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Tia Upshaw speaks to the importance of women owning their power

March 13, 2025

Tia Upshaw's to-do list on any given day reads a little something like this: empower others, create opportunities, break glass ceilings, change narratives and turn anomalies into norms.

"I didn't get here by accident," the BLK Women in Excellence Founder and CEO announced in her keynote address at the International Women's Day Luncheon hosted by the Municipality of the County of Kings March 7.

Upshaw was fresh off a plane after attending a ceremony honouring her as one of Atlantic Canada's Top 25 Most Powerful Women in Business in 2025 when she stood in the Municipality's Council Chambers encouraging all in attendance to repeat after her: "I deserve to be here."



International Women's Day Luncheon keynote speaker Tia Upshaw stressed the importance of women owning their power - and encouraging other women to do the same.

It's a mantra Upshaw turns to for motivation when she's overlooked or underestimated.

"I know what it means to struggle. I know what it means to fight for everything that I have, and I know what it's like to win that fight," she said.

Upshaw became a mother at 14 and raised her three children while building three successful businesses, writing four books, launching a national not-for-profit organization, and mentoring women and girls.

"There are moments when you need to stand tall, hold your head high and know your own value," the 45-year-old said.

"That took me a long time to learn."

As a young girl raised by her grandmother, Upshaw had a front-row seat to resilience in action time and time again. She studied her grandmother's strength in the face of adversity and learned from her perseverance.

“Do not let the hurdles stop you. Do not let anyone diminish you. Own your power. Own who you are and stand tall,” said Upshaw, speaking to the importance of recognizing and embracing self-worth and helping others do the same.

The team at BLK Women in Excellence provides Black women and girls with entrepreneurial ambitions with tools, resources and supports they need to be successful in business. Diversity, Upshaw stressed, is a proven business model that should be universally embraced.

“I believe inclusion is strength, diversity is advantage, equity is non-negotiable, and accessibility is fundamental,” she said.

In introducing Upshaw at the luncheon, Mayor Dave Corkum shared that the theme for International Women’s Day in 2025 was “Accelerate Action.”

“It is a call to move beyond conversations and step boldly into meaningful change. We have seen some progress, but progress cannot wait,” Corkum stressed.

“Whether it’s advancing gender equity in the workplace, ensuring women’s voices are present and heard in places where decisions are made, or addressing barriers that still hold women back, now is the time to push forward urgently and with purpose.”

To learn more about International Women’s Day, please visit <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/>