

## How BC Notary Students Benefit from Mentoring Relationships: the Protégés' View

As a supplementary component of the Notary Preparatory Course, *The Scrivener* is now finding its way into the homes of 18 fresh Notary students who constitute the Class of 2004.

Presentation of distinctive and useful educational themes is a strong feature of The Society's quarterly journal. In this issue, the collection of articles on the subject of *Mentoring, Coaching, and Role Modelling* offers valuable insight on ways of acquiring the kind of skills a Notary aspirant strives to develop and master, early on.

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This piece explores the progress of a small study group comprised of three Notary students—Mia Sevigny, Joseph Valerio, and myself—and submits the protégés' view on the subject of mentoring.

Although the Notary Preparatory Course is conducted in distance education

style, there is no lack of opportunity for course participants to seek prompt mentoring assistance from others.

Topping the list is our designated tutor, Marny Morin. Besides providing helpful written comments when returning marked assignments, Marny acts as coach for anyone who may encounter certain ambiguities in his or her review of the course materials, and who may require further clarification on points of law or facts of a problem-solving situation.

The Notary students' Website and Bulletin Board is a mentoring forum available 24/7. It is remarkable that at the time of this writing, late January 2003, there are already 130 postings of queries and comments on the Bulletin Board, where each student can either ask a question or provide an answer to queries raised by others. As Mia comments, "This discussion board is invaluable, especially for those students in remote areas."

Added to the Website facility are the various Study Seminars organized for the Class of 2004 by the course administrators. To date we have attended the first in a series of such seminars: the November 2002 conference focusing on the Contract Law, the Structure, and History of The Society of Notaries Public of BC, and other informative topics



*Study group Joseph Valerio, Mia Sevigny, and Fred Khasha in the Burnaby Public Library in Metrotown*

presented by seasoned professionals. Thus, despite the distance nature of our educational pursuit, the students' experience is typified by the convenience of instant cyber contact with those revered as our coaches and mentors.

"The mentoring really starts when students complete the interview stage of the application process," says Mia. "Seasoned professionals have already agreed to spend time with aspiring Notaries, share some of their own experiences, and provide important feedback. My interview was conducted with the utmost professionalism and was extremely informative—it gave me personal insight as to whether the Notarial profession was going to be a 'good fit' for me."

It was in these informal exchanges that the significance of our own modest study group, as a mentoring medium, came to light. Joseph, whose initial suggestion on the Bulletin Board led to the formation of our group, puts it this way, "When there is doubt in my ability

to understand and complete an assignment, I feel fortunate to be in a study group where we address our doubts and concerns, and help each other overcome them. Further, there is the pressure—welcomed pressure—to be diligent in completing the assignments ahead of time and be up to speed with the study group. I find correspondence schooling more difficult than being in a classroom; it requires more self-discipline. In a study group, when a question or concern is voiced, feedback is immediate. With a small study group, it feels like we have camaraderie among us."

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We also discussed the invaluable opportunities given to us by some of the established Notaries in the Lower

Mainland to attend their offices and acquire hands-on knowledge of the delicate practical side of the profession, i.e., things you normally don't find in a textbook. I explained to my friends how wonderful it felt to log on to my computer one day last September, to notice I was receiving an email reply from William Anderson's Notary office in Burnaby, advising I would be welcome there as a trainee.

Since then, the extent of my learning from Bill and his cooperative and competent staff has been tremendous, not only in terms of understanding how some of the more complex real property conveyancing matters take shape and are dealt with in practice, but also the no less important nitty-gritty of attending to clients' needs and affecting customer satisfaction in a busy Notary's work environment.

Joseph, too, seems very pleased with the mentor-protégé relationship in which he's been involved. "When the

advisability of having a mentor was suggested, I opened up the phone book and made a cold call to Notary Elizabeth Rechsteiner. Elizabeth has been more than helpful, being a recent grad herself. Attending her practice once a week has allowed me to see what the day-to-day operations entail—from answering phones to acquiring new software, to facilitating procedures and finding information. I have been fortunate that, when deemed appropriate, Elizabeth lets me sit in when she meets with a client. This has been very useful in showing me how matters are discussed and what diverse issues can arise.”

Finally, Mia, Joseph, and I agreed that for the purpose of building a successful mentor-protégé relationship, it is essential that both parties hold several key attributes. Among other things, these include clarity of objective, willingness, time, commitment, diversity of roles and

responsibilities, and the two most important attributes of a protégé—self-confidence and confidentiality.

On the latter two, we concluded that much of the onus for building a mentoring relationship is, and should be, on the protégé. A protégé needs to have the self-confidence to approach likely mentors and effectively present the merits of a potential mentoring relationship. As well, your mentor expects—and professional ethics demand—that the particulars of any information coming to your notice as a result of accessing the facilities under the mentor’s control be kept confidential.

As evidenced by the multiple interactions of this small study group, an open and honest human relationship is key to powerful mentoring. In an affiliation of this nature, parties are driven by a common yearning to develop

a defined skill or competency. This objective will best be achieved by a mutual show of respect for the values and expectations of both sides.

We hope that the success of this study group will inspire the rest of the Class of 2004 in forming similar mentoring relationships among the various members themselves, and with other agreeable practising Notaries throughout the province. ▲

**Fred (Fariborz) Khasha** is a professional translator and court interpreter and a regular freelance contributor to the Persian language publications in BC. He is one of the 18 students currently enrolled in the 2002 – 2004 Notary Preparatory Course.

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*At a recent information and social function with Rich Coleman, Solicitor General for the Province of BC, G. W. (Wayne) Braid, Executive Director of The Society, and Delta Notary Public Del Virk were able to share thoughts and ideas on the provision of Notarial services to the people of British Columbia.*

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