



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Our Voices

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

WINTER 2019

The Changing Face of Leadership

What might leadership look like if value was on who we are, instead of what we do?

While Kristan Nielson, founder and consultant at PeopleLead, was in her third year of a Bachelor of Arts in psychology, she found herself wondering what life in the workplace might look like, and enrolled in an industrial psychology course. This began her ongoing journey defining and redefining what leadership means.

“We are seeing a transition into the next generation

of knowledge and moving away from having a positional leader as the expert and simply transferring knowledge — things are shifting to be more internal,” Kristan said.

Nielson, a UCalgary alumna, has served as a Women's Leadership Conference presenter since it began in 2013 in an effort to bring what she's learned back to her roots. While she acknowledges that students seek hard and fast leadership tips, participants can expect to work through deep questions to build



leadership capacity.

“There is no longer a model of ‘all-knowing leader’; we do far more for one another by asking, engaging and inspiring to catalyze change,” she said.



Keeta Gladue, Indigenous Student Program Advisor with the Native Centre, has long been recognized as a leader in her community — even still, she’s identified that, like her, people seem to bump up against the idea that a leader is someone other than them.

“Leadership is a big monolith in western ideology — if you Google leadership, you’ll see a lot of men in suits on mountain tops. It’s hard to check that box off, which is why we need a different definition,” she said. “To me, [leadership] is the work we show up for and the role we play in the community.”

“Female-identifying peoples have been raised with a kind



of humility that borders on shame — where we aren’t allowed to claim our good things,” she explained. “We need to see ourselves in a new light in order to identify all of the things we bring into our communities.”

The Role of Intersectionality, Community and Grassroots Leadership

This year’s conference will highlight intersectionality as a vital component of leadership identity. That is, the consideration of the multiple social locations we occupy and the interlocking nature of race, ability, faith, sexuality and privilege as vital to shaping who we are and how we lead.

Linda Kongnetiman, MSW ’00, PhD ’17, draws on her experience as an instructor in the Faculty of Social Work to foster a culture of inclusion and explore how today’s leaders can address oppression by understanding privilege.

“This is where humility and grace come in when doing anti-oppressive work,” she said.

“It doesn’t matter who you are, we all have unearned privileges. It is what you do with it that is the key thing,” Linda said, adding that true leadership requires garnering an understanding of privilege — and mobilizing that knowledge to empower others.



“I see a leader as someone who actually leads by example, but also someone who is able to bring people together without too much effort. They can be vulnerable and really find their voice no matter the context they are in.”

Saima Jamal, BSc, has long been one of Calgary’s most active community organizers, social activists and humanitarians. Having been involved in peacebuilding and compassionate work ranging from refugee and immigrant issues, activism, anti-racism, religious discrimination and women’s issues — Saima is no stranger to lending her voice to the greater good.

As co-founder of the Calgary Immigrant Support Society (formerly the Syrian Refugee Support Group), Saima uses a unique multi-faith, multi-cultural and multi-community approach to mobilize thousands of individuals to make Calgary a welcoming place for newcomers to live and thrive.

“I am a community enforcer, but I am approachable as a leader, non-judgmental of new ideas and constantly receptive of what other people have to say. If you aren’t responding to the community’s needs — then people won’t look to you for leadership,” Saima said.

“A leader isn’t just a teacher, or just a thinker — it’s someone who is a doer.”

Why Women’s Leadership Initiatives Matter

Calgary Arts Development President and CEO, Patti Pon, BFA ’87, reiterated the need for new ways of leading — particularly with a consideration of equity, diversity and inclusion.

“For women leaders, we were told to just act like a man, to do better, which is really just fitting a system, rather than asking how we should change it,” she said.

In hopes of inspiring new ways of leading and creating a more equitable, connected city, Pon leads by three unwavering principles: one size fits one, nothing about us without us, and perpetuate a virtuous cycle, not a vicious one.

“Whether you are on a leadership path, at a crossroads or just starting out not sure where to go — embracing who you are in what you do and why you do it, paves the way.”



“We are building more empathy and heart to understand where people come from in a time of adaptive change,” she continued. “We are making our way looking different than those before us.”

2019 WRC Award Recipients

WRC Distinguished Alumna

Sara Elkady

In the Schulich School of Engineering, Sara Elkady has been considered a symbol of resilience. While both professional and academic accolades are exemplary of her determination, it is her immense strength and resolve in the face of adversity that shaped her legacy at UCalgary.

