

# INDIGENOUS WOMEN LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

**TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR GROWTH, RESILIENCE,  
AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

ECO CANADA | CALGARY, ALBERTA | OCTOBER 2025

This project has been funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

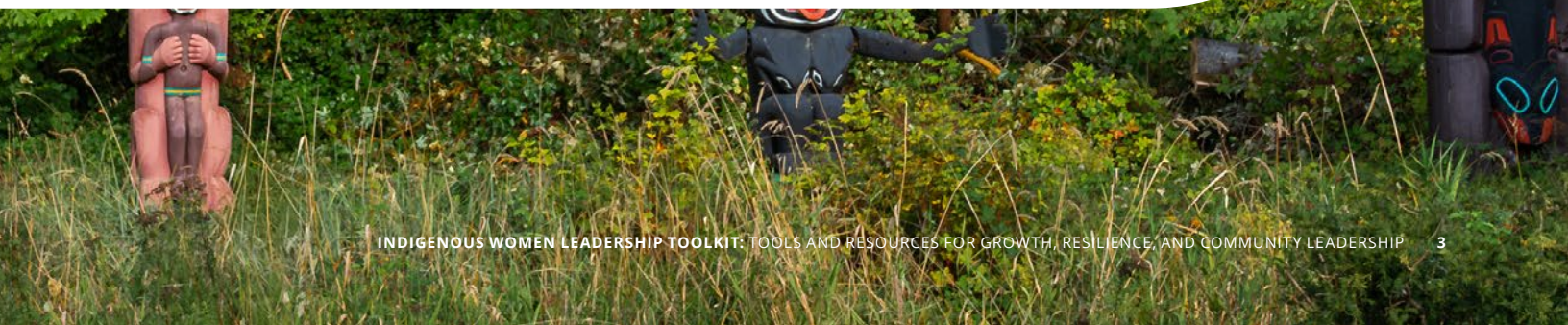
Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

**Canada**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT</b>	<b>5</b>
How to Use this Toolkit	5
Voices of Indigenous Women Leaders: Companion Conversations	6
<b>1.0 KNOWING YOURSELF AS A LEADER</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Understanding Leadership Through an Indigenous Lens	7
1.2 The Power of Story: Learning from Our Journeys	8
1.3 Exercise: My Leadership Story	8
1.4 Values in Action - Leading from What Matters Most	9
1.5 Template: Personal Vision and Values Map	10
1.6 Reflection Prompt: What does Leadership Mean to Me?	10
Closing Thought for Section 1	10
<b>2.0 LEADING WITH PURPOSE AND INTEGRITY</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Honoring Indigenous Ways of Knowing	12
2.2 Building Confidence and Credibility	13
2.3 Framework: The Four Directions of Leadership	13
2.4 Exercise: My Leadership Compass	14
2.5 Case Study: Decision-Making with Integrity	14
2.6 Checklist: Leading with Respect and Accountability	15
Closing Thought for Section 2	15
<b>3.0 STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS AND NAVIGATING CHALLENGES</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1 Leadership as Relationship	17
3.2 Listening Deeply: The Heart of Connection	18
3.3 Role-Play Scenario: Managing Tension in a Team or Community Setting	18
3.4 Guide: Seven Steps for Respectful Negotiation	19
3.5 Template: Preparing for a Difficult Conversation	19
3.6 Exercise: Strength-Based Collaboration	20
Closing Thought for Section 3	20

<b>4.0 EMPOWERING OTHERS AND SUSTAINING GROWTH</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1 The Ripple Effect: Lifting Others as We Rise	22
4.2 Reflection: What Does Empowerment Mean in My Community?	23
4.3 Framework: The Circle of Mentorship – Giving and Receiving Guidance	23
4.4 Exercise: “My Mentoring Circle”	24
4.5 Case Study: Women Leading Change in Nunavut Communities	24
4.6 Indigenous Women in the Workplace	25
Closing Thought for Section 4	26
<b>5.0 SPEAKING WITH CONFIDENCE AND PURPOSE</b>	<b>28</b>
5.1 Why Public Speaking Matters in Leadership	28
5.2 A Storytelling Approach to Public Speaking	29
5.3 Speaker Preparation Guide	29
5.4 Speech Outline Template	30
5.5 Honouring Cultural Protocols When Speaking	30
5.6 Managing Nerves and Building Confidence	31
5.7 Using Visuals Effectively	31
5.8 Public Speaking Checklist	32
5.9 Featured Resource: ECO Canada’s Leadership Pathways for Indigenous Professionals	32
<b>6.0 CONTINUING THE JOURNEY</b>	<b>34</b>
6.1 Staying Grounded in Culture and Identity	34
6.2 Continuing to Learn and Grow	35
6.3 Reflection Worksheet: Where I Am, and Where I Want to Go	35
6.4 Further Resources: Continuing Your Leadership Journey	36
6.5 Closing Words and Gratitude	39
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>41</b>
A.1 My Leadership Action Plan	41
A.2 Career Growth Map	42
A.3 Strengths and Values Inventory	43
A.4 Preparing for a Difficult Conversation (Worksheet)	44
A.5 My Mentoring Circle	45
A.6 Reflection Log – My Growth Journey	46
A.7 Speech Builder Worksheet	47



## FOREWORD

Leadership takes many forms. In Indigenous communities, leadership often begins not with a title, but with a commitment to care, courage, and connection, to people, to the land, and to future generations. This toolkit was created to honor that spirit and to support Indigenous women, especially those in remote, rural, and northern areas, who are walking their leadership journey.

It recognizes that leadership is deeply personal. It can emerge in the home, in the workplace, in community service, or in cultural stewardship. Each path is unique, yet each contributes to a shared strength, one that uplifts others and carries forward the wisdom of those who came before.

This resource brings together practical leadership tools and teachings that draw from both traditional knowledge and contemporary skills. It also features the voices of two remarkable Indigenous women leaders who share their stories of beginnings, resilience, and purpose. Their words remind us that leadership is not a destination, but a continuous act of learning, healing, and giving back.

We hope this toolkit will serve as a guide, a companion, and an inspiration for Indigenous women everywhere who are ready to lead in their own way, with confidence, authenticity, and heart.



# ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

*The **Indigenous Women Leadership Toolkit** was designed as a **practical and reflective resource** to help women discover and strengthen their leadership capacities.*

It combines self-reflection, guided exercises, and real-world strategies with Indigenous perspectives on leadership, balance, and community.

You will find:

- Personal development tools to build self-awareness and confidence.
- Practical leadership frameworks to navigate challenges, communication, and collaboration.
- Exercises and templates to turn insights into action.
- Stories and Companion Conversations with Indigenous women leaders who share their experiences in resilience, empowerment, and cultural identity.

Each section offers both reflection and action, encouraging you to pause, think, and then take a small step forward. Whether you're leading a project, mentoring youth, or creating change in your community, the exercises and stories are meant to support you at every stage of your journey.

