

# OUR FUTURE YOUR PATH

Building Diversity for a Brighter Future in Political Leadership

## DO WE NEED MORE WOMEN IN POLITICS?

**Wednesday, May 19, 2021 - Vancouver, BC - *for immediate release***

**New Westminster and District Labour Council (NWDLC) partners with 100% Indigenous-owned social impact organization, PowHERhouse, to create opportunity for women and non-binary people to succeed in a political career.**

It took until November 2015 for a Canadian prime minister to form the first-gender balanced cabinet in Canadian history. This is significant because, on a substantive level, multiple international research studies comprehensively demonstrate that women's participation in politics results in tangible gains for democracy. Yet, politics remains a hostile environment for women in Canada.

Women are not a minority; they are half of Canada's population. For our political institutions to be democratically legitimate and responsive to all citizens, they must be inclusive of the whole population. Our Canadian political structures require a greater representation of women, non-binary people, and visible minorities at the municipal, provisional and federal levels to be legitimately representative.

There is strong evidence stating that women elected to office are more likely to focus on child welfare, reproductive rights, minority rights, education, health and senior care than their male counterparts. All these issues form the bedrock of an equitable and successfully run democratic society.

Furthermore, women tend to employ a democratic and collaborative leadership approach than men's more autocratic style. Therefore, they are more successful at building coalitions and reaching consensus, making them more effective at getting things done.



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The Honourable Katrina Chen speaks up for diversity and the need for women in politics during the NWDLC virtual FireCircle Gathering May 29, 2021.

**"I HOPE WE WILL BECOME A MORE COMPASSIONATE NATION, AND THE LESSON WILL BE TO VALUE THE STRENGTH OF OUR DIVERSITY AND DEMOCRACY."**

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The Honourable Katrina Chen, Minister of State for Child Care, BC and MLA for Burnaby-Lougheed is proud to be one of 29 women of 57 NDP members of the Legislative Assembly announced November 24, 2020. It is the first provincial governing caucus in Canadian history to have a majority of women. She has every reason to be proud. Nobody understands better how important it is that women participate in politics than Minister Chen, a mother of a young son and an immigrant to Canada.

*"My political goal is to contribute to a more equitable society by investing in the vital services we need and impacting policies. I know now that my political participation represents an intersection of gender and race and serves democracy. It is this knowledge that gives me the confidence and fortitude to be a woman in politics", says Minister Chen.*

The Honourable Melanie Mark, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, is the first First Nations woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. She is also the first Indigenous woman to serve in the Cabinet of British Columbia.

*"It is my honour to be the first. However, reconciliation in action means I can't be the last. Our political institutions need to reflect our neighbours' diversity and lived experience to inform progressive, rights-based public policy. I believe we have a responsibility to inspire, support and empower future generations to have the courage to step forward and put their name on the ballot. We have to commit to doing the heavy lifting and paddle together to ensure that they're elected and supported to do the work at the decision-making tables", says Mark.*

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**POLITICS MATTERS. REPRESENTATION MATTERS. DIVERSITY OF OPINION MATTERS.**

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Councillor Trish Mandewo shares how experiencing injustices as an intersectional woman empowered her to succeed in business and politics during the NWDLC virtual FireCircle Gathering May 29, 2021.

**"IT BEGINS WITH YOUR PURPOSE, YOUR DESIRE AND YOUR PASSION. THE REST WILL FOLLOW."**

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Since becoming a Coquitlam City Councillor, Trish Mandewo says:

*"The more diversity there is in all three levels of government, the more colourful the ideas and solutions will become." Mandewo speaks as an intersectional woman who is no stranger to systemic prejudices against women, Indigenous people and visible minorities.*

The NWDLC has partnered with the PowHERhouse Impact Media Group to address the lack of diversity in politics. Recognizing that successful leaders have benefitted from being championed and supported in political careers, they have created a 'clear path' for future political champions. *"The vision of this initiative is to create a gender-aware lens to build better communities. The goal is to provide a clear path for women, and non-binary people, to pursue positive and powerful political careers"*, says Coleen Jones, president, NWDLC. "The program will produce a supportive network of diverse and exceptional leaders for political office."

**Our Future Your Path** is a preparatory program designed for women and non-binary people interested in running a political campaign in the next one to five years.

*"Like never before, we need relevant, authentic, and forward-thinking women to step into the role of political leadership. And, there is no need to do this alone"*, says Christina Benty, former two-term Mayor of the Town of Golden, BC.

Together with PowHERhouse founder Charlene SanJenko, she worked to create the strategy and program curriculum. SanJenko and Benty co-facilitate the 10-week cohort experience starting June 16, 2021.

**Preparing for a Better Future with Greater Diversity in Political Leadership** launches with a virtual morning gathering on Saturday, May 29. A panel of guest speakers will champion the FireCircle. They are the Honourable Melanie Mark, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, and MLA Vancouver-Mount Pleasant; the Honourable Katrina Chen, Minister of State for Child Care and MLA Burnaby-Lougheed; and Coquitlam City Councillor, Trish Mandewo.

**For more information for women and non-binary people interested in taking their first step into politics, go to the link to find out more:** [www.powherhouse.com/nwdlc-firecircle-may-29/](http://www.powherhouse.com/nwdlc-firecircle-may-29/)

**For more information on the interactive 10-week cohort experience dedicated to building diversity for a brighter future in political leadership, go to** [www.powherhouse.com/nwdlc-first-steps/](http://www.powherhouse.com/nwdlc-first-steps/)

The **New Westminster & District Labour Council (NWDLC)** was formed in 1966 to give a greater voice at the local level for the unions and their members in the Lower Mainland. Over the years, the NWDLC has realized notable success in increasing leadership diversity in the 14 communities in their region.

PowHERhouse—founded by Charlene SanJenko in 2013 with roots dated back to 2000—is an Indigenous-owned house of leaders for global impact who utilize the influence of media for the impact and beat of their drum. As an organization they:

- Partner with conscious organizations ready to weave their efforts for greater impact
- Create and leverage the re-imagined power of media to change the narrative for HER: Human Expansion Realized.
- Prepare whole leaders who are ready for the fire of our time.

***"When we deliberately weave our attention, energy and collective efforts, we begin to braid for a better tomorrow."***

For more information or interviews with spokespeople:

- Charlene SanJenko, founder PowHERhouse
- Janet Andrews, Secretary Treasurer, NWDLC, and
- Christina Benty, former two-term Mayor of the Town of Golden, BC

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