

# Manon Jeannotte: 'Decisions must respect the next seven generations'

Passion for learning keeps chief of the Mi'kmaq Nation of Gespeg moving forward

KARL MOORE

THE LADDER

**M**anon Jeannotte is the chief of the Mi'kmaq Nation of Gespeg. She has more than 14 years of experience working in the community, where the first role she occupied was councillor for the urban region of Montreal. She graduated from the McGill-HEC Executive MBA program in 2016.

**I grew up in between Montreal, Lanaudiere and Gaspesie, as we are nomad people. I don't recall my earliest leadership experience, but from a young age I have always been a person of integrity who was involved in my community, which led people to follow me, I imagine.**

**I always go with the flow, just like a river.** Living in a community mode has helped me stay grounded and determine the priorities for the survival of the population, as well as the longevity of the environment.

**If I have one thing to teach non-aboriginal people, it is a holistic vision of the world, and putting collective needs ahead of individualistic ones. A leader must be careful with this, because at the non-aboriginal level, the needs of an enterprise and its shareholders are oftentimes put ahead of our collective needs. Aboriginal communities always think of the sea and land prior to potential economic development.**

**In an aboriginal community such as mine, the elders and the youth occupy a very important role. We always take advice from our elders, while taking into consideration our next generations. Any decision that is made in an aboriginal community must encompass the respect of the next seven generations and of the environment.**



DAVE CHAN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

**The biggest challenge for aboriginal people in the future is to be respected, recognized and autonomous. We are always seated between two chairs, but will be fully autonomous once we finally have the capacity, the ability and the possibility to lead our own people.**

**I do not believe in people being segregated as being generation X, Y or Z. The way people decide to live, as well as the relationships they choose to prioritize, is what makes them who they are. If we were to follow the definitions given to generations X, Y and Z, all aboriginal people would fall into Generation Y as they put family above all else.**

**Technology has the power to change any field, including aboriginal communities. It helps bring all aboriginal communities together – across Quebec, Canada and the world. Social-media platforms, as well as video conferences, can help communities brainstorm and tackle issues together at any time.**

**Everyone has blind spots. I used to find excuses for the mistakes people made around me, and I often ended up paying the price for these mistakes. This has taught me to be more attentive and judge situations in an analytical way, as opposed to simply trusting people and following gut feelings.**

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**MANON JEANNOTTE**  
CHIEF OF THE MI'KMAQ  
NATION OF GESPEG

**My passion is learning.** I learn new things and acquire new skills every day, and it is what keeps me going. I believe that everyone has the power and ability to learn something new every day, and that education can help make the world a better place.

**Staying true to yourself** is the best career advice anyone can receive. By staying close to people and living life in a simple manner, everyone has the ability to stay grounded and live a full and wholesome life.

Special to The Globe and Mail

This interview has been edited and condensed.

## Unintentional behaviours may be sending co-workers signals you're untrustworthy

MERGE GUPTA-SUNDERJI

**A**re you trustworthy? Do you find that your co-workers are reluctant to rely on you? Are you left out of confidential meetings? Does your supervisor double-check your work or micromanage you? Are you always the last person to find out what everyone else already seems to know?

Workplace trust is essential not only to establish your reputation, but also to build a strong network of people who will help you throughout your career. So if you find yourself in such situations often, it may be time to reflect, to consider whether your own actions are inadvertently causing others to view you as untrustworthy.

Here are five unintentional behaviours you may be exhibiting that cause others think that you are not to be trusted:

**YOU FAIL TO DELIVER**

You make commitments, but don't seem to be able to follow through and deliver. Sure, your promises are made with the best of intentions – after all, you want to be viewed as a team player – but saying “yes” without ensuring that you have the time and resources to see things through to completion will only set you up to fail.

It's far better to be deliberate and thoughtful about what you can truly get done. If you say you'll do it, then do it. When you repeatedly miss deadlines or cancel at the last minute, people begin to believe that this is your norm. So underpromise and overdeliver.

