



VIRTUAL SPEAKER SERIES FOR
FIRST NATIONS WOMEN
IN LEADERSHIP

LA SÉRIE DE CONFÉRENCES VIRTUELLES
À L'INTENTION DES ASPIRANTES
DIRIGEANTES DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS

First Nations Women in Leadership: *Advice for Leaders*



*"Stand
your ground,
pray, and forgive."*
-National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak

**Reflections from the
Assembly of First Nations
Virtual Speakers Series**




TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Traditional Grounding	3
Robert Oshkabewisens	3
Session 1	3
Dr. Gwen Point	4
Session 2	4
Session 3	4
Speaker Reflections	5
Culture Matters	5
Practical Considerations	7
Leadership Gifts	10
Advice for Aspiring Leaders	11
Challenges	16
Conclusion	17
Appendix A: Resources and Opportunities	18
Resources	18
Potential Initiatives	18
Appendix B: Overcoming Imposter Syndrome (Advice Shared by Regional Chief Joanna Bernard)	19
Appendix C: Speakers Series Key Messages Framework	20



INTRODUCTION

The Assembly of First Nations held a Virtual Speakers Series for First Nations Women in Leadership that included three online events (February 21st, March 8th, and March 19th, 2024).¹ These two-hour events consisted of a traditional opening, speakers sharing their story and key messages, the most valuable advice they have received as a leader, and some further reflections on the key messages of the series (See Appendix C). Speakers then responded to questions from attendees.² This document is a compilation of advice and insight for “up-and-coming” First Nations community leaders and to support existing leaders.

The aim of the Virtual Speaker Series is to empower aspiring women leaders by sharing insights and experiences of First Nations women leaders. The panelists included National and Regional Chief leadership, leaders in communities, and members of Parliament.

Special thanks to the strong and influential leaders who shared their insight and expertise (in order of appearance):

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum
Chief Joanne Miles
Grand Chief Savanna McGregor
Grand Chief Sky Deer
National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak
Regional Chief Joanna Bernard
Regional Chief Andrea Paul
Senator Judy White
Senator Michèle Audette
Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta

¹Please see AFN's website for session recordings.

²The February 21st session had 58 attendees.

The March 8th session had 29 attendees. The March 19th session had 25 attendees.

TRADITIONAL GROUNDING

Each session of the Virtual Speakers Series for First Nations Women in Leadership was opened and closed by an Elder/Knowledge Keepers. Grounding this work in Spiritual leadership was crucial to holding space for both positive advice and heavier issues that leaders addressed. Dr. Gwen Point and Roberta Oshkabewisens each shared their own reflections and teachings on leadership with speakers and attendees. The powerful teachings of Elders/Knowledge Keepers are sacred and should always be treated with care. Out of respect for the uniqueness of each First Nations community and different protocols with handling such knowledge, below is only a high-level summary of what was shared.

ROBERTA OSHKABEWISENS

SESSION 1

Elder Roberta expressed thanks for the teachings, acknowledging the ancestors, the medicines, and Creator, and highlighting the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The ancestors' spiritual presence was welcomed for encouragement and emphasis placed on the importance of the little ones who see what we cannot. We learned that grandmothers and grandfathers trust the next generation with teachings and to finish what they were unable to during their time.

In closing, Elder Roberta expressed thanks for the good words and guidance of great-grandmothers, grandmothers, and aunties that was shared. Teachings come from sitting with and having tea with Elders; communication comes even where languages are not shared as the ancestors who walk in front of you translate for you. The importance of women's leadership was emphasized as women have always been leaders and give birth to leaders. Aunties, sisters, mothers, daughters, and grandmothers adopt each other and share our skills, understandings, and teachings. There are always differences because none are on the same path, and we all lead our own way.

DR. GWEN POINT

SESSION 2

Elder Gwen shared a profound idea of a loved one who held that leadership should be turned over to women to fix everything; it seemed that after this statement more women started taking leadership roles. Elder Gwen sees hope in the work happening at the provincial, regional, and national levels, including sessions like these. It gives hope for a better future—one where families and communities feel safe. In the opening, special blessings were sent to organizers, speakers, and attendees and a song was shared to encourage one mind, one heart, good mind, good heart, strong mind, strong heart, and continuation of good work.

