

Volume

12

ONTARIO NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

BUILDING ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP



The Mentorship Program

ONTARIO NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Introduction to The Mentorship Program

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The Ontario Native Women's Association

Building Aboriginal Women's Leadership (BAWL) Program

About the ONWA Mentorship Program

“Support, guidance, life-long friendship.”

Participating in the ONWA Mentorship Program is a great way for Aboriginal women to share skills, knowledge, experience and learning opportunities simply by helping and encouraging one other.

The role of a mentor is a fulfilling experience – as you provide advice, support and guidance you will gain personal satisfaction in sharing your own experiences to help and guide others. You will gain personal insight while working with a mentee and you can learn from your mentee while challenging and making positive contributions to her personal and professional development as she learns from you.

As a mentee you will benefit from the knowledge and wisdom of your mentor, learning and achieving the expectations and standards of the mentor's personal and professional experience and knowledge.

“I wasn't sure I was mentor / leadership material, but I realize that all of us face challenges, none of us are perfect and we are all on a journey. Being a mentor has given me more confidence in my own abilities.”

What is a Mentorship Program?

Everything starts with an idea. A story – a resume – a song – A DREAM.

The design of ONWA's Mentorship Program started with the idea that Aboriginal women, working together supporting one another to create relationships and strengthen leadership within the locals, would involve not only reaching out to our sisters, but also working to strengthen our communities by building networks, partnerships and assisting each other in personal and professional growth.

Connecting ONWA's members with women who share similar professional interests and backgrounds, The ONWA Mentorship Program is an outlet for Aboriginal women to engage in the sharing of information, experiences and network connections. Everyone has knowledge to share and everyone can learn something new. Even women who have climbed to the highest rungs of the power ladder require forums for talking shop, analyzing their organizations, seeking new resources, opportunities and feedback.

ONWA's Mentorship Program is open to all members of ONWA Locals and Aboriginal Women in Ontario communities from professionals of all career levels to students. The objectives of the Mentorship Program are to engage, inform and energize Aboriginal women through one-on-one professional relationships.



Simply put, a Mentorship is when someone who has greater experience in a specific area instructs and provides feedback or coaches someone with lesser experience in that same area. It is about people learning from each other and applying the learning. Mentorship is a nurturing and trusting process providing the opportunity for more experienced individuals to share their professional knowledge and expertise with others who are less experienced. A mentor is someone who helps individuals to reach their potential by guiding and encouraging them to excel and grow.

A mentor inspires, counsels and encourages the mentee in developing their vision and dreams for the future and skills needed to advance on a career path. A mentee gains insight and access to new skills and knowledge through the mentor's example and support.

“Improved my self-esteem. Validated my role as both professional and Aboriginal leader.”

What does a Mentor do?

A mentor provides support by listening and trying to understand the issues and questions; helps with accessing information and resources, and provides vision for the future by being a positive role model.

There are different types and levels of mentoring:

Coach – you show another person how to do a specific task or activity

Facilitator – you create opportunities for another to learn or use new skills

Counsellor – you help the mentee explore the consequences of their action

Networker – you refer the mentee on to others who can help them

For example, you could share the steps you used in the design and building of a successful program with an individual from another ONWA Local.

Or,

You could team up with another individual on a joint proposal writing venture - you could prepare the budget of a proposal and the other woman writes the report.

Or,

You could make suggestions, provide guidance and edit a mentee's proposal writing.

Or,

You could provide administrative support to another ONWA Local's program or ED for a knowledge exchange, such as how a program is run or helpful hints on how to gain political expertise.

The Benefits to a Mentor

"Being a mentor has been a very meaningful experience for me."

