

Montreal's facialist to the stars shares her top 3 pieces of advice for skin

Up close with Jennifer Brodeur on products, aging and her celebrity clients



What do Oprah Winfrey and Michelle Obama have in common, besides being two high-profile powerhouses? The icons both have Montreal-based facialist Jennifer Brodeur to thank for their glowing complexions.

If Brodeur's name doesn't ring a bell, that's because the former skin chemistry teacher turned entrepreneur treads discreetly in the name of glow. "I really take [clients'] privacy and skin to heart. I'm never that person who runs to the media and says, 'Here's what I do! I can give you the scoop.'"

Brodeur has been obsessed with all things skin for as long as she can remember. "When I was really little, I used to put cream on everybody," she says with a laugh. So it shouldn't be surprising, then, that she's managed to build a dedicated, jaw-dropping client list that also includes Sophie Grégoire Trudeau and film director extraordinaire Ava DuVernay.

JB SKIN GURU FEATURED ON CBC.CA

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The mom-of-three's moniker as skin whisperer to the stars began to grow back in the early 2000s, when she and her former business partner (who is also her husband), invented Max+, an LED light therapy machine that acts like a multivitamin for the skin.

Eventually, the skin-healing powers of Max+ would cross paths with Ms. Winfrey at a clinic in Beverly Hills. The media mogul, who's been Brodeur's client since 2012, instantly became hooked on the device's results, and Brodeur has been jumping on countless planes to treat Ms. Winfrey's skin personally ever since.

The skin guru went on to launch her own plant-based beauty brand, [JB Skin Guru](#), in 2016. That same year, her four-step, anti-inflammatory regimen, Peoni, received the ultimate praise: landing on Ms. Winfrey's famous "Favorite Things" list. "I was so grateful," she says. "I was honoured because it came from her. I never asked."

Brodeur also reveals that the talk show host's stamp of approval made her rewrite her whole business plan. "It completely changed the mindset of the business," she says. "You go from thinking I'm going to be successful in Montreal to now we're launching globally [...] and pushing product out the wazoo."

We caught up with the jet-setting facialist (she took more than 100 flights last year alone) to glean some of her wisdom on all things career, relationships and beauty — including her top three pieces of advice when it comes to fixing her clients' skin.

On realizing great things take time:

"The day I started the business ... I made a deal with the co-owner — who is my husband: 'I will do this endeavor and create this device, but you have to promise me that after we do this I can have a product line.' He was like, 'No worries, next year we'll do a product line.' But it took 15 years. When you start a business, you think everything is going to be so easy, and it's not."

On never doubting herself:

"I have a vision, I believe in it and I just charge. I never think, 'Oh, I can't do this.' I can do this! I think that's part of why I am somewhat successful in what I do."

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On her attitude about aging:

"Seeing as how I think aging is a privilege, I don't believe in 'anti-aging.' But I do think that we can preserve cellular function in a healthy way. The action of getting your skin looking its best is not about, 'Oh my goodness, I look 20 years younger!' It's about how that moment of self-care makes you feel empowered to be your best."

On the partnership with her husband:

"We were in business together until 2009. I mean, he's still involved don't get me wrong ... even though he's not the owner per se, being in a marriage, you still share.

It's good for any person in a business to have a partner that supports you, that believes in your dreams and that pushes you further. Because I do travel a lot, I take a lot of risks, and you need someone there who's like, I got you. You go do you, I'll go do me and I support you and I'm proud of you. Oftentimes I get a lot of the accolades and I'm invited to a lot of swanky things, and he's walking the dog, feeding the kids and going to work. You need that relationship were you understand it's for the better of all of us, and that it's not just for one.

Owning a business and being married is a very tricky thing. It's like this beautiful dance you do everyday to make it work."

On the importance of authentic communication — with any partner:

"We're in a society right now where people rely too much on appearances, like what you see on Instagram. I think it's a lot better to be like, 'I'm having a real shit day right now,' and to be able to say, 'You know what? You're allowed to have a shit day. Enjoy it. In a few days it will be different.' A lot of the time, we put on a façade, but the energy you're exuding around you [makes others think] 'What's wrong with her today?'. And it causes miscommunication [when] communication is key."

On being a legit "skin whisperer":

"Facials are such an intimate thing. I see clients through all these things like pregnancy, weight loss, weight gain, divorces, marriages and deaths. You do build this bond because the skin is a site of response. Your skin is going to tell me everything that's going on inside your body, like hormonal changes. Whether you want to tell me or not, I'm usually the first person to guess you're pregnant."

On the inspiration behind her new line, Lumi:

"My mom immigrated from Finland. I went to Lapland and was inspired by the light that reflects off the snow — it's like no other. I thought, 'How could I take this illuminated scenery and put that in a bottle?'"

We chatted with the Finnish and Scandinavian women about how they view and take care of their skin. They eat healthy, they eat lots of fish and fruit, and they love lingonberry. Lingonberry is an arctic superfruit that goes through days of darkness and days of sunshine, and it's got more antioxidants and more capacities than most of the ingredients we talk about on the regular. Lumi is a combination of lingonberry and vitamin C, and the name means 'snow' in Finnish."



