



Selkirk First Nation



So, You Want to Run for Council?

**A Support and Orientation Handbook
Written for SFN Citizens**





Running for SFN Council

If you are thinking about running for SFN Council, this handbook is for you. It has been written to help you identify, understand and think about matters connected with being a Council member. It is meant to support you in your personal decision-making process by encouraging you to take some time at the beginning of your journey to learn about the job of being a Council member.

If you decide to go ahead with a “yes” decision, you will know that you are doing this with a basic understanding of what the expectations will be if you are elected. Having this level of understanding may help you be well spoken in your campaign and gain support from others.

On the other hand, if reading this information helps you realize that a Council position may not be the right thing for you at this time, the handbook will still have achieved its main purpose. Perhaps reading over the material here will help you to understand your motivations and strengths, which will help you get a better sense of which path would be right for you.

If serving your Citizens is your main motivation, you may find that there are other choices which may help you gain the experience and skills you need to run for Council in the future such as sitting on one of the SFN Committees, volunteering, etc.

Of course, knowledge doesn't replace experience, and there's no way to get experience except to do the job. Having some of the basic information you need about the job before you start, will give you an idea of what to expect. This handbook will guide and help shape your experience to be a positive one.



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Your willingness to stand as a Council member is an important act of kindness towards your Citizens and your community – your First Nation.



Introduction

Being a member of Council is a tall order. If you are elected, you will be taking on a highly complex job, which requires you to deal with very demanding work.

In other words, being on SFN Council means becoming familiar with political, administrative and corporate situations, many of which overlap and connect. These issues will span the entire community to include the interests of individuals, families, businesses and every part of community life. Council is also required to work with other governments and interests from outside of the community.

Because the work Council does often touches on subjects that are at the very heart of the community and Citizens' interests, emotions also play a key role and must be handled with care. Council members have to listen to all

points of view, consider the many reasons causing the situation and respond by making decisions that will be in the best interests of Citizens and the community. This can be very challenging when different Citizens want different things, which is common. It can create a situation that feels like a constant stream of challenges and is stressful 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 stand as a Council member is an important act of kindness towards your Citizens and your community – your First Nation. While you will benefit as an individual from the growth you will reach by taking office (assuming you are elected), you will also be giving to and helping Citizens in a very valuable way. You will be sacrificing some of your private life in order to help your First Nation.



Why Run For Council?

THINGS TO GIVE THOUGHT TO BEFORE SAYING YES

As is true of any major life decision, it's good to have a clear understanding of what your reasons are for wanting to be a Council member before going ahead with the decision. Here are some of the most common (both positive and negative) reasons people choose to get into politics.

What are the Right Reasons to Run for Council?

■ STRENGTHENING THE FIRST NATION

If you feel that one of your main 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 SFN become more self-reliant by supporting and encouraging the blending of traditional ways with the modern ways of self-governance. In so doing, you will be in a position to nurture the participation of all Citizens in the political process, including Youths and Elders. This is an important and exciting part of the Council member's role.

■ IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF COMMUNITY LIFE THROUGH GOVERNMENT

Having an honest desire to improve the quality of Citizens' lives by contributing positively to governance is one of the most important reasons for running for office. Good governance creates quality programs and services, and supports strong leadership which improves the overall standard of living for Citizens.

Having a strong personal reason to run for Council will also help you to stay in tune with Citizens throughout your term in office. This is important in order to make good decisions on its behalf, which is the role of a functional and productive Council.

- ✓ Strengthening the First Nation
- ✓ Improving the quality of community life through government
- ✓ Improving the quality of government
- ✓ Desire to be a good role model
- ✓ You have good skills and experience to contribute
- ✓ You are willing to learn

Having a strong personal reason to run for Council will help you to stay in tune with Citizens throughout your term in office. This is important in order to make good decisions.

■ **IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT**

If you feel that government should be fair, open and accountable, and you want to contribute your energy to the process of 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 have been designed to keep things fair, open and accountable. This means Council members must be willing to make a commitment to learn and follow these processes.