In closing, Elder Gwen expressed thanks to everyone present and gratefulness for the examples of emotional and spiritual growth that were shared; seeds were planted when each of the speakers were born. The honesty and integrity in advice shared during the session was acknowledged, as was the encouragement evident. These leaders are leaving tracks and legacy—the tracks are lit up in silver and gold by the sun and moon, especially in dark, difficult, and challenging times. These tracks are left for young people, especially young women to follow.

SESSION 3

Elder Gwen thanked all involved in organizing and participating in the session. To set an intention of doing business with a clear mind in a good way, Elder Gwen shared a song given to her people and sent special blessings to all present, their families, and communities. Thanks was given to the speakers who are sharing part of who they are, it is important to listen and be respectful of those who take the time to speak and share.

In closing, Elder Gwen gave thanks expressing that it was wonderful to hear laughter during the session and to hear speakers supporting one another. The story sharing was especially appreciated as this is how Elders taught and continue to teach. It is courageous to be who you are really are and put yourself forward as a leader—this is what courage and hope look like. This difference-making is wonderful to hear about at all levels of government; it is necessary to be involved at all levels of government to make change. It is rewarding to see young people who have confidence and are not afraid to do what they are supposed to be doing and taking on leadership positions. Elder Gwen shared a song that teaches about listening with ears, head, and heart. Elder Gwen encouraged everyone to use what they have learned as it has no value unless passed on or used to help someone else.

CULTURE MATTERS

All leaders spoke of their upbringing and how **ancestry and kinship** ties influence their pathway and current role as a leader. It was acknowledged that not everyone is gifted with strong role models or encouragement to pursue leadership opportunities. Some leaders shared being immersed in culture, community, and language throughout their lives, while others spoke of mixed exposure, especially concerning formal and informal learning opportunities; this was also linked with being of mixed ancestry (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). Leaders encourage others to use their experiences to either continue strong leadership patterns and cultural engagement or make positive changes by reflecting on what is/was missing and seeking it out.

- ◇ Draw on family, your background, and experiences—this may be building upon a long line of leaders or learning and setting a new path of change and leadership.
- ◇ Recognize the diversity in how you, community members, and other leaders were raised; some grew up immersed in language, culture, and land, while others were separated from or hid their Indigeneity; (re)claim what you can.
- ◇ (Re)claim your heritage where and when it is meaningful for you.
 - » Offer protocol and (re)connect with organic networks: lodge, longhouse, Elders' Circles, dance, song, Ceremony, etc. It does not have to be your own traditional way to connect with Spirit; meet and learn from other communities.
- ◇ Seek out and turn to teachings and ancestral knowledge.
- ◇ Indigeneity is not how you look, but what is in your heart.



The **responsibilities** of Indigenous women were also a strong theme across what leaders shared. In addition to highlighting some of the difference between women and men as individuals and leaders, engaging in Ceremony (sometimes gender-based) was strongly stressed. Much of this is based in the inherent strengths and abilities of women that were in some ways repressed by colonial practices but remain vibrant and necessary to the wellbeing of families and communities. Understanding and grounding of self in gifts and responsibilities as a female or gender diverse person and a leader is crucial to making change in ways that men are unable or unwilling to.

"Supporting First Nations women must remain a priority and a reconciliatory action"

(Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum).

- ◇ Be willing to show emotion; woman leaders come into their roles being heart - rather than ego-focused; this comes from Creation.
- ◇ Understand your place in the Circle of Life and leave an impact.
- ◇ Everyone has gifts from Creator and responsibilities as environmental stewards of the land.
- ◇ Follow your inner voice when unsure; Spirit and ancestors will provide a message with the answer—open your heart, spirit, and mind to receive it.
- ◇ Always remain rooted in culture and Ceremony.
- ◇ Use Ceremony when starting a new chapter, job, or initiative—ask for strength and courage, while giving thanks for the opportunity; pray on the work you are doing
 - » Use the land, fasting, dancing, and the sweat lodge for fortification always, but especially when facing challenges.