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

---

*This is not a book to read once and put away, it's a living resource.*

You can move through it in order or open it to whichever topic resonates most. Each section includes:

- Reflections and prompts to deepen self-awareness
- Exercises and tools you can apply in your life and work
- Real stories and voices to inspire learning
- Calls to action to help you take the next step

You are invited to journal your thoughts, discuss insights with peers or mentors, and adapt the tools to your community's context.

---

GROWTH HAPPENS IN YOUR OWN RHYTHM. TAKE YOUR TIME,  
RETURN OFTEN, AND **LET THE WISDOM GROW WITH YOU.**

---

## VOICES OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN LEADERS: COMPANION CONVERSATIONS

---

*To complement this written guide, two Indigenous women leaders generously shared their journeys through recorded interviews. Their stories weave through this toolkit as moments of reflection and inspiration.*

The videos explore:

- Personal beginnings and cultural grounding
- Finding purpose and voice in leadership
- Overcoming challenges with courage and resilience
- Empowering and mentoring other Indigenous women
- Honoring culture, identity, and the future

You can watch these Companion Conversations using the QR codes or links provided throughout the toolkit.

---

EACH STORY IS UNIQUE, BUT TOGETHER, THEY REFLECT A  
SHARED TRUTH: LEADERSHIP GROWS FROM WITHIN,  
**NURTURED BY COMMUNITY AND GUIDED BY PURPOSE.**

---



# 1.0 KNOWING YOURSELF AS A LEADER

*Exploring Identity, Purpose, and Personal Strengths as the Foundation of Leadership.*

## 1.1 UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP THROUGH AN INDIGENOUS LENS

*Leadership in Indigenous communities is rooted in service, balance, and connection.*

It is not about standing in front, but about standing with, listening to the needs of the people, caring for the land, and carrying forward teachings for the next generation.

True leadership begins with self-knowledge. It asks:

**Who am I?**

**What do  
I stand for?**

**How do my  
values guide  
my choices?**

For Indigenous women, leadership often intertwines with family, culture, and community responsibility. It grows from stories, ceremonies, and everyday acts of kindness and courage. Recognizing and honoring this interconnectedness helps you lead in ways that are authentic to who you are.



## 1.2 THE POWER OF STORY: LEARNING FROM OUR JOURNEYS

---

*Every leader carries a story, a series of experiences, teachings, and turning points that shape how we see the world.*

Sharing and reflecting on these stories helps us recognize patterns of strength and resilience that may have gone unnoticed.

Your story is not just your past; it is your foundation for growth. Understanding it helps you:

- Identify the values that have guided your decisions
- See how challenges became lessons
- Recognize how culture and community shaped your path

When you tell your story, you give others permission to find strength in theirs.

## 1.3 EXERCISE: MY LEADERSHIP STORY

---

### **PURPOSE:**

To explore the personal experiences that have shaped your leadership journey.

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Take 10-15 minutes to reflect or write about the following prompts. There are no right or wrong answers, only what feels true for you.

Question	My Notes
What early memories or teachings shaped who you are today?	
Who has influenced your sense of responsibility or courage?	
Describe a time you took initiative. What motivated you?	
What role do your culture, identity, and community play in your decisions?	
What does "leadership" mean to you right now?	

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:**

Share one part of your story with a trusted friend, mentor, or family member. Notice how speaking it out loud strengthens its meaning.

**REFLECTION PROMPT:**

“When I look back at my story, I see a thread of \_\_\_\_\_ that has always guided me.”

## 1.4 VALUES IN ACTION - LEADING FROM WHAT MATTERS MOST

---

*Knowing your core values helps you make decisions aligned with your purpose, even when challenges arise. Values are not abstract words. They are daily choices that shape how you lead and live.*

**EXAMPLES OF GUIDING VALUES:**



**ACTIVITY:**

1. Circle or list 5 values that matter most to you.
2. Next to each, write one way you already live that value.
3. Identify one value you want to express more fully this year.

Value	How am I living this value?

**REFLECTION:**

“When my actions reflect my values, I feel most aligned with who I am.”

## 1.5 TEMPLATE: PERSONAL VISION AND VALUES MAP

---

My Core Values	How I Live Them Today	How I Will Strengthen Them in Leadership
Example: <b>Respect</b>	I listen before I speak	I will ensure every voice is heard in team decisions
Example: <b>Courage</b>	I take on new roles despite fear	I will mentor a younger woman to build confidence

Use this table to visualize how your values connect to your leadership goals. Revisit it as you grow.

## 1.6 REFLECTION PROMPT: WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP MEAN TO ME?

---

*Write or speak this sentence several times, finishing it differently each time:*

"Leadership means \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_."

Keep this page near the front of your toolkit. It can serve as your compass, a reminder of your unique way of leading.

### CLOSING THOUGHT FOR SECTION 1

---

*Leadership begins not in strategy, but in self-understanding.*

When you know who you are and what you stand for, your actions naturally align with your purpose. From that clarity, confidence grows and so does your capacity to uplift others.



## 2.0 LEADING WITH PURPOSE AND INTEGRITY

*Developing Practical Leadership Habits that Align With Your Values, Culture, and Commitments.*

### 2.1 HONORING INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

---

*Purpose-driven leadership begins with a clear sense of why you lead.*

In many Indigenous worldviews, leadership is guided by responsibility rather than authority, to protect the land, nurture relationships, and act for the well-being of future generations.

#### A PURPOSEFUL LEADER:

**Acts with integrity** even when no one is watching.

**Grounds decisions in values**, not convenience.

**Builds trust** through transparency and humility.

Understands that **success is shared**, not individual.

## 2.2 BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND CREDIBILITY

---

*Confidence grows from consistency, from keeping promises and following through. Credibility develops when others see that your actions match your words.*

Try these everyday practices:

- Prepare and pause. Take a breath before responding; grounded voices carry farther.
- Acknowledge others. Publicly recognize contributions.
- Admit and repair. Integrity includes owning mistakes.
- Learn openly. Confidence is strengthened by curiosity, not by knowing everything.

### REFLECTION:

When have I earned trust by being honest, even when it was difficult?

## 2.3 FRAMEWORK: THE FOUR DIRECTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

---

*Many Indigenous teachings describe balance through the Four Directions - mind, body, spirit, and heart. These elements can also guide leadership practice.*

Direction	Focus	Guiding Question
Mind	Clarity and learning	Do I understand the facts and perspectives before acting?
Heart	Empathy and compassion	Am I considering how my decision affects others?
Body	Action and courage	Am I taking concrete steps, not just talking about change?
Spirit	Purpose and values	Does this choice honor my deeper beliefs and commitments?