This requires a certain sense of neutrality and a willingness to understand why the modern government system is the way it is, what its requirements for effective participation are, and how you can contribute to make it perform at its best for SFN Citizens.

The learning curve to embrace this level of knowledge can be steep at the beginning. Again, if your motivation is strong, it will carry you through the challenges and help you see the larger picture of how transparency and fairness can be reached and maintained by SFN.

■ **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 extra amount of energy that is needed to do Council work, you are the right kind of person to be in the public eye. As a Council member, you will inspire others. Citizens will respect your actions and words.

■ **YOU HAVE GOOD SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE TO CONTRIBUTE**

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

■ **YOU ARE WILLING TO LEARN**

If you are truly interested in government process and Citizen well-being, you may want to learn everything you can about how it all works. This can be a great motivator and give you the passion needed to do a great job.

What are the Wrong Reasons to Run for Council?

Sometimes people run for office for reasons that may feel right to them, but would not benefit the First Nation. Some of these include:

■ DESIRE FOR PERSONAL POWER

Because there is a sense of status given to those who hold political positions, it is not uncommon for people who want to gain a sense of personal power to run for office. This is a mistake because the type of power you get from the public service is very different than personal power, or having power over others. Instead, it is the job of senior officials in all systems to act as guides, working with government process to make it function at its best on behalf of the First Nation.

At SFN, Council members have been trusted to direct the government in ways that will best serve Citizens. Council members are not in their positions to assume power or authority over others for their own purposes.

This can be confusing in some ways because (among other things) Council is the top management authority at SFN and therefore has many responsibilities with being in charge. For example, Council is responsible for hiring senior management, which reports to, and seeks direction from, Council; reviewing and approving budgets for the whole government; signing

cheques, giving out contracts; making business decisions as Selkirk Development Corporation shareholders; adopting policies, etc.

However, the flow of energy from Council to the directors and employees is communicated through the Executive Advisor on behalf of the Council.

Council itself doesn't directly tell SFN employees what to do or how to do their work, even though Council makes decisions about how this work should be handled from the top. This is usually done through strategic planning and budget/workplan review and approval.

So while Council is technically in charge of the smooth running of the government, this does not mean that its power and authority can be used to promote individual interests, or to support individual Council members to act as “bosses” either inside or outside of government.

Council must work cooperatively as a team to direct the government by working well within their defined role in the Constitution. The individual Council member is one of a group, which together steers the ship.



“The Council shall represent the interests of the Selkirk First Nation and the Selkirk People and shall manage the property, interests and affairs of the Selkirk First Nation in accordance with and subject to the provisions of this Constitution and the direction, priorities and mandate established by the Assembly.”

– SFN Constitution 2013, section 10.10



LEFT TO RIGHT: Councillor Wilson Silverfox, former Chief Danny Joe and former Chief Tommy McGinty

Running for Chief vs. Running for Council

The questions that should be considered when running for Council carry even more weight when an individual is thinking of running for the position of Chief.

The Chief must provide leadership and direction to the Council, government and community as a whole. This means that the Chief has significant additional responsibilities than those of Council members.

The Chief is principal spokesperson for SFN. The role of spokesperson involves providing the clear voice of leadership within the government itself, as well as with Citizens, the Yukon, Canada and beyond. However, Council decisions are made by consensus. The Chief is responsible for leading SFN, ensuring that SFN rights, titles and interests are represented and protected in all processes and decisions. Often this involves negotiating with representatives of other governments; speaking with other government leaders and industry; speaking with the media; speaking before the SFN General Assemblies; speaking before board hearings and courts. If you plan on running for Chief, you should have some public relation skills and are capable of speaking to large groups of people. Also, you will have to do research and reading necessary to be well prepared for such events.

In order to fulfill this role, the Chief must act as the main communicator, or liaison, between Council, the administration and the Assembly. The position of Chief is like a communication pipeline between all of the governing bodies, and also to the Citizens.

