

Stephanie Wiggins was raised in Nelson since she was two months old. She grew up in the Bonnington area and attended school both out at Playmor Junction and also in Nelson. Stephanie attended Selkirk College in Castlegar and graduated with a diploma from the Early Childhood Care and Education Program. Presently Stephanie lives in the Nelson city limits in Rosemont. She is blessed to live in subsidized housing through Nelson CARES Society where she lives with her sassy two-year old daughter. Stephanie works at the School House Early Care and Learning Centre as an Infant and Toddler Educator in the 0-3 years classroom. In the past she has also worked at Kootenay Kids, when the centre was still called Care to Learn. In the past 10 years Stephanie relocated to several different parts of Ontario to work and attend school, but has always been drawn back to Nelson which she says is “my heart and soul’s home”.

Stephanie believes she will bring a unique perspective to city council as a single parent, Early Childhood Educator, member of the LGBTQ+ community and as a citizen who lives in subsidized housing. She believes that while past councils have been concerned about poverty, lack of affordable housing and the childcare crisis, only someone who is really living with these issues day to day can understand the urgency that is needed in finding solutions. Stephanie wants to make sure that the voices of all Nelson’s citizens are being heard, especially those who are most vulnerable.

With her experience in the social services field Stephanie has honed and continues to master many skills that will make her an exceptional city councillor. Through working with a wide variety of staff, children and parents she continues to learn the arts of deep patience, perspective shifting, diplomacy, broad-mindedness, self-learning, critical thinking, self reflection and tolerance. Friends and colleagues describe Stephanie as approachable, articulate, humble, magnanimous, and determined. These and other qualities will allow Stephanie to listen openly to the concerns of citizens, get along well with other councillors and our Mayor and think outside the box when trying to find solutions to issues that effect our city.

Stephanie knows that Nelson is a city full of talented professionals in a wide variety of fields. Over the years she’s felt frustrated to watch money being spent on consultants who do not live in Nelson yet help make crucial decisions about our city. Stephanie wants to help put policy into place that says the City must first try to find a local business or individual to do the work the city is needing before hiring an out of town company or individual. Let’s keep Nelson taxpayer money and resources in the pockets of Nelson’s citizens.

Our city has committees for many types of interests and issues. Stephanie believes these committees are an important way for council to hear from the many different communities in Nelson. She wants to see council use the expertise of the committees to help make decisions and give a deeper understanding and perspective to council surrounding issues the community wants to see addressed.

Baker Street is the heart of Nelson. There are many people who are unhappy with issues like homelessness, panhandling and drug use that are in plain sight in our downtown. Stephanie is one of those people who is also concerned and wants to see these issues met with support for existing social resources and creative expansion of resources to help those people who need a hand up. She would like to see the city work with the Street Outreach Workers to come up with collaborative ways to identify eligible clients who wish to work, and connect them with businesses and citizens who need work done. Stephanie would like to see a committee formed where this type of work program could be launched to help people build their work experience and resumes while breaking down barriers and stigma with the public and business owners.

Stephanie is passionate about issues related to homelessness, lack of housing, barriers to employment and substance abuse. She wants to ensure that council continues to always remember that the people that are a part of our street culture are exactly that: people.

In 2017 fifty-two businesses collaborated on writing a letter to Nelson City Council. Their concerns included lack of parking, panhandling, signage issues, drug use, drug dealing, garbage handling issues and vandalism. Stephanie want to see city council invite all concerned businesses to a forum to talk about issues like the ones expressed in the letter. Her hope would be that the forum would include individuals from the Street Culture Collaborative and the Nelson City Police in addition to the local business owners so we could not only address and hear these concerns but also brainstorm possible solutions.

