

Mentoring matters



Having started in the mid-1980s under the original articling program, **Dan Jones, AACI, P.**

App has been a mentor to candidate appraisers for more than 20 years. “Although it carries a different name, the training that goes on is still as valuable and important,” says Jones. “Whether it is called articling or mentoring, my commitment to quality and high standards is still the same.”

In fact, his first experience with mentoring was on the receiving end of the process. In 1974, Jones graduated from Vancouver’s Langara College with a diploma in Realty Appraisal. After working for 13 years as a Senior Appraiser of Industrial Valuations for the British Columbia Assessment

Authority in Richmond/Delta, he decided to pursue an AACI designation. During that time, he was mentored by several different appraisers at BC Assessment in the Vancouver and Delta areas. Reflects Jones: “The in-depth training I received gave me the foundation to tackle any appraisal problem and to use critical thinking skills as a necessary day-to-day requirement in our consulting business.”

In 1986, shortly after being awarded his AACI designation, he purchased Campbell and Pound, one of British Columbia’s oldest appraisal firms. With plans for expanding the practice, mentoring upcoming appraisers became almost immediately a part of his work. Over the years, the candidates Jones has mentored have

exclusively been people he has hired on as staff members.

“The time I put in developing self-sufficient critical thinkers will pay off as my business flourishes down the road,” he explains, adding that, even if the accredited appraiser eventually moves on, the industry will benefit. “I look at mentoring as an investment, not only in my business, but in our industry as a whole. Any time you inject new blood into an organization, whether it be your own practice or the Appraisal Institute of Canada, it invigorates the candidate as well as all those around the candidate. Showing new candidates the ropes, helping them to avoid pit falls, and working with them is not only healthy, but refreshing.”

At Campbell and Pound, the process has a positive effect on everyone involved. Even if Jones is the mentor, the candidate works as part of the team. In the first month, teaching takes place in a classroom-like setting. Examining zoning, official community plans and various types of architecture puts a practical twist on what candidates have learned in school. Then, for a 60-day period, the candidate participates in performing group appraisals with other members of the team. During a group appraisal, candidates get a chance to be involved in everything from measuring a house/ICI building to visiting city hall's planning, engineering and building permits departments.

Eventually, the candidates become involved in every aspect of the firm's appraisal practice, including land use studies, expropriation/partial taking appraisals, portfolio valuations, highest and best use analysis, rental surveys, insurance unit in place replacement costings, absorption studies and appraisals for mortgage security and insurance purposes. Although 70% of the work



DAN JONES, AACI, P.A.P.P.

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at Campbell and Pound is residential, the firm also has a substantial industrial, commercial, and investment real estate division.

After participating in group appraisals, the candidate is ready to become an assistant to an appraiser. At the end of a day working in the field, candidates return to the office and any questions are answered. “That is where the mentors are the most valuable,” notes Jones. And that is where Jones is concerned that there may be a big hole when a candidate and a mentor are separated by geography.

“There are only so many hours in a day,” he adds. “So, if I am not in a position to take on any more candidates for mentorship, it then becomes a challenge to place them with willing and committed mentors who will follow through and help them get the experience needed. This challenge becomes frustrating at times for candidates in remote areas where geography and member numbers are limited.”

No one knows this better than **Terry Tillberg, CRA**. Now retired, the Kenora, Ontario appraiser spent many



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years as the only appraiser between Winnipeg and Thunder Bay. Tillberg started in real estate in 1981, working in sales for 10 years before obtaining his CRA so that he could focus strictly on appraisals. "I was not mentored," he recalls. "At one time, I sent my work to a gentleman in Dryden, who basically checked it over and signed the forms." Taking the course work by correspondence resulted in such slow progress that Tillberg finally decided to temporarily relocate to London, Ontario.

When he returned with his CRA to work for Kenora's Royal LePage office, his territory extended from Fort Frances to the south, Dryden to the east and Red Lake to the north, each community located a two to three hour drive from Kenora. "It was quite an expansive area," chuckles Tillberg, noting that his work included many types of recreational properties.

