



xe'xe' qwelstuxw MEMBERSHIP CODE

Guided by our **teachings,**
led by our **people,**
reclaiming our inherent **sovereignty.**

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MEMBERSHIP CODE UPHOLDS THE

x̌e'x̌e' qwelstuxw

(SACRED TRUST)

"A Snuneymuxw Membership Code will restore our Nation's authority to define our membership in ways that are true to us, now and into the future.

When we have the authority to determine who our members are, we help ensure decisions are made by our People, **strengthened by our snawaylth and our responsibilities under the Sacred Trust**."

CHIEF MIKE WYSE,
XUM'SILUM

te'tuxwtun Lands

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FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE SNUNEYMUXW MEMBERSHIP CODE





MEMBERSHIP CODE RESTORES SNUNEYMUXW AUTHORITY TO DECIDE WHO IS, AND ISN'T, A MEMBER OF THE NATION.

Currently, Snuneymuxw's membership list is managed by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), based on the *Indian Act*. ISC's rules and processes do not align with our beliefs, values and traditional laws.

Under ISC, people can be added to, or excluded from, Snuneymuxw's membership list without the knowledge or consent of Snuneymuxw. This may include individuals who have no direct ties or lineage to Snuneymuxw. There may also be future descendants who are not included on Snuneymuxw's membership list because Canada does not recognize their connection to our Nation.

Since the first families, Snuneymuxw People have created systems of belonging grounded in love, respect, emotional intelligence, collective wellbeing, and sacred responsibility to one another as real relatives. These systems were nurtured through family, community, ceremony, shared responsibility, and our interconnected relationships with, and responsibilities to the lands, waters, and all living beings surrounding us.

When we have the authority to determine who our members are, we help ensure decisions are made by our People, strengthened by our snawaylth, our responsibilities under the Sacred Trust, and the Snuneymuxw Sarlequun Treaty of 1854. This includes who has a right and responsibility to vote in Snuneymuxw governance decisions, to run for Council, to live on Snuneymuxw Land and to receive benefits from the Nation.

The Snuneymuxw Membership Code focuses on carrying teachings forward in ways that restore trust, strengthen families, honour women and future generations, and rebuild the sacred relationships sustaining our people across generations.

The Snuneymuxw Membership Code work before us becomes more than policy; it is a part of a larger journey of healing, restoration and strengthening who we are as a people.



"We seek to restore deep respect for the Land and all living things, a responsibility that has always been ours. **The Elders referred to this responsibility as the Sacred Trust**. It is about developing a relationship with and responsibility for the environment, taking adaptive actions through a relational lens, and fostering connections with other communities and the more-than-human world. It means learning to share our gifts so that knowledge can take root in the minds and hearts of others."

FORMER SNUNEYMUXW CHIEF, JERRY BROWN

MEMBERSHIP CODE AND INDIAN STATUS

THE SNUNEYMUXW MEMBERSHIP CODE WILL NOT REPLACE INDIAN STATUS.

The Snuneymuxw Membership Code will only remove Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) control over who is recognized as a Snuneymuxw member.

Canada will manage Indian Status and Indian Status cards. The Snuneymuxw Membership Code does not change who is and is not eligible for Indian Status under the *Indian Act,* the issuance of Indian Status cards by ISC, and does not affect any benefits received under the *Indian Act.*

Current and future Snuneymuxw members will still be able to hold Indian Status and will be issued Indian Status cards if they qualify under the *Indian Act.*

WHAT CHANGES UNDER MEMBERSHIP CODE

Snuneymuxw controls membership

Snuneymuxw defines membership criteria

Creation of a member-approved governance process

Snuneymuxw maintains the list of who is recognized by Snuneymuxw as a member

WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE UNDER MEMBERSHIP CODE

Indian Status

Federal eligibility rules

Current benefits tied to status

Indian Status cards





GUIDED BY OUR ESTEEMED ELDERS

The Snuneymuxw Elders play a critical role in guiding the development of the Snuneymuxw Membership Code through our Elders and Matriarch Advisory Committees.

The material and agenda items for discussion with Snuneymuxw Families has been reviewed and informed by Snuneymuxw Elders. Their knowledge of Snuneymuxw families, relationships, responsibilities and ways of being are crucial as we develop a Membership Code that is true to Snuneymuxw.







