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WELCOME TO THE MENTORSHIP NETWORK

This mentorship network was created to support women and gender diverse individuals in building meaningful relationships, developing leadership confidence, strengthening networks, and navigating growth within the nonprofit and community sector.

We recognize that leadership looks different for different people. There is no single way to lead, communicate, build relationships, or contribute to community. We celebrate diverse leadership styles, lived experiences, identities, and ways of thinking.

This is more than a mentorship program.

It is:

- a leadership community,
- a support system,
- a place to learn,
- a space to reflect,
- and an opportunity to grow together.

We recognize that women and gender diverse folks often navigate:

- systemic barriers,
- underrepresentation,
- burnout,
- invisibility,
- emotional labour,
- and inequitable access to leadership opportunities.

This network aims to create space for:

- authentic leadership,
- shared learning,
- mutual support,
- confidence-building,
- and sustainable growth.

You belong here exactly as you are.

ABOUT THE MENTORSHIP NETWORK

Program Goals

This mentorship network aims to:

- Build leadership confidence
 - Strengthen sector connections
 - Support career growth and exploration
 - Reduce isolation in nonprofit/community work
 - Create inclusive leadership pathways
 - Foster belonging and peer support
 - Encourage sustainability and wellness in leadership
-

COMMUNITY VALUES

Our Shared Commitments

We value:

- Respect
 - Inclusion
 - Curiosity
 - Compassion
 - Accessibility
 - Collaboration
 - Authenticity
 - Accountability
 - Community care
-

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

We agree to:

- Respect lived experiences and communication differences
- Assume different communication styles are equally valid
- Ask before making assumptions about participation or engagement
- Value different ways of processing information and contributing

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- Maintain confidentiality
 - Share space and airtime
 - Listen with curiosity
 - Avoid assumptions
 - Use inclusive language
 - Honour boundaries
 - Participate with care and consent
 - Support learning and growth
-

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY & INCLUSION

Creating Safe and Supportive Spaces

This mentorship network is committed to:

- Gender-inclusive practices
- Accessibility and accommodation
- Trauma-informed facilitation
- Respecting identities and lived experiences
- Reducing barriers to participation
- Supporting authentic expression

Helpful Practices

- Pronoun sharing is always optional
 - Participants are encouraged to participate in ways that feel comfortable
 - We prioritize connection over perfection
 - There is no “right” way to lead
-

Neurodiversity & Different Ways of Working

We Recognize That Participants May:

- Process information differently
- Communicate differently
- Prefer written vs verbal communication
- Need additional time
- Experience sensory sensitivities
- Thrive with structure and predictability

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- Prefer direct communication
- Experience social anxiety
- Have different approaches to relationship-building

Our Commitment

We believe there is no single “right” way to communicate, lead, learn, network, or participate.

Participants are encouraged to:

- Ask for accommodations
- Participate in ways that work best for them
- Take breaks when needed
- Use cameras on or off
- Request written follow-up materials
- Communicate their needs and preferences

Neurodivergent ways of thinking and leading are valued strengths within this network.

SECTION 1 — MENTOR HANDBOOK

THE ROLE OF A MENTOR

Mentors Help To:

- Encourage reflection and growth
 - Share experiences and perspectives
 - Listen actively and empathetically
 - Support confidence-building
 - Expand networks and opportunities
 - Create space for honest conversations
 - Support leadership exploration
-

WHAT MENTORS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR

Mentors are not expected to:

- Solve every challenge
 - Act as therapists or counsellors
 - Be available at all times
 - Make decisions for mentees
 - Have all the answers
 - Carry emotional labour alone
-

MENTORSHIP BEST PRACTICES

Helpful Mentor Skills

Active Listening

- Listen without interrupting
- Reflect back what you hear
- Ask open-ended questions
- Avoid jumping into “fix-it mode”

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Encouragement

- Celebrate growth and effort
- Validate experiences
- Support confidence-building

Curiosity

- Avoid assumptions
- Ask thoughtful questions
- Remain open to learning

Accountability

- Follow through on commitments
- Respect time and boundaries
- Communicate clearly

Supporting Neurodiversity Mentees

Understanding Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity recognizes that people think, learn, communicate, process information, and experience the world in different ways.

Your mentee may identify as:

- Autistic
- ADHD
- Dyslexic
- Dyspraxia
- Having a learning disability
- Having another neurodivergent experience
- Or they may choose not to disclose a diagnosis or identity

The goal is not to become an expert in neurodiversity. The goal is to create a mentorship relationship that is flexible, respectful, and responsive to individual needs.