Nelson has had a 0% vacancy rate for at least 5 years. This makes life challenging not only for every day citizens but also for business owners. Keeping a business staffed when your staff cannot find a place to live is a serious issue that plagues many businesses in our community. Stephanie wants to help put policy into place to make building high density rentals, subsidized especially, more affordable and attractive to developers and non-profit organizations like Nelson CARES Society. Lowering or waiving city fees like building permits or water and sewage hook up could be one way city council could make building more rentals viable. Stephanie believes that some of the burden of housing vacancy could be lifted if Selkirk College could have more student housing on campus. Presently only the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Campus has a residence. Stephanie would like to collaborate with Selkirk College to see how the city can help the college build a residence at, or close to, the Silver King Campus so students would need less off-campus accommodation.

Most candidates have kept silent on the topic of cannabis, despite the fact that federal legalization will be going into effect mere days before our municipal election day on October 20<sup>th</sup>. Stephanie recognizes that the cannabis industry has been a vitally important part of Nelson's economy. The federal government will be enforcing strict guidelines for the possession, growth and sale of cannabis. Stephanie wants to see Nelson city council support our existing cannabis businesses and the people these businesses employ, by creating a collaborative environment to listen to these businesses themselves. By working together with businesses and individuals in the cannabis industry Nelson city council can create fair municipal policies that bolster an industry that, like it or loath it, is a huge part of Nelson's economy and culture. Stephanie wants to see city council make decisions that will protect the jobs of existing citizens who work in the cannabis industry and make way for the creation of new jobs and business opportunities.

The risk of a fire encroaching on the city limits is a real threat. Stephanie wants to see Nelson city council continue to work with wildfire and firefighting experts to lower the chances of this serious issue becoming a reality. Stephanie is thankful that there are people running for city council that are very knowledgeable about this and other climate change issues and is looking forward to working closely with them on council. During this last smokey summer Stephanie noticed the lack of indoor activities being offered during the weeks we were all forced to stay indoors. She would like to work with the NDCC and RDCK to ensure that there is a variety of activities for people of all ages to participate in when being outside is not safe or healthy. Ensuring that the indoor pool stay open and programs like Tumbleweeds are offered will help people stay active while ensuring isolation does not cause more mental health strain on our communities.

All across BC there is a childcare crisis. There are not enough spaces for families requiring care for their children who are not yet school age. Nelson is a part of this crisis, especially for children who are

under 3 years old. Nelson only has 24 licensed spaces for children under three years of age within the city limits. Stephanie wants to see the city engage with local Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) to find solutions to our lack of sufficient childcare facilities and spaces. On council she would influence the default of “yes” to people who are looking to create new spaces and centres within the community. By collaborating with local ECEs, council can help break down barriers for educators to help ensure that parents have safe, quality childcare for their children so they can return to work and contribute to Nelson’s economy.

If given the privilege of being a Nelson city councillor Stephanie’s first order of business will be to address the acknowledgement that each city council meeting starts with “The City of Nelson acknowledges all Aboriginal peoples on whose traditional territories we stand. We honour their connection to the land and rivers and respect the importance of the environment to our strength as a community.” I believe that unless we can learn to at the very least speak the names of the people and territories of Indigenous people who’s land Nelson stands upon, then this acknowledgement is just lip service. Stephanie would like to see a group such as CoINS (Circle of Indigenous Nations) help city council rewrite this acknowledgement and also help council better understand how Nelson can be a part of reconciliation and support of indigenous citizen in our community.

If elected Stephanie would help implement education for the greater public, through radio, newspaper and social media. Specifically about how the municipality runs, where funding comes from, and how City revenue and funds are being spent. She believes that through education people will be more active in their roles as citizens of municipal government, as well as less critical of council once educated on where municipal, provincial and federal roles start and stop. Stephanie believes this will also help young people become more involved and interested in civic government.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for being an engaged citizen of Nelson. If you would like more information about Stephanie Wiggins you can find her on Facebook at Stephanie Wiggins for Nelson City council or by emailing her directly at [stephanie.wiggins250@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie.wiggins250@gmail.com). See you at the polls!

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has. - Margaret Mead