As outlined in SFN's Constitution, Council chooses the Deputy Chief amongst its members and the Council fixes the term of office. The Deputy Chief fills this role when required, as well as performs any additional tasks Council may delegate to him or her. The Deputy Chief must be prepared to take on the role of Chief at any time, and so must stay on top of processes and situations, staying as aware and informed about issues and situations as the Chief.

The most important thing for the Deputy Chief to learn and remember when authorized to act as Chief, is to continue to follow the same official mandate as the Chief. This is necessary to ensure that there are no inconsistent positions, decisions or actions. Inconsistencies and sudden changes of position create turmoil.

Consult with your friends, family and other supporters and ask yourself the tough questions about why you want to run, and if you are ready.

■ STRONG LEADERSHIP SKILLS

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

Therefore, a person considering running for Chief must be self-confident, have a high level of skills and knowledge, be able to manage complex 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.

For these reasons, it is very important to consider your skill level, your understanding of government processes (SFN, Yukon Government and Canada), your relationship with the Citizens and your ability to handle complex situations before you decide to run for Chief or Deputy Chief. Examples of complex and difficult situations are: disgruntled Citizens, legal document review, develop and implement policies and strategic plans, financial statements and audits, review of financial statements, court actions, dispute with Yukon or federal government, etc.

In the Chief and Deputy Chief positions, the supports and skill level required are magnified and multiplied, so the challenges are even greater than the position of a regular Council member. For example, the

Council member needs to understand government process, but the Chief needs to know government process inside out in order to lead the Council, the administration and all the other governing bodies. The Chief and Deputy Chief's job is more demanding than the Council member's job. Therefore, it is important to be able to maintain work/life balance.

In other words, running for Chief or accepting to be Deputy Chief should be something for existing leaders to consider. You should consider being a leader first in order to learn what it takes to do the job of the Chief or Deputy Chief.

The level of contribution you will make to Citizens and the community by taking on this role is also greater than other roles. If you feel you have the skills and knowledge to do a good job as Chief or Deputy Chief, then this may be the right time to challenge yourself.

Consult with your friends, family and other supporters and ask yourself the tough questions about why you want to run, and if you are ready. The same questions asked earlier in this handbook to clarify reasons for running for Council should be reviewed with an eye to the even larger responsibilities and powers of the Chief or Deputy Chief.

Again, taking the time to answer and think through these questions now will help clarify your position and give confidence; regardless of the direction the process takes you.

Supports You Need

IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE CONFIDENT THAT THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE SUPPORT YOU TO TAKE ON THIS ROLE BEFORE YOU RUN

Behind every good Council member stands the support of his or her family, friends and Citizens. Deciding to run for Council is a decision that will affect your personal life, and those who are close to you, in positive and negative ways.

It is important to be confident that the people in your life support you to take on this role before you run. Spouses, family and friends 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 directly. This is a challenging situation, so it's best if your life is in relatively good shape and the people who are close to you feel they have what it takes to handle the ups and downs of political life.

It's also 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 can think about ahead

of time, the more likely it is that you will be successful.

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

Although SFN's form of government is new, it is similar enough to democratic governments around the world that there is a wealth of good information and models to follow.

This handbook is the initial support tool offered to potential Council members. Think of it as an introduction to the job's requirements and is meant to inform and prepare you as much as possible, for what the job involves.

Part of the initial process of self-assessment includes 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. This process will give you a good idea of whether you are ready to run for Council.



What the Role of the Council Member Looks Like

The role of the Council member has many sides to it. Although this handbook can give a basic outline of Council duties and responsibilities, remember the energy that some situations take and that you will face on the job 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 ready to participate in such a meeting might require a lot of preparation time before meeting.

Similarly, when there are conflicts or very difficult issues for Council to deal with, this will demand personal energy that may be stressful and in turn, may affect your family and possibly interfere with other commitments. It is difficult to identify these parts of a job description, but they take up a lot of time and energy.

Keep in mind that this simple description focuses on the parts of the job that are most easily recognizable, and they only represent the “tip of the iceberg.” Many of the items listed here will be more or less demanding for different individuals, depending on the level of skill and knowledge they may have before becoming a member of Council.

