

Anluuf Amgyiik di waam Ts'msyenu (my traditional name)

Jeanette Spalding di waam K'amsiwamu (My English name)

I am Gispudwada from the house of Łagaax and am excited at the opportunity to be a Kitsumkalum Band Council member.

I am the youngest daughter to Irene Mason and the late Jeffrey Spalding. I was born and raised in Kitsumkalum at a time when there were no youth groups or traditional Ts'msyen ceremonies. There were 13 houses with a new subdivision under construction during my childhood.

After high school, I moved to Vancouver and began working immediately. I started at a popular local Hungarian deli restaurant while settling into the city. The owner of what is now a leading auto insurance company, All West Insurance, recruited me out of the deli and trained me to be one of the top mobile insurance agents of that time. What I loved most about working there was meeting people from all walks of life and establishing a relationship with those that became regular clients.

After ten years, I searched for new opportunities, and I accepted a job at Harbour Air Seaplanes, an award-winning company in the transportation tourism field. I started as a shuttle driver, commuting passengers in a 25-seat shuttle bus, cruising around downtown Vancouver's city streets. I also worked as a barista and tour agent, where we served hundreds of customers a day. I worked closely with the executive/management team to organize the facilities to operate as efficiently as possible. I was one part of an incredible team, I learned no task is too small, unimportant, and significant things can be achieved when you surround yourself with dedicated people, working towards a shared vision.

In October 2015, I moved back to Kitsumkalum and started a job with TFN Treaty Society as an administrative assistant and communications officer. Our office works with five Tsimshian communities that are involved in treaty negotiations at different stages. Since then, I have been learning more about the relationship, or sometimes lack of, between First Nation communities and the Crown governments.

Before I moved away from the community, it seemed that Industry was not held accountable to communities, and the crown/ government never had to engage with First Nation communities. Our language was not promoted, and our cultural ceremonies were not fully revitalized. Thankfully today, there is more recognition of our rights and title, and reclamation of our language and culture.

Since living back home, I was a part of the land code team, where we helped our community take out 32 sections of the Indian Act around land management. Though it only applies to the tiny Indian Reserve lands, it is an excellent model for officially gaining authority over our entire laxyuup (traditional territories).

I have kept busy volunteering at community events, participating in traditional ceremonies such as feasts and supporting families during celebrations and through times of sorrow. I also enjoy volunteering to help take care of the Kitsumkalum community garden, from planting seeds, water and weeding to harvesting in the fall. I hold a professional driver's license; I am fortunate to have driven our elders to Edmonton in 2017 to attend the first National Elders Gathering. The Kitsumkalum Youth group always needs drivers, and I am happy to help drive for them since I did not have the fun after school opportunities when I was a youth; it is great the new generations do have these opportunities.

Kitsumkalum has many great community members in line for council. I would be happy to be part of the team to help to be a voice for more recognition of our rights and title, plus support business opportunities. I will continue to promote and participate in the reclamation of our language and who we are as Ts'msyen. I will continue to advocate for the advancement of Kitsumkalum members, on and off-reserve.

Nt'oyaxsn, (Thank you), Carol Sam and Andrea Good, for your nomination and best of luck to all the candidates.

