions, but as their spokesperson must support those decisions.



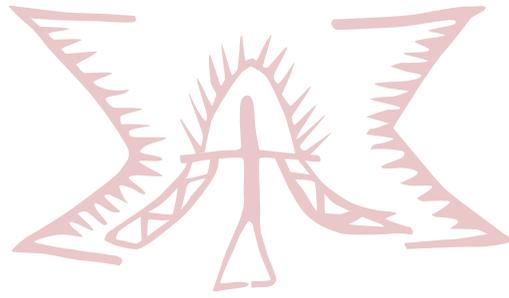
It is important to consider your skill level and understanding of government processes. Also, think about your relationship with the TH community and your ability to handle complex, difficult situations. You should consider all this very carefully before deciding to run for Chief. As Chief, the supports and skill level required of a 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 and other governing bodies. 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.

Discuss the idea with your friends and family 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. Taking time to think through these questions will clarify your interests and give confidence in your decision, regardless of which direction the process takes you.



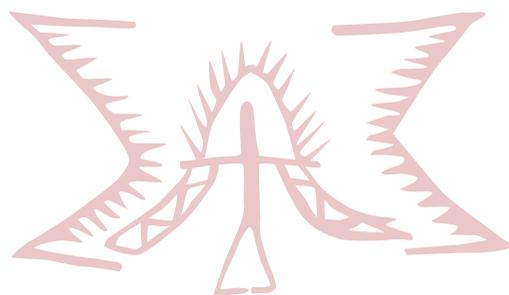




Supports you will need

Good Council members have the support of friends, family, and the community. Being a member of Council will affect your personal life and the lives of those close to you. It is important 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 times your work will be confidential and you will not be able to discuss it with them. Being a Council member can be challenging, so it is best if the people close to you are prepared for the ups and downs of political life.

There are other supports in place to help you learn your role if you are elected. TH has orientation tools and materials to help you learn and perform the tasks of being a Council member.









What is the role of a Council member?

Although this handbook gives a basic outline of Council member duties and responsibilities, many of the challenges you will face are not easily described in a handbook.

For example, while meetings may not take up much time, being properly prepared for them might require significant amounts of preparation time. Similarly, when Council deals with 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 anticipate all of the issues in advance, but they will take up a lot of your time and energy. Keep in mind that the following outline focuses on parts of the job that are most easily identified and represents 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.

What you will need to learn

- Government structures, government bodies, and their roles and procedures.
- 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.
- How to interact with other governments and the media.
- How powers of Council are exercised.
- Content, meaning, and degree of implementation of TH’s Final Agreement and Self-Government Agreements.

In a nutshell

You will need to understand the basic structures and processes of government and know how these relate to Council’s work. In particular, you will become very familiar with the TH Constitution, legislation TH 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 staff. Communication with the media is also 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 provide a basic level of understanding about government structure and processes.

What you will need to do

- Attend Council meetings, General Assemblies, and other meetings and events.
- Participate in meetings by listening, discussing issues, and offering points of view with respect, thoughtfulness, and clarity.
- Read documents relating to Council business.
- Work with the other Council members in a cooperative way, be part of a functioning group, and speak with one voice as a way of ensuring Council solidarity.
- Abide by rules, policies, and procedures guiding Council behaviour.
- Act as 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 prepared to participate in meetings and making sure you have read meeting material, 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 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 towards government action in a way that truly serves community needs.

What you will need to uphold

The TH Constitution, laws, and policies spell out the rules and guidelines for ethical, legal Council behaviour and action. Council members need to be 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 Council procedures and processes.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Avoid conflict of interest.
- Avoid unbecoming conduct.
- Avoid lateral-violence behaviours.

In a nutshell

Council members must maintain a constant awareness that they have been entrusted by TH citizens with a position of leadership and influence. Council members are not there to serve the interests of their families or friends. The focus must always be on the entire community and ensuring equality and fairness for all TH 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 TH laws, policies, traditions, and cultural values.







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:

- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Self-Government Agreement
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement Implementation Plan
- Umbrella Final Agreement
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Constitution
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in acts, regulations, and policies







Required skills and experience

Council members come to government from diverse careers and personal backgrounds. 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 do not have political experience, it is still likely that your life and work experience will prove valuable in your Council work.

However, people who run for Council should be aware 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 key skills or have pursued the position for the wrong reasons.

Before you decide to run for Council, ask yourself the questions on the following page. 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 TH

- How well do you know the TH community and citizens?
- How long have you lived in the TH community?
- How familiar are you with TH 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 TH government and people?
- Are you knowledgeable about the TH Final and Self-Government agreements? The TH Constitution? TH laws?
- Have you attended many of the General Assemblies and other TH events?
- Do you understand the relationship between the General Assembly and the Council?
- Do you understand the relationship between government staff and the Council?
- Do you understand basic government structure and processes and the role of the General Assembly, Council, and staff?

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 and financial reporting?

Problem solving

- Are you able to approach a problem logically?
- Are you a creative thinker?

Working as a team

- 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?

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?
- Can 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?

These are just a few of the questions that could be considered. The important thing is to identify your skills and experience and how these could be valuable as a Council member. Not everyone has skills and experience in all areas, and most people have gaps in their development 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.





Conclusion

We hope you find this information valuable and that the questions asked help you determine what is best for you and the TH government.

Though being on Council can be challenging, TH needs caring, skilled, and motivated people at the helm. Regardless what you decide, we hope this information helps you with your decision.

Good luck!







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