**BALANCED LEADERS CHECK IN WITH ALL FOUR BEFORE MAKING KEY DECISIONS.**

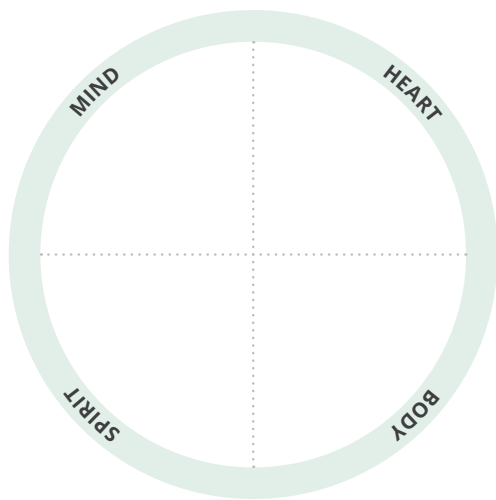
## 2.4 EXERCISE: MY LEADERSHIP COMPASS

---

**PURPOSE:**

To reflect on where your leadership is balanced and where it may need attention.

1. Note the circle below divided into four quadrants labeled Mind, Heart, Body, Spirit.
2. In each area, write examples of how you currently express that aspect.
3. Mark one quadrant that feels strongest and one that needs more focus.
4. Note one small action to bring greater balance this month.



---

---

---

---

---

---

**PROMPT:**

“When my heart and mind work together, my decisions feel \_\_\_\_\_.”

## 2.5 CASE STUDY: DECISION-MAKING WITH INTEGRITY

---

**SCENARIO:**

A community committee receives funding to run a youth program. One member suggests using part of the budget for travel unrelated to the project. You value relationships but also accountability.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What values are being tested here?
2. How can you raise the concern respectfully?
3. Which of the Four Directions can guide your response?
4. What outcome would reflect integrity and preserve trust?

Use this scenario with a partner or group to explore culturally respectful ways to uphold ethics.

## 2.6 CHECKLIST: LEADING WITH RESPECT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Practice	Reflection Question
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I communicate decisions clearly and follow through.	Did I explain the why behind my choices?
<input type="checkbox"/> I invite diverse voices into discussions.	Who else should be heard?
<input type="checkbox"/> I give credit generously.	Did I name the contributions of others?
<input type="checkbox"/> I document and report actions transparently.	Would I feel proud if this decision were shared publicly?
<input type="checkbox"/> I care for my well-being.	Am I leading from wholeness, not exhaustion?

Review this checklist monthly.

SMALL, CONSISTENT ACTIONS BUILD **TRUSTWORTHY LEADERSHIP.**

### CLOSING THOUGHT FOR SECTION 2

*Integrity is not a single act but a daily practice.*

When purpose and values guide your words and actions, you create ripples of trust that reach far beyond your role. Purpose-driven leadership is quiet, steady, and deeply transformative. It reminds others that strength and kindness can lead together.



## 3.0 STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS AND NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

*Building Trust, Communication, and Confidence in Times of Conflict and Change.*

### 3.1 LEADERSHIP AS RELATIONSHIP

*In many Indigenous traditions, leadership is viewed as relational, not about control, but about connection.*

Strong relationships are the foundation of effective leadership. They are built through honesty, humility, and respect, and they require ongoing care.

#### WHEN RELATIONSHIPS ARE STRONG:

Teams work together toward **shared goals.**

Disagreements are **handled with openness.**

Everyone feels seen, valued, and **safe to contribute.**

Leaders strengthen relationships by listening before speaking, recognizing others' strengths, and treating every person as part of the circle.

## 3.2 LISTENING DEEPLY: THE HEART OF CONNECTION

---

*Listening is one of the most powerful acts of leadership.*

It shows respect, honors wisdom, and creates understanding before action. Deep listening involves not only hearing words, but noticing tone, emotion, and silence.

Try these steps for deep listening:

- Be fully present. Set aside distractions and maintain gentle eye contact.
- Suspend judgment. Listen to understand, not to respond.
- Reflect back. Summarize what you heard to show understanding.
- Acknowledge emotion. Sometimes people need to feel heard before finding solutions.
- Pause before replying. Silence allows others' thoughts to settle.

### REFLECTION PROMPT:

"When I truly listen, I learn \_\_\_\_\_ about others and \_\_\_\_\_ about myself."

## 3.3 ROLE-PLAY SCENARIO: MANAGING TENSION IN A TEAM OR COMMUNITY SETTING

---

### SCENARIO:

You are leading a small project team. Two members disagree about how to distribute tasks. One feels unheard; the other feels overburdened. Your role is to guide a respectful conversation that leads to understanding and collaboration.

### PRACTICE STEPS:

1. Set the tone: Begin with gratitude and shared purpose.
2. Invite each person to speak: Allow uninterrupted time.
3. Acknowledge feelings: "I hear that you're feeling..."
4. Find common ground: "You both want the project to succeed."
5. Ask solution-focused questions: "What would help us move forward together?"
6. Close with appreciation: Reinforce that everyone's contribution matters.

---

**TIP: YOU CAN USE THIS SCRIPT IN A REAL SITUATION OR PRACTICE IT WITH A PEER OR MENTOR TO BUILD CONFIDENCE.**

---

### 3.4 GUIDE: SEVEN STEPS FOR RESPECTFUL NEGOTIATION

---

*Negotiation in leadership is not about winning. It's about finding balance that honors everyone involved. These seven steps can guide respectful and culturally grounded dialogue:*

1. Prepare with intention. Clarify what matters most before entering discussion.
2. Open with respect. Acknowledge others' time, perspective, and role.
3. Listen to understand needs, not positions.
4. Share your view calmly and clearly.
5. Seek common values. Return to what you care about - community, fairness, or growth.
6. Offer options, not ultimatums.
7. End with gratitude and next steps. Summarize agreements and thank participants.

**REFLECTION:**

“Negotiation is successful when everyone feels heard, not when one person walks away with more.”

### 3.5 TEMPLATE: PREPARING FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

---

*Use this worksheet before entering a challenging discussion.*

It helps you center your purpose and stay grounded in respect.

Question	My Notes
What is the purpose of this conversation?	
What outcome do I hope for?	
What emotions might come up — for me and others?	
Which values will guide how I speak and listen?	
What support or preparation do I need beforehand?	
How will I open and close respectfully?	

Keep this page handy as part of your leadership preparation toolkit.

## 3.6 EXERCISE: STRENGTH-BASED COLLABORATION

---

*When people understand each other's strengths, collaboration becomes easier and more meaningful. This activity helps you recognize and draw on the diversity within your team or community.*

### STEPS:

1. Gather your group and invite everyone to share one personal strength and one way they like to contribute.
2. Record all strengths on a large sheet or virtual board.
3. Discuss how these strengths complement each other.
4. Create a plan for how each person's skill can be best used in the next project or initiative.

---

**TIP: REVISIT THIS LIST REGULARLY. STRENGTHS EVOLVE AS PEOPLE GROW.**

---

## CLOSING THOUGHT FOR SECTION 3

---

*Challenges and conflicts are not signs of failure, they are invitations to deepen understanding.*

When leaders stay grounded in respect and empathy, difficult moments become opportunities to strengthen trust, build bridges, and remind others that relationships are the heart of leadership.