With only four classes left to complete her Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering, Sara’s life was forever changed when her family was involved in a car accident. The accident claimed the lives of both her parents and one of her sisters, an urban studies major at the University of Calgary. Sara’s injuries



were extensive, resulting in a nine-month hospital stay and ultimately, the amputation of her lower left leg. Despite enduring pain and grief, it was her love for her surviving younger sister and her desire to complete her degree that gave her strength. A plan was put into place to help her complete her degree while undergoing treatment in the hospital, with sights set on walking the convocation stage just 18 months after the accident. These days, Sara balances her full-time job as a process engineer with her commitment to giving back to her community.

In addition to her remarkable academic achievements, Sara is a proponent of community involvement and strives to make the world a better place through inquiry and action. Exemplified through her contributions to Homes of Hope (a Schulich School of Engineering initiative to build houses in Mexico), an exchange to Germany in pursuit of improving cross-cultural communication, and as an active member of the Scholars Academy — Sara was a deserving choice to be the 2018 Iron Ring Ceremony student representative.

Sara remains dedicated to initiatives fitting with her lived experiences. Through speaking engagements, Sara inspires the next generation of women leaders in the STEM and engaging immigrant youth by drawing on her experiences as a young newcomer. Sara aims to remain physically active and re-gain her strength through para-rowing.

Sara models wisdom, resilience and compassion in her pursuit of understanding social challenges and creating a more equitable world for all.

WRC Distinguished Graduate Student

Annie Hoang

Annie Hoang is a dedicated researcher, committed mentor, and strong student leader. However, it is her unwavering commitment to fostering an appreciation of science, promoting women in science and thinking outside the box that make her a trailblazer in her field. Annie holds a Bachelor of Science in chemistry from the University of Calgary, and is currently undertaking a Master of Science in physical chemistry. Beyond her academic excellence, Annie's contributions to the Graduate Students' Association (GSA), not-for-profit sector and in the

field of clean energy are important to the community.

Annie's road to success as a chemistry researcher and student leader was not without difficulty. However, her commitment to personal growth and advancing gender equality in her field fostered resilience.

Although Annie did not receive a summer research position until the fourth year of her degree, she recognized that she could still build capacity in the realm of research. She embarked on professional development

opportunities that ultimately landed her a prestigious undergraduate research award, allowing her to work on novel nanomaterials for electrochemical devices cleanly converting fuel into electricity. This accomplishment was an



important stepping stone to entering graduate school, though Annie wanted to expand her knowledge outside of her chemistry background. Her curiosity led her to run for the Graduate Student Association's VP Finance position and, while she ran a compelling campaign, she did not win the election. Her support for the goals and initiatives at the GSA was unwavering, and she later ran for Finance Standing Committee Chair, where she was elected by the Graduate Representative Council.

Annie's contributions to her field echo her commitment to bridging research and public good.

In acknowledging the few prominent female researchers in her field, especially at scientific conferences, Annie decided to share these experiences — and lessons in resilience and rigor — to support girls through the Cybermentor program. Annie completed her Transformative Talent Intern-ship with GO Technology Foundation, a social enterprise that

raises money to fund future technologies, and is now in the process of writing her thesis focused on designing lower cost nanomaterials for environment friendly vehicles. Volunteering at Beakerhead for several years, Annie became a proponent of effective science communication and is able to distill down the complexities of her work for a general audience, while telling a clear and compelling story — making scientific research accessible for all who want to learn.

WRC Distinguished Undergraduate Student

Tina Guo

Tina Guo is a passionate clinician, researcher and activist. Born into a first-generation immigrant family, she came to understand at a young age the irreplaceability of diligence and tenacity. Personal experiences not only exposed Tina to the systemic barriers for marginalized populations that complicate access to resources, services and opportunities, but gave her the insight to better understand and be compassionate to the needs of others.

Having studied Biological Sciences in pursuit of a Bachelor of Science degree, her demonstrated academic

excellence, instrumental research contributions and domestic violence advocacy earned her rare acceptance into the Cumming School of Medicine's Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) program prior to completing an undergraduate degree. Her passion for health humanities was cultivated by her extracurricular activities, initiatives and projects that advocated for those who had experienced mental illness, homelessness, or domestic abuse. This is illustrated by Tina's motivation to found the Students Against Domestic Abuse Association (SADAA) to advocate for survivors of domestic abuse and dating violence, disproportionately



represented by women. Tina manages to balance both the responsibilities of a medical student and her position as co-executive director of SADAA.

