

Celebrate the women in your life

BY JASON VELTRI

THIS women's history month, I wish to acknowledge the importance of a few incredible women in my life who have mentored, nurtured and supported me through my journey of the past 40 years.

First, to my many teachers who had to deal with a Jason who would rather misbehave or talk in class about anything other than the topic at hand: thank you for dealing with me.

One teacher comes to mind as having a lasting impact on my life. I wish to honour her this month — Dina McFarlane. She was my French teacher when I moved to Holy Cross School in Grade 2 through Grade 6. Later on, during my high school co-op class, I worked alongside her in her Grade 1 classroom at Corpus Christi School. Dina has been a source of inspiration and strong ally who has helped lead change we all need to see within the Catholic School community here in Thunder Bay.

All these educators have helped inspire me in ways that helped me become a strong and fearless leader. To all my incredible women educators, thank you.

To the women in my life who have helped mentor and shape



ONE CITY,
MANY VOICES

The Thunder Bay Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario

my political and advocacy career, you have all played an integral role in helping guide, inspire and motivate me to learn, listen and grow as a leader, advocate, and aspiring politician. To Shelby, Patty, Rebecca and Kristen, you have been there, held me accountable and made me a better person and leader because of your friendship and compassion for finding the best in me and the community you serve.

We are better because of strong, dedicated community focused leaders who put people first and politics second. Thank you for leading and thank you to all the other women who have come before you who stepped

forward for their community to make a difference.

Finally, the most important women in my life are my mother, stepmother and grandmothers who have helped guide me through the troubled waters of public life, stood by me at my lowest lows, cheered me on as I tell them of my wild visions and dreams.

My number one fan, my most beautiful and loving mom, you have stood by me, told me to back off, go faster, harder; you have inspired me to become whoever I wanted to become, and you have loved me unconditionally no matter who I love.

This Women's History Month, recognize the most important women in your life and make them feel special. Give them a call, text or buy them a rose or just say 'thank you.'

In a growing intolerant and hateful world, kindness, compassion and love are needed more than ever; and we need to look to the women in our orbits to find that kindness, compassion and love this world desperately needs.

Jason Veltri is a community builder and human rights activist. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.