MEMBERSHIP CODE POLICY STATEMENT

This policy statement provides a high-level outline of the principles, approach and process for a Snuneymuxw Membership Code, to be further developed by way of engagement with Snuneymuxw members and Snuneymuxw Elders, and approved through referendum.

From our very first breath, we were embraced within extraordinary systems of love, care, responsibility, and belonging. The old people understood that every child entered the world already connected: to family, community, ancestors, lands, waters, and the larger living system itself. We were never meant to walk alone.

For countless generations, Snuneymuxw people developed systems of belonging grounded in love, respect, emotional intelligence, collective wellbeing, and sacred responsibility to one another as real relatives. These systems were nurtured through family, community, ceremony, shared responsibility, and our interconnected relationships with the lands, waters, and all living beings surrounding us.

The Old People understood that when one member of the community is hurt or without, the collective feels that pain and absence together. Our teachings remind us to live with one heart and one mind. To care for one another with humility, kindness, respect, and collective responsibility. These teachings grounded our people in ways of living that honoured both the intellect and the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the community.

Over time, colonial systems introduced external definitions of identity, belonging, leadership, and governance that did not emerge from our own teachings or systems of relationship. Many of these systems reduced living systems of belonging into administrative categories, codes, regulations, and membership structures that often failed to reflect our deeper understandings of family, responsibility, and collective care. In particular, many women, children, and families experienced profound hurt, separation, rejection, and loss as these imposed systems disrupted sacred relationships carried across generations.

The pain created through these systems has at times been immense. Yet the Old People continually reminded us that leadership is rooted not simply in administration, but in responsibility to the people, emotional intelligence, humility, collective wellbeing, and Sacred Trust. When trust is disrupted, the whole community feels that pain together.

DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT I ACCURATE AS OF SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

It is within this larger context that discussions surrounding Bill C-31 must be understood. While amendments to the *Indian Act* sought to address some of the harms and exclusions created through earlier colonial policies, the deeper work before us extends far beyond legislative reform alone. The work is about restoring balance between two worlds while continuing the journey back toward our own truths. These truths are grounded in belonging, relationship, collective wellbeing, and responsibility to one another as real relatives.

As Snuneymuxw continues to develop a path forward in fulfilling contemporary responsibilities while reclaiming and strengthening systems of belonging. This work is not about returning backward, but about carrying our teachings forward in ways that restore trust, strengthen families, honour women and future generations, and rebuild the sacred relationships sustaining our people across generations.

In this way, the work before us becomes more than policy or administration alone. It becomes part of a larger journey of healing, restoration, and remembering who we are as a people.



WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Rooted in Snawayalth and the Snuneymuxw worldview, which affirms the interconnectedness of all living beings, mutual respect and recognition, collective wellbeing, and our sacred responsibilities to one another, our lands, waters, and future generations.

Expression of Snuneymuxw inherent and Aboriginal right of self-determination and the authority to decide Snuneymuxw membership, in accordance with Snuneymuxw laws, teachings, and governance, as recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and the principles of UNDRIP.

Restoring Snuneymuxw authority to recognize our own people through processes grounded in our legal orders, kinship systems, customs, lived relationships, and responsibilities.

Recognizing that membership is a sacred privilege and a part of a living system of reciprocal rights, responsibilities, and care. Membership reflects enduring relationships with family, community, ancestors, and the Snuneymuxw homelands. As a self-governing Nation, we have both the right and the responsibility to determine who belongs within that system.

A collective responsibility to protect the integrity of the Nation for generations yet to come, ensuring that decisions made today strengthen families, uphold Snuneymuxw teachings, and preserve our ability to care for our people, lands, waters, and future descendants.

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CURRENT PROCESS

ISC grants status to individuals and adds them to Snuneymuxw membership list without Snuneymuxw consent. Snuneymuxw is notified of people added to the list with limited information.

PROPOSED LAW

A. PURPOSE

To develop a process for Snuneymuxw to determine who is Snuneymuxw in accordance with Snuneymuxw laws and protocols.