In addition to seeking out **new teachings** and embracing new opportunities to grow as a woman and in Spirit, leaders encourage reflection on teachings already carried. Even if not received formally, leaders suggest everyone receives teachings throughout their lives and emphasized the importance of reflecting on them. As a part of suggesting how to use these teachings, leaders also shared teachings that they carry closely in their leadership roles.

- ◇ Value relationship building.
- ◇ Only take what you need and give back more than you take.
- ◇ Encourage and support intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- ◇ Know your/our place in the world.
- ◇ Live with the land, not on the land.
- ◇ Our spirituality comes with us wherever we go and when we nourish it, we are well.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to offering advice on how to manage some of the technical aspects of leadership, leaders spoke about **self-care** and the need to take care of body, mind, and Spirit. This takes time and effort but is crucial to ensuring one is well enough to do the work of serving community and is an opportunity to role model healthy living to others. It was suggested that individuals find what is relaxing and healing for them. Leaders shared their own strategies for wellness.

- ◇ Focus on your posture, breathe deeply, stay hydrated, exercise, and eat well; take care of your mind, body, and Spirit will follow.
- ◇ Practice and model selfcare, even if it is just little things (walking, tea without work, just sitting).
 - » Be your/our own medicine by taking care of ourselves and our sisters.
- ◇ Walk, snowshoe, or be on the land however it resonates with you.
- ◇ Create and follow an exercise routine/schedule.
- ◇ Take up a hobby (e.g., beading).
- ◇ Even if in a city, find grass or a tree, acknowledge the rocks.

Emotional and mental wellbeing is also very important for women in leadership roles. Leaders spoke of the many stresses and struggles of community leadership (see “Challenges”) and some strategies for managing these aspects. Much of the advice around emotional and mental wellbeing from leaders is grounded in unease due to interpersonal conflict; within community there is often disagreement with leadership decisions, that can be exacerbated by social media. Leaders need to know and prepare their own ways of coping with discontent and criticism. All leaders advise having a group of positive and encouraging individuals around for sustaining emotional and mental wellbeing.

- ◇ Create a support network.
 - » Use a close group of trustworthy advisories if in a formal leadership position.
- ◇ Have awareness of being a leader taking a lot of sacrifice and time away from your family; find ways to maintain connection.
 - » It can be challenging as caretakers (mothers, aunties, and grandmothers) to find time for both family and leadership.
- ◇ There will be negative remarks or comments about your position and decisions; do not take it personally (it is about your role, not you).
 - » Surround yourself with family and friends who believe in you to focus on the good; let negativity be “water off a duck’s back.”
 - » You do not have to put up with being personally attacked; address it, but not publicly/using social media.
 - » Use social media settings to block individuals/accounts where needed.
- ◇ Follow inspirational or positive accounts on social media because what you let in impacts you; water only sinks a boat if there are holes to let it in.
- ◇ Social media can be helpful for understanding community concerns and conversations you are not otherwise privy to, but do not get drawn into online debates.
- ◇ Learn from your missteps and mistakes and continue to grow.



"It is important to show emotion. Women leaders come into the role leading with heart instead of ego"

(Grand Chief Sky Deer).

Leaders also offered very practical advice that relates to *intellectual* considerations when managing leadership responsibilities. Establishing legitimacy and creating trust among community and colleagues takes hard work including planning and preparation required for a formal leadership term. According to leaders, it is important for community members to know the platform and intentions for the time spent in leadership positions both before voting and once successfully in a role.

- ◇ Develop a vision and follow it; “a leader without a vision is not a leader.”
 - » Share your vision with voters
(e.g., needing 5 mandates/10 years to make change).
- ◇ When in a leadership position, develop a strategic plan early-on (hire someone if needed); map out the journey and prioritize the work before it gets messy.
- ◇ There is no handbook on how to be Chief, approach formal leadership roles with curiosity.
- ◇ Pre-brief and de-brief for meetings so you are informed, but also speak from the heart.
- ◇ Create transparency in governance and be accountable; e.g., uphold the fiduciary responsibility to community and answer any questions clearly and directly.
 - » If you do not know, ask before sharing information with community members; avoid assumptions/assuming.

