

## TITLE 9. FAMILY LAW

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### Chapter 9.1

### MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

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**9.1.1. Findings.** The Suquamish Tribal Council finds that marriages involving Suquamish Tribal citizens, different sex and same sex couples, are fundamental rights and fundamental institutions that preserve and protect the Tribe's political integrity, economic security, social vitality, and the health and welfare of individual tribal citizens, their children, and the tribal community as a whole. The Tribe further finds that this chapter, as amended, addresses purely intramural relationships among and by persons

who are recognized and integrated members of the Tribe's community. (Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011)

**9.1.2. Purpose and Intent.** Pursuant to the inherent sovereign powers of the Suquamish Tribal government and the powers vested by the Suquamish Tribal Constitution and Bylaws Article III(i), the purpose of this chapter, as amended, is to establish tribal laws to regulate the conduct of people, maintain law and order, administer justice, and protect, preserve, and promote the health and welfare of the Suquamish Tribe and its members, particularly as set forth, the rules that govern the recognition, formation, and dissolution of marriages of Suquamish Tribal members. This chapter reflects the Suquamish Tribe's cultural and community values. This chapter does not and is not intended to guarantee that any other community or government will recognize or uphold any marital union established herein. (Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011)

**9.1.3. Definitions.** The following definitions are used in this chapter.

(a) "Address" means the residential address of a Suquamish Tribal citizen within the exterior boundaries of the Port Madison Reservation or any Indian homestead property.

(b) "Certificate of civil union" means a document issued by a competent jurisdiction that certifies that the persons named on the certificate have established a civil union in accordance with the laws of such jurisdiction and such jurisdiction recognizes civil unions in a form that is the same or substantially the same as is defined in this chapter.

(c) "Civil union" means that two eligible persons have established a relationship in compliance with the laws of a competent jurisdiction and, in accordance with such law, may receive the benefits and protections and be subject to the responsibilities of spouses.

(d) "Marriage" means a formal and express civil contract entered into by and between two persons, regardless of their sex, who are at least eighteen (18) years of age, who are otherwise legally capable of entering into a contract, who may or may not have solemnized their union through a formal ceremony, and where at least one of them is a member of the Suquamish Tribe. (Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.4. Jurisdiction.** (a) The Suquamish Tribal Courts have jurisdiction over the subject matter of this title pursuant to Suquamish Tribal Code Chapter 3.2.

(b) The Suquamish Tribal Courts have jurisdiction to hear and determine all family matters including but not limited to divorce, separate maintenance, annulment, determination of paternity and support, custody of minor children, and division of all personal and nontrust real property. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §2 (part): Res. 80-074,

passed July 1, 1981; Res. 90-106 (part), passed Sept. 24, 1981; amended by Res. 92-005, passed Oct. 15, 1992 and amended Oct. 19, 1992; amended by Res. 94-156 (part), passed Nov. 21, 1994; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011)

**9.1.5. Marriage and Divorce.** All marriages entered into before the effective date of this title, whether in accordance with and valid under state law, tribal law, or tribal custom, are declared valid and binding. Parties to such marriages may obtain a marriage certificate upon proof of the validity of their marriage in accordance with the procedures set forth in this chapter. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §2 (part); amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.6. Marriage Formed on the Reservation.** (a) A valid marriage hereunder is constituted by the issuance of a marriage license by the Tribal Court or any of the United States and by recording the marriage license with the clerk of the Tribal Court.

(b) The solemnization of the marriage by tribal custom, by a judge within the territorial jurisdiction of the Port Madison Reservation, by a recognized clergyperson, or by a public official authorized to do so by the State of Washington is optional.

(c) No marriage solemnized or performed before any person professing to have authority to marry will be invalid for want of such authority, if consummated in the belief of the persons involved or either of them that the officiant had such authority and that they have been lawfully married.

(d) Tribal custom marriages entered into after the effective date of this title must be duly recorded with the Suquamish Tribal Court by the signing of a marriage register, maintained by the clerk of the court, by each party and the officiant of the marriage. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §2 (part), §3; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)**9.1.7. Marriage License.** (a) No marriage may be performed under authority of the code unless the persons have first obtained a marriage license from the court clerk.

(b) Upon payment of a fee to be set by the Chief Judge of the Suquamish Tribal Court, the court clerk will issue a marriage license to persons who appear entitled to be married as provided in this chapter.

(c) The court clerk will keep a public record of all marriage licenses and certificates issued.

(d) The marriage license, properly endorsed by the authorized person performing the marriage, will be returned to the court clerk who will issue a marriage certificate to the parties.