The simplest way to label the general duties of Council is in three sections:

- 1) what you have to learn;**
- 2) what you have to do;**
- 3) what you have to uphold.**

Of course, these sections do overlap in many ways, as you will see in the lists themselves. We offer brief snapshots of what is involved in each of these areas, just to give you a general idea of the different ways you will be required to use your energy if you are elected to Council.

Remember: it is important to be able to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

What You Will Need to Learn

- Government structure (SFN, Yukon and Canada), processes, laws, policies, and procedures
- Duties, Powers and Responsibilities of Council as stated in the SFN Constitution
- How to work together, as a decision-making government body
- How to interact with different areas of the community and different Citizens
- How to read and understand concepts and ideas related to community planning (such as strategic plans)
- How to interact with other governments and with the media
- Different structures of other organizations SFN belongs to such as Council of Yukon First Nations, Land Claims Agreement Coalition, Yukon Indian Development Corporation, etc.

What You Will Need to Do

- Attend Council meetings, Assembly meetings, and other meetings and events involving different Citizen, business and intergovernmental interests. (There were 61 Council meetings in 2015 and many other meetings that involve travel.)
- Participate in meetings by listening, discussing issues, offering points of view with respect, thoughtfulness and clarity.
- Read documents and information relating to government processes and Council issues; prepare for meetings.
- Work with the other Council members in a shared way; learn to be part of a friendly group, speaking with “one voice,” ensuring a good relationship amongst Council members.
- Follow rules, policies and procedures guiding Council behaviour.
- Act and speak with the knowledge that you are a role model.
- Act as shareholders of the Selkirk Development Corporation and Companies.

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 SFN Constitution, the different pieces of laws SFN has enacted, and the policies, which affect Council process and procedure. It will be important to understand how Council is responsible for developing policies and regulations, and how these are then put into action by the management.

You will also need to learn about how Council communicates with and relates to the other governing bodies and the administration. Communication and negotiation with corporate interests, other governments and the media will also be important.

Some of this knowledge will be obtained by reading documents. The SFN Management team will ensure Council is informed and receives all relevant documents.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY

- Make decisions based on fairness and quality for the betterment of the Citizens and the community (rather than advancing the interests of yourself, family and friends).

IN A NUTSHELL:

Along with gaining a good understanding of how government works, Council members need to be fully present and able to work in their role. This means being well prepared to participate in meetings, making sure you have read, talked to people or resources, and researched whatever information might be required to understand the issues that are at hand.

It also means offering opinions and ideas and listening to others. It is important to act in ways that help build a positive group environment in the Council, while keeping your personal values.

Being fully present, as a Council member, requires paying attention to all parts of community life and keeping a level of awareness of how community and Citizen issues and government process connect. This knowledge and awareness then leads to government action in a way that truly serves Citizens’ needs.

What You Will Need to Uphold

There are many sides to the SFN Constitution that spell out the rules and guidelines for proper Council behaviour and action. Council members need to be very aware of these requirements and ensure that they follow them.

The details of these policies and directives are available from the Government Administration, as well as in the Constitution. If you are elected you will be expected to learn all of these rules and follow them.

Here are some of the central themes regarding Council conduct:

- Observe SFN Constitution – Council shall observe and follow the SFN Constitution.
- Maintain Confidentiality – Council members shall follow 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 contract Council enters into, or from a decision that Council makes, the Council member must inform the Council that this is the case. Then a suitable course of action will be taken that will protect the member and the Council.
- Avoid Unbecoming Conduct – If a Council member's values are called into question because of certain conduct or behaviour, the Council as a whole is accountable. Certain situations may be referred to the Elders Council and may require disciplinary action.
- Avoid Undue Use of Influence – This occurs when a Council member accepts a fee or reward of some kind in exchange for using their Council position to influence the outcome of a matter before Council. If such a situation arises, the person involved may be prosecuted or required to appear before the Elders Council.
- 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 within the Selkirk First Nation government.