Mentors are encouraged to:

- Avoid interpreting communication differences as lack of interest

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- Ask about communication preferences
- Provide clarity around expectations
- Allow time for processing and reflection
- Avoid pressure to respond immediately
- Recognize strengths-based approaches to leadership

Ask About Preferences

Rather than making assumptions, ask:

- What communication style works best for you??
- Do you prefer verbal or written information?
- What helps you feel comfortable in meetings?
- How do you like to receive feedback?
- Is there anything that would make our meetings more accessible?

Be Flexible

Different mentees may benefit from:

- Written agendas
- Advance discussion topics
- Visual supports
- Additional processing time
- Shorter or more structured meetings
- Follow-up notes after meetings

Value Different Communication Styles

Some people may:

- Need time to think before responding
- Prefer direct communication
- Avoid small talk
- Communicate more comfortably in writing
- Process emotions differently

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These are communication differences—not deficits.

Focus on Strengths

Many neurodivergent individuals bring strengths such as:

- Creativity
- Innovation
- Problem-solving
- Deep focus
- Pattern recognition
- Empathy
- Systems thinking
- Persistence
- Attention to detail

Mentors can help mentees recognize and leverage these strengths.

Helpful Mentor Practices

- Clarify expectations
 - Avoid vague instructions
 - Allow time for reflection
 - Check for understanding without putting people on the spot
 - Respect sensory and energy needs
 - Follow up with written summaries when helpful
 - Celebrate different leadership styles
-

Reflection for Mentors

Consider:

- What assumptions do I make about communication?
- What does "professionalism" mean to me?
- How might my expectations unintentionally favour neurotypical styles?
- How can I create more flexibility and choice in this relationship?

SAMPLE MENTOR MEETING STRUCTURE

Part	Suggested Time
Check-In	10 min
Main Discussion Topic	25 min
Goal Reflection	10 min
Wrap-Up & Next Steps	5 min

MENTOR CONVERSATION STARTERS

Building Connection

- What inspired you to join this mentorship network?
 - What kind of support feels most valuable to you?
 - What are you hoping to gain from this experience?
 - What environments help you thrive?
 - What conditions help you do your best thinking?
 - What communication approaches work best for you?
 - What can others do to support your success?
-

Leadership & Career Growth

- What leadership goals are you exploring?
 - What parts of your work energize you?
 - What leadership strengths do you bring?
 - What opportunities would you like to pursue?
-

Confidence & Visibility

- What situations make you feel most confident?
 - What situations make you shrink yourself?
 - What support helps you feel empowered?
 - How can you advocate for yourself more confidently?
-

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Wellness & Sustainability

- What helps you recharge?
 - How are you balancing work and wellbeing?
 - What boundaries feel important right now?
 - What signs tell you you may be approaching burnout?
-

DIFFICULT CONVERSATION SUPPORT

Helpful Responses

- “That sounds really challenging.”
 - “What support would feel helpful right now?”
 - “Would you like advice, brainstorming, or simply space to process?”
 - “You don’t need to have everything figured out.”
-

Things to Avoid

- Interrupting
 - Minimizing experiences
 - Over-advising
 - Comparing struggles
 - Taking over the conversation
 - Assuming shared experiences
-

MENTOR REFLECTION

After Each Meeting

Reflect:

- What went well?
- What did I learn?
- Did I create space for honesty and reflection?
- Did I listen more than I spoke?
- What follow-up may be helpful?
-

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Notes:

Supporting Neurodiverse Mentees

Reflecting on My Mentorship Practice

Understanding Assumptions

Consider:

- What assumptions do I make about communication styles?
- What assumptions do I make about professionalism?
- What assumptions do I make about leadership?
- How might these assumptions influence my mentoring approach?

Reflection Notes

Creating Inclusive Mentorship Relationships

Reflect:

How do I respond when someone communicates differently than I do?
How comfortable am I adapting my mentoring style?
What can I do to create more flexibility and choice within the mentorship relationship?
How can I ensure my mentee feels valued and respected?

Reflection Notes

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Recognizing Strengths

Think about a time when someone approached a challenge differently than you expected.

- What strengths did they bring?
- What did you learn from their perspective?
- How did their approach contribute to success?

Reflection Notes

Supporting Different Ways of Learning and Leading

As a mentor, I can:

- Provide clear expectations
- Offer written follow-up when helpful
- Encourage questions
- Allow time for processing and reflection
- Adapt communication approaches
- Focus on strengths rather than deficits
- Respect individual preferences and boundaries
- Celebrate different leadership styles

Which of these practices would I like to strengthen?

For mentors who hold leadership positions:

Consider:

- Do our workplaces value only one communication style?
- Are there barriers that may unintentionally exclude neurodivergent individuals?
- How can I use my influence to create more inclusive environments?

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- What does leadership look like when we value different ways of thinking, learning, communicating, and contributing?

What if leadership excellence can look different from what I was taught?

MENTOR SELF-CARE

Supporting Others Sustainably

Mentorship can involve emotional labour.

Remember:

- You are not responsible for fixing everything
- Boundaries are healthy
- You can refer participants to additional supports
- Rest and sustainability matter

Self-Care Reflection

What helps you feel grounded and supported?

SECTION 2 — MENTEE WORKBOOK

WELCOME TO THE MENTEE EXPERIENCE

You do not need to be “perfect” or have everything figured out to belong here.

This mentorship network exists to support:

- your growth,
 - your confidence,
 - your leadership journey,
 - your wellbeing,
 - and your connections.
-

WHAT MENTORSHIP CAN OFFER

Mentorship can help you:

- Build confidence
 - Explore leadership pathways
 - Navigate workplace challenges
 - Strengthen networking skills
 - Gain perspective and support
 - Feel less isolated
 - Build community and connection
-

HOW TO BE AN ENGAGED MENTEE

Helpful Practices

- Attend meetings consistently
- Prepare questions and topics
- Be open and honest
- Reflect on your goals
- Follow through on action items
- Respect boundaries and time
- Ask for support when needed

PREPARING FOR MENTORSHIP MEETINGS

Before Each Meeting Ask Yourself:

- What support do I need right now?
 - What challenges am I navigating?
 - What goals am I working toward?
 - What questions do I want to ask?
 - What recent wins can I celebrate?
-

MENTEE CONVERSATION STARTERS

Leadership & Career Growth

- How do I grow my confidence as a leader?
 - What leadership strengths do others see in me?
 - How can I navigate difficult workplace dynamics?
 - What skills should I focus on developing?
-

Networking & Visibility

- How do I build authentic professional relationships?
 - How do I advocate for myself professionally?
 - How do I feel more comfortable networking?
 - How do I increase my visibility in the sector?
-

Wellness & Sustainability

- How do I avoid burnout?
 - How do I set healthier boundaries?
 - How do I balance ambition and wellbeing?
 - What sustainable leadership practices can I build?
-

GOAL-SETTING WORKBOOK

MY LEADERSHIP GOALS

Short-Term Goals

Goal	Timeline	Support Needed	Action Steps	Progress Check

Long-Term Goals

Goal	Timeline	Support Needed	Action Steps	Progress Check

CONFIDENCE BUILDING ACTIVITY

Leadership Strength Mapping: My Leadership Strengths and Leadership Style

Leadership does not look the same for everyone. Different ways of thinking, learning, communicating, and problem-solving can be valuable leadership strengths.

Reflection

When do I do my best thinking?

- Alone
 - Through conversation
 - Through writing
 - During focused work
 - While brainstorming with others
 - Other: _____
-

What environments help me thrive?

- Clear expectations
 - Structured meetings
 - Flexible schedules
 - Quiet spaces
 - Collaborative environments
 - Visual information
 - Time to reflect before responding
 - Other: _____
-

My Leadership Strengths

Which strengths describe you?

- Creativity
- Innovation
- Strategic Thinking
- Deep Focus

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- Problem Solving
 - Pattern Recognition
 - Attention to Detail
 - Relationship Building
 - Empathy
 - Advocacy
 - Curiosity
 - Persistence
 - Systems Thinking
 - Adaptability
 - Community Building
 - Other: _____
-

My Top 5 Leadership Strengths

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
-

My Unique Leadership Contributions

People often come to me for:

I make a difference by:

I feel most confident when:

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Strengths Others Often See in Me

Leadership Reflection

Complete the sentence:

The leadership strengths I bring to my team, community, and sector are:

Areas I Want to Grow

IMPOSTER SYNDROME REFLECTION

Reflection Questions

- When do I doubt myself most?
- What accomplishments am I minimizing?
- What would I say to a friend experiencing self-doubt?
- What evidence exists that I am capable and growing?
- Have I ever felt pressure to:
 - Mask who I am?
 - Hide communication differences?
 - Fit into a leadership style that doesn't feel authentic?
 - Change myself to belong?
- What would authentic leadership look like for me?

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Notes

NETWORKING TOOL: BUILDING MY SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM

People Who Support My Growth

Type of Support	Names
Mentors	
Peers	
Sponsors/Champions	
Wellness Supports	
Community Connexionx	

NETWORKING REFLECTION

Questions To Consider

- Who inspires me professionally?
- What spaces would I like to participate in more often?
- What relationships would I like to build?
- What fears show up for me around networking?

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Inclusive Networking Guidance: Networking Your Way

Networking can include:

- One-on-one conversations
- Small groups
- Online communities
- Shared-interest discussions
- Volunteering
- Collaborative projects
- Informational interviews

Networking does not require:

- Being outgoing
- Constant socializing
- Large events
- Self-promotion

There are many valid ways to build relationships.

BOUNDARY-SETTING WORKSHEET

Reflect:

What drains my energy?

What boundaries would support my wellbeing?

What makes it difficult to say no?

MONTHLY CHECK-IN PAGE

Instructions

Use this section monthly to reflect on your growth, leadership journey, mentorship conversations, wellness, and goals. Participants may complete this independently or discuss portions during mentor meetings.

Monthly Reflection

What is going well?

What challenges am I facing?

What support do I need?

What am I proud of this month?

WELLNESS & SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable Leadership Practices

Consider:

- Rest is productive
- Boundaries are healthy
- Asking for help is a strength
- Community care matters
- You deserve support too
- Sensory needs are valid
- Breaks are productive
- Different energy levels are normal

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- Accommodations support success

WELLNESS CHECK-IN

How Am I Feeling Right Now?

Area	Low	Medium	High
Energy			
Stress			
Motivation			
Confidence			
Connection			

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TIPS

Instead of:

- Professionalism
- Executive presence
- Culture fit

Consider:

- Authentic leadership
- Leadership presence
- Inclusive workplace practices

Instead of:

- Good communicator

Consider:

- Communicates in ways that work for them and their audience

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This helps to reduce bias toward neurotypical communication styles.

MENTORSHIP AGREEMENT TEMPLATE

Mentor Name:

Mentee Name:

1. Learning Goals for the 6-month Mentoring period

The mentee and mentor will work together to achieve the following specific goals over the next six months:

Goal	Description	Success Indicator

These goals will be reviewed and refined at the mid-point (May/September) of the mentoring period.

2. Terms of Engagement

- Meeting Frequency: (e.g., Bi-weekly / Monthly)
- Meeting Duration: (e.g., 30 minutes / 60 minutes)
- Preferred Method(s) of Communication: (e.g., video-call in Slack, Zoom, or Google Meet, phone call, in-person)
- Rescheduling Protocol: Both parties agree to provide at least 24 hours' notice for rescheduling unless in the case of an emergency.

3. Terms of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a core component of a safe and trusting mentoring relationship. Mentor and mentee will jointly define what confidentiality means in their context and agree on how it will be maintained.

Suggested Guidelines for Discussion:

- What kinds of professional or personal information do we consider confidential?
- Are there topics or types of information we agree are especially sensitive?
- What are our boundaries around sharing stories, names, or issues outside this relationship?
- What methods (e.g. messages, recordings, notes) will we use to store or share sensitive information, if any?
- In what circumstances (e.g., safety risks) would confidentiality be broken?

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Our Shared Understanding of Confidentiality:

Use this space to write a brief, shared definition of confidentiality.

--

4. Accountability Mechanisms

- **Maintain a collaborative approach:** the mentee is responsible for proactively setting goals and accountability measures; the mentor is there to help explore these goals, provide support and accountability, and to brainstorm how to approach to challenges
- **Documentation:** A touch log of meetings and goal progress should be maintained by the Mentee on the Slack channel with Mentor (1-1).
- **Check-Ins:** Periodic check-ins will be conducted by the project team to collect feedback and assess progress.
- **Oversight:** To report any concerns or issues regarding the mentoring relationship, please email Christine Snow directly at christinesnow@cscnl.ca.

5. Safety and Support

- **Safe Communication:** Both parties agree to actively listen, create a non-judgmental space, and abide by the Open Hearth Mentorship Network Community Guidelines.
- **Boundaries:** Each party has the right to set and uphold personal boundaries.

Use this space to outline your boundaries:

--	--

- **Support Channels:** Concerns about safety, harassment, or misconduct can be reported to Christine Snow directly at christinesnow@cscnl.ca
- **Well-being First:** Either party can pause or discontinue the relationship if emotional, psychological, or physical well-being is impacted. Please let Christine Snow y know by email if you decide to do so.

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Signatures

We, the undersigned, commit to the above terms in good faith, and agree to maintain a respectful, growth-oriented, and mutually supportive mentoring relationship.

Mentor Signature: _____

Mentee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

RESOURCE LIBRARY

Leadership & Professional Development

- Leadership podcasts
 - Sector conferences
 - Networking events
 - Professional development workshops
 - Nonprofit leadership resources
-

Wellness & Sustainability

- Burnout prevention resources
 - Boundary-setting tools
 - Mental wellness supports
 - Stress management practices
-

Equity & Inclusion Learning

- Gender-inclusive language guides
 - Accessibility resources
 - Trauma-informed practice resources
 - Anti-oppressive leadership tools
-

CLOSING REFLECTION

Final Reflection Questions

- What did I learn about myself?
- How have I grown?
- What relationships impacted me most?
- What leadership strengths have emerged?
- What do I want to carry forward?

Reflection Notes

CLOSING MESSAGE

Leadership does not require perfection.

Your voice, experiences, ideas, and presence matter.

Thank you for contributing to a mentorship community rooted in growth, care, courage, and connection.

You belong here.