

International Women's Day celebrates empowerment

BY LEEMA FARHA

MARCH 8 is celebrated each year as International Women's Day, a day to honour women. As I pause to think about what we are truly celebrating on this day, I realize it's about more than just existence; it's about our presence, intelligence, contributions and — most importantly — our dignity. All of these elements come together to form empowerment.

While we've made significant strides, there's still so much more to be done, especially in parts of the world where women are unaware of their 'self' — their own worth.

To me, empowerment begins with celebrating the 'I' — being proud of who I am. It's about embracing my choices and the way I want to be seen in society. Whether I'm a homemaker, a businesswoman, a doctor or a carpenter, every woman makes a unique contribution whether it's economic, social or through the essential role of caring for a family and raising children who will become responsible citizens.

I feel empowered when I recognize that I am enough just as I am, and that I can shape my own path, regardless of the direction I choose.

Over time, I've heard many different perspectives on what March 8 is really about. For me, empowerment is personal. It's about the freedom to choose what makes me feel whole, whether that's intellectual strength, physical beauty, or both. The power lies in the choice, in how I choose to express my true self.

This year on March 8, this Saturday, the International Tapestry Women's Network will celebrate International Women's Day featuring Dr. Sanjay Azad, a prominent plastic surgeon who will discuss how plastic surgery has evolved and empowered women (and people of all genders) in transformative



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

ways.

The connection between plastic surgery and empowerment is many fold. Many women face significant emotional and physical challenges. Examples include breast cancer treatment, domestic violence, body shaming, burns and traumatic accidents. Plastic surgery offers a way for them to regain their confidence by rebuilding parts of their body, helping them to heal and feel whole again.

This isn't just about aesthetics; it's a deeply psychological process, enabling women to regain control over their bodies and live with pride and confidence.

No one should feel ashamed of their appearance because true empowerment comes from within — celebrating the mind and the heart. However, as I mentioned earlier, the key to empowerment is choice.

If I have the means and the desire to reconstruct my body, that's my choice — my form of self-expression. Another person may choose not to pursue reconstruction, and that is also an act of empowerment. The freedom to make that choice is what truly matters.

Personally, I focus less on my physical appearance and more on building my inner confidence. But, that's me — the freedom to define myself in my own way. But some others may take

a physical appearance enhancement as a source of confidence and empowerment.

No one's choices are inherently wrong. For example, a movie star may focus on her beauty as part of her career, but does that mean she's less empowered? Absolutely not. Many powerful women in this industry are icons, advocates and role models, showing that beauty and power can coexist.

Celebrating women's empowerment doesn't mean an exclusive women affair. It's about shared responsibility. It's about breaking stereotypes. It's about respect, and fostering trust and understanding across gender lines. Empowerment isn't just about women advocating for themselves, but also about creating a culture where everyone, regardless of gender, supports and lifts each other up.

We are in it together. It's all about growth and personal advancement, in every aspect.

When we come together as a united community, we can truly understand and embrace what it means to empower women. Once we do that, we'll celebrate empowerment — not just on March 8, but every day with everyone.

Join us on Saturday, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery as the International Tapestry Women's Network celebrates the International Women's Day with an inspiring talk by RBC regional vice-president Maria Holland. The event gets support from Lakehead University Student Union, TBaytel, and RBC. Registration is limited, so please connect with us at tapestrythunderbay@gmail.com.

Leema Farha is affiliated to Thunder Bay Multicultural Association and an active volunteer with the international Tapestry Women's Network. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.