## 4.0 EMPOWERING OTHERS AND SUSTAINING GROWTH

*Encouraging Mentorship, Resilience, and Community-Centered Leadership.*

### 4.1 THE RIPPLE EFFECT: LIFTING OTHERS AS WE RISE

*True leadership is not about standing above others. It's about lifting others as we rise.*

When Indigenous women lead, they carry generations of strength and open paths for those who follow. Empowerment is a shared act: when one woman finds her voice, she helps another find hers.

#### EMPOWERING OTHERS MEANS:

Creating space for  
**new voices to be heard.**

**Sharing knowledge generously**  
and without competition.

**Recognizing potential** where others may only see inexperience.

Celebrating success as a **collective achievement.**

#### REFLECTION PROMPT:

“Who lifted me when I was finding my way – and who can I now lift in return?”

## 4.2 REFLECTION: WHAT DOES EMPOWERMENT MEAN IN MY COMMUNITY?

---

*Empowerment may look different in every community.*

It could mean creating opportunities for youth, supporting cultural revitalization, or modeling leadership in everyday life. Take a few minutes to reflect:

Question	My Notes
How do women in my community support each other?	
What barriers might still exist?	
What small action could I take to make someone feel more confident or included?	

Remember: small, consistent gestures of encouragement can change someone's path.

## 4.3 FRAMEWORK: THE CIRCLE OF MENTORSHIP – GIVING AND RECEIVING GUIDANCE

---

*In Indigenous teachings, learning often happens through sharing circles, spaces where everyone has wisdom to offer. Mentorship works the same way: it's reciprocal, built on trust and mutual growth.*

### THE CIRCLE OF MENTORSHIP

- Receiving Guidance: Learning from Elders, leaders, and peers.
- Walking Beside: Collaborating as equals; sharing lessons and support.
- Giving Back: Mentoring others and creating opportunities for growth.
- Reflecting and Renewing: Pausing to celebrate progress and gratitude. This circular model reminds us that we are always both learners and teachers.

---

**TIP: MENTORSHIP DOESN'T ALWAYS NEED A TITLE. IT BEGINS WITH LISTENING, ENCOURAGING, AND BELIEVING IN OTHERS.**

---

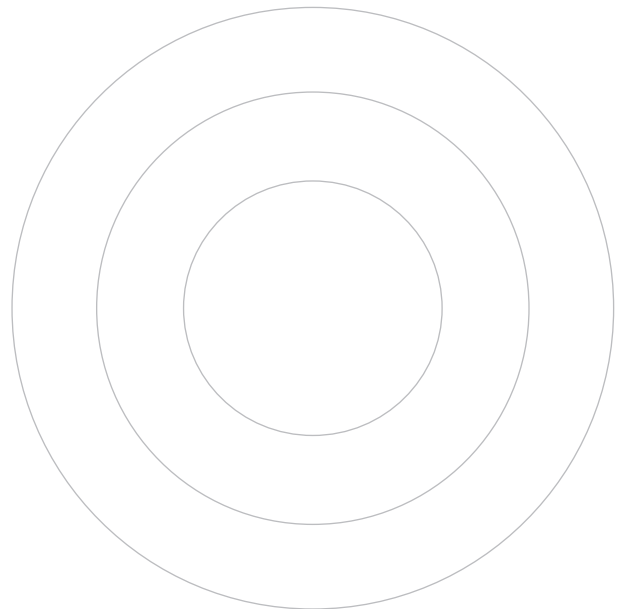
## 4.4 EXERCISE: “MY MENTORING CIRCLE”

---

### **PURPOSE:**

To identify your sources of support and the people you can empower in return.

1. Note the three concentric circles on the right.
  - In the inner circle, write the names of people who mentor or guide you.
  - In the middle circle, list peers or collaborators you learn with.
  - In the outer circle, note those you currently support, mentor, or hope to uplift.
2. Reflect on how energy flows through your circle, what you receive, share, and give.
3. Choose one relationship from each circle to nurture in the next month.



### **PROMPT:**

“Mentorship is not a ladder I climb. It’s a circle I keep alive.”

## 4.5 CASE STUDY: WOMEN LEADING CHANGE IN NUNAVUT COMMUNITIES

---

*Adapted from publicly available information on leadership and capacity-building programs led by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada.*

### **CONTEXT:**

Across Nunavut, Inuit women have taken leadership in programs that strengthen community well-being, safety, and economic development.

Through initiatives such as Pauktuutit’s Inuit Women in Leadership and Women of Courage projects, women have created community networks, developed workshops on governance and entrepreneurship, and supported one another to step into leadership roles.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS:**

- Empowerment often begins in community spaces where women share stories and build trust.
- Programs succeed when rooted in local values and guided by Elders.
- Mentorship and peer circles help women sustain confidence and growth.

*Source: Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada – Inuit Women in Leadership Program [www.pauktuutit.ca](http://www.pauktuutit.ca)*

## 4.6 INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

---

### *Bridging cultural identity, leadership, and professional growth.*

Indigenous women bring unique strengths to the workplace, deep relational awareness, collaborative decision-making, and an ability to see systems holistically. Yet, many also face barriers such as underrepresentation, cultural bias, or limited access to mentorship and advancement opportunities.

This section encourages reflection and provides strategies to navigate these spaces with confidence and integrity.

#### **RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS**

Indigenous women often embody leadership qualities that today's workplaces need most:

- Relational leadership – leading through trust, empathy, and shared purpose.
- Community perspective – focusing on collective success, not competition.
- Resilience and adaptability – navigating change with creativity and groundedness.
- Values-based decision-making – aligning choices with cultural teachings and integrity.

These qualities are powerful assets, not differences to hide, but perspectives to celebrate.

#### **NAVIGATING BARRIERS WITH STRENGTH AND SUPPORT**

Many Indigenous women describe feeling “in two worlds”, balancing professional expectations with cultural identity. Here are some ways to lead authentically while maintaining well-being:

- Stay connected to your roots. Ground yourself in cultural practices that strengthen confidence.
- Find allies and mentors. Build supportive networks, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
- Use your voice thoughtfully. When you speak, bring perspective — your lived experience adds depth.
- Model balance. Show that leadership can include empathy, reflection, and respect.
- Acknowledge burnout early. Workplace leadership requires care of self and community.

#### **REFLECTION PROMPT:**

“When I bring my whole self to work – my culture, my values, my voice – I contribute.”

## PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Tool	Purpose
Career Growth Map	Identify your professional goals and the skills to get there.
Mentorship Action Plan	Pair up with a peer or senior leader to share insights and guidance.
Strengths Inventory Worksheet	List 5 cultural or personal strengths and how they show up in your work.
Workplace Reflection Prompt	“What does leadership look like in my current role — and how can I shape it with integrity?”