- Sharing the wisdom and experience.
- Learning from the expanded view of experience.
- Giving back to a community
- Assist with the development and growth of a Aboriginal women
- Recognition by Mentee for Mentor's academic and professional achievements.
- Enhancing with the growth and development of a Aboriginal organizations



Expectations of a Mentor

- Be proactive, not reactive
- Schedule sufficient time to mentor
- Be a positive role model
- Be a sounding board, provide honest opinions
- Talk **and** listen, but **don't** be a psychologist. There is a professional line in every mentorship relationship that should never be crossed
- Make sure you are accessible and respond within a reasonable amount of time
- Be there to guide and provide support – NOT to complete the tasks
- Be approachable and available
- Devote time and effort to the relationship

Be a professional and be a person. Sure, the point of this relationship is professional development, but sharing personal tidbits gives your colleague a better snapshot of you. Plus, offering appropriate personal information makes the environment more open.

Be honest. Great mentors and mentees have several traits in common, but the most important is self-awareness. Be clear about your professional strengths and weaknesses, your career goals, and how these tie into your overall goals for the mentorship experience. This is a give-and-take relationship, so be upfront about what you can give and what you hope to take away.

Be proactive. Plan weekly or monthly meetings, keeping in mind holidays and work deadlines/obligations. The more frequent and regular your meetings, the more comfortable you'll feel contacting each other.

Set realistic expectations. This is very important at the outset of the relationship. At the first meeting clarify what your respective expectations are and come to an agreement. Make sure you agree on the frequency and length of meetings, the time of day, confidentiality and setting of the agenda.

Respect communication styles. For example some people are blunt and outspoken, while others are quiet and shy. Some people need time to think about issues before responding, while others blurt out answers immediately. Determine what kind of communication style you each have and accommodate each other.

Leave room for spontaneity. Having an agenda as a guide is a good idea, but leave time for discussions to take an unexpected turn.

Fulfill your commitments. If you are working together across geographical distances, it can be easy to cancel an appointment because you don't have to see the person. Show how seriously you take your role as mentor and / or mentee by being on time and being fully prepared for each appointment. IF you have to cancel – and this should only be done rarely – explain why you are cancelling and offer dates to reschedule.

Interactive conversations versus same-time conversations. Be prepared to use email or forms of computer messaging to augment telephone communications. Long distance mentoring relationships can work as long as both parties are ready, willing and able to work at building trust, think of creative means of connection and show flexibility in planning and above all, show commitment.

“I feel so glad for having a mentor who knew how to listen and understand me, who had the time and experience to give me advice that really worked in my life.”

What Does a Mentee Do?

A mentee is interested in professional and personal growth, is willing to learn, and is receptive to feedback and coaching.

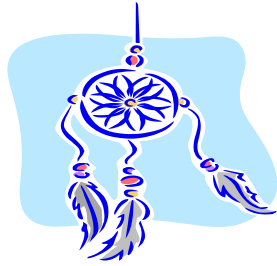
Benefits to a Mentee

- Guidance in proper involvement in educational and research activities, facilitating advancement to employment in an appropriate job environment.
- Feed back on Academic progress.
- Acknowledgement of mentee's unique abilities and potential for improvement.
- Support and experienced guidance in self managing career development.
- Increased network of contacts and resources for support.

Expectations of a Mentee

- Be willing to ask for help and be open to accepting feedback
- Recognize and respect your Mentor's experience and knowledge
- Work around your Mentor's schedule and be respectful of your mentor's time
- Take responsibility for your own learning
- Accept criticism as constructive
- Make reasonable requests of your Mentor
- Maintain a positive goal oriented attitude
- Be open and honest with your Mentor
- Understand yourself and your potential areas of growth

"I thought it was really great to talk with someone who was once in my shoes, going through the same thing I am now..."



What Makes the Mentor / Mentee Relationship Work Well

- **Nibwaakaawin—Wisdom:** To cherish knowledge is to know Wisdom. Wisdom is given by the Creator to be used for the good of the people. This word expresses not only "wisdom," but also means "prudence," or "intelligence." in addition to "wisdom," this word can also mean "intelligence" or "knowledge."
- **Zaagi'idiwin—Love:** To know Love is to know peace. Love must be unconditional. When people are weak they need love the most.
- **Minaadendamowin—Respect:** To honour all creation is to have Respect. All of creation should be treated with respect. You must give respect if you wish to be respected.
- **Aakode'ewin—Bravery:** Bravery is to face the foe with integrity. This word literally means "state of having a fearless heart." To do what is right even when the consequences are unpleasant.
- **Gwayakwaadiziwin—Honesty:** Honesty in facing a situation is to be brave. Always be honest in word and action. Be honest first with yourself, and you will more easily be able to be honest with others.
- **Dabaadendiziwin—Humility:** Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation. "compassion." You are equal to others, but you are not better. "calmness," "meekness," "gentility" or "patience."
- **Debwewin—Truth:** Truth is to know all of these things. Speak the truth. Do not deceive yourself or others.