B. WHAT IS SCOPE OF THE LAW?

This law will cover all persons applying to join Snuneymuxw including children, adults and transfers. Everyone who is a Snuneymuxw Member immediately prior to this Code coming into force is entitled to be a Snuneymuxw Member. After the Code comes into force, someone can only become a new member or Member of Snuneymuxw by submitting an application and being accepted as Snuneymuxw under this Code.

This means that under ISC's process, the applicant may have Indian status and affiliation with Snuneymuxw, but will not automatically be a Snuneymuxw member and will not be entitled to any benefits from Snuneymuxw unless the applicant is accepted by Snuneymuxw as a member.





C. APPLICATION PROCESS

1. ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY

Individuals applying for membership can apply under two streams:

A. Ancestral membership: Person who has at least one Snuneymuxw grandparent, ancestral lineage to Snuneymuxw and a demonstrated connection to Snuneymuxw.

B. Customary membership: Person with Indian status who is also an adopted child or spouse of an Ancestral member but has no Snuneymuxw blood.

2. APPLICATION TO REGISTRAR

All individuals seeking Membership must apply by submitting an application to the Registrar and include proof of genealogy. **Proof of genealogy** may include: long form birth certificate(s), paternal DNA tests, other evidence supporting genealogy.

If the applicant is an adult (over the age of 19), an application for Membership must also include:

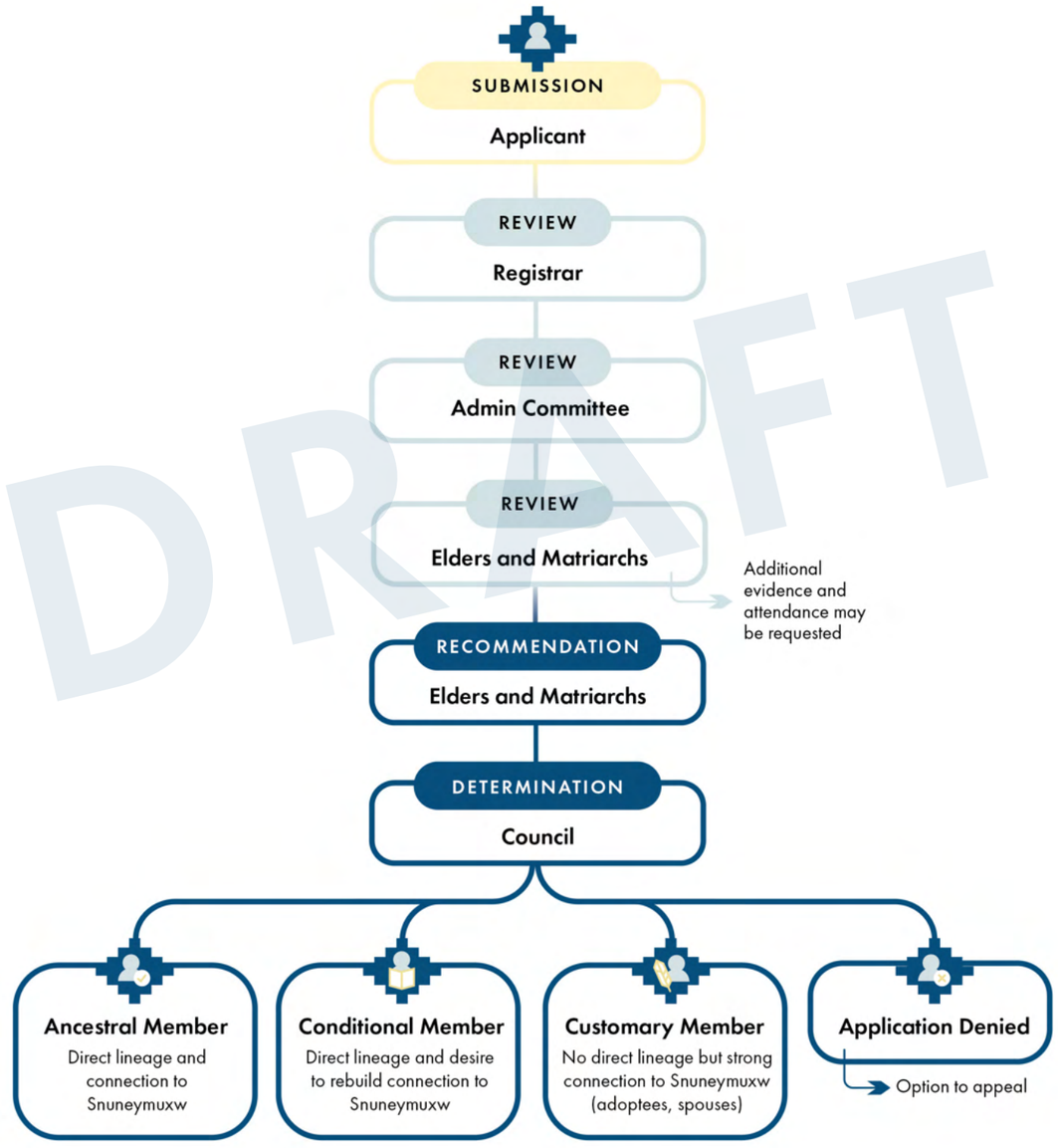
- Evidence supporting the degree of knowledge the applicant has regarding the culture, language, and customs of the Snuneymuxw First Nation or, if disconnected, how the individual intends to commit to learning the culture, language and customs.
- How the individual has or will contribute to the collective wellbeing of the Nation.
- Proof of Good Character (references, Criminal Record Check).

3. ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE CLASSIFICATION

The Administration Committee will review all applications and provide a recommendation to Council.

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4. APPLICATION REVIEW AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS



5. APPEAL PROCESS

Determination

1. Accept them as an Ancestral Member

    A. Accepts them as a Conditional Member;

2. Accept them as an Customary Member; or,
3. Reject the application.

Ancestral Member: Person who has at least one Snuneymuxw grandparent, ancestral lineage to Snuneymuxw, a demonstrated connection to Snuneymuxw, and who is accepted as a Snuneymuxw member.

Conditional Member: Some applicants under the Ancestral membership stream may have no current connection to, or history of contribution to, Snuneymuxw for many reasons of disconnection and dislocation, but are genuinely committed to establishing a connection. For these applicants, rather than accepting or rejecting the applicant, Council may grant them Conditional Membership to allow the individual time to establish a true connection to Snuneymuxw. This pathway reinforces that being Snuneymuxw carries responsibilities as well as rights. It also gives people a genuine, structured route back to Snuneymuxw without requiring Council to grant full membership on the basis of intent alone, or to reject based on disconnection through no fault of the applicant.

Customary Member: Person with Indian status who is also an adopted child or spouse of an Ancestral Member but has no Snuneymuxw blood. Customary Member cannot pass on their membership.

6. APPEAL PROCESS

If an individual believes that Council has not followed the process outlined in the Membership Code, they may request an appeal of a decision to deny or revoke Membership.

- Application submitted to Ombudsman. This is a person appointed by Snuneymuxw.
- Ombudsperson accepts or rejects the appeal and can send reasons for the decision to that person
- Ombudsperson appoints an appeal body as required
- Appeal body will be arms-length from Council
- May include external members appointed by Council (i.e: non-member, lawyer)

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LAW DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

PHASE		RESPONSIBLE
1	Community Engagement on Membership Code	Council Staff/Coms Legal Counsel
2	Membership Code Finalized	Council Elders & Matriarchs Legal Counsel
3	Ratification Vote	Council Staff/Coms
4	Membership Code in Force	Council Staff



faq

GET TO KNOW THE SNUNEYMUXW MEMBERSHIP CODE

QUESTION

What is the Membership Code?

ANSWER

The Membership Code sets out the membership criteria and the process for applying to become a Member of Snuneymuxw First Nation in accordance with established Snuneymuxw laws and protocols.

QUESTION

What does it do?

ANSWER

The Membership Code gives Snuneymuxw the authority to take jurisdiction over the membership list from Indigenous Services Canada and to determine who is and isn't eligible to be a Snuneymuxw member, in accordance with Snuneymuxw laws, jurisdiction and inherent rights.

QUESTION

What does it not do?

ANSWER

It does not change who is and is not eligible for Indian status under the *Indian Act* and does not affect any benefits granted under the *Indian Act*. It also does not allow us to exclude anyone from our membership list who was already on it before the Membership Code came into effect.

QUESTION

What does it mean to have Snuneymuxw Membership vs. *Indian Act* status?