## ENCOURAGING WORKPLACE ALLIES

True inclusion grows when others understand the value Indigenous women bring. If you are a manager, colleague, or mentor, you can support Indigenous women by:

- Listening without assumption.
- Valuing traditional and community-based knowledge as leadership expertise.
- Offering mentorship and sponsorship opportunities.
- Advocating for equitable hiring, training, and advancement pathways.

LEADERSHIP IS STRONGER WHEN **EVERYONE'S VOICE IS HEARD AND HONORED.**

## CLOSING THOUGHT FOR SECTION 4

*Empowerment is both a gift and a responsibility.*

When we build others up, we strengthen our communities, preserve our teachings, and create ripples of hope for the next generation.

Sustaining growth means continuing to learn, mentor, and lead with humility. Keeping the circle strong for those who come after us.



## 5.0 SPEAKING WITH CONFIDENCE AND PURPOSE

*Building Your Voice through Storytelling, Cultural Grounding, and Practical Public-Speaking Tools.*

*Public speaking is an essential leadership skill, whether you are sharing your story, speaking in a meeting, advocating for your community, or presenting in a workplace.*

For Indigenous women, public speaking is also a way to honour ancestors, carry forward teachings, and inspire future generations.

This section offers culturally grounded and practical tools to help you speak with clarity, confidence, and purpose.

### 5.1 WHY PUBLIC SPEAKING MATTERS IN LEADERSHIP

Public speaking gives you opportunities to:

**Influence**  
decisions and  
policies.

**Share**  
your lived  
experience  
and wisdom.

**Represent**  
your  
community  
and culture.

**Educate,**  
advocate,  
and inspire.

**Strengthen**  
your  
professional  
presence in the  
workplace.

*Leadership is not only about what you do, it is also about how you communicate your purpose.*

#### **REFLECTION PROMPT:**

“When I speak from a place of truth and values, my voice becomes a bridge between my story and my leadership.”

## 5.2 A STORYTELLING APPROACH TO PUBLIC SPEAKING

---

Indigenous cultures have rich oral traditions that use stories to teach, heal, and connect. This approach can guide your speaking style:

### THE FOUR-PART STORYTELLING FRAMEWORK

1. **Begin with Connection:** Acknowledge the land, your community, your purpose.
2. **Share the Heart of Your Story:** Use lived experience, teachings, or personal lessons.
3. **Offer Insights or Teachings:** What does your story show about leadership, resilience, or values?
4. **Close with a Call to Action:** What do you want people to reflect on, feel, or do?

*This framework can be used for speeches, meetings, presentations, or community gatherings.*

## 5.3 SPEAKER PREPARATION GUIDE

---

Use this guide to prepare for any speaking opportunity.

### BEFORE SPEAKING

- Clarify your purpose: What message matters most?
- Choose 2–3 key points.
- Ground yourself with a breath, prayer, or quiet moment.
- Consider whose teachings you carry with you.

### WHILE SPEAKING

- Speak slowly and intentionally.
- Use pauses. Silence can be powerful.
- Make eye contact with welcoming faces.
- Let your story and values guide your voice.

### AFTER SPEAKING

- Thank the audience and acknowledge community.
- Reflect: What felt strong? What can grow next time?

## 5.4 SPEECH OUTLINE TEMPLATE

---

A simple structure you can use for any speech (see [Appendix A.7](#) for outline template):

1. Land and Community Acknowledgment
2. Introduction – who you are and why you are speaking
3. Key Message #1 – story or teaching
4. Key Message #2 – insight or learning
5. Key Message #3 (optional)
6. Closing Reflection or Teaching
7. Call to Action

*Use this as a guide, not a script. Adapt it to your voice and context.*

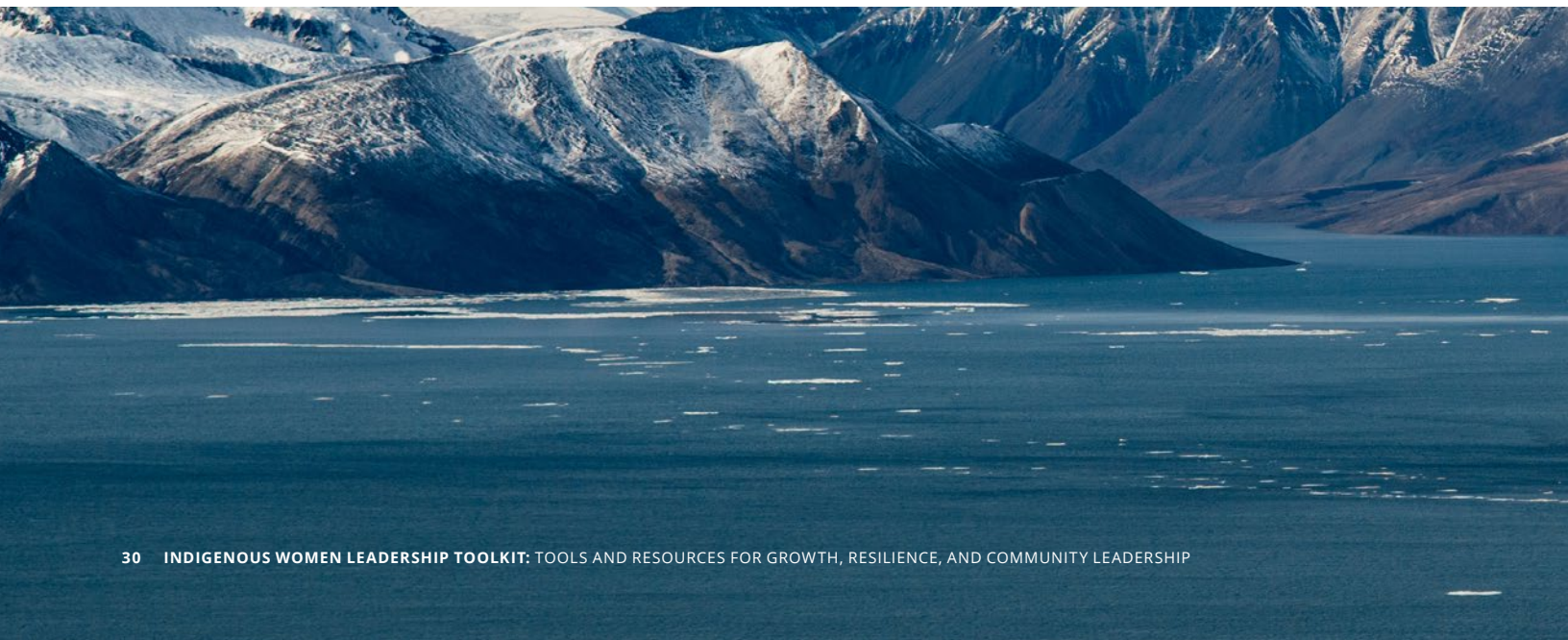
## 5.5 HONOURING CULTURAL PROTOCOLS WHEN SPEAKING

---

When speaking in Indigenous or diverse spaces:

- Acknowledge Elders and Knowledge Keepers respectfully.
- Check for permissions before sharing sacred teachings.
- Be mindful of whose stories you share and how.
- Honour the diversity of Indigenous Nations, languages, and experiences.
- Use cultural elements (imagery, language, teachings) with care and respect.