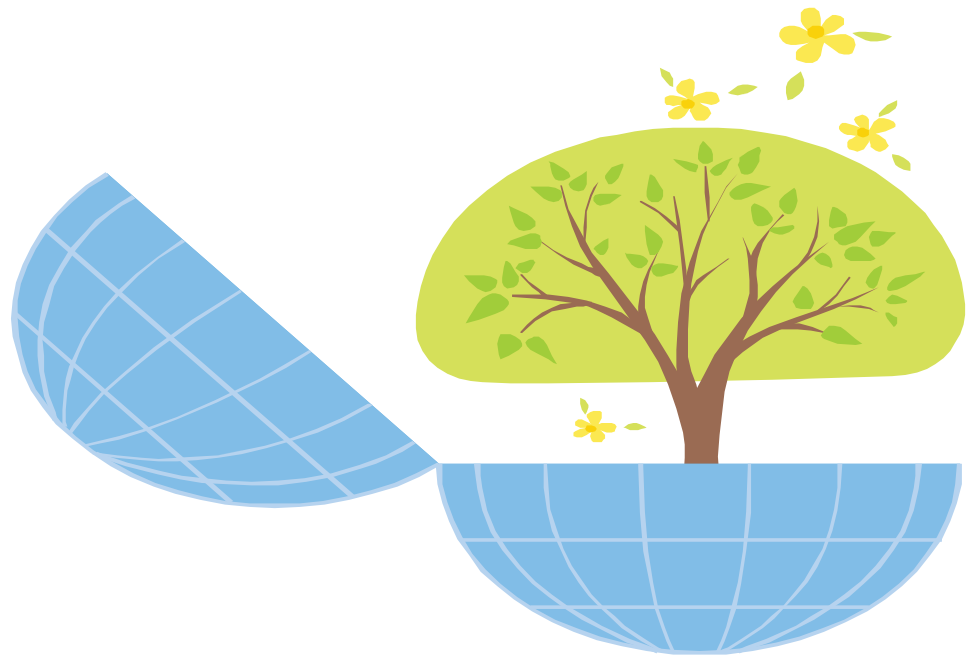
The Mentor and Mentee Communicating and Working Together

You can maintain contact through:

- E-mail and/or telephone at agreed upon intervals
- ONWA face book account
- Meeting yearly at ONWA AGA
- Face-to- face / one-on-one

Powerful, wonderful things can happen when a respected, experienced Aboriginal woman show an interest in and goes out of her way to mentor and help another Aboriginal woman, especially when that woman is open to being influenced and helped.

Mentoring can open up a whole new world of opportunities, inspiring courage to meet challenges and successes in professional and personal lives of the mentee and provide



(Sample) **PERSONAL PLAN FOR SUCCESS**

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Mentoring Goals and Objectives:

Developmental Need _____ _____	Beginning Date	Projected Ending Date
Developmental Activity:		
a.		
b.		
c.		

GUIDELINES / SUGGESTIONS ON GETTING STARTED

TALK ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS / UNDERSTANDING OF THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

- You both need to have a realistic understanding of what you both expect to get out of the Mentor and Mentee relationship.
- You both need to have a realistic agreement of how you are going to meet the expectations you have of the Mentor and Mentee relationship.
- This relationship is a partnership – the Mentor is not telling the Mentee what to do, but rather the Mentor is a partner who is sharing their knowledge.
- The Mentee needs to know what she needs and let the Mentor know.
- The Mentor / Mentee relationship is one of mutual learning and experience.