Then, three years ago, he decided it was time to retire and to begin mentoring Loren Knopf. "He was going to come into the firm and take over my practice," explains Tillberg. "We felt the company needed another appraiser to carry on the work."

Although there was another appraiser in Kenora, the latter was also involved in sales and, as a result, restricted the number of appraisals he performed. "That left a pretty big load for me," notes Tillberg. "There was no lack of work, just a lack of appraisers. If we had an AACI, he or she might be able to offer more experience as a mentor, depending on what the candidate wanted to do when he was finished."

Knopf's goal was to become a CRA. Taking his courses by correspondence, he was soon learning all the technical aspects of appraising. That left the practical side. Tillberg started by taking Knopf out with him when doing appraisals. He then suggested the candidate do an appraisal concurrently, after which the two would sit down and compare notes. Knopf asked questions and Tillberg made suggestions. "He was getting to prepare appraisals and consider what changes needed to be made," recalls the senior appraiser. "They say that the best education is working at the job. I felt that the hands-on experience was equally as valuable as what he was learning in a book."



TERRY TILLBERG, CRA

Mentors are instrumental in keeping candidates interested, excited and enthusiastic.

Much of the knowledge Tillberg passed on cannot even be found on a map. He points out that, unlike in a city, many roads off the local highways are unmarked. "A lot of it is the knowledge of where to go," he says. "In our community, we do not have subdivisions like they do in larger centres. In Kenora, you are lucky if you find two homes that are the same."

Knopf is also very fortunate to have inherited the files that Tillberg diligently prepared over the years. They will provide useful references and guidelines for many of the evaluations required to keep up with the skyrocketing real estate values of waterfront properties in the past five years. Tillberg feels confident in having left the business in good hands. "I was fortunate to have a very good student," he says. "He did very well in his exams, so I was satisfied that any help I did give him was not in vain."

Necessity was a driving force behind Tillberg's mentoring of Knopf, a situation that is very common across the appraisal industry. Mentoring makes sense for a firm's expansion or succession plans. However, when a candidate is not on staff to be "groomed" as part of a firm, finding a mentor can be difficult.

"That is where the industry has a challenge," says Jones. "We need more mentoring opportunities for people who are self-employed." As a part-time member of the Board of Examiners Committee (AIC BC As-

sociation), he interviews seasoned candidate members who have completed their academic requirements and passed their demonstration reports. They should also demonstrate that they have an appropriate amount of practical experience. In instances where that experience appears to be lacking, Jones has found that candidates often had mentors who were a few hundred kilometres away.

"We need to find incentives for mentors to want to volunteer to help these people out," he says. Jones suggests the possibility of encouraging mentoring from institutional appraisers by offering professional development credits in return. He notes that, in British Columbia alone, 18% of appraisers work for BC Assessments. They form a pool of highly qualified AACIs and CRAs.

In areas such as the Yukon and the Kootenays, where fee appraisers may be separated by 150 kilometers of geography, it is difficult for mentors and candidates to keep in touch, and for appraisers to drive to a chapter meeting for a professional development credit. But, many areas have branch offices for BC Assessments or for the Ministry of Transportation and Highways in which the institutional staff already has a closer relationship with independent appraisers than is the case in southern more populated areas. By capitalizing on those relationships, the appraisal industry could potentially provide more mentoring opportunities.

"There seems to be no pool of mentors waiting to be claimed by candidates and that is a challenge that the AIC must tackle in the near future to help our candidates move forward," notes Jones. "Based on the age of our membership, it is important that existing members see succession within their profession as a broad and ongoing issue. Mentors are instrumental in keeping candidates interested, excited and enthusiastic. By mentoring candidates to be ethical professionals and teaching them the highest standards possible, we are setting the stage for the long-term success of all our members. When approached by a candidate to become a mentor, experienced appraisers must look, not only at the long-term goals of their own career, but also at the future of their profession." 🍷