Tina is a trailblazer, not only in the novelty and innovation behind the organization that she founded, or her unique and thoughtful

approach to leadership, but through both academic and professional achievements. Through her biology and public health research, Tina has made meaningful contributions to both the Department of Biology and the O'Brien Institute for Public Health. Consequently, Tina is currently drafting a manuscript, for which she

will be the first author, to publish a systematic review of how physicians and healthcare systems globally identify cardiovascular risk factors. As vice-president (finance) of the Student Run Clinic, Tina continues to address the intersections between domestic abuse, mental illness, and homelessness by

providing quality, accessible healthcare for residents and patients at Inn from the Cold, the Calgary Dream Centre and at the Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic. Tina is recognized for having imparted a considerable legacy of community service, volunteerism, and leadership at the University of Calgary.

Sheila O'Brien Award for Excellence in Leadership

Ashley Von Hatten

Ashley Von Hatten is in her final year of her Bachelor of Arts in geography, coming to UCalgary with a diploma in architectural technology from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. In addition to her academic pursuits, Ashley has been a dedicated volunteer and a key member of the Women's Resource Centre community since January 2016.



Through being a part of the WRC community, Ashley was able to explore her passion for supporting others, both in the context of peer support and in a leadership capacity by helping volunteers achieve their goals. Having been relatively new to the idea of allyship, Ashley used much of her time volunteering to garner a deeper understanding of social justice through events and dialogues at the WRC to better understand how to support others.

Ashley created meaningful volunteer experiences as a peer leader — notably, contributing to *The Weave*, facilitating Journal Club and supporting new peer helpers. Ashley initially joined the Volunteer Engagement and Development team, and

became connected to all aspects of the volunteer experience by later joining the Events and Education and Community Outreach and Peer Support teams. Ashley is the only volunteer who has served in a team leader position for all three teams. She said the Women's Resource Centre provided invaluable opportunities for her to shape her activist identity and knowledge — but above all else, it provided a space where she could be herself.

Ashley was selected by her WRC volunteer peers to be recognized for outstanding contributions to the WRC, her warm leadership style and her commitment to fostering an inclusive, compassionate and supportive space for the campus community.

University of Calgary Address

Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning)

Dr. Leslie Reid

Dr. Leslie Reid, vice-provost (teaching and learning), works tirelessly to build meaningful experiences and an authentic learning culture at the University of Calgary. Prior to stepping into her current role in 2017, she served as Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Science from 2012 to 2017, where she supported the creation of educational development programs to enhance learning and teaching experiences for students and staff. In a merging of interests, Dr. Reid's scholarly work remains focused on STEM teaching and learning and educational development for academic staff.

As a leader recognized as collaborative, participatory, and mindful, Dr. Reid shares what she's learned about leading authentically.

How would your colleagues describe your leadership style?

I strive for collaboration in my leadership practice; these elements not only help foster workplaces of creativity, respect and

inclusivity, but they also encourage consensus building, purposeful work, and organizational success. I feel that by committing to ensuring that people feel heard and encouraging everyone's participation and contributions, we can all develop a sense of ownership and trust that ultimately builds deeper connections and drives impactful, meaningful change. I should add that my leadership style is highly facilitative in nature and I strive to always provide others with timely, relevant, and thoughtful feedback from a position of empathy and mindfulness.

What values or traits do you think make for a great leader?

I think a truly great leader makes themselves available to others and sees their role as working to ensure individuals and teams have what they need to succeed. Something I like to say a lot is, 'meet people where they're at.' I think great leaders are both visionary and understand people's readiness for change and work from that



place as a starting point. It's important for me to be both authentic and self-aware of my emotions, triggers and biases. I believe a great leader is skilled in recognizing and acknowledging all the voices and opinions in a room, even when they're not being explicitly expressed. If you show up as your authentic self as a leader, and people can understand who you are and where you are coming from, it helps build strong collaborative and courageous teams.

To learn more about the WRC Awards, visit:
ucalgary.ca/women/awards

*Thank you to Liam McConnell for photographing the
2019 WRC Award Recipients.*

Women's Resource Centre

MacEwan Student Centre
(MSC 482)
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB T2N 1N4

403.220.8550
women@ucalgary.ca

WOMEN'S
RESOURCE
CENTRE