**YOU LIE**

While this may seem obvious, it is easy to slip up. It may seem simpler to tell a small white lie – “Yes, I did that yesterday,” when you only just acted moments before you walked into the meeting – but when your lie is uncovered, your believability will take a beating. Sadly, it doesn't take more than a few white lies for your credibility to crumble. Similarly, it's far better to admit you don't know something than to fake or fumble your way through an answer or solution. Once you lose credibility, you can't get it back.

**YOU BELIEVE THAT YOUR IDEAS ARE ALWAYS THE BEST**

No one likes a know-it-all. If you are not willing to acknowledge that others may have insights or viewpoints that are valuable and worth considering, then you will never build positive relationships with those you work with. Above all, be willing to admit when you're wrong.

Perhaps surprisingly, admitting that you've made a mistake actually fosters trust because it demonstrates authenticity and integrity – authenticity in that you're human and fallible (just like everyone else) and integrity because it shows that you can be trusted to do the right thing in difficult circumstances.

**YOU'RE QUICK TO TAKE CREDIT BUT SLOW TO GIVE IT**

This happens more by default than by intention. After all, we tend to be more vocal about things that go well and play down

those that don't. But if you find that your co-workers are putting everything in writing (and copying the boss), it might be a clue that you are guilty of this workplace blunder. So deliberately do the opposite.

Find opportunities to praise your peers for their behaviour and actions. Go out of your way to say thank you for a team member's extra effort. At your next team meeting, actively acknowledge a colleague's project milestone. When you have something to celebrate, intentionally recognize others who were instrumental in getting you there.

**YOU GOSSIP ABOUT OTHERS**

You may think that a little idle chit-chat about who-said-what, and so-and-so-did-that is simply rapport-building or trivial banter. It isn't. Office gossip is toxic. Rumours can hurt feelings and damage reputations, so steer clear.

If the conversation can be hurtful, or cast negative aspersions, or create gossip, then it's unquestionably gossip. If the outcome is intrateam cliques or rifts between team members, then it's definitely gossip.

Ironically, when you engage in gossip, it says more about you than anyone else. If you're willing to talk about people behind their backs, the person you're gossiping to is likely wondering what you'll say about them later.

So if you're frustrated enough with some aspect of your workplace that you need to discuss it, then vent to someone outside your organization, or run the risk of damaging your trustworthiness.

Special to The Globe and Mail

## When the boss is unhappy

ROB WALKER

**The question**

I recently accepted a promotion, not really because of my own desire but because management wanted me to take on a new role. The new job is fine, but the head of the department I now work for seems completely miserable. He basically does the job of three people, because of changes upper management has forced on him.

Dealing with him has been horrible. I'm still learning this job and have questions and need help doing things that only he knows how to do. He responds to me with such exasperation that I think twice before I approach him. He doesn't seem mad at me; he just seems to hate his job and his managers. He doesn't want to be there but evidently has nowhere else to go.

– Anonymous

**The answer**

If your description is accurate, it's no wonder he's unhappy: Your company sounds rather poorly managed. I don't know why he has “nowhere else to go,” but I wonder whether you do, and what you think your opportunities at this place will be.

But let's say you really want to hold on to this position you didn't seek.

You're already doing the most important thing one can when sorting out how to deal with an unpleasant boss or colleague: You've made the effort to figure out why this person is such a drag.

If it's correct that he has basically been put in an impossible position, then have some sympathy, and then consider two courses of action.

The minimalist strategy: Do what you're doing, but even more so. Be extremely selective about what you must extract from this boss to do your job, timing your requests according to his apparent misery level.

Strive for a future in which you interact with him as little as possible.

The more ambitious strategy: See if there is a way you can take on responsibilities that would benefit you in the long run and make this manager's life less “miserable” right now. Propose this option in a way that suggests both empathy and engagement: “I know you've been asked to do a lot, and since I'm interested in X maybe I could help you by handling that?”

But given the evidence of higher management's performance at your company, I would add that even if you pursue the more ambitious strategy, do so with an eye toward future options elsewhere.

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