

Citizenship Code Revision Project

Q&A

Why do we need a code? We know who our people are!

Absolutely. The Code does not “define” who is or is not Tlingit. At the end of the day it’s an administrative document which fulfills an administrative purpose. Impacts of colonialism mean that many of our relatives have either moved away, or been born far away and this helps the TRTFN Administration, ensure that they have a record of who our people are so that we can support them wherever they are. Also, a gentle reminder that the question is not whether or not to have a code. We already have one, that decision took place in 1987 and we are working to ensure that the wishes of our ancestors and hopes for future generations, remain in Tlingit hands. The revising and modernizing of our code is to ensure our Nation's survival.

Who is doing this work?

This work is **entirely** Tlingit led and driven with only one non-Tlingit staff person supporting the administrative process. (Convening and chairing meetings, making recorded meetings available to Commission members). The Commission members and project team members are as follows:

Yaandek’in Yeíl (Wayne) Carlick - Kookhittaaan (CDC Representative)

Vivian Mahoney – Ishkeetaan

Laankadeishk’ei (Brenda) Reeves – L'eeneidí

Daas.oox’ (Rise) Kirby – Luknax.adí

Shaan Tlaa (Caitlin) O’Shea -- Kookhittaaan

X_waal (Valerie) Tizya -- Gaanaxteidí

Shuwutin (Violet) McKay-Simmons -- Yanyeidí

Project Lead: Tamis Cochrane - Yanyeidí

Project Advisor: Ghuxdujixh (Logan) Law - Yanyeidí

Project Admin Staff: Kendra Poulin

How was the commission formed?

All Clan representatives were appointed or volunteered to represent their clan. As per the current code, there is no clear process to appoint the commission, only that it “shall be formed”. The new code lays out a much clearer and structured process for the appointment.

What have we done with all the feedback we have received so far?

We have heard that a lot of the time people feel like their feedback goes into a void. We want this document to reflect the voices of all who have contributed, so please see the attached documents which highlight what the input and feedback received was, and the section which was changed accordingly from the drafts we shared in the fall. The draft version of the Code itself includes comments which are the feedback we received and where possible we have retained the comment with the edited changes we incorporated.

Why are we doing this work now?

A revision of our current code has been overdue since the code was originally written in 1987. As per the current code, revisions are supposed to happen annually.

Although revisions have never come to pass, this work has been ongoing, and there have been many attempts to finish over the years.

Shouldn't we be focusing on other things?

There are many projects underway across all Departments, all of them important to our Nation. However, this project's success will determine our Nations survival.

How come this is the first time I've heard of this?

The need for this project was identified decades ago and fulfills JCM Mandates from previous years. (2011, 2017, 2021) In reality, this project has been ongoing since before Logan Law started in her position as Vital Statistics & Genealogy Coordinator in early 2021. Community engagements have been ongoing since that time, with the most recent engagements as follows:

October 15th 2025: Elders Meeting

November 3rd 2025: Elders & All Citizens Meeting

November 25-27th 2025: All Citizens Engagement – Open House at Rec Centre.

January 12th 2026: Elders Meeting

January 14th 2026: All Citizens Meeting

January 20th 2026: All Citizens Evening Meeting

- + Document mailouts & handouts
- + Document available on TRTFN Portal
- + Social Media Posts & Other Communications
- + Individual one on one phone calls & meetings as requested

If you have somehow not seen or received any information on this project please connect with our Vital Statistics Coordinator to ensure that your contact information is up to date.

What issues does this work address?

- Names of deceased relatives showing up on the election list – The revised code will have a process to support the removal.
- Taku River Tlingit relatives, not being recognized as citizens
- Streamlining of administrative processes regarding housing, health, and education
 - Eg. Canada trying to collect rent from deceased individuals because we can't remove them under our current code.
- Halts the steady decline of our numbers, ensuring the recognition and survival of our nation.
- Another layer of protection for TRT Citizens rights within this document.
- Having a “code” that is written by our Citizens – for our Citizens; the 1987 Code was written by Mark Wedge from CTFN.

Do we need to ratify this code today? What if we want to make changes or provide further feedback?

The hope of the Citizenship Commission is that this version of the code can be ratified at the upcoming JCM. We recognize that there may be further feedback forthcoming from the community and have written in Section 14, an Annual Review & Revisions schedule. Ratifying the code today does not mean that you lose the opportunity to contribute to it tomorrow, feedback can continue to be provided through the Elders Council, or to the Citizenship Commission, or directly to the Vital Statistics & Genealogy Coordinator. Additionally, through the extensive engagement we have done, there are four specific sections to be deferred to a future JCM based on the feedback we've received.

Why are four sections of the Citizenship Code written as deferred within the Mandate, to a future JCM?

The four sections which have been highlighted as “For a Future JCM” throughout the document, are not required for being able to move ahead with processing applications.

They are selected for deferral as a response to the feedback we received at the engagement sessions. Here is a brief summary of some of the reasons why each is selected for deferral:

Honorary Citizen Criteria (Sections 5.0-5.3): Clarifying language around what constitutes an Honorary Citizen. This section previously was “Associate Member” and it may be that this is an appropriate place to retain the use of the term “Member” to create that distinction. Some wish to see the section eliminated altogether. Some wish the word “Honorary” to be changed. This section is not required for processing applications – can be deferred to future JCM for further revision.

Honorary Citizen Privileges (Sections 6.0-6.1) Consensus that “Privileges” is better than “rights” for this section, but wanted additional detail on what Honorary Citizens “Cannot” do added. Really good questions about how these privileges (Which are carried over from previous code) might interface with Conservation Officers etc. This section is not required for processing applications – can be deferred to future JCM for further revision.

Adoption (Sections 7.0-7.4): Despite the efforts of the Commission & Technical team to draft language which provided guidance for “process” without being “prescriptive” (Respecting that each Clan has their own ways of doing these things) there was no consensus reached at any of the engagements regarding this section. What we did hear loud & clear was “We do not adopt our own people” so the process of Acknowledgement of Patrilineally connected individuals might need to be a separate section. Additionally, some of the issues we faced with this (eg. “clanless” individuals) is likely able to be resolved with better data management going forward which is addressed in Section 8. This section is not required for processing applications – can be deferred to future JCM for further revision.

Citizenship Withdrawal (Section 12.0-12.3): The idea that an individual cannot belong to 2 Nations, is a colonially imposed concept. There was a great deal of amazing dialogue around the idea of eliminating this section altogether, unfortunately as we are still technically an Indian Act governed band, there is no way for us to administratively recognize relatives who have selected to “belong” to another Nation that they may have familial ties to. As we work towards a Self-Government Agreement, this section may become obsolete if that’s what the community wishes. This section is not required for processing applications – can be deferred to future JCM for further revision.

What is blood quantum and why is it bad?

Blood quantum is a tool used by colonial governments to ensure the eventual eradication of Indians across North America through the continued dilution of blood. Its place in our 1987 code comes from INAC precedent, although INAC says in their own

documentation that it is not advisable to include:

- Proving blood degree is impossible.
- Figuring blood degree can become a very complicated business.
- There could be considerable expense (legal, medical or otherwise) placed on the individual seeking to enroll, if he/she is asked to prove blood degree.
- The higher the blood degree requirement, especially tribal blood, the lower the number of eligible applicants.
- A Band could limit the future size of its membership by raising either blood degree criteria.

Furthermore, blood quantum is not in line with Lingít Kusteeyí because we know who our people are through familial connection and have our own ways of verifying that.