*Respect is leadership in action.*



## 5.6 MANAGING NERVES AND BUILDING CONFIDENCE

---

Even experienced speakers feel nervous. Confidence grows through practice and purpose.

### **SIMPLE WAYS TO STAY GROUNDED:**

- Take deep, slow breaths.
- Plant your feet firmly on the ground.
- Start with a story you know well.
- Practice with a trusted friend.
- Remind yourself: My voice matters.

---

**CONFIDENCE TIP: CONFIDENCE DOESN'T COME FROM BEING PERFECT – IT COMES FROM BEING AUTHENTIC.**

---

## 5.7 USING VISUALS EFFECTIVELY

---

If you use slides or props:

- Keep slides simple and uncluttered.
- Use images or patterns that honour culture (with permissions).
- Avoid reading from slides. Speak directly to the audience.
- Ensure visuals support your message rather than overshadow it.



## 5.8 PUBLIC SPEAKING CHECKLIST

---

Use this checklist just before you speak:

- I know my purpose

---

- I have 2-3 main messages

---

- I am grounded in my values and story

---

- My opening honors community and land

---

- I've practiced at least once

---

- My visuals are simple and respectful (if using them)

---

- I'm ready to speak with confidence and heart

---

## 5.9 FEATURED RESOURCE: ECO CANADA'S LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS PROFESSIONALS

---

*Building skills, confidence, and community through mentorship and training.*

ECO Canada supports Indigenous professionals at all stages of their careers through:

### **MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

A national mentorship program pairing Indigenous mentees with experienced environmental professionals

Supports:

- Confidence building
- Career navigation
- Leadership development
- Expanding professional networks

### **ECO ACADEMY COURSES** (<https://ecoacademy.ca/>)

Short, self-paced online courses ideal for women in remote or northern communities. Enhances skills in:

- Goal setting
- Communication
- Leadership styles
- Teamwork
- Self-awareness
- Mentorship



## 6.0 CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

*Carrying Your Leadership Forward with Purpose, Balance, and Gratitude.*

### 6.1 STAYING GROUNDED IN CULTURE AND IDENTITY

*Leadership begins within, but it is sustained by connection to culture, land, language, and community. For many Indigenous women, these connections offer strength, guidance, and renewal.*

They remind us that leadership is not about perfection but about presence showing up with respect, courage, and care.

#### WAYS TO STAY GROUNDED:

Spend time on the land or in nature to **renew balance**.

**Seek wisdom** from Elders, knowledge keepers, or family stories.

**Participate** in ceremonies, community events, or traditional teachings.

Reflect on your leadership journey as part of a **larger collective story**.

#### REFLECTION PROMPT:

“The roots that ground me most deeply are \_\_\_\_\_. I will return to them when I need strength.”

## 6.2 CONTINUING TO LEARN AND GROW

---

*Leadership is a lifelong journey of learning.*

As you complete this toolkit, you may find new areas you wish to explore — whether professional development, personal growth, or community-building.

Here are some ideas to continue your growth:

- Join or start a peer mentorship circle in your community.
- Explore training programs, scholarships, or leadership workshops for Indigenous women.
- Keep a learning journal to capture insights from your experiences.
- Share your story. Your voice might be the encouragement someone else needs.

Remember: learning happens everywhere, in classrooms, communities, and conversations.

## 6.3 REFLECTION WORKSHEET: WHERE I AM, AND WHERE I WANT TO GO

---

*Take time to reflect on how far you've come and where you hope to grow next.*

Reflection Questions	My Notes
What am I most proud of from my leadership journey so far?	
What challenges have taught me the most?	
What new skills or knowledge would I like to develop next?	
How will I give back or mentor others in the coming year?	
Who will I lean on for support as I continue my journey?	

**PROMPT:**

“I walk forward in leadership not alone, but as part of a long line of women who led with love.”

## 6.4 FURTHER RESOURCES: CONTINUING YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

---

*A curated list of programs, networks, readings, and wellness supports to extend learning and connection beyond the toolkit.*

### 1. Leadership and Mentorship Programs

---

#### NATIONAL AND PAN-CANADIAN PROGRAMS

- **Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)** – Indigenous Women's Leadership programs, economic development, and mentorship initiatives. <https://nwac.ca>
- **AFOA Canada – Leadership and Governance Training** – Workshops and certificates focused on community leadership, governance, and financial management. <https://afoa.ca>
- **Cando – Indigenous Women in Community Leadership Program** – Professional and community leadership development opportunities. <https://www.edo.ca>

- **ECO Canada – National Mentorship Program**

Pairs early-career Indigenous professionals with experienced leaders in the environmental and sustainability sectors. <https://ecoacademy.ca/>

This program is especially helpful for Indigenous women entering or advancing in environmental, conservation, policy, or regulatory fields.

Learning through mentorship strengthens confidence, supports skill-building, and opens doors to leadership pathways.

#### REGIONAL OR COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES

- Check with local **Friendship Centres, Tribal Councils, and Indigenous Women's Resource Centres**. Many offer leadership circles, mentorship, and community-based training.
- **Northern and Rural Networks**: Look for women's councils, community education programs, or Elders' circles that mentor young leaders.



## 2. Education and Skill Development

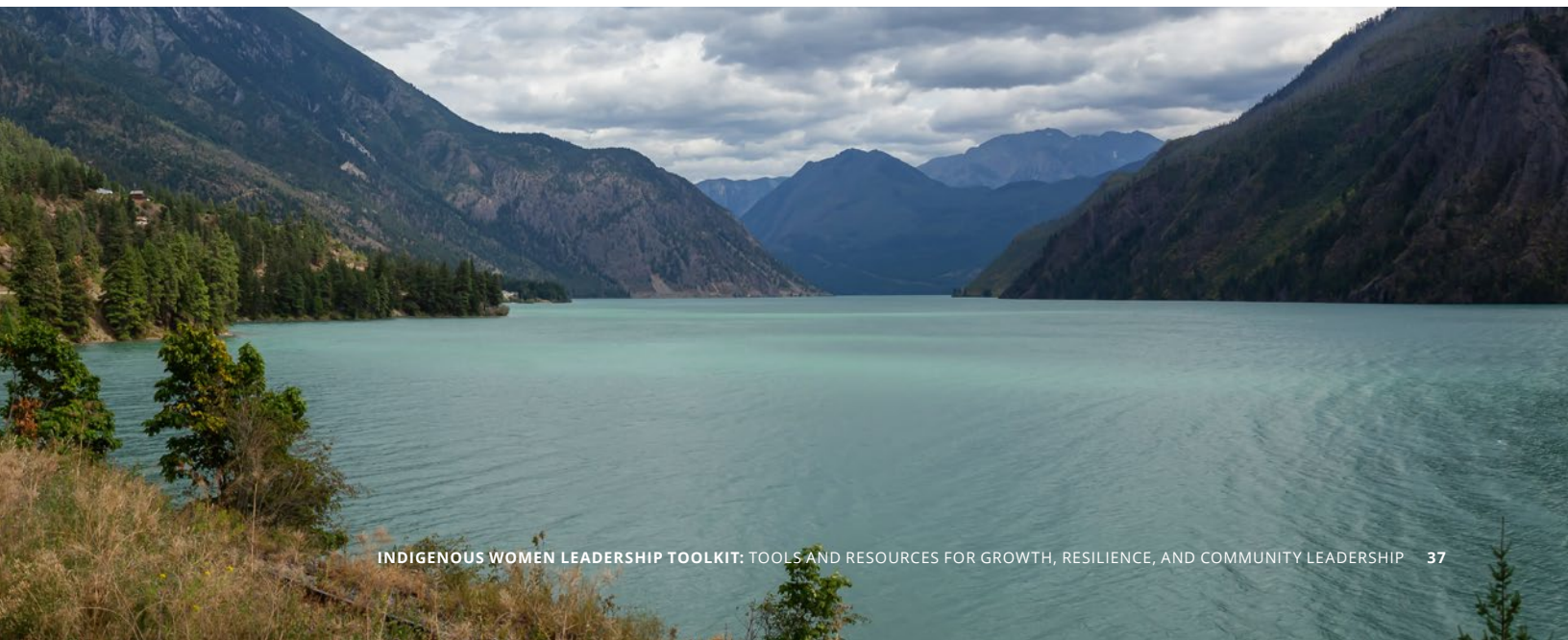
---

- **University of Alberta – Indigenous Canada (MOOC):** Free online course exploring Indigenous histories, perspectives, and contemporary issues. <https://www.coursera.org/learn/indigenous-canada>
- **eCampusOntario and Campus Manitoba:** Offer short, flexible micro-credentials in leadership, communication, and project management.
- **LinkedIn Learning & Coursera:** Look for short courses on conflict resolution, negotiation, mentoring skills, and communication for leaders.
- **Indspire – Bursaries and Awards:** Funding and scholarships for Indigenous learners pursuing education or leadership training. <https://indspire.ca>
- **ECO Canada — ECO Academy:** Offers short, accessible online courses designed to strengthen communication, teamwork, leadership, and workplace skills.

These courses are flexible and suitable for women in remote, rural, or northern communities. Recommended courses include:

- **Soft Skills Course Bundle:** Communication, teamwork, professionalism, and leadership foundations.
- **Goal Setting and Communicating Them Effectively:** Supporting clarity, confidence, and accountability.
- **Mentoring Others:** Practical skills to help you guide and uplift others.
- **Exploring Leadership Styles:** Understanding your leadership approach and how it shifts across contexts.
- **Self-Awareness in Leadership:** Building emotional intelligence, confidence, and grounded decision-making.

These courses complement the teachings in this toolkit and provide practical next steps for continued growth. <https://ecoacademy.ca/>



### 3. Community Networks and Mentorship

---

- **Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs Network (IWEN):** Connects Indigenous women in business and leadership.
- **Women of the Métis Nation:** Programs supporting personal development and advocacy.
- **Aboriginal Women's Professional Association (AWPA):** Leadership and mentorship circles across Canada.
- **ECO Canada Mentorship Programs:** For certified professionals in environment sector.

---

**TIP: MENTORSHIP DOESN'T HAVE TO BE FORMAL. REACH OUT TO A PEER, COLLEAGUE, OR ELDER WHOSE LEADERSHIP YOU ADMIRE. INVITE CONVERSATION AND LEARNING OVER TEA OR A PHONE CALL.**

---

### 4. Reading and Inspiration

---

#### BOOKS

- *Braiding Sweetgrass* – Robin Wall Kimmerer
- *Indigenous Women and Leadership: Roles, Pathways and Perspectives* – Edited by Carol Hopkins & Deborah Chansonneuve
- *Seven Fallen Feathers* – Tanya Talaga
- *The Right to Be Cold* – Sheila Watt-Cloutier
- *Talking to My Grandmother: Transmissions of Indigenous Knowledge, Life, and Story* – Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

#### PODCASTS AND MEDIA

- *Unreserved* (CBC) – Stories of Indigenous experiences and resilience.
- *Telling Our Twisted Histories* – Reclaiming Indigenous perspectives on common words.
- *Matriarch Movement* – Celebrating Indigenous women's voices and leadership.

#### FILMS & DOCUMENTARIES

- *Mary Two-Axe Earley: I Am Indian Again* – National Film Board of Canada
- *The Road Forward* – A musical documentary exploring activism and empowerment.
- *We Will Stand Up* – By Tasha Hubbard, about courage and advocacy in the face of injustice.

## 5. Self-Care and Wellness Supports

---

Leadership can be emotionally demanding. Grounding yourself through wellness and connection helps sustain you.

- **Hope for Wellness Help Line:** 1-855-242-3310 (24/7 culturally safe counselling)
- **First Nations Health Authority (FNHA):** Resources for holistic health and balance.
- **The Moose Hide Campaign:** A movement of men and boys working to end violence against women and children. <https://moosehidecampaign.ca>

## 6. Reflection Prompt

---

“One new connection I will make to support my continued growth is \_\_\_\_\_. One way I will share what I’ve learned is \_\_\_\_\_.”

### 6.5 CLOSING WORDS AND GRATITUDE

---

*This toolkit is more than a collection of exercises. It’s a journey of reflection, courage, and connection.*

By exploring your story, values, relationships, and capacity to empower others, you’ve taken meaningful steps in your leadership path.

Leadership is not about having all the answers; it’s about being willing to listen, learn, and act with integrity. As you continue, may you walk gently but with confidence, guided by your values, your ancestors, and your vision for the generations to come.

**FINAL REFLECTION:**

*“I already have what I need within me. My role now is to nurture it and to share it.”*



# APPENDICES

## A.1 MY LEADERSHIP ACTION PLAN

*Turning reflection into action for growth in work, community, and self.*

Use this template to set intentions for your leadership journey.

Think about where you want to grow whether it's in your workplace, your community, or within yourself. Revisit and update it every few months as your goals evolve.

