



## Backgrounder

### About the Program

The Mentorship Program works by connecting an Indigenous post-secondary protégé with a mentor in their chosen field(s) of study. The mentor's role is to provide a positive, professional role model for their protégé, while being open to professional and cultural learning opportunities themselves. The protégé's role is to participate actively in maximizing the benefits of the mentorship, for both their own career and their Mentor.

The Influence Mentoring program is an online system that allows for any Indigenous post-secondary student (protégé) to participate in the mentorship program from anywhere in Canada. The protégé simply fills in an online form/profile that details who they are, what school they attend, and what their field of study(s) is/are. The program mentors (mentors) are a select group of individuals who have volunteered to be in the program. These mentors can be Indigenous or non-Indigenous people. Mentors and protégés will be matched first according to their shared fields of study and work then secondly based on an identified relationship dynamic; a tailored approach where both go through the same online profile building exercise. This mentor/protégé relationship will be managed through the online mentorship portal and allows for virtual or in-person mentoring. This style of matching also allows for the best opportunity for success as the mentor and protégé do not need to be in the same physical region.

The program will also provide opportunities for: ongoing virtual mentoring education; professional/career development; employment and peer networking; enhanced cultural competency; and related support services. The Program is aspirational as protégés strive for career success and mentors become champions.

The official length of each mentoring match is approximately one year, which should provide enough time for a significant impact on the lives of both participants. However, it is the goal of Influence that the mentor/protégé relationships created through this program will become long-term connections that are rewarding for both people.

### Program Values

Taking inspiration from traditional Indigenous ethics, the values of the program are:

1. **Talent Development:** We see an immense potential in Indigenous students. We want to play a role in shaping them into future leaders for the community.
2. **Mutual Respect:** We believe that this program grows from seeds of mutual respect between different cultures and beliefs, and we further believe it can help that respect blossom through reciprocal mentorship.
3. **Inclusivity:** Our program makes no distinction between First Nations, Inuit, Métis or Non-Status Indians, between young or old: all self-motivated, Indigenous, post-secondary students are welcome to become protégés. Partners and mentors of all cultural backgrounds are welcomed as well.
4. **Partnership:** Influence Mentoring strives to develop partnerships with many organizations, in education, industry, and the community. This enhances the performance of this program and the well-being of Indigenous people across Canada.

## **Next Steps**

We are seeking to conduct a pilot in 2021/2022 with a committed institutional partner to connect us to Indigenous students. This pilot will inform the continued development of our program and organization.

We would like a partner who is equally passionate about the positive effects of mentorship, believes in the Influence Mentorship values and mentorship model, and sees the mutually beneficial relationship this partnership would create.

Influence Mentoring is built on an online platform, which allows Protégés and Mentors to connect with each other from any location, so its rollout is not impacted by the pandemic. In light of COVID-19 perhaps the need is greater as Indigenous students can find connection to a broader community, and the ability to lean on diverse support networks, both of which Influence Mentoring will create.

## **Influence Mentoring Leadership**

### **Colby L. Delorme ICD.D**

Colby Delorme is one of the founding creators of Influence Mentoring Society and was appointed Chairperson of the IMS' Board of Directors in December 2020. With over 26 years of experience in business and as an entrepreneur, Mr. Delorme has built multiple business and is currently the President of the Imagination Group of Companies. Mr. Delorme's experience has spanned the construction industry, brand development and marketing, a certification practice, franchise development, tobacco manufacturing, and business consulting. Mr. Delorme is also a celebrated industry leader; in 2010 he was inducted into the Calgary Top 40 Under 40 and won the Big Idea 2. In 2014, Mr. Delorme was the recipient of the Dr. Douglas Cardinal Award from the University of Calgary. Colby Delorme has a long and varied career in Not-For-Profit and Corporate governance, sitting on many boards over the past 15 years. Mr. Delorme holds an Institute of Corporate Directors Designation from the Rotman School of Management. Colby is passionate about creating new and sustainable opportunities in business and for Indigenous peoples.

### **Jay Gerritsen B.F.A.**

Jay Gerritsen is one of the founding creators of Influence Mentoring Society, and was appointed Vice Chairperson of the IMS' Board of Directors in December 2020. Jay's professional career includes over 20 years in team building management and leadership roles. Jay is currently a Senior Consultation Advisor for the Major Projects Management Office, Natural Resources Canada. Jay brings knowledge and awareness of Indigenous issues and the Government of Canada's obligations and commitments with respect to Indigenous Peoples. Jay has a unique understanding of the diversity of the culture, the history, legal rights, politics and an understanding of the top issues for Indigenous Peoples; both politically and socially. Jay holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communication. Jay is also a member of the Board of Directors and Miskanawah Community Services Association, a not-for-profit social services organization working from an Indigenous worldview to strengthen the resilience of children, youth and families. Jay lives in Calgary with his wife Arden and son Matthew.