[Lumi Gift Box](#), \$225, jbskinguru.com

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On her personal no-fuss beauty routine:

"When you have kids, you realize really fast that ponytails are like the trophies of life. They're the best! In the morning, I put on my Peoni face cream and then a dab of my face oil on top because I dehydrate so fast and it's very cold in Montreal.

I don't wear any makeup per se; I'll add a dab of zinc-based foundation if I have something important to do. I can count on one hand how many times I wear makeup in a year. In the evening, I'll cleanse and use my essence. I play around between the Lumi and Peoni toners — I mix it up. After that, I just use a lot of face oil to go to sleep. When I do want a slight exfoliation, I'll use my Clarisonic. I have the Mia Smart at home, and I'll use that with a very sensitive cleansing brush once a month. I do my own facials once a month, too. I really believe less is more. Skin responds better when you're using less products."



[La crème](#), \$195; [L'extrait](#), \$225; [Le nettoyant](#), \$60; [L'essence](#), \$60, jbskinguru.com

On her in-flight skincare essentials:

"We have to be very mindful on a plane: the air is hard on skin. A mask could be a very good thing. I also like to work with the concept of applying your moisturizer and then, on top of that, adding your face oil. That's a really good way to ensure that you're going to keep your moisture."

On her cardinal skincare rule:

"The first rule when I take on a new client, apart from [stopping] skin picking, is to stop exfoliating. It's not that I'm against exfoliation, it's just that there are so many studies coming out about how an abusive exfoliation process is actually aging the skin faster. And now exfoliators are so well developed — you have lactic acid, salicylic acid, nanoparticles — and they're penetrating so deep. Usually, after a few months, my go-to to help clients exfoliate is a Clarisonic brush because you can control that."



[Mia Smart 3-in-1 Connected Sonic Beauty Device, \\$229, clarisonic.ca](https://clarisonic.ca)

On her top three recommendations for healthy skin:

"The first thing I recommend is to remember that less is more, that's number one. Then I recommend a collagen supplement. It's vital to me because collagen starts from within. I could be using the best creams on your skin, but if your skin is inflamed and dehydrated, it's really difficult. Third, I recommend less makeup — and sunscreen. I really like CyberDerm, a brand out of Ottawa. They have a new product out that's a bit tinted, so you'll look glowing but be protected, and it's more organic."

On less-is-more makeup:

"Makeup is an extension of your skincare routine. Women want to camouflage the redness, but oftentimes what they're using has irritating ingredients, which creates a vicious cycle. I have them bring in their makeup, and we review the ingredients to make sure what they're using is as clean as possible. If you have skin issues like rosacea or acne, I would recommend [you] start with Jane Iredale, which is a very good coverage mineral makeup. But if you don't have problematic skin, there's a bunch of good brands, like Armani."



[Luminous Silk Foundation](#), \$74, [armani-beauty.ca](#); [PurePressed Base Mineral Foundation](#), \$52.50, [janeiredale.ca](#)

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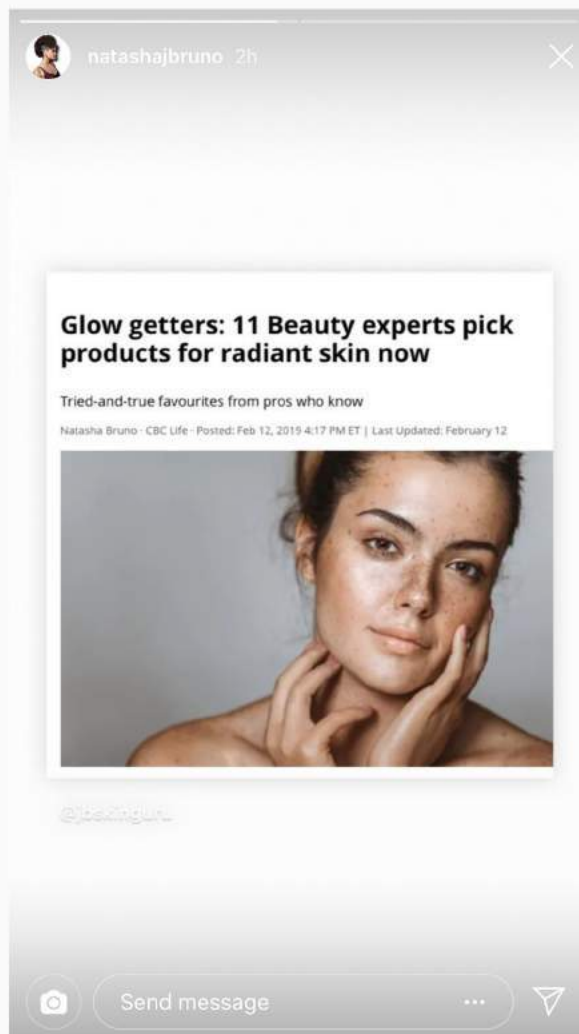
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