Relational advice was also provided by leaders who suggested ways to create a pathway that follows others who are doing good work in their own way, or similarly. Further, leaders acknowledge the potential for conflict associated with leadership, including confidentiality breaches and community members seeking special favours or treatment. Leaders should carry themselves always looking for opportunities to grow and holding to boundaries to maintain the integrity of their position(s).

- ◇ Connect and network with individuals or groups who are a few steps ahead of you on the same path (e.g. similar role/position, initiatives, processes, policies, or systems; look for and accept advice from mentors including youth, other female leaders, grandmothers, and aunts—not all mentorships are formal and can also be found online).
- ◇ Observe and mirror leaders who you would like to model yourself after to improve your own skills.
- ◇ Understand and uphold that Councils (or other groups) will not agree on everything but must respectfully agree to disagree and reconcile conflict in a way that creates balance.
 - » To encourage engagement and respect for confidentiality, have Council or group members place phones in a bin during meetings.
- ◇ Have a governance plan in place to manage any confidentiality breaches and provide direct, but careful messaging around the oath of confidentiality, speaking outside of mandates, inappropriately forwarding emails, etc.
- ◇ Avoid favouritism by applying policies consistently to all community members, regardless of how they voted.
- ◇ Standing your ground, praying, and forgiving.

LEADERSHIP GIFTS

It is held that all leaders carry particular gifts and skills that they should continually embrace and nurture. Many of these have to do with interacting with and **inspiring** individuals being led. However, leadership skills also involve remaining grounded and firm in values and overarching responsibilities to a greater good. In its own way, this is about modeling positive ways for community members; just as established leaders look to other leaders for advice and examples, new leaders can emerge from watching someone they admire. Leaders can make change is by supporting others to make the change they want to see.

- ◇ Not compromising your values; speak out even if it is controversial but do it in a kind and productive way.
 - » Call out racism and sexism—some people do not realize what they are doing, and some will never understand even once explained; the more you denounce it the more you can make change, but it is challenging to do it alone (find a support system).
 - » Stay true to who you are and how people see and know you.
 - » Know who you are and where you came from and be grateful for this.
- ◇ Listening more than speaking.
- ◇ Advocacy; embrace the responsibility of speaking for those who do not have a voice at the table.
 - » This may be individuals, the environment, animals, or plants, etc.
- ◇ Always demonstrate action—honestly and truly working for the interest of your People is what allows you to lead.
 - » Use strategic action.
- ◇ Trying, listening, and doing.
- ◇ Be there for the people, always showing up for them.
- ◇ Make your mark as part of decolonizing women in leadership.
 - » As women we must do the reparative work.
- ◇ Walking forward bravely and confidently (not in fear of missing something); work with what is in front of you.
- ◇ Generational thinking; advance rights, protect resources, and use your experiences to benefit the next generation.
 - » Encourage young people to take over the places we currently occupy.
- ◇ Empower others to make change; encourage individuals who are often complaining, but not acting, to do something.
- ◇ Being a good role model and lead by example (e.g., abstain from alcohol and drugs).

Leaders are very clear that **working with others** is crucial to making change and continual success. The ability to work in partnership consciously and intentionally is a gift. Being collaborative and cooperative supports both shared work and individual projects. The benefits of collective resources: time and energy, best practices, physical, or monetary serve to ensure leaders can achieve set goals on a larger scale.

- ◇ Collaboration and cooperation with other female leaders in support of your work.
- ◇ Being a leader requires teamwork, with the leader making decisions and encouraging the team.
- ◇ Avoiding arguments or fights; some individuals may try to incite you to react negatively and test you; shake it off and do not react.
- ◇ Being genuine; show you want to work with people, champion causes, and work together.
- ◇ Be consciously kind; competition can be your worst enemy.

