Ladner’s work involves Indigenous politics and governance in Canada and in other settler states such as Hawaii, where Indigenous politics is typically defined by two very different visions of self-government: the continuation of Indigenous sovereignty, and the assertion of Crown and/or merged sovereignty.

In Canada, Indigenous and Canadian authorities are divided on the existence of a right to self-government, the applicability of Canadian law and jurisdiction on reserves, claims of sovereignty, and the necessity of negotiating self-governments agreements. These conflicting ideas have also created tensions within Indigenous communities. For instance, there are supporters of the band council system who want to negotiate a revised political system within a framework governed by the Canadian political order. Others, however, support a traditional Indigenous political system, seeking to disengage from the imposed constitutional order.

Ladner’s research will bring communities together – engaging grassroots, traditional leadership, and political leaders in discussions about their visions of the future. What do they see as self-government? What is the meaning of Indigenous governance and traditional governance? Can traditional governance be recreated to meet modern needs? To help answer these questions Ladner has established the Indigenous Governance and Community Based Research Space, or Mamawipawin, at the University of Manitoba. It will facilitate scholars and Indigenous communities around the world in working together to create an innovative understanding of Indigenous governance and solutions for political decolonization.

Ladner earned her BA at the University of Calgary before going to the University of Saskatchewan to complete her MA (Political Studies). She then continued her trek east and completed another MA (Canadian Studies) and her PhD at Carleton University in 2001, receiving the Carleton University Senate Medal for Highest Academic Achievement along the way. She taught at Carleton University, Trent University and the University of Western Ontario before arriving at the University of Manitoba as an Assistant Professor and a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in 2006.

In her short career Ladner has published no fewer than 10 articles in refereed journals, written six book chapters, and authored nine professional reports. She has given 15 invited lectures and presented at 32 conferences.