IN A NUTSHELL:

Council members must maintain a constant awareness that their Citizens trust them to perform appropriately in their positions of leadership and authority. Council members are NOT there to serve their personal or their families' interests – the focus must always be on SFN Citizens and ensuring the equality and fairness for all SFN citizens.

Therefore, Council members must respect privacy and be fair.

It is important that each Council member self-police and live up to the standards required by SFN law and policy, and to be responsible to Council as a whole by enforcing these standards on its behalf.

DOCUMENTS TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH:

There are a number of documents you will need to become familiar with if you are elected. These include but are not limited to:

SFN Final Agreement & Self-government Agreement

SFN Constitution (2013)

As a Council member, you will need to learn the Constitution intimately in order to live and follow it.

SFN Election Act (2016)

You will need to know all the provisions that apply to you as a candidate.

SFN Election Handbook (2017)

Oath of Office which is part of the *Election Act*

Required Skills and Experience

What kinds of skills are needed in a Council member? Council members are elected, not appointed. The Citizens choose them. Therefore, they come to government from different kinds of career and personal backgrounds, and they bring a variety of skills and experiences to the table.

Much of what new Council members have learned outside political life – such as business, management or people skills – will be valuable inside political life. So it is important to recognize that even if you don't have political experience, it is still very likely that your life and work experience will prove valuable as you work within the SFN government.

However, First Nations throughout the Yukon have said that people who run for Council need to be aware that there are specific skills and experience required to do a good job on Council. People want their Council to succeed, which is not possible if the Council members are lacking in key skill areas, or if individual members wanted the position for the wrong reasons.

Before you decide to run for Council, take some time to answer the following questions to help you assess your skills. If you feel that 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 feel confident that you can answer most or

many of these questions positively, and that you are willing to work on the areas where you lack skills or experience, then you may be well situated to run for Council at this time.

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

As with the previous exercises in this handbook, if reviewing your skills makes you question your decision to run for Council, talk it over with someone in a good position to give you a fair-minded point of view. You may need to work on these areas before you actually run, or they may be the kind of skills you can develop on the job.

Either way, you will be better able to face the future and achieve your goals with the self-knowledge you have gained. By putting in the effort now, you may discover a previously unknown set of personal choices – including the possibility of running for Council in future – to consider.

Creating good government requires a willingness to learn about the government structures and processes, which have been designed to keep things fair, open and accountable.

KNOWLEDGE OF SFN

- How well do you know the SFN Citizens, community and family structures? How long have you lived in the community?
 - How familiar are you with SFN culture, traditions, and language? Do you have a sense of how to blend the old ways with the new ways?
 - How familiar are you with the history of the SFN?
 - Are you knowledgeable about the SFN Agreements, the SFN Constitution, SFN laws and regulations?
 - Have you attended a significant number of General Assemblies and do you know about recent Assembly decisions and processes?
 - Do you understand the relationship between the Assembly and the Council?
 - Do you understand basic government structure and process, and the role of Assembly members, and the responsibilities of the different governing bodies such as Elders Council and Family Heads and the administration?
 - Do you understand how the role of Council fits into the overall government picture (administrative versus political)?
-

LITERACY

- Are you comfortable reading formal government documents?
 - Are you confident about your writing skills?
 - Are you comfortable reading about SFN history, and speaking to the Elders about the old ways and the “hard times”?
-

COMPUTER

- Do you have basic computer skills? Would you bring any extra technical knowledge or expertise in this area to Council?
-

FINANCIAL

- Do you have basic math skills?
 - Do you understand the basic principles of budgeting, balanced budgeting and financial reporting?
-

PROBLEM SOLVING

- Are you able to approach a problem logically? Are you a creative thinker?
- Do you have a personal approach to problem solving?