ANSWER

The Snuneymuxw Membership Code will not change who is entitled to Indian status under the *Indian Act*. It will only change who is and isn't eligible to become a member. Under the Membership Code, being a Snuneymuxw member will not be the same as having Indian status. To become a member, someone will need to have Indian status, but having Indian status and affiliation with Snuneymuxw will not guarantee membership.

QUESTION

Why is it being developed or updated at this time?

ANSWER

We have an interim Membership Policy that applies only to transfers from other First Nations. The Snuneymuxw Membership Code will allow Snuneymuxw to self-determine who is and is not a Snuneymuxw member. This is fundamental in the assertion of the inherent right of self-government and jurisdiction, as well as the ability to allocate and protect our resources for current and future generations of Snuneymuxw.

QUESTION

What are the most important elements to know about the Snuneymuxw Membership Code?

ANSWER

Members should understand who is and is not eligible to become a member, how membership applications will be decided, what rights and responsibilities new Snuneymuxw members will have and how our laws and protocols will be reflected in the Membership Code.



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MEMBERSHIP CODE FOR SNUNEYMUXW

QUESTION

Who is affected by the Membership Code (e.g., current members, future members, descendants)?

ANSWER

The Snuneymuxw Membership Code affects all current members, future members and descendants. Anyone currently on our Membership list managed by Indigenous Services Canada will be moved to the list managed by the Nation. All future members and descendants of current members will only be added to the membership list in accordance with the new Snuneymuxw Membership Code.

QUESTION

Are there any groups that are not impacted?

ANSWER

As membership is an important part of all self-government initiatives, every current member and future member is potentially impacted.

QUESTION

Under the Membership Code, can members be added and removed?

ANSWER

Yes. There may be people who become newly eligible to be recognized as members under the Snuneymuxw Membership Code. There will also be a process for removing members in certain circumstances.

QUESTION

How does this affect my status or my family?

ANSWER

This will not change who is and is not currently a member, but it will change who is eligible to become a member in the future. New members will have to apply to Snuneymuxw to become members, and this will be determined by the Nation under the Snuneymuxw Membership Code with considerations such as ancestry, connection to our language and culture, custom adoptions, etc. It will not affect Indian status under the *Indian Act*.

QUESTION

Will the Snuneymuxw Membership Code allow Snuneymuxw to not include people on the current membership list?

ANSWER

No. A requirement of enacting a Membership Code is that everyone on the membership list currently maintained by ISC will be transferred to the Snuneymuxw Membership Code. After the Membership Code is enacted, people will only be added to the list in accordance with Snuneymuxw's Membership Code. The Snuneymuxw Membership Code may also provide for removal of membership in certain circumstances.

QUESTION

How will the Snuneymuxw Membership Code address adopted children and spouses of members?

ANSWER

The Snuneymuxw Membership Code may provide specific criteria to recognize spouses and adopted children of members, and for the rights granted to adopted children and spouses.

QUESTION

Will the Snuneymuxw Membership Code change how Members are recognized by the USA?

ANSWER

USA recognition of Canadian Indian status is based on the Jay Treaty, and is at the sole discretion of USA Customs to recognize. The Jay Treaty allows Canadian First Nations with at least 50% American Indian blood (from Canada or the USA) to cross the border, and to live, work and study in the USA. Sometimes USA Customs will accept Indian Status cards from ISC without further proof. However, USA Customs may require proof that someone has at least 50% blood quantum to cross under the Jay Treaty. To demonstrate this, members can request a letter of ancestry from ISC, which will identify their First Nations' ancestors in Canada. Because ISC does not use blood quantum, additional evidence, such as a blood quantum letter, may be required.

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LOGISTICS OF THE SNUNEYMUXW MEMBERSHIP CODE

QUESTION

Where are we in the process of developing the Snuneymuxw Membership Code?

ANSWER

We have had meetings with Council and the Elders and Matriarch Committee to receive direction on the Snuneymuxw Membership Code. The Membership Code has not been finalized and we are still in the early phase of development. The following FAQs may evolve through engagement with Council, Elders and Matriarchs and the community.

QUESTION

Who currently administers or oversees the Snuneymuxw Membership Code?

ANSWER

At this time, the membership list is managed by Indigenous Services Canada. Currently, we do not have a say in the addition of most new members to the membership list.