**Amy Comegan FCPA, FCGA, CAFM**

Amy Comegan was appointed as Treasurer to the Influence Mentoring Society Board of Directors in February 2021. Amy Comegan is an Anishinaabe woman and a member of the Anishinaabeg of Naongashiing First Nation in Ontario. She has spent her career working in finance and administration in First Nation communities and for First Nation not-for-profit organizations. Amy is passionate about contributing to the financial success of First Nation communities and organizations serving First Nation people. Amy's First Nations organization experience encompasses health, child and family services and most recently a Tribal Council delivering services to nine First Nations in the area of water and wastewater; infrastructure; education; and economic development. She holds the designations of Chartered Professional Accountant and Certified General Accountant as well as the Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager designation from AFOA Canada. In November 2020, the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario conferred Ms. Comegan a Fellowship designation. This distinction recognizes exceptional service to the community by its members. Amy has worked extensively with community First Nation leadership as well as Board of Directors on First Nation organizations. She has also obtained ample experience serving as a Board of Director on national and regional Boards with First Nation organizations such as the First Nations Financial Management Board, and Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Ontario.

**Bruce Randall LLB, BA, BCL**

Bruce Randall is one of the founding creators of Influence Mentoring Society and was appointed Secretary of the IMS' Board of Directors in December 2020. Bruce is a community-builder, lawyer, corporate professional and non-profit leader with 40 years of progressive experience across Canada, helping organizations develop and grow, with expertise in infrastructure and governance alignment with organizational goals; team building; stakeholder engagement; and strategic planning and execution. Currently the Executive Director of the Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC), Bruce is a proud member of CRIEC's founding group. CRIEC designs and delivers highly effective employment-related mentoring programs connecting newcomer professionals with Calgary-region corporate mentors. Bruce retired as an active lawyer and General Counsel in 2004, having served as the lead in-house legal advisor for several large Canadian public companies, namely The Forzani Group Ltd. in Calgary and CCM, The Hockey Company in Montreal. Previously, Bruce was in private legal private with two of Canada's top law firms in Toronto and Montreal. Bruce's community leadership includes serving as the Board Chairperson of Miskanawah Community Services Association (an Indigenous social services organization serving Indigenous children, youth and families; Miskanawah is deeply rooted in Cree cultural teachings and language which guided all areas of the organization including Board and governance practices); co-founder and Member of Mosaic Rotary Club (a Calgary-based club founded on the principles of diversity and inclusion); committee member of Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (providing support to Alberta's settlement and integration sector); and committee member of BlackNorth Initiative, Alberta Chapter (providing support for the removal of anti-Black systemic barriers negatively affecting the lives of Black Canadians). Raised in northern New Brunswick, Bruce's life has been influenced, informed and inspired by that special place's local community leaders, cultures and traditions.

**Jennifer Findlay MA, BA**

Jennifer Findlay was appointed to the Influence Mentoring Society Board of Directors in December 2020. With almost 20 years of experience working in the private sector, Jennifer's work has focused largely on building

relationships with a broad base of communities and stakeholders to ensure understanding of, and benefit from, resource development. Jennifer currently works at Pembina Pipeline Corporation as Senior Manager, External Affairs Services, leading Communications, Community and Indigenous Affairs and Government Relations teams. Prior to this, she led Government and Tribal Affairs on Pembina's Jordan Cove LNG project, based out of Portland, Oregon. Before joining Pembina, Jennifer held a variety of roles at Talisman Energy and Repsol Oil and Gas Canada, where her work on resource plays and major projects took her to many lesser-known parts of Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. She spent an additional three years working firmly outside her comfort zone in development roles focused on financial and procurement controls, water strategy and international exploration. Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Indigenous Studies (with distinction), a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (with distinction) and a Master of Arts in Community Studies. Jennifer is also the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors at Miskanawah Community Services Association, a not-for-profit social services organization working from an Indigenous worldview to strengthen the resilience of children, youth and families. She is passionate about volunteering to support Indigenous communities and people as a result of the profound impact they have had on her life and her worldview. Jennifer lives in Calgary with her husband Brent and dog Stella, and works hard to enjoy as much travelling and good food as is humanly possible.

**Valerie K. Knaga B. Hons. N.A.**

Valerie Knaga was appointed to the Influence Mentoring Society Board of Directors in February 2021. Valerie has extensive experience in working with Indigenous communities across Alberta, in Saskatchewan and British Columbia on land use studies, reconciliation efforts, heritage preservation, historic resource management, protection of culturally significant sites and consultation. Prior to joining the Government of Alberta, Valerie worked as a researcher with a focus on applied historical research. Graduating with an Honors in Natives Studies, from the Faculty of Native Studies, University of Alberta, Valerie's thesis focus was on historic Métis communities in Alberta. Valerie has been with the Government of Alberta for 13 years, for the last 8 years she been in the role of Director of the Aboriginal Heritage Section in the Historic Resources Management Branch with Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women. Valerie is passionate about Indigenous heritage and is committed to working towards meeting the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action and recognizing the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within a cultural resource and heritage management setting. Valerie is Co-Chair on the Indigenous Engagement Working Group, for the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Table on Culture and Heritage (FPTCH) and enjoys working in collaboration with colleagues across Canada in different provincial, territorial and federal organizations. Valerie has recently sat on the City of St. Albert's Heritage Advisory Committee and is a current member of the National Trust for Canada.