(e) If any applicant is not a Suquamish Tribal citizen, that applicant must voluntarily and expressly consent in writing to the personal jurisdiction of the Tribe for all matters arising from the marriage or the marital relationship.

(f) Permanent residency at an address within the reservation is not a requirement to obtain a marriage license under this chapter. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §4: amended by Res. 2003-107, passed Aug. 25, 2003; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.8. Solemnization.** In the event that a judge, clergy person, tribal official, or anyone authorized to do so solemnizes a marriage, such officiant must file with the clerk of the court a certification thereof within thirty (30) days. The validity of any marriage is not affected by the absence of a ceremony. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §5; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011)

**9.1.9. Invalid or Prohibited Marriages.** Marriages which are prohibited and invalid under this chapter are:

(a) Those in which one party is less than eighteen (18) years of age.

(b) Those in which either party is lawfully married to or in a registered domestic partnership with another person still living, unless that marriage has been legally annulled or dissolved;

(c) Those between ancestors and descendants of every degree, between a stepfather and a stepdaughter or between stepmother and stepson, between brothers and sisters, aunts and nephews, uncles and nieces, and between first cousins whether the relationship is of the half or whole blood and legitimate or illegitimate, or any nearer kin to each other by blood as computed by the rules of the Suquamish Enrollment Code (STC Chapter 1.1), provided that a marriage is not void if the parties are first cousins by legal court adoption only and are not related by blood; and

(d) Any other than those specifically recognized herein that are prohibited by custom and usages of the Tribe. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §6; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.10. Recognition of Marriages Formed in Other Jurisdictions.** For the purposes related to jurisdiction exercised under this chapter, the tribal government will recognize marriages, civil unions, or domestic partnerships formed under the laws of other federally recognized tribes, a state or territory of the United States and their duly authorized subdivisions, and from those foreign nations, jurisdictions, and provinces that the United States government formally recognizes, provided that:

(a) Both parties to the marriage are at least eighteen (18) years of age; and

(b) Such marriage is legally recognized in such jurisdiction and all requirements of the laws of such jurisdiction have been satisfied. (Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.11. Issuance of Certificate of Marriage in Lieu of Civil Union.** A tribal citizen who has entered into a civil union or domestic partnership formed under the laws of other federally recognized tribes or a state or territory of the United States and their duly authorized subdivisions may, upon written application to the Tribal Court and submission of the original or a certified copy of a certificate of civil union or domestic partnership, request the issuance of a certificate of marriage in lieu of civil union or domestic partnership without the payment of the court fee, provided the tribal citizen's partner voluntarily and expressly consents in writing to establishing such marriage and to the personal jurisdiction of the Suquamish Indian Tribe. (Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.12. Marriages which May Be Annulled or Voided.** (a) A marriage may be voided or annulled by the Suquamish Tribal Court for any one of the following reasons upon the application of one of the parties:

(1) Either party was underage at the time of the marriage;

(2) The consent of either party was obtained by force or fraud;

(3) Either party lacked mental capacity at the time of the marriage and was therefore incapable of consenting; or

(4) The marriage was invalid on one of the grounds set forth in §9.1.9.

(b) If, after termination of any of the foregoing defects, the parties continue to live together as a married couple, the marriage will not subsequently be subject to annulment because of such defect.

(c) If either party in a proceeding for an annulment or voiding is a member of the military, the Court may conduct the proceeding in such a way as to be consistent with the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. §§ 3901-4043).

(d) The marriage will be annulled or be void from the time the Suquamish Tribal Court issues a judgment or order declaring the marriage annulled or void. A finding that a marriage is annulled or void under this section does not relieve a party to the marriage from spousal support, child support, property settlement, or other requirements of tribal or other applicable law. Upon a marriage being found annulled or void, all spousal benefits related to being married to a Suquamish tribal citizen will cease. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §7; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.13. Legitimacy of Children.** When the parties enter a marriage in good faith and in the belief that their marriage is valid, any child conceived or born during the marriage and prior to a court's invalidation of the marriage is the legitimate child of both parents regardless of the sex of the parties to the marriage except this section does not apply to or have any effect upon any application for tribal enrollment.