QUESTION

How are disputes handled?

ANSWER

The Snuneymuxw Membership Code will include a process for resolving disputes about membership decisions, including review by the Elders Council and an appeal process.

QUESTION

How is fairness ensured?

ANSWER

Membership applications will undergo a thorough review process that involves administration, the Governance Committee, Elders and Matriarchs, and Chief and Council to ensure that our laws are followed and that decisions are made only after a complete review.

QUESTION

What risks or limitations exist without a Membership Code?

ANSWER

Without a Membership Code, the Snuneymuxw membership list will continue to be managed by Indigenous Services Canada, and people will continue to be added to or excluded from the membership list without our free, prior and informed consent. This may include individuals who have no direct ties or lineage to Snuneymuxw, and those whom we do not know due to historical dislocation and displacement. Without a Membership Code, there is no formal process for knowing these individuals and to bring them into our Nation in accordance with Snuneymuxw processes and laws.

QUESTION

What are the legal and governance implications?

ANSWER

We are exercising full jurisdiction over membership decisions, now and into the future, in accordance with Snuneymuxw's inherent rights, laws and legal orders. Who is a member is directly connected to who has a right to vote in our governance matters, to run for Council, to live on our lands and to receive benefits from the Nation.

QUESTION

Will Snuneymuxw issue Status Cards if a Membership Code passes?

ANSWER

Membership Code will not change how Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) issues status cards. Individuals will need to apply for Snuneymuxw membership and *Indian Act* status separately.

1. If someone applies through ISC first, when they are registered under the *Indian Act,* they will be sent their status card, as well as information about how to apply for membership with Snuneymuxw.
2. If someone applies through Snuneymuxw first and is granted membership with the Nation, they will still need to apply for status and a status card through ISC's process.

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BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE OF SNUNEYMUXW

QUESTION

What decisions, rights or processes does the Membership Code establish?

ANSWER

The Membership Code establishes our jurisdiction over membership decisions. It sets out the criteria for membership eligibility and may include different categories of members. Membership Code will also outline the process for determining membership applications, removals and appeals.

QUESTION

How does Membership Code support Nation-building and self-determination?

ANSWER

Deciding who belongs to Snuneymuxw is a fundamental part of self-government, as membership is directly tied to almost every aspect of governance for the Nation. The Membership Code will ensure we can self-determine who is a member without any dependence on how that is defined in the *Indian Act*.

QUESTION

How does the Membership Code relate to the Land Code?

ANSWER

Both the Membership Code and the Land Code are areas of jurisdiction that we are moving into and key steps in the exercise of self-determination and self-government. Members (current or future) will be the ones to vote on the Land Code, and laws that are passed under the Land Code will apply to those that are recognized as members.

QUESTION

Does one need to be in place before the other, or are they complementary?

ANSWER

No, the Membership Code and Land Code are complementary. Each is an exercise of Snuneymuxw's jurisdiction in a different area, and one does not depend on the other moving forward.

QUESTION

What does the Membership Code change, and what does it not change?

ANSWER

The Membership Code creates a Snuneymuxw process for determining who becomes a member in the future. It does not remove people who are already on the existing membership list maintained by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and it does not change anyone's eligibility for Indian status. Once the Membership Code is approved, any future decisions about adding or removing members will be made according to the rules set out in the Code.

QUESTION

Are there any changes from previous approaches or policies?

ANSWER

After the Snuneymuxw Membership Code is ratified, it will be overseen by the Snuneymuxw Membership Department, the Governance Committee, Elders and Matriarchs, and Chief and Council. We do not currently have a Membership Code, so we do not control who is added to the membership list, except for individuals who apply to transfer from another First Nation. The Membership Code will allow us to control who is added to the Snuneymuxw membership list and to include criteria for membership applications and transfers.

OUR SACRED INHERITANCE





"Weaving is my connection to who we **were**, who we **are**, and who we will **become**"

SNUNEYMUXW WEAVER: YUTUSTANA:T, GENA SEWARD-WILSON





Share your **knowledge.**
Build a **stronger Snuneymuxw.**

Visit **www.snuneymuxw.ca/cp/codes** for more information on what membership code means and when Snuneymuxw will be voting to approve the new code.