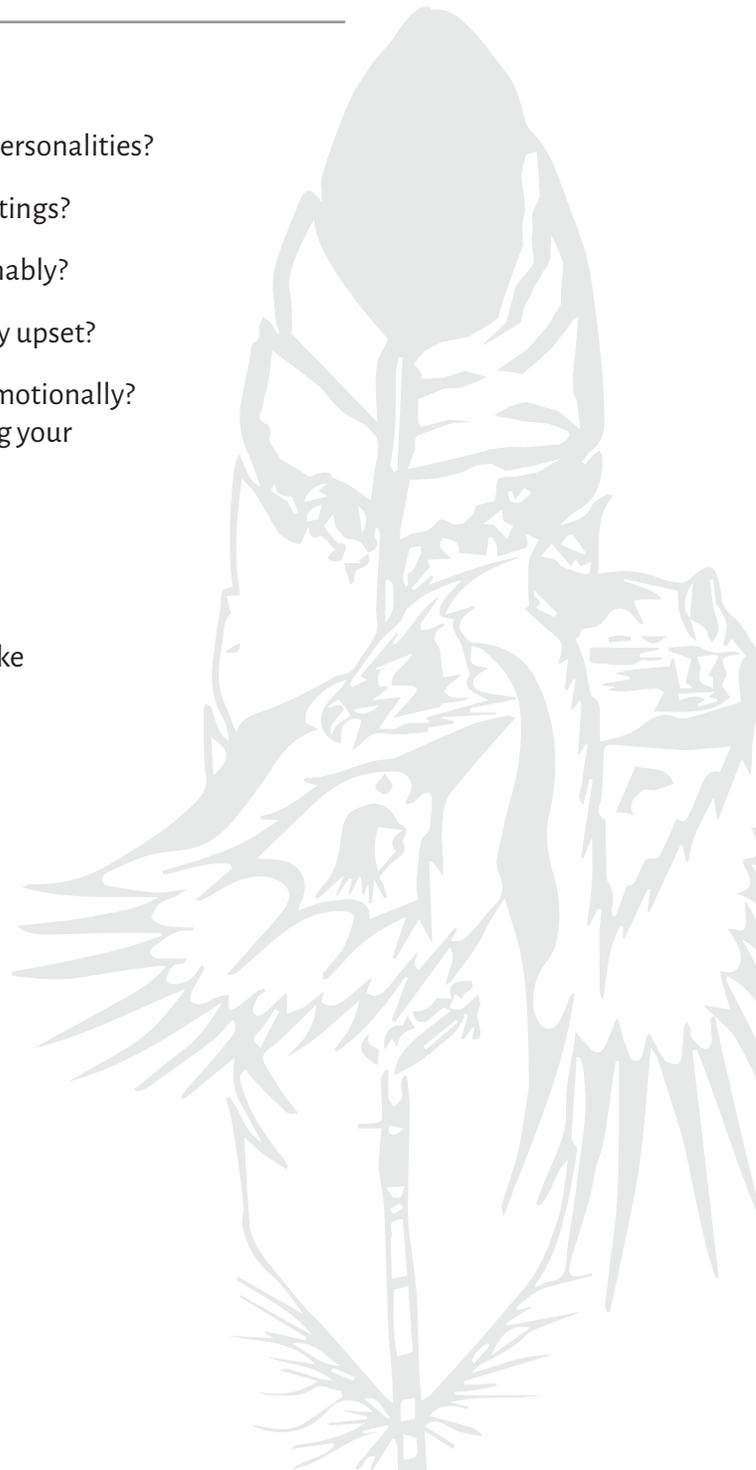
■ WORKING AS A TEAM, DECISION-MAKING

- Do you have good judgment? Are you comfortable assessing a situation?
 - 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 briefly?
 - Are you flexible and able to find a happy medium when appropriate?
 - Are you able to lead a discussion?
 - Do you understand the concept of “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 kindly as well as reasonably?
- Are you able to remain calm when people are emotionally upset?
- Can you recognize when you are reacting to a situation emotionally?
Do you then know how to continue to deal without letting your emotions take over?
- How do you handle conflicts?
- What do you enjoy about working with people?
- Have you ever had to make decisions that people didn't like or were unhappy with?
- What are you like in a team environment?

- What kind of contribution do you feel is natural for you to make to a team?





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