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New partnership with Influence Mentoring creates innovative mentoring program for Indigenous students

Indigenous students at the University of Lethbridge will have the opportunity to connect with Indigenous and non-Indigenous professionals across a range of career paths thanks to a new partnership between ULethbridge and the Influence Mentoring Society.

The program is an online initiative that pairs interested Indigenous students who are committed to achieving their career goals with professionals in a protégé/mentor relationship. In addition, the mentoring partnerships are integrated with strategies and projects including workshops and bootcamp-style and other experiential learning sessions that are safe, inclusive and culturally aware.



“We are truly excited to launch this new partnership with Influence Mentoring,” explains Shanda Webber, manager of Strategic Indigenous Learning Initiatives for the EleV Project at the University. “This innovative program will allow Indigenous students from ULethbridge the opportunity to build genuine relationships with dedicated mentors in the field of their study that will ultimately lead to building capacity, talent and enhancing future career opportunities. As well, the partnership will contribute to a foundation of knowledge and mutual respect between industry and Indigenous students, thus helping to create a more equitable and inclusive work environment.”

The vision of Influence Mentoring is to work collaboratively, across cultures, to create better opportunities for Indigenous post-secondary students throughout their post-secondary careers, and to create measurable opportunities for reciprocal mentoring, in the spirit of reconciliation, to increase awareness of Indigenous culture, history and issues.

“Traditionally, mentorship has played an important role in the Indigenous community,” says Influence Mentoring Society Chairperson, Colby Delorme. “Culture, traditions, spirituality, teachings, and stories have all been shared and best understood through the

Elder and protégé relationship. This transference of knowledge has been integral to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Influence Mentoring is built on this foundation.”

Since the receipt of seed funding from actors and philanthropists Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively as well as additional support from RBC and a family foundation, the Influence Mentoring program has been successful in collaborating with several notable and national organizations to provide one-on-one and group mentorship to post-secondary Indigenous youth in a variety of industries and sectors.

This national program will match a mentor with an Indigenous student for one academic year, with the opportunity for the student to match with the same or other mentors in the same industry for each year of their educational journey.

“With the mentorship program occurring simultaneously over the full academic year, Indigenous students will have extra supports and guidance to assist them in achieving success,” adds Webber. “The approach is also holistic in nature, ensuring our next generation of leaders has access to the tools and resources necessary for a successful life of community service, family-building and personal fulfillment.”

When EleV was established in 2019, programs such as these were at the heart of its mandate.

“The Influence Mentoring program is a prime example of what the EleV project is all about — creating opportunities for Indigenous learners to be full partners in their education and journey to meaningful work,” says Webber.

A virtual information session for ULeithbridge Indigenous students took place today, with future Influence Mentoring information workshops to be announced shortly. Indigenous students who are interested in becoming a protégé are encouraged to apply online at [Protégé Application: influencementoring.com](https://www.influencementoring.com).

About Influence Mentoring

Influence Mentoring is an Alberta society governed by a volunteer Board of Directors with substantial experience working with Indigenous communities and across the not-for-profit and corporate sectors.

Influence is a collaborative organization whose goals are to create better opportunities for Indigenous post-secondary students, and to create opportunities for mentors to raise their awareness of Indigenous issues, culture, and history. The Influence Mentoring program itself is a new initiative aimed at building capacity, talent, and career opportunities for eligible Indigenous students, who are committed to achieving their career goals. This innovative program is delivered through an online platform

thereby allowing protégés and mentors to participate in the mentoring program from anywhere in Canada.

About EleV

Established in late 2019, EleV is an innovative partnership between the Blackfoot Confederacy, the University of Lethbridge and the Mastercard Foundation established to create educational opportunities for Indigenous youth and bolster supports to ensure their success.

The tri-partnership includes four overarching objectives:

- Build pathways and enhance access to post-secondary education for prospective indigenous students
- Enhance supports to increase indigenous student success at the University of Lethbridge
- Leverage current academic and research programming, and infrastructure to build connections between education and economic opportunity linked employment
- Support the development of employment and economic development opportunities through the sharing of connections and resources to balance the principles and visions of the Blackfoot confederacy, and aspirations of the individual nations and aspirations of the individuals

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/new-partnership-influence-mentoring-creates-innovative-mentoring-program-indigenous-students#.YkyAbZPMJFw>

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Contact:

Trevor Kenney, News & Information Manager

403-329-2710

403-360-7639 (cell)

trevor.kenney@uleth.ca

@ULethbridgeNews