Use of **perception**, including **two-eyed seeing** are held to be key gifts for leaders to implement in their work. It was shared that being attuned to surroundings and thoughtful response are key to moving change in a positive way. Leaders spoke to the challenges of working within the confines of colonial systems (while also working to replace them in some cases) and the necessity of walking in two worlds while navigating responsibilities. This can be especially difficult when caught between community members and Western political stakeholders. Ongoing attention must be given to meeting needs on both sides with an eye to how issues at hand are approached.

- ◇ Using your intuition to ‘read the room’ and not showing your thoughts or reactions; avoid head nodding when listening as it may be interpreted as agreement.
- ◇ Share an Indigenous lens at every opportunity to decolonize and bring forward two-eyed seeing.
- ◇ Acknowledging we cannot change what happened, but we can change where we are going.
- ◇ Taking time to notice and be openly thankful for the nice things around you: the meeting room, the people you are seeing, the solutions you are working on, etc.
- ◇ Multi-tasking, caregiving, and results-oriented work by prioritizing what needs to be happen; women have this advantage over men learning it in their youth —women like to get things done.

"[You must] work hard to earn the respect of community, Band Council, and staff; it takes many years of honestly and truly working in the interest of [your] people"

(Chief Joanne Miles).

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING LEADERS

Leaders shared advice on how women seeking leadership opportunities can **get started** and become actively involved in their communities and beyond. Most leadership begins grounded in particular issues or concerns and pushing for change in an area close to the heart. It is from here that more formal leadership opportunities and broader portfolios grow. An overarching suggestion from leaders is to start locally and seek information and guidance from admirable formal leaders.

- ◇ Find a cause you feel connected to and passionate about, then find the resources to have your voice heard in public forums.
 - » E.g., altering governing structure to foster self-determination (non-colonial) that can be shared, environment, child wellness/next generation, education, economic development, etc.
- ◇ Research the opportunities available to you (municipal, band, provincial, federal, etc., including opportunities to volunteer).
- ◇ Start small in your work or influence (e.g., sit on a local committee, advisory, or board).
 - » Serve on community/governing boards (e.g., education, economic development, child wellness).
- ◇ Attend Council sessions or community events to become engaged in community work and processes:
 - » Reach out to and meet with leaders to get a sense of their jobs and responsibilities.
 - » Seek information on roles, governance frameworks, and job expectations.
- ◇ Speak with past Chiefs who have had strong leadership in your community.
- ◇ Seek a mentor to help navigate formal leadership processes (e.g., nomination, election, etc.)
 - » Be brave and connect with/email a Senator or Chief and meet them for tea.
- ◇ Put your name forward—there is no knowing what could happen.

"Because of the power of women leaders, we can make [everything we say] louder by standing up together; collectively our voices get further, and more ears listen"

(Grand Chief Savanna McGregor).

To make change it is important to **remain focused** on the work at hand and navigate pathways of change thoughtfully. According to leaders perceived barriers may not be as challenging as they seem and drawing upon gifts such as two-eyed seeing is important to moving forward in a good way. At the same time, leaders need to remain focused on what they have set out to achieve and not get pulled in too many other directions.

- ◇ “Stay in your lane” based on your cause, role(s), and responsibilities.
 - » Have awareness we cannot take on every issue, embrace those that come to you; if we try to take it all on, we get lost.
- ◇ Assert Indigenous jurisdiction by not allowing obstacles such as perceptions of legislation get in the way; embrace that this is your place and space, land, and water.
- ◇ You may not succeed at every attempt at a position; keep trying until you find your place.
 - » Stay true and persistent.
- ◇ Step into your power and have confidence.
 - » Do not take “no” for an answer—find those who will provide for and embrace your natural skills and pursuit of further knowledge.



"It is an honour to share time with these leaders and to hear their passion. I am so grateful to hear them speak about Imposter Syndrome as I too am not fully confident in my new Leadership role and these new moccasins are still not as comfortable as I wish them to be today. I feel blessed to hear the views and experiences of Powerful Women Leaders, what a gift. Mahsi cho to you all and the Creator for the gift of today and the hope that I feel about tomorrow."