The legitimacy of children conceived or born prior to a judgment of annulment is not affected by the judgment. The judgment is conclusive only as against the parties to the action and those claiming under them. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §8; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011)

**9.1.14. Dissolution by Divorce.** A marriage may be dissolved by divorce in the Suquamish Tribal Court for incompatibility of the parties for whatever reason. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §9; renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011)

**9.1.15. Referral to Counseling or Mediation.** Prior to issuing an order dissolving the marriage, the Suquamish Tribal Court may refer the parties to any person or organization for counseling or mediation. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §10; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011)

**9.1.16. Actions of the Court Pending Determination of Request for Divorce or Annulment.** (a) In addition to the powers granted the Suquamish Tribal Court pursuant to Chapter 9.8, in pending proceedings for dissolution or annulment of a marriage, the Suquamish Tribal Court may order:

(1) The separate maintenance of a party and support for the children, as the Court may deem just, upon application therefor, or in the disposition of the proceedings;

(2) The care, custody, and maintenance of the minor children of the marriage during the pendency of the proceedings;

(3) The restraint of either party from molesting or interfering with the other party or any minor children in any manner; and

(4) The restraining and enjoining of either party or both from disposing of personal or nontrust real property during the pendency of the proceedings except as ordered by the Court. This limitation does not apply to:

(A) Attorney fees in the existing action;

(B) Real estate or income taxes;

(C) Mental health therapy expenses for either party or a minor child of the parties; or

(D) Expenses necessary to provide for the safety and welfare of a party or a minor child of the parties.

(b) The Court may issue and enter into the docket as a judgment any order to pay any monies falling due during the pendency of the proceedings if payment is in default and may order enforcement of such judgment as provided in the civil code of the Suquamish Tribe.

(c) In determining an order for maintenance of an amount and period of time that is just and equitable, the Court will consider all relevant factors including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) The financial resources of the party seeking maintenance, including separate or community property apportioned to that party, and that party's ability to meet the party's needs independently, including the extent to which a provision for support of a child living with the party includes a sum for that party;

(2) The time necessary to acquire sufficient education or training to enable the party seeking maintenance to find employment appropriate to that party's skill, interests, style of life, and other attendant circumstances;

(3) The standard of living established during the marriage;

(4) The duration of the marriage;

(5) The age, physical and emotional condition, and financial obligations of the party seeking maintenance; and

(6) The ability of the party from whom maintenance is sought to meet that party's needs and financial obligations while meeting those of the party seeking maintenance.

(d) Unless otherwise agreed in writing or expressly provided in the decree of dissolution, the obligation to pay future maintenance is terminated upon the death of either party or the remarriage of the party receiving maintenance. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §11; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.17. Action for Annulment or Voiding.** (a) An action to obtain an annulment or a declaration of a voided marriage, for causes mentioned in §9.1.12, may be commenced within the periods and by the parties as follows:

(1) For causes mentioned in STC §9.1.12(a)(1) by the party to the marriage who was married under the age of legal consent, within two (2) years after arriving at the age of consent, or by a parent, guardian, or other person

having charge of such minor, at any time before such married minor has arrived at the age of legal consent;

(2) For causes mentioned in STC §9.1.12(a)(2), by either party during the life of the other, or by such former spouse;

(3) For causes mentioned in STC §9.1.12(a)(3) by the party injured, or relative or guardian of the party of unsound mind, at any time before the death of either party;

(4) For the causes mentioned in STC §9.1.12(a)(4) by either party or the Suquamish Indian Tribe. (Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.18. Procedure and Disposition.** (a) All proceedings under this chapter must be in accordance with the procedures for civil actions provided in the Suquamish Tribal Code and with §9.7.2.

(b) Pursuant to the requirements of Chapter 9.8, in addition to voiding, annulling, or dissolving a marriage, the Court has the power to provide as follows:

(1) For the future custody, care, and support of the minor children of the marriage, as may be in the best interests of the children;

(2) For the recovery of money or other personal property from either party to allow for the care, custody, and support of minor children in an amount as may be just and proper;

(3) For contribution from either party toward the education of minor children of the marriage;

(4) For the recovery from either party of such an amount of money or other personal property as may be just and proper toward the maintenance of the other party;

(5) For the division and distribution of the parties' personal property in accordance with the rules of community property as mandated by the Tribe;

(6) For the division and distribution of the parties' nontrust real property in accordance with the rules of community property as mandated by the Tribe; and

(7) For the restoration of the premarriage name of either party without court fee. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §12: amended by Res. 92-005, passed Oct. 15, 1992 and amended Oct. 19, 1992; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended and renumbered by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.19. Appeal.** An appeal may be taken from the judgment of the Court annulling, voiding, or dissolving a marriage or from any parts of the judgment rendered in pursuance to the foregoing provisions, as provided under the appeals procedure of this chapter. (Prior code Ch. V, Art. I, §13; amended and renumbered by Res. 2011-080, passed Aug. 1, 2011; amended and renumbered by Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)

**9.1.20. Community Property.** (a) Property rights and liabilities of spouses as defined in this chapter will be governed by the community property laws of the State of Washington except that trust or restricted lands subject to the jurisdiction of the United States may not be considered community property for purposes of disposition of property. (Res. 2026-146, passed Jun. 8, 2026)