Goal Area	My Next Step	Resources or Support Needed	Timeline	How I'll Celebrate or Reflect on Progress
<b>Mentorship</b>	Reach out to a younger colleague or community member to co-lead a project	Time for check-ins	1 month	Share tea and reflect on what we learned together
<b>Professional Growth</b>	Discuss a development opportunity or leadership training with my manager	Mentor support, HR resources	2 months	Treat myself to something symbolic of progress
<b>Learning</b>	Complete an online course on Indigenous governance or negotiation	Internet access, study time	3 months	Share key lessons with my team or community
<b>Cultural Connection</b>	Join or start a women's circle at work or in my community	Space, peer support	Ongoing	Mark progress at each season with gratitude
<b>Well-being</b>	Build rest and reflection time into my weekly routine	Boundaries, accountability partner	1 month	Celebrate by spending time outdoors

**TIP: GROWTH HAPPENS IN MANY PLACES — AT WORK, IN COMMUNITY, AND WITHIN YOURSELF. CELEBRATE EVERY STEP, NO MATTER HOW SMALL. LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT HOW FAST YOU MOVE, BUT **HOW TRUE YOU STAY TO YOUR VALUES.****

## A.2 CAREER GROWTH MAP

Use this visual tool to plan and track your professional development. It helps you focus on short-, medium-, and long-term growth while staying aligned with your values and purpose.

Timeline	Goal or Focus Area	Skills or Competencies to Develop	Actions / Steps to Take	Support or Resources Needed	Reflection or Outcome
Short-Term (3-6 months)					
Medium-Term (6-12 months)					
Long-Term (1-3 years)					

**TIP:**

- KEEP THIS MAP VISIBLE IN YOUR WORKSPACE OR JOURNAL.
- REVISIT IT EACH SEASON — GROWTH IS ONGOING, NOT LINEAR.
- WHEN YOU ACHIEVE A GOAL, NOTE **WHAT HELPED YOU SUCCEED AND WHO SUPPORTED YOU.**

### A.3 STRENGTHS AND VALUES INVENTORY

---

A quick exercise to help identify what you bring to both your community and workplace.

My Strengths	Where I See Them in Action	How I Will Use Them More

**REFLECT:**  
Which of these strengths do others recognize in me? Which ones do I use most naturally at work or in community roles?

## A.4 PREPARING FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION (WORKSHEET)

---

*Practicing clarity, courage, and respect in communication.*

This worksheet helps you prepare for conversations that may be uncomfortable but important. Use it before meetings, discussions with colleagues, or community dialogues where emotions or differing views may arise.

It can help you stay grounded, focused, and aligned with your values.

Reflection Question	My Notes
What is the purpose of this conversation?	
What outcome do I hope for?	
What emotions might come up - for me and others?	
Which values will guide how I speak and listen?	
What support or preparation do I need beforehand?	
How will I open and close the discussion respectfully?	

---

**TIP:**

- BEGIN FROM A PLACE OF EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING.
  - LISTEN FULLY BEFORE RESPONDING.
  - REVISIT THIS WORKSHEET AFTER THE CONVERSATION TO REFLECT ON **WHAT WORKED AND WHAT YOU MIGHT DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME.**
-

## A.5 MY MENTORING CIRCLE

---

*Mapping the people who guide, walk beside, and learn from you.*

Mentorship is a circle, not a ladder. This template helps you visualize your relationships of support — those who mentor you, those you collaborate with, and those you encourage or mentor in return.

Use it to strengthen connections and notice where you may want to give or receive more support.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Draw three concentric circles (or use the table below).
  - **Inner Circle:** People who guide or mentor you.
  - **Middle Circle:** Peers and collaborators who share knowledge with you.
  - **Outer Circle:** People you mentor, coach, or hope to uplift.
2. Reflect on the balance between these circles.
3. Choose one relationship from each circle to nurture this month.

Circle	Who is in My Circle	How They Support My Leadership	How I Will Strengthen This Connection
Inner (Mentors / Guides)			
Middle (Peers / Collaborators)			
Outer (People I Mentor / Support)			

### REFLECTION PROMPT:

“Leadership flows in all directions. When I share what I learn, I help the circle grow stronger.”

# A.6 REFLECTION LOG – MY GROWTH JOURNEY

*Capturing key lessons, milestones, and insights along the way.*

Growth happens gradually, through experiences, challenges, and conversations.

Use this log to record important moments, what you learned from them, and how they shaped your leadership. Revisit it each season to notice patterns, strengths, and new areas of growth.

Date / Period	Experience or Event	What I Learned	How It Strengthened My Leadership

**TIP: REFLECTION TURNS EXPERIENCE INTO WISDOM. EVEN SMALL STEPS OR SETBACKS CAN REVEAL VALUABLE LESSONS WHEN VIEWED WITH CURIOSITY AND COMPASSION.**

# A.7 SPEECH BUILDER WORKSHEET

---

*Creating a clear, confident message rooted in your story and purpose.*

Use this worksheet to prepare for any speaking moment - a meeting, presentation, community gathering, or workplace event.

It helps you organize your thoughts, ground your voice in your values, and build a message that feels natural and authentic.

## 1. Grounding and Purpose

---

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MY SPEECH OR MESSAGE?** (Why am I speaking? What do I hope to offer?)

---

---

---

---

---

**WHO AM I SPEAKING TO, AND WHAT DO THEY NEED TO HEAR?**

---

---

---

---

---

**WHICH VALUES OR TEACHINGS WILL GUIDE HOW I SPEAK?**

---

---

---

---

---

**2. Opening and Connection**

.....

**LAND OR COMMUNITY ACKNOWLEDGMENT** (Optional):

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**HOW WILL I INTRODUCE MYSELF?** (Name, community, role, purpose)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**WHAT WILL I SAY TO CREATE CONNECTION AT THE BEGINNING?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### 3. Key Messages and Storytelling

---

**KEY MESSAGE 1** (What is the most important thing I want people to remember?)

---

---

---

---

---

*Story, example, or teaching to support this message:*

---

---

---

---

---

**KEY MESSAGE 2**

---

---

---

---

---

*Story, example, or teaching to support this message:*

---

---

---

---

---

**KEY MESSAGE 3** (Optional)

---

---

---

---

---

*Story or insight to support this message:*

---

---

---

---

---

**4. Closing and Call to Action**

.....  
**CLOSING REFLECTION, TEACHING, OR GRATITUDE STATEMENT:**

---

---

---

---

---

**CALL TO ACTION** (What do I want people to think/feel/do?):

---

---

---

---

---

## 5. Speaking Preparedness

---

**ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER WHILE SPEAKING:**

---

---

---

---

---

**HOW I WILL GROUND MYSELF BEFORE I BEGIN:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TIP: YOU DON'T NEED TO FILL EVERY LINE.** A POWERFUL SPEECH CAN COME FROM ONE STRONG STORY, ONE CLEAR MESSAGE, AND ONE GROUNDED MOMENT.

---



## CONTACT US

...

ECO Canada  
Suite 400, 105 12 Avenue SE  
Calgary, Alberta T2G 1A1

P : 1-800-890-1924

E : [research@eco.ca](mailto:research@eco.ca)

W : [eco.ca](http://eco.ca)

We are located in the heart of Calgary, Alberta, and have representatives located in Vancouver, Edmonton, Windsor and Halifax.

Visit our website or contact us for more information.



@ecocanada

Photo credit: Page 28 by Joseph Corl on Unsplash

This project has been funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

Canada