All leaders shared how their **educational experiences** inform their current work, role, and responsibilities, each having had a unique pathway and timeline. Leaders hold that pursuing continued education and maintaining a growth mindset is crucial to being a good leader. Which topics and skills are most significant depend upon individual needs and aspirations. However, education is never wasted is a shared belief.

- ◇ Pursue training and educational opportunities to gain new skills:
 - » Indigenous studies.
 - » Becoming an educator.
 - » Political science.
 - » Languages (Indigenous, French, and English).
 - » Governance.
 - » Public speaking.
 - » Community leadership.
- ◇ No formal education can prepare you to be a leader of a First Nations community as you must work at the community, municipal, provincial, and national levels due to the unique jurisdictional and funding relationships that apply.
 - » Know you are a born leader as a woman.
- ◇ Take courses whenever possible to gain new skills (e.g., public speaking).
- ◇ Look to Elders (traditional leaders) and take on their advice and values.
- ◇ Imposter syndrome is real and ongoing but that unconfident voice gets quieter over time.
 - » Embrace that you can be whatever you want to be.

*"Celebrate your successes and achievements,
no matter how small they seem"*

(Regional Chief Joanna Bernard).



Putting thought into **communication** and how ideas are being voiced or articulated is also a suggestion from leaders. Though some things may seem small, remaining grounded in small change is important because they are easily achieved and have ripple effects. Embracing the power and meaning behind words that are often casually spoken is important for having impact and not taking power away from critical issues and movements.

- ◇ Sometimes we look to leadership to be a grandiose movement, but simple things like changing how we speak, including to each other, is all we need.
 - » Use words like “Innu-ize” or “Indigen-ize” (positive movement over “decolonize” that centres Western systems).
 - » “Pretend”ianism is not a severe enough word for the devastation caused by fraudulent identity claims and de-legitimization of rights.
 - » Avoid using the word “hate” casually to not take away its power.
 - » Labels can diminish important concepts (e.g., “lateral violence,” “lateral kindness”; work toward just being a good person).



*"At the end of the day make sure
you've done the best you could and
helped as much as you could"*

(Regional Chief Andrea Paul).

CHALLENGES

Leaders shared the hardships of being an Indigenous woman in leadership positions with intention and acknowledgement of how difficult the work can be to demonstrate shared struggles. The isolation that comes with leadership can be felt on many levels including the physical isolation of being the only woman in a room full of men or the mental isolation of being the holder of and decision-maker for community concerns. Leaders spoke to always stepping back to evaluate challenging situations and seeking emotional and Spiritual supports when needed.

- ◇ Women leaders are more heavily scrutinized and easier to condemn than men.
- ◇ It can be challenging to have others listen; men often receive more recognition (for the same message).
- ◇ Women who speak loudly may be labeled “aggressive” while men speaking loudly are “passionate”; these double standards must be navigated.
- ◇ There is a lot of harm in the world and many topics/files are heavy; leaders must work to stay balanced and not fall apart.
- ◇ It can be lonely as a politician in First Nations politics; look for the beauty of the community embracing you and recognizing what you are putting forward on their behalf (listen to them).
- ◇ Tearing down, lateral violence, and bullying are a part of every community because of the colonial system (not the fault of community); you can withstand a lot by relying on family and friends.
- ◇ There is a lot of trauma internally and in community; however, it is a choice to be respectful, decent, to show care, and volunteer—to be an original person who understands being peaceful and having a good mind.
- ◇ If you are struggling with a path slow down and look at it: “back the boat up.”
- ◇ Rely on traditional/old knowledge in times of crisis.
- ◇ We need to be everywhere to make change; it can be overwhelming or rewarding.
- ◇ It can be exhausting being in spaces with a lot of privileged folks who need educating; find reminders of why you/we do the work.
 - » Discomfort belongs to those who feel it; those who do not know will learn.
- ◇ Take care of yourself when facing colonial violence—you will face racism and sexism regularly; build relationships around humanity to make change.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of the three speaker sessions a wealth of knowledge was shared around a multitude of topics. Much of the advice was connected but came from unique perspectives and experiences supporting its relatability. This collective wisdom touched upon advice around embracing **ancestry and kinship**, taking up of inherent **responsibilities**, valuing **teachings**, practicing **self-care**, and the importance of leaders upholding their **emotional and mental wellbeing**. Leaders also spoke of more practical considerations such as **intellectual** undertakings, **relational** best practices, the importance of **inspiring** and **working with others**, as well as how to incorporate **perception** and **two-eyed seeing** into leadership work. Advice was also provided on how to **get started**, strategies to **remain focused**, the value of **educational experiences**, and how **communication**, especially word choices, need to be thoughtful. Finally, leaders showed their relatability by sharing **hardships** they face in their roles.