THE MENTOR SHARES WHY THEY ARE MENTORING AND WHAT THEY HOPE TO GET OUT OF MENTORING

- The Mentor can talk about what they are looking forward to in this process and what outcomes they would like to see.

THE MENTEE SHARES WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO GET OUT OF THE MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIP

THE MENTOR ASKS THE MENTEE SOME QUESTIONS TO GET TO KNOW THEM AND WHAT IT IS THEY WANT (Some sample questions follow)

- Tell me about your job. How long have you been there and what do you do?
- What do you like about your job? What don't you like about your job?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What are the areas you would like to develop skills in or learn more about?
- Where do you want to be in one year? In three years? In five years? (Ask for activities they would like to be doing – not just a job or program title)
- What is your dream?
- What kind of hobbies do you have?

MENTOR AND MENTEE DISCUSS / ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT SUPPORT IN THE RELATIONSHIP

- What kind of support is required? (e.g., Gently encouraged? Forcefully pushed? Challenged? Is a lot of acknowledgement/interaction required?)
- How can I, the Mentor best support you, the Mentee?
- Make a commitment to the relationship and keep agreements you make with each other
- Tell the truth... for example tell the Mentee what she is strong is and where you see her selling herself short
- Being honest and direct with each other – ask each other’s permission to be direct with each other, for example, if something is not working or is something is bothering either of you
- Challenge each other

Both the Mentor and the Mentee should talk about how important **CONFIDENTIALITY** is and discuss what, if anything, is to be kept confidential

MENTOR AND MENTEE DECIDE ON THE LOGISTICS AND STRUCTURES THAT THEY WANT TO USE TO SUPPORT THEIR RELATIONSHIP

Set up regular meeting times - Length of meetings - Frequency of meetings – Where / how meetings are held

Who initiates the meeting

How will you structure your meetings or use your time together?

Any forms or structures you want to use

Plan for a **Check-up** to determine what is and isn’t working in the relationship and discuss how well the plan is going



The BAWL Mentorship Program Application Process

Make the commitment to be a mentor or mentee. In either role, you'll learn more about yourself and build a stronger community.

Remember that mentorship is a partnership that must meet the needs of both participants to be successful. Every Mentor is an individual who has offered to volunteer their personal time to help mentee develop themselves. The amount of time and the type of activities that each mentor is able and willing to contribute will vary from person to person. Be sure that you are clear what your own expectations of the program are and what roles (s) you expect the Mentee to undertake so that you can both come to an agreement on how your particular partnership will look.

The Mentor/Mentee applications are attached, can be downloaded from the Ontario Native Women's Association Facebook Group or sent via e-mail, if requested.

Complete a Biography to submit along with your application

Complete the appropriate application and return it to ONWA BAWL Program to:

Shelley Knott - sknott@onwa-tbay.on or **Tracy Gagnon** - tgagnon@onwa-tbay.ca

Please call (807) 623-3442 or toll-free at 1-800-667-0816 if you have any questions

ONWA BAWL Program will contact you via e-mail upon receipt of your application and begin searching for the perfect match based on your professional background and career goals. While ONWA will strive to connect you with someone within your geographic region, this may not always be possible. In these cases, mentors and mentees are encouraged to connect via phone and e-mail. All mentors and mentees are encouraged to meet via the Ontario Native Women's Association Facebook Group and at the ONWA Annual General Meeting.

Once a match is found, ONWA BAWL Program will introduce mentors and mentees via e-mail and teleconferences will be set up between all parties to develop the goals and objectives and the development of the mentoring partnership agreement, once a match is made and agreed upon, how the relationship works is completely up to the mentors and mentees. ONWA BAWL Program will

provide ideas and tips for both mentors and mentees, stressing that commitment, respect, and open communication are the main ingredients to a successful mentorship relationship.

The BAWL program will evaluate the mentorship program, through the success of sharing information, developing partnerships and growth of leadership development. There will not be an evaluation of the personal goals and objectives of the mentorship relationship. Any evaluation of the mentorship relationship is left completely in the hands of the mentor and mentee.