The three sessions reflect the power and strength of women leaders, especially when they hold each other up as the speakers did for each other and attendees. Each leader shared very personal aspects of their journey, including moments of vulnerability along the way. Their grounding in culture and Spirit is evident in their approaches to leadership and the values they carry in their everyday lives. The openness and heart-centredness of what was shared with session attendees is beyond measure and value; the wisdom reflected will carry forward in the recordings and this document.

"This gathering today is an example of growth and support amongst our community."

APPENDIX A: RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

RESOURCES

- ◇ [Toastmasters \(join a local club\)](#)
- ◇ [COADY Institute \(St. Francis Xavier University\) program: Indigenous Women in Community Leadership](#)
- ◇ Book: “All About the Land” re. self-determination and traditional governing structure, etc.
- ◇ [Senate of Canada Student Employment Program](#)

POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

- ◇ The development of an endowment fund, bursary, or scholarship for young women and 2Spirit leaders to make running for leadership more accessible/affordable.
- ◇ Annual meetings/ “summer school” for women to learn how to campaign.

"Yes, women guide our people in leadership. Miigwech to our women. Much is being said on power in honesty all around."

APPENDIX B: OVERCOMING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

ADVICE SHARED BY REGIONAL CHIEF JOANNA BERNARD

- ◇ Acknowledge and understand imposter syndrome as a real psychological experience.
- ◇ Know imposter syndrome is a normal reaction to success; it does not reflect abilities.
- ◇ Be aware imposter syndrome affects women more than men.
- ◇ Challenge negative thoughts—self-doubt and self-talk.
- ◇ Find (within yourself) evidence that supports your accomplishments and achievements; know you can and are good enough.
- ◇ Remind yourself of skills, experiences, and the hard work that you have put in.
- ◇ Celebrate your successes and achievements, no matter how small they seem.
- ◇ Create a record of your experiences and accomplishments, and recognition you have received.
- ◇ Recognize that everyone makes mistakes and move forward.
- ◇ Reinforce for yourself that making mistakes is a natural part of learning and growing.
- ◇ Adjust your approach (and your crown) and move forward.
- ◇ Surround yourself with supportive mentors—seek encouragement and listen to others' perspectives.
- ◇ Embrace continuous learning and taking chances, using a growth mindset.
- ◇ Practice self-care and self-compassion with a focus on physical wellbeing: find joy, reduce stress.
- ◇ Uphold kindness and understanding for yourself; nobody is perfect.
- ◇ Embrace your brilliance, strengths, quirks, and unique perspectives.

KEY MESSAGES FRAMEWORK

1. Decolonizing women's leadership roles
2. Governance structures, finance, professional development
3. Leadership styles, Public Speaking/Effective Communication, and Networking Skills
4. Overcoming Obstacles/Challenges
5. Success Stories
6. Self-Care and Healing
7. Knowledge Sharing/Teachings
8. Emotional Intelligence
 - Best practices and techniques
9. Lateral violence vs. Lateral Kindness
10. Leadership Roles
11. Leadership Across the lifecycle

*"Break trail and smash glass ceilings.
Anything is possible with hard work"*

(Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse,
Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta).



NOTES



**VIRTUAL SPEAKER SERIES FOR
FIRST NATIONS WOMEN
IN LEADERSHIP**

**LA SÉRIE DE CONFÉRENCES VIRTUELLES
À L'INTENTION DES ASPIRANTES
DIRIGEANTES DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS**