

Introducing Albertans to the CPA Profession

Fall 2026

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Capitalize is a semi-annual magazine that introduces students and others to the accounting profession in Alberta.

Visit capitalize.cpaalberta.ca for even more *Capitalize*!

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Rachel Miller FCPA, FCA
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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

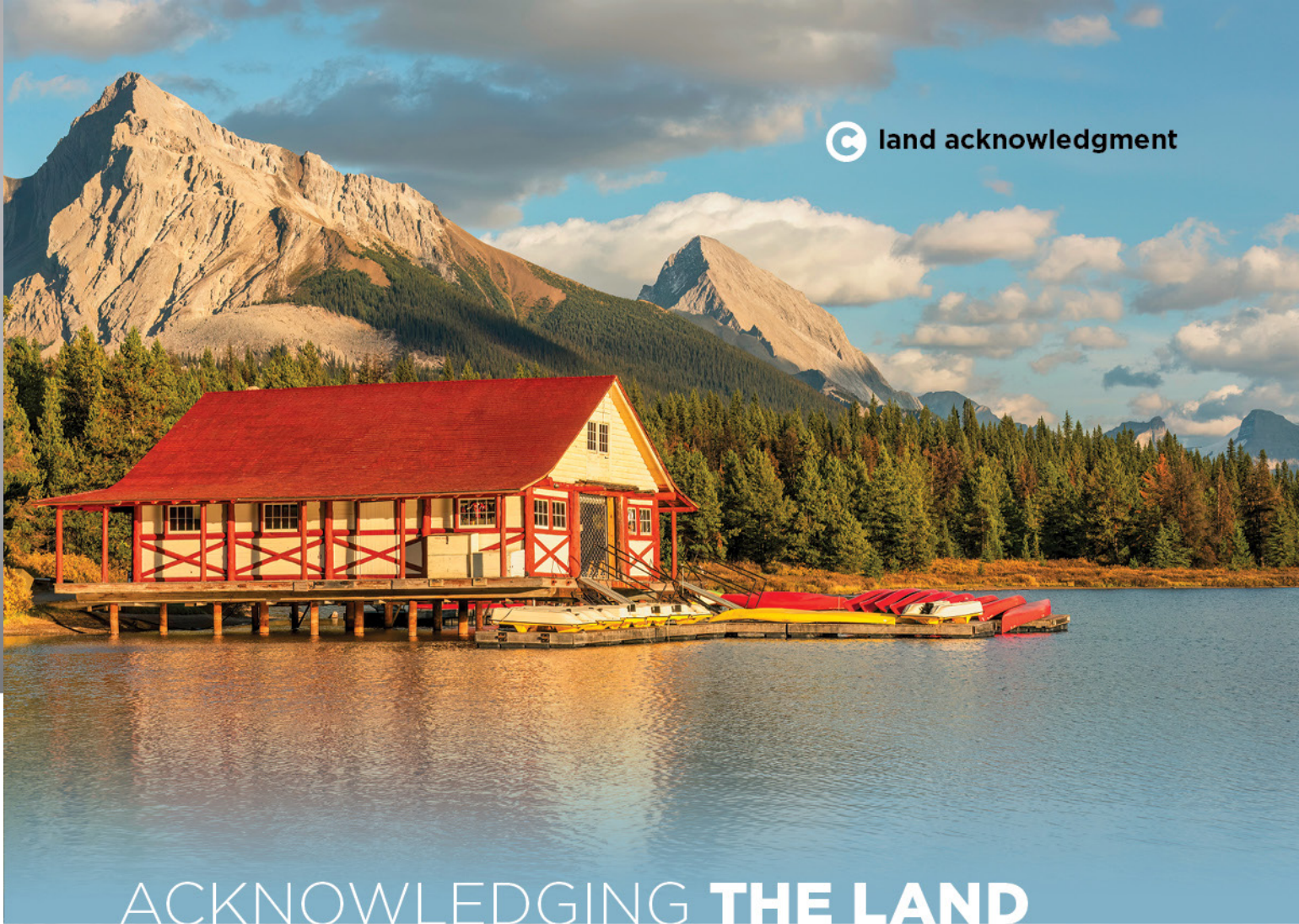
Dear Alberta students:

In this issue of *Capitalize*, we explore the history of the Alberta CPA—not as a dusty timeline, but as a profession shaped by real people, major economic shifts, and moments of financial leadership. From Luca Pacioli's Summa de Arithmetica and the invention of the ledger to the introduction of income tax as a wartime measure and the discovery of oil in Alberta and beyond, the story of accounting is the story of communities, industries, and public trust.

Think of this history as more than a look back; it's a preview of what makes being a CPA exciting. Every major shift created a need for curious problem-solvers who could ask the right questions, make sense of change, and help others move forward with confidence. That is still true today, whether your interests lead you to public practice, entrepreneurship, technology, sustainability, public service, or an industry that has yet to be imagined.

I'm honoured to be part of the rich history of this trusted profession, and I'm excited to see where we will go as the business world continues to evolve. If you'd like to one day help shape the future of this trusted profession, don't hesitate to reach out to our student recruitment team at recruitment@cpaalberta.ca. I hope you enjoy this issue of *Capitalize*, and I look forward to supporting your student experience and CPA journey.

Rachel Miller FCPA, FCA
CEO, CPA Alberta



WE CALL ALBERTA

We acknowledge the land we call Alberta is the traditional and ancestral territory of many Indigenous peoples, who have lived on and taken care of these lands since time immemorial. We are honoured and grateful to share this land.

The CPA Alberta office in Amiskwacîwâskahikan (the Cree word for the area known as Edmonton) is on the traditional lands of many First Nations, including the Nêhiyawak, Anishinaabe, Niitsitapi, Dene, and Nakota Sioux. It is also within the Métis Nation's North Saskatchewan River Territory and Treaty 6 Territory.

The CPA Alberta office in Moh'kinsstis (the Blackfoot word for the area known as Calgary) is on the traditional lands of many First Nations, including the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani), the Îyâxe Nakoda (Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney), and Tsuut'ina. It is also within the Métis Nation's Battle River Territory and Treaty 7 Territory.

In the spirit of reconciliation and respect, we acknowledge all the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for millennia and who have faced many barriers in the CPA profession. CPA Alberta is committed to building a profession where Indigenous peoples and their voices and experiences are heard, valued, respected, and celebrated.

Why do we acknowledge the land?

Land acknowledgments are traditional protocol used to show gratitude and pay respect to the land and those who call it home.

When part of a thoughtful, intentional process that includes ongoing education and action, land acknowledgments can move beyond a performative gesture and become a starting point on the journey of truth and reconciliation. 



CAN'T-MISS EVENTS FOR FUTURE CPAS

CPA Alberta hosts a number of annual events for students, appears at career fairs, and sponsors events at post-secondary institutions across Alberta.

Stay in the know about what's coming
up at cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Events



MEET YOUR 2026-27

CPA CAMPUS AMBASSADORS

The 2026/27 CPA Campus Ambassador team is here to assist you on the path toward the Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation. CPA Campus Ambassadors are your primary connection to CPA Alberta on campus. They share information about important CPA-related events and activities, answer your questions about the path to becoming a CPA, and bring *Capitalize* to your campus every term.

Bella Jahner

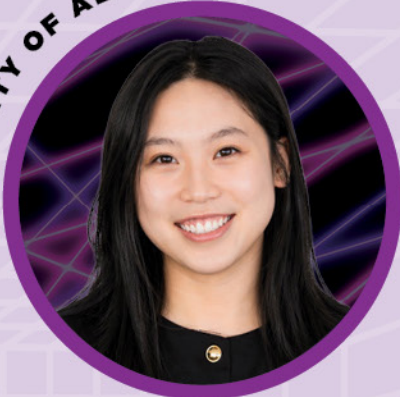
What song would be your finals-week anthem?

My finals-week anthem would definitely be “Springsteen” by Eric Church. It’s one of those songs that can instantly put me in a better mood no matter how stressed I am, and I honestly don’t think I’ll ever get sick of it.

MACEWAN UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA



Christina Tran

What’s one item you always carry in your backpack?

A portable charger. Between classes, meetings, networking events, and campus activities, my phone somehow manages to be at five per cent when I need it most.

NAIT



Ben Toshack

What’s something about accounting or business that surprised you?

What surprised me about business was the culture surrounding work and networking. I had never heard of LinkedIn and didn’t have a clue about networking events when I went into business.

NAIT



Dev Vodehra

What’s been one of the biggest lessons from your post-secondary journey so far?

Never shy away from an opportunity to try something new. I think post-secondary is the perfect time for students to explore, meet new people and find what they enjoy. You have to try everything at least once!

Diya Duggal

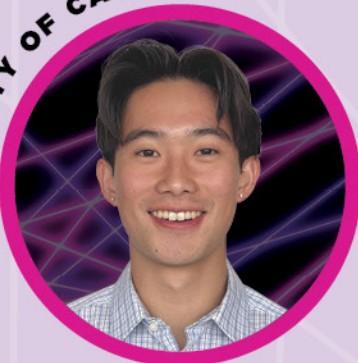
What’s one thing you wish more people understood about accounting?

I wish more people understood that accounting is much more than just working with numbers. It can be challenging and sometimes stressful, but it also helps you build strong problem-solving, communication, and professional skills.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY



Madden Chau

Who has positively influenced your student journey?

My parents have had a massive impact on my academic journey. From building me up as a person to teaching me to value challenges and face them head-on, they have been crucial to my success and an incredible support system.

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE • CALGARY



Mannapreet Kaur

What's a podcast, show, app, or creator you've been enjoying lately?

Lately, I've been enjoying using Notion to stay organized and keep track of school, goals, and deadlines. It has made balancing everything much easier.

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY



Crystal Osagioduwa

What is something about you that might surprise people?

People think I am quiet until they hear me mutter one sarcastic comment and suddenly realize I have been funny this whole time, just politely minding my business.

SAIT



Anika Skoko

What's a podcast, show, app, or creator you've been enjoying lately?

My favorite podcast is Huberman Lab. I love learning about human performance, health, and the science behind building better habits.

SAIT



Claire Dixon

What's something about you that might surprise people?

The healthcare industry is where my post-secondary journey started. I was originally working towards becoming a licensed optician before I transitioned into business.

MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY



Shehnoor Virk

What's been one of the biggest lessons from your post-secondary journey so far?

One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that success isn't about being perfect, it's about being consistent. Showing up, staying disciplined, and continuing to improve a little each day can make a huge difference over time.

MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY



Mateo Vrhovac

What's a podcast, show, app, or creator you've been enjoying lately?

A show I've been enjoying recently is a series called *From*. It's on Paramount+ and was made by the creators of *Lost*. Needless to say, I have been enjoying the constant suspense and lack of answers as I typically like to watch shows that are in the sci-fi and mystery genres.

**Reach out
to your CPA
Campus
Ambassador!**





Mental health is at the heart of the profession



**Post-secondary
students and
recent grads!**

Ready to go PRO? Don't miss the PRO Dinner, where a dynamic panel will reflect on how the role of a CPA has evolved, share lessons they've learned, and explore what these changes mean for the next generation of professionals.

CALGARY

Wednesday, October 21
5:00-8:00 p.m.
BMO Centre at Stampede Park
1912 Flores Ladue Parade SE

EDMONTON

Wednesday, November 4
5:00-8:00 p.m.
JW Marriott Edmonton ICE District
10344 102 Street

Register:



Health and wellness support
for CPAs, CPA Candidates,
and their immediate families.
cpa-assist.ca



Introducing the CPA Professional Program

The CPA profession is updating its certification requirements, including the education program, exams, and practical experience components for candidates looking to enter the program in 2027

Program overview

The CPA Professional Program blends essential technical excellence in accounting and a strong grounding in ethics with real-world experience and future-focused skills.



**Those pursuing careers in public accounting must pass the Licensure version of CPA Core and pass the Licensure version of Professional Final Exam One.*

Please note: These details may be subject to change and additional information will be shared as it is known.

Foundational Experience and Professional Experience explained

What is the difference between Foundational Experience and Professional Experience?

Foundational Experience helps learners develop the competencies for more advanced roles. It may be entry level but must involve decision-making and the application of judgment and cannot be clerical in nature.

Professional Experience builds on foundational experience with greater complexity and more advanced decision-making.

Do I need to complete my Foundational Experience before submitting my Professional Work Experience Plan?

No. Before beginning your Professional Experience, you will work with your employer and mentor to develop and submit an experience plan for approval. Your plan may include both Foundational Experience and

Professional Experience and should demonstrate how you intend to meet the minimum 24-month experience requirement.

Will co-op or other prior experience count toward the Foundational Experience requirement?

Some co-op experience may be eligible if it provides opportunities to demonstrate the required competencies. Not all co-op positions will meet these requirements, and most candidates will continue developing these competencies in a post-graduation role.

If you have already completed eligible experience, you will be able to report that while submitting your Professional Experience Plan.

When can I start reporting my experience?

You may begin reporting your experience when you start the Foundational Development Module.

Admission requirements

To be accepted into the CPA Professional Program in Alberta, you must:

- 1 Have a minimum GPA (65%)
- 2 Have a post-secondary degree with at least 120 credit hours
- 3 Demonstrate knowledge of accounting and business competencies (45 credit hours in specific subject matter OR passing the Knowledge Assessment exam)
- 4 Be eligible to study in Alberta
- 5 Demonstrate good character and work, as defined by CPA Alberta

Looking for more information?

The CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) will provide updates on the new program as they are available. If you have questions about what these updates may mean for your CPA journey, please reach out to CPAWSB at cpaprogram@cpawsb.ca or the student recruitment team at CPA Alberta at recruitment@cpaalberta.ca.

Visit cpawsb.ca for more information:



Key dates

CPA Professional Program	Learners can start reporting experience	First Knowledge Assessment	First offering of new modules		First CPA Professional Exams	
2027	JANUARY	MARCH	MAY	JUNE	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
Current Program	Final Core 1 offering		Final Core 2 offering	Final Core 1 exam	Final Core 2 exam	Final Elective offering

© Note: There is only one CFE in 2027 in September

2028

MARCH

MAY

JULY

SEPTEMBER

DECEMBER

Final Elective exams

Final Capstone 1 offering

Final Capstone 1 presentations
Final Capstone 2 offering

Final CFE

Transition Deadline

QUESTIONS ABOUT BECOMING A CPA?

Scan to book an appointment with a member
of the CPA Alberta Student Recruitment team:



cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA
recruitment@cpaalberta.ca



FUND YOUR FUTURE.

"I've worked hard to get to where I am today, and I've had to make a lot of sacrifices. But receiving these awards showed me my sacrifices were worth it, reaffirmed I'm on the right path, and alleviated financial stress."



Haley Sacrey, 2026 recipient of the Alex Tutschek FCPA, FCA Award for Indigenous Student Post-Secondary Achievement, Crowe MacKay LLP No Limits Award and Joshua Letendre CPA, MPAcc Métis Community Champion Award

POST-SECONDARY AND CPA PEP
AWARDS APPLICATION DEADLINE: **January 31, 2027**

HIGH SCHOOL AWARDS
APPLICATION DEADLINE: **May 1, 2027**



Learn more and apply today!
cpaalberta.ca/Scholarships

STRUCTURE and story

Morgan Lock proves the analyst
and the artist can thrive together

By Courtney Mvula | 📷 Laughing Dog Photography

When you picture a CPA, poetry is probably not the first thing that comes to mind.

For **Morgan Lock CPA**, the two have always been more connected than they appear.

Morgan first discovered poetry as a child, long before she imagined a career in accounting. Writing became a quiet place to process her thoughts, make sense of difficult experiences, and imagine a future beyond the circumstances she was living through.

"I was probably about nine years old when I started writing," she says. "It felt like a peaceful place where I could put my feelings."

As a young mother looking for stability, Morgan chose to become a designated accountant because it offered opportunity. "I needed to focus on survival and be pragmatic," she says. "Accounting felt like something that would always give me a chance at a job."

Writing quietly faded into the background, and it wasn't until after investing so much into

her work and education that she realized she needed to reconnect with something that was purely her own.

That something was poetry.

Today, Morgan writes prolifically, often capturing ideas in the Notes app on her phone when inspiration strikes. Some poems come together in minutes after days or weeks of reflection. Others are refined over time, each word carefully chosen until it feels right.

For Morgan, writing isn't about literary perfection. It's about creating space to process emotions, reflect on life's challenges, and celebrate its joys. "Poetry helps me let things go," she says. "It helps me process things. It helps me feel all my emotions."

That creative outlet became especially valuable while completing the CPA program during the COVID-19 pandemic. She condensed the program into just 16 months, balancing the demands of work, study, and family while the world around her felt uncertain.

"Writing poetry became my distraction," Morgan says. "It helped me process everything that was happening."

Although accounting is often viewed as highly structured and poetry as deeply emotional, Morgan has never seen them as opposites.

The analytical mindset that helps her solve complex client challenges also shapes how she approaches writing. A poem, like a professional problem, often begins with an idea before being refined, adjusted, and strengthened until it reaches its fullest potential.

"I love solving problems for clients," she says. "Writing is similar. I ask myself, 'How can I make this the best it can be?'"

That balance between creativity and technical expertise has also influenced the kind of CPA Morgan strives to be. As the owner of her own accounting practice, she has built a career that reflects her values and personality. She believes authenticity is an advantage, not a limitation, and hopes her story encourages others to see that there is no single mould for what a CPA should look like.

"You can take your job seriously and still be someone who's smiley, bubbly, and into poetry," she says. "We're not monoliths. There's room for everyone."

Morgan is equally passionate about mental health, community involvement, and supporting the profession. Her contributions have been recognized through CPA Alberta's Early Achievement Award, and she has been an active member of the CPA Assist Committee, where she has seen first-hand the profession's growing commitment to wellness and inclusion.

After years of balancing work, education, and family, reconnecting with poetry reminded her that people are more than their profession. "I didn't want accounting to be the only thing that defined me," she says. "Poetry reminded me that I'm human. I'm more than any one thing."

It's a perspective she hopes future CPAs will embrace as they build careers of their own.

Success isn't only measured by professional milestones. It's also found in the passions that sustain us, the creativity that keeps us curious, and the parts of ourselves we continue to nurture long after the work-day ends.

For Morgan, those moments are often found in the lines of a poem. 📖

The beauty of being you

By Morgan Lock

The beauty of being you

Have the audacity to believe in yourself.

To let go of your inhibitions,

Your self-imposed limitations.

To stand in front of the mirror and accept,

Accept fully:

Your individualities.

Your commonalities.

The complicated facets of you

That make you shine in ways no one else can.

That curve light in ways unexplained.

To embrace,

Fully embrace:

The way your voice sounds when you sing.

Your unique laugh and smile.

The wrinkles around your eyes.

Remember.

Sit in your memories

As only you can.

As only your perspective will allow.

The map you've drawn of your happiest days.

Moments you can't talk about without tears.

The profound sadness of saying goodbye.

The thundering waves of a lonely beach.

Fall in love with your life:

The totality of it.

Let yourself feel the profundity

And the benign.

Live with a resounding kindness.

Live with critical thought over skepticism.

Be boisterous or quiet, merry, still...

Just be.

Be exactly who you are.

Know it is enough.

Where we've been

Every profession has a history.
Ours has receipts.

By Caroline Pulford

Accounting history should be boring.
But then you open the archives.

Handwritten financial statements. A ledger book patent. Photos of vintage calculators, audit stamps, magnetic data tapes, and offices from another era. Records typed line by line. Journals filled with impossibly neat handwriting. Traces of a time when spreadsheets existed entirely on paper.

Together, these start to feel less like old records and more like a gallery of the profession's evolution alongside Alberta itself—because the story of Alberta's accounting is also the story of its growth. As industries expanded and cities transformed, accountants were already helping organizations navigate change, long before anyone called it innovation.

The tools changed. The world changed. The profession changed with it. »

POV: you fell down
an accounting-history
rabbit hole

Inside the archive

Vintage accounting core



Exhibit 01
Your future career has lore

Exhibit 01

Luca Pacioli's Summa de Arithmetica introduced the principles of double-entry bookkeeping (1494).

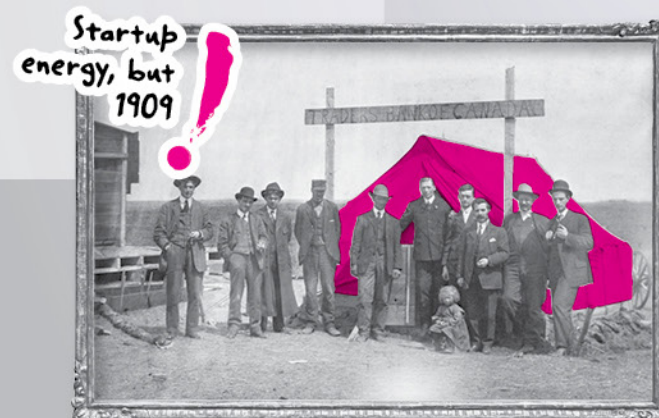


Exhibit 03
Your future career has lore

Exhibit 03

Traders Bank operated from a tent in Williston, Alta., with accountants "Shorty" Riggs of Merchants Bank and Mr. Parr of Traders Bank (1909).

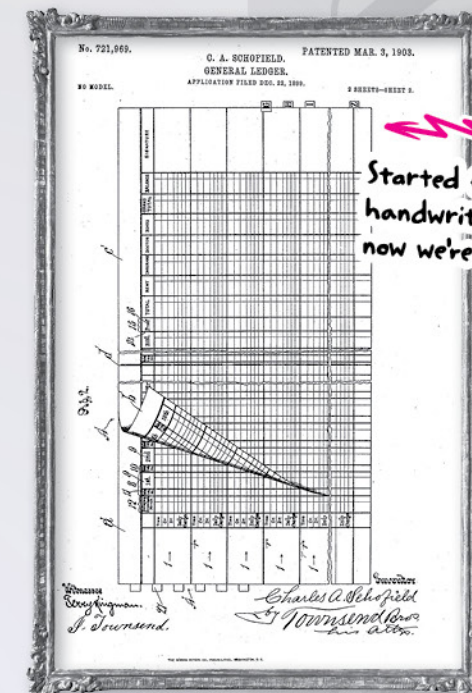


Exhibit 02
Your future career has lore

Exhibit 02

The general ledger was patented by Canadian inventor Charles A. Schofield (1903).



Exhibit 04
Your future career has lore

Exhibit 04

An official examines a ledger in the Sewer and Water Department in Edmonton (1913).



Exhibit 05
Your future career has here

Exhibit 05

An accountant's desk at the *Lethbridge Herald* in Lethbridge (1946-1947).

Manual mode:
always on



Exhibit 06
Your future career has here

Exhibit 06

An emergency backup system featuring an abacus, magnetic data tape spools, and a hammer labeled "In case of emergency break glass" (1971).

Retro tech
support

Accounting helped build Alberta

Behind every major Alberta storyline? Accounting was there.



Tax season enters
the chat
(permanently)

Exhibit 07

Income tax introduced

Introduced as a wartime measure in 1917, Canada's *Income Tax War Act* marked the federal government's entry into personal income taxation. What began as a temporary tool to fund Canada's involvement in World War I quickly reshaped how money moved through the country—and how it was recorded, reported, and understood.

For Alberta, still in the early stages of rapid economic growth, this shift created new demands for financial structure and accountability. Businesses, governments, and individuals now needed clearer records, consistent reporting, and professionals who could interpret increasingly complex financial obligations.

It was one of the early catalysts in the formalization of accounting work in the province—turning financial record-keeping from a largely administrative task into a specialized profession.



Investors waiting to buy oil stocks in Calgary during the Turner Valley oil boom (1914).

Exhibit 08

Oil discovery and changing financial reporting

The discovery of major oil reserves at Turner Valley in 1914—and later the transformational Leduc No. 1 strike in 1947—changed Alberta's economy and accelerated the growth of its energy industry. As exploration expanded and production scaled rapidly, organizations moved from relatively simple bookkeeping into far more complex financial reporting systems.

Suddenly, companies were making decisions involving significant capital investments, long development timelines, and uncertain returns. This required more sophisticated forecasting, stronger internal controls, and clearer reporting practices to track costs, revenues, reserves, and risk across increasingly large operations.

As Alberta's energy sector became one of the province's defining industries, accounting evolved alongside it—helping transform geological discoveries into investments that could be measured, managed, and trusted. Financial reporting became a critical tool for attracting capital, supporting growth, and providing confidence to investors and regulators alike. ▸

Alberta went
big, accounting
went bigger

A key figure in Alberta's accounting story

Richard (Dick) Haskayne FCPA, FCA
Leader • Born 1934

- Inside Canada's energy backbone ➤ Oil. Gas. Pipelines. Power.
- Helped shape business education in Alberta long before "talent pipeline" was a phrase

One day this could be you →



The Great West Saddlery Company float and staff pause on 8th Avenue, Calgary with Kerr Brothers and accountant Van Thiel visible off-center (1898).

The city
was still **LOADING**
○○○

Exhibit 09

The growth of Calgary and Edmonton business culture

As Calgary and Edmonton expanded from frontier settlements into established urban centres, early downtown streets filled with banks, trading companies, insurance offices, and small enterprises that formed the foundation of local economies.

As the number and scale of transactions grew, financial record-keeping became more structured and consistent. Banking institutions broadened their reach, business operations became more complex, and organizations required clearer processes to manage growth across expanding markets.

Accounting professionals helped steady the pace of development, supporting early businesses, maintaining financial continuity, and shaping the systems that allowed growth to be measured and sustained.



Ken Dickson, an engineer's accountant, checks tools with Huey, a foreman, during highway construction at Frank, Alta. (1935).



Field trip, but make
it accounting

Exhibit 10

Accountants supporting public infrastructure

Alberta was expanding and public infrastructure needed to scale up to support growing communities. Roads, bridges, utilities, schools, and civic buildings required not only engineering and labour but also financial planning, budgeting, and long-term accountability.

Public works increasingly relied on structured financial oversight to manage costs, allocate resources, and track spending across complex, multi-phase developments. From early municipal projects to larger provincial initiatives, accounting professionals played a key role in translating public investment into practical, deliverable outcomes. ▸

A key figure in Alberta's accounting story

Dorothy Reid CPA, CA
Trailblazer • 1916-99

- Stepped into a profession that wasn't built for her yet and became part of what it would become
- Became Alberta's first female professional accountant in 1949

! In her "not waiting
for an invitation" era



A key figure in Alberta's accounting story

Dr. Francis G. Winspear FCPA, FCA
Builder • 1903-97

- Integral across industries > Public practice accounting, Insurance, Steel, Aviation, Mining, Lumber, Finance.
- Invested in culture as infrastructure not an afterthought

Maxed out the skill tree



Exhibit 12

Systems behind community life

The cultural and civic institutions that define life across the province began to take shape as the province grew. Arts organizations—such as Arts Commons, Theatre Calgary, and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra—helped shape the province’s cultural identity, while institutions like the Royal Alberta Museum preserved and shared its history and stories.

Sports organizations, including the Calgary Flames, Edmonton Oilers, Calgary Stampeders, and the Edmonton Elks, became central to community life, drawing audiences together across generations and creating shared cultural moments.

Behind the scenes, accountants helped keep these organizations running, managing budgets, funding, governance, and long-term planning. They provided the structure that allowed purpose-driven institutions to grow, adapt, and endure, strengthening Alberta’s culture, communities, and civic life.

Ethel Rushton, an accountant, works at a typewriter during the Community Chest-Red Cross 18th Campaign in Calgary (1957).



The office of Harry O. Patriquen of Chandler and Patriquen Chartered Accountants, Edmonton (1914).

Proof accountants survived before Wi-Fi



Exhibit 11

Small firm practitioners and the evolution of larger accounting firms

Across Alberta’s growing towns and urban centres, early accounting was carried out by individual practitioners and small partnerships. Deeply embedded in their communities, these firms supported farmers, shop owners, trades, and family-run businesses that formed the foundation of local economies. Their work was broad and relationship-based, covering bookkeeping, tax preparation, payroll, and day-to-day financial support.

As Alberta’s economy expanded in the post-war decades—alongside growth in the energy sector and public institutions—financial activity became more complex and specialized. Small partnerships began to expand, merge, and formalize into larger regional firms, forming the foundations of more structured accounting networks.

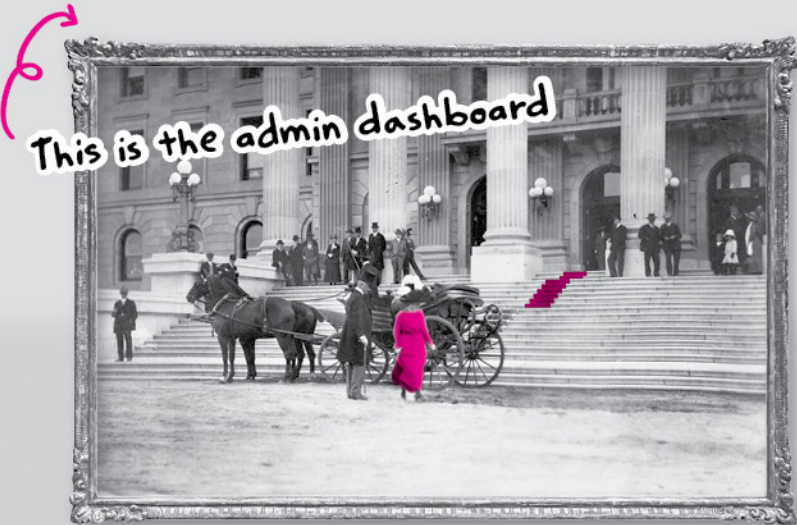


Exhibit 13

The machinery of government

Systems of governance expanded alongside population growth, urban development, and increased administrative complexity. The Alberta Legislature in Edmonton became the centre of provincial decision-making, while municipal governments in Calgary, Edmonton, and other communities developed formal structures for taxation, infrastructure, and civic services.

Accountants played a leading role in maintaining financial order across public operations. Early public service accountants and auditors ensured accountability in public spending, supporting departments that would become today’s Government of Alberta.

As services expanded, financial oversight became more formalized through institutions such as Alberta Health Services, relying on structured budgeting and reporting to manage healthcare delivery across the province. Accountants translated public policy into financial systems that could be recorded, measured, and sustained. »



CPA Alberta Joint Venture Co-chairs from left to right: Darrell Jones FCPA, FCMA, Greg Draper FCPA, FCGA, Curtis Palichuk FCPA, FCA

Exhibit 14

Governance and designation unification

As accounting in Alberta became more structured, so too did the governance of the profession. As a self-regulated profession, accounting has long operated under provincial legislation that sets standards for education, ethics, registration, and professional conduct.

Throughout much of the 20th century, the profession developed through three designations—Chartered Accountants (CA), Certified General Accountants (CGA), and Certified Management Accountants (CMA)—each with distinct training pathways, standards, and areas of focus. The profession was governed through separate regulatory bodies, even as the work performed by members became increasingly similar.

Over time, overlapping competencies and changing business needs led to unification. The *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*, proclaimed on July 1, 2015, established the CPA designation in Alberta and created a single regulatory body for the profession.

Today, CPA Alberta carries forward this integrated structure, reflecting a profession that is more connected, mobile, and consistent across practice areas, while still built on the distinct histories that shaped it. ☺



Plot twist: Now it's your turn

The tools changed. The world changed. The profession changed with it...and it's still evolving.

That evolution is your invitation to step into the exhibit and add yourself to the story. Because the archive doesn't just preserve the past—it keeps evolving with you.

Learn more about joining a profession with a robust history and a promising future at cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA

Acknowledgements

This story is built from historical photographs, records, and materials preserved by archives, libraries, museums, heritage organizations, and private collections.

History doesn't just live in textbooks. If you'd like to dig deeper, explore the Glenbow Archives' digital collections at digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca or visit museums and heritage sites across Alberta. Thousands of photographs, documents, and stories are available online for students, researchers, and curious explorers alike.



Visit for photo attributions



Dear 20-something me

Two CPAs share advice with their younger selves

The future is somehow both exciting and extremely overwhelming. What comes next? How do you prepare? How do you know you're making the right choices? Julia Read CPA, CA and Paul Groch CPA, CA remember those feelings well.

They've written advice to their younger selves, but it's advice anyone can carry with them as they navigate this tricky and thrilling time. Learn who you are, take care of yourself, and build real relationships. And don't confuse moving fast for moving in the right direction.

Julia and Paul's message is simple and reassuring: you don't need to have everything figured out. You are still becoming. »



Dear Julia,

You're doing a really good job, and you should be proud of yourself. You'll never regret getting your designation, working hard, travelling. But I want to tell you something I've had to learn the hard way: achievement is not the same as alignment.

The best advice I can give you is simple: spend more time getting to know yourself. Beyond your qualifications and resumé, who are you? What brings you joy? What drains you? What do you actually want, separate from what you're supposed to want?

You do have good instincts, but it takes work learning to listen to them. The more you know yourself, the sharper your intuition becomes. This helps develop discernment: your ability to tell the difference between what looks good on paper and what is actually right for you. This will serve you better than almost any credential.

How do you do this? Try new things: take an art class, learn to cook something from scratch, learn to garden, quiet the noise by walking in nature with no destination and no headphones. Learn to take care of your body, your mind, and your spirit. You may feel like you don't have time to do this alongside building a career, but trust me, this is how you learn who you are outside of your ambitions, and that knowledge is what makes you a better leader, partner, and decision-maker.

You end up learning a lot of this the long way. Hardship has its own wisdom, and I won't pretend otherwise. But some of it could have come sooner, with a little more stillness and a little more trust in yourself.

You have a lot of amazing adventures ahead. Do the inner work alongside the outer work. And have fun.

Love, Julia Read



Hi Paul,

You're in a hurry. You want to prove yourself, move fast, and build something meaningful.

Keep the ambition. Lose the rush.

In your 20s, life will feel heavy at times. Long nights. Pressure to get it right. Quiet trade-offs you don't always talk about. You'll look around and think others have it figured out. They don't. Neither do you yet, and that's okay.

Don't rush past the part where you build yourself.

You'll chase credentials, promotions, and recognition. That's part of the path. Just don't confuse motion with progress. The real work is slower and less visible. Learning how to think. Communicating clearly. Doing work that stands up when it's challenged.

You will feel behind. More than once. That pressure will push you to move faster than you should. Resist that. Stay in the work. Do hard things consistently. Most people drift or stop. If you don't, you'll separate yourself.

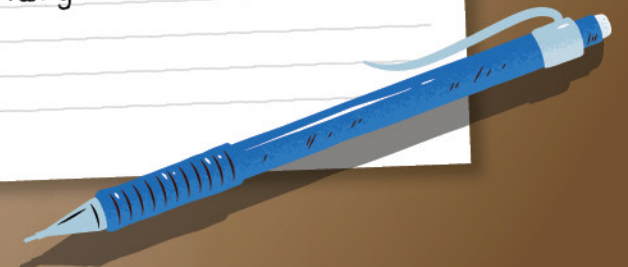
Take your health seriously earlier. Energy is an advantage. When you learn to take care of yourself, you show up differently for everything else.

Invest in people sooner. Call back. Follow up. Say thank you. Build real relationships, not transactional ones. Over time, you'll realize the work was never just about the work.

And one more thing—you'll learn this later than you should—leadership isn't about pushing harder or carrying more. It's about how you show up for others. Presence matters. Kindness matters. Belief in people matters. When you get that right, everything changes.

Stay grounded. Control what you can. Let the rest go.
You're not behind. You're building.

Paul Groch



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This isn't *your* **grandma's** financial literacy

Antonia Stiuca and Victoria
Magpantay discuss the evolution
of financial literacy

By Courtney Mvula

Victoria Magpantay CPA and **Antonia Stiuca CPA** are both passionate about financial literacy. They discuss how financial literacy has evolved over the years and why it is an essential life skill for people at every stage of life.

Antonia: Financial literacy has changed significantly over the past couple of decades. What does it truly mean to be financially literate in today's digital, interconnected, and increasingly complex financial landscape?

Victoria: While the fundamentals of budgeting, saving, debt management, and investing haven't changed, financial literacy has evolved far beyond those basics. Today, it means having the knowledge and critical thinking skills to make informed decisions in a world of digital banking, investing apps, artificial intelligence, and endless online financial advice.

It's not just about understanding money. It's also about recognizing credible information, questioning what you see online, and knowing which questions to ask before making financial decisions.

What financial skills and habits do you think are most important for helping young people build long-term financial resilience and confidence? ›

 CPAs on CPAs



Ultimately, financial literacy isn't just about building wealth; it's about creating the freedom to pursue what matters most, whether that's family, career flexibility, experiences, or personal goals.

ANTONIA STIUCA CPA

Antonia: Today's young people are far more financially sophisticated than many give them credit for. They have access to information unlike any previous generation, and now they also have artificial intelligence helping them learn even faster. A student recently shared a simple framework for financial literacy: Income earned minus expenses equals savings. While it may seem basic, each stage builds on this foundation.

Financial literacy starts with managing expenses then grows into building savings, investing for the future, and increasing earning potential. As CPAs, we see the value of developing skills that create financial security and open opportunities.

Ultimately, financial literacy isn't just about building wealth; it's about creating the freedom to pursue what matters most, whether that's family, career flexibility, experiences, or personal goals.

Do you think the traditional definition of financial success is still relevant today or are young professionals redefining what success looks like?

Victoria: Traditional measures of success—earning a strong income, owning a home, building wealth, and preparing for retirement—remain important. However, today's professionals are expanding their definition of success to include factors like work-life balance, flexibility, meaningful work, and personal fulfillment.

Financial security isn't just about accumulating wealth; it's about creating options and the freedom to build the life you want. This aligns closely with the CPA profession, where professionals help individuals and organizations make informed decisions, manage risk, and create long-term value.

How do you think technology is changing the way people think about money, including how they spend, save, and invest?

Antonia: With so many apps, platforms, and investment options available, it can be overwhelming to know what tools are reliable and how they fit into your financial goals.

Technology can help us be more intentional with our money, but we still need to ask important questions: Do I trust the tool I'm using? Is it secure? Does it support my financial goals?

It's also important to maintain good habits, such as regularly reviewing bank statements, tracking spending, and understanding your debt obligations. Even with all the new technology available, those foundational skills continue to be critical.

Products such as "buy now, pay later" services often feel less risky than traditional forms of credit. What makes them so appealing?

Victoria: I think the psychology behind these services is really interesting. They remove some of the barriers that traditionally cause people to pause before making a purchase. Breaking payments into smaller installments can make something feel more affordable, even though the overall cost remains the same.

The challenge is that people may focus on the smaller payment rather than the total financial commitment. One purchase may feel manageable, but multiple payment obligations can quickly add up and create financial stress.

A helpful question to ask is: If I had to pay for this purchase in full today, would I still make the same decision? Sometimes simply taking a pause or sleeping on a purchase can help us make more intentional financial choices.

Antonia: I love that approach because sometimes by the next day, you realize you don't want or need the purchase. Technology has made spending incredibly easy, so creating those moments to pause is an important financial habit.

Victoria: A big part of financial literacy today is learning how to sift through all the information available. Consumers need to approach financial advice with curiosity, critical thinking, and a healthy level of skepticism.



Consumers need to approach financial advice with curiosity, critical thinking, and a healthy level of skepticism.

VICTORIA MAGPANTAY CPA

Antonia: Especially with social media and artificial intelligence, it can be difficult to distinguish between credible financial guidance and misinformation. Consumers should be cautious about taking advice from individuals who may not have the right credentials or expertise.

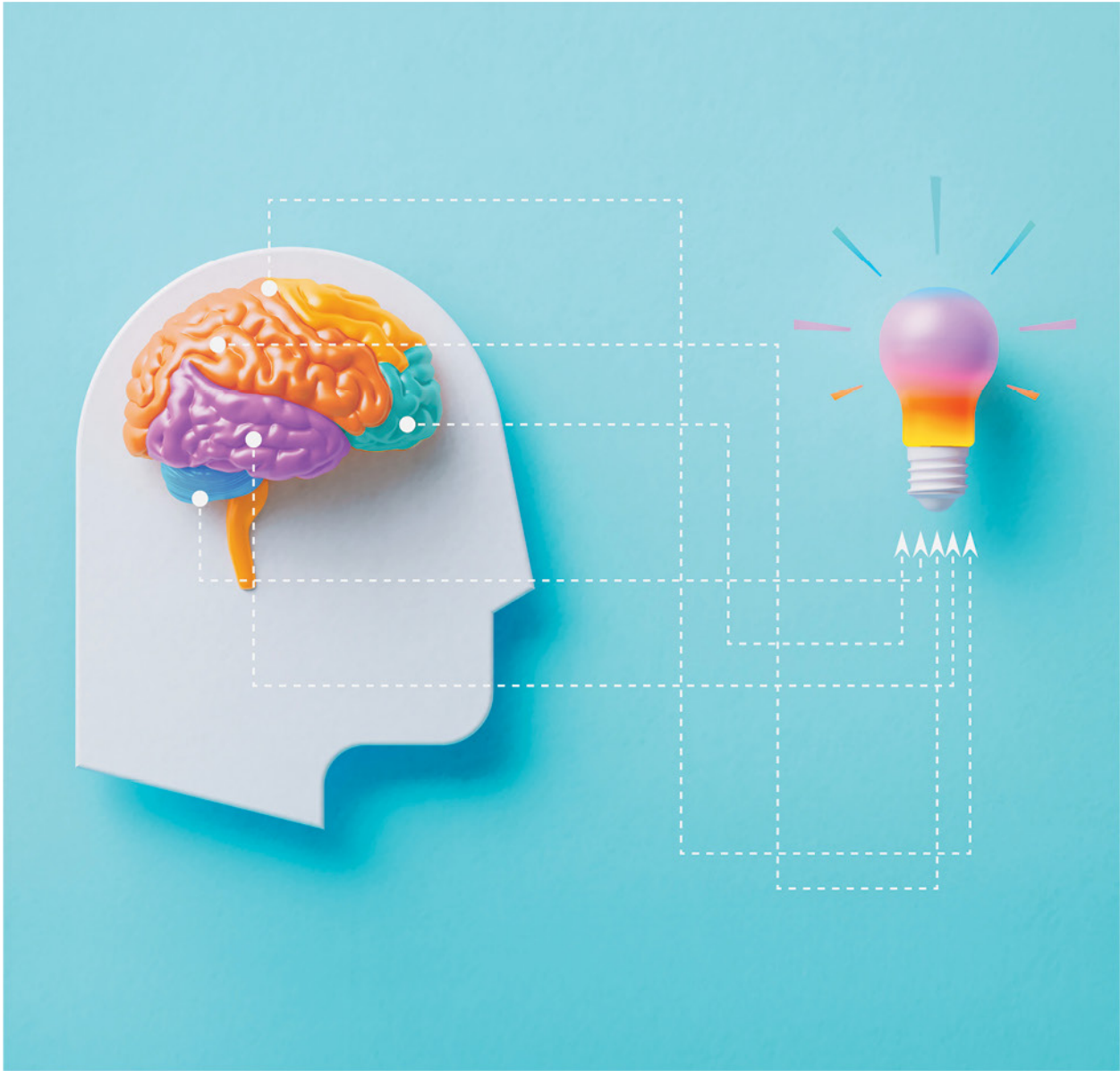
A flashy lifestyle or a large online following does not necessarily mean someone is providing sound financial advice. It's important to look for trusted sources and work with professionals who understand your specific financial situation.

Financial decisions are personal. What works for one person may not work for another, so understanding your goals, risk tolerance, and comfort level is essential when making financial decisions. ☺

THE CAREER ADVANTAGE

YOU WON'T SEE ON A RESUMÉ

Why the way you think is worth more than the way you fit in
By Leanne Gawley CPA, CMA



For most of my career, I performed a version of myself I thought the room wanted.

I sat still when my brain was running. I rewrote emails so they sounded measured instead of fast. I hid how I actually got to an answer because the way I got there didn't look like everyone else's way.

I was a CFO. I was also, before I had the words for it, an ADHD woman masking full-time to fit a neurotypical mould.

Masking is exhausting, and it is expensive. Every bit of energy I spent looking like the standard accountant was energy not spent on the work. And the way of thinking I was hiding was the most valuable thing I brought to the table.

Accounting gets taught as precision. Real work is messier than that. It is ambiguous and human and full of problems where the answer is not in the textbook. The people who move the fastest are rarely the ones who match the mould. They are the ones who notice what everyone else missed.

Spotting the number that does not belong. Asking the question no one else thought to ask. Untangling the file everyone else gave up on.

That is not in spite of how they are wired. It is because of it.

So, if you are sitting in a classroom right now, certain you are too scattered, too curious, too much to belong in this profession, read the next part twice.

"Consistent, precise, quiet" is a costume. It is not a job requirement. The profession is changing, and it needs minds that work differently, which means the thing you think disqualifies you is often the thing that will set you apart.

You do not have to earn your place by disappearing into it.

Bring the brain you actually have. That is the one we need. 



Leanne Gawley CPA, CMA spent years as a CFO before an ADHD diagnosis reshaped her path. She now runs The ADHD Advantage, working alongside women in leadership who are brilliant, wired differently, and done pretending otherwise. She is a CPA based in Calgary.





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profile

Someone who **GETS IT**

Sharif Ahmed has been where you're trying to go, and he's not keeping the path to himself

By Dami Oladipo 📷 Laughing Dog Photography

There's a version of this story that sounds like a highlight reel: treasury executive at a major telecom in Bangladesh, senior finance roles at a global energy giant, earning a CPA designation while raising a family and settling into a country he was still getting to know.

Impressive. Tidy. Easy to admire.

Sharif Ahmed CPA prefers the full version. The one that includes the pay cut he saw coming and took anyway. The years of social life quietly shelved. The endless scheduling math of working in public practice plus studying for his CPA plus raising three young children, all simultaneously. He knew the cost before he paid it, and

he paid it anyway because he understood what was on the other side.

"The experience strengthened my resilience, discipline, and ability to perform under pressure, lessons that continue to shape both my professional and personal life today," he says.

That kind of self-awareness is exactly what makes him a compelling mentor. When he sits across from a newcomer who's questioning if their international experience translates here or a CPA student who's panicking three weeks before the CFE, Sharif is not guessing at what they're going through. He's been there.

What nobody tells you

When Sharif arrived in Canada through the Federal Skilled Worker Program, he thought he came prepared. What he couldn't fully plan for, however, is how little the transition had to do with technical skills. And his story isn't unique—this is something he hears consistently from the internationally trained professionals he now mentors.

It's all about the unwritten stuff. How to network here. How interviews feel different. How workplace culture has its own dialect that no textbook covers.

"Technical skills can usually be learned," he says. "But navigating unfamiliar systems and environments can feel overwhelming."

That's where Sharif says a mentor comes in. Not as someone handing out answers from a distance, but as someone who has sat in similar rooms, asked similar questions, and figured it out. "Sometimes people don't need someone to open doors for them," he says. "They need someone to remind them they are capable of walking through those doors themselves."

The return on investment

Sharif doesn't hesitate when you ask him what makes mentoring worth it.

One mentee comes to mind. She entered the CPA program with momentum, then became a mother mid-program. Studies paused. When she returned, the challenge had new layers: technical, emotional, physical. By the time the CFE arrived, exhaustion and self-doubt had moved in alongside the study notes.

Ahmed didn't hand her answers. He helped her remember she already had them and watched





her push through. “Watching someone overcome doubt, pass the CFE, secure their first opportunity, or simply regain confidence is incredibly fulfilling,” he says.

Earlier than you think

If you’re a student thinking mentorship is something reserved for experienced professionals, Sharif disagrees. He believes it accelerates learning long before major career decisions are necessary.

“Who better to explain what that first year feels like than someone who finished it just eight months ago? Titles don’t make mentors. Lived experience does.”

And this might surprise you: you’re probably ready to be a mentor sooner than you think too. “Even a grade 6 student can be an excellent mentor to a grade 3 student,” he says. “Experience is relative. Someone who recently overcame a challenge is often in the best position to guide another person through it.”

Who better to explain what that first year feels like than someone who finished it just eight months ago? Titles don’t make mentors. Lived experience does.

What it actually looks like

Sharif’s mentoring relationships don’t follow a script. Some run a few months around a specific milestone: a job search, the CFE, a career pivot. Others stretch into years.

“Careers are rarely linear,” says Sharif. “Sometimes one conversation with the right person can completely change the direction of someone’s future.”

For the internationally trained professionals or CPA candidates who’ve found their way to Sharif, that’s not a theory. It’s proven.

A mentor can help students explore career paths, build confidence, expand their networks, and avoid common mistakes. More importantly, mentors offer something textbooks and job descriptions can’t: a real person who has already been where you’re trying to go.

Find a mentor. And when the time comes, be one for someone else. 🌱



Business Challenge Case Competition judges



Business Challenge Case Competition participants

What’s the deal with case competitions?

The CPA Education Foundation supports student success with unique experiences

By Kevin Spila 📷 Laughing Dog Photography

When you think of a “competition,” you might picture a high-stakes game, a rivalry, or a winner-takes-all battle. For some, that thrill of the competition and the adrenaline rush that comes with it is invigorating. For others, it can be intimidating. But case competitions are a bit different. They’re not just about winning; they’re about learning and growing in ways the classroom alone can’t offer.

The CPA Education Foundation recognizes that experiential learning opportunities, such as case competitions, are powerful extensions of academic learning and believes the most meaningful learning happens when students are given the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts.

The Foundation created their Business Challenge Case Competition to provide students with the chance to apply what they’ve learned in the classroom to real-world business problems in a high-energy, supportive environment.

So, what exactly is a case competition?

Case competitions put students in the role of the decision-maker. Teams of students are presented with a scenario, often based on an actual

company or industry issue, and are tasked with analyzing the situation and developing practical, strategic recommendations. They then present their solutions to a panel of judges, typically industry professionals or company representatives, who not only assess the quality and actionability of the solution, but also provide constructive feedback.

What sets these competitions apart is how closely they mirror real business environments. Imagine being handed a complex business problem faced by a real organization, and your team has only a limited amount of time to make sense of the situation, identify key issues, and develop recommendations you can stand behind. You then have to present your solution—which has the potential to influence real business decisions—to the very people who deal with these kinds of challenges every day. It doesn’t get more real than that.

Skills that stand out

According to **Trish Stringer** FCPA, FCMA, FCA, faculty adviser at the University of Alberta, case competitions are one of the most effective ways for students to build career-ready skills. Since becoming involved in 2016, she has coached teams at local, national, and international levels. ▶

Case competitions 101

Two case competition coaches offer even more insight into the world of case competitions, including advice for getting involved, in an exclusive online piece just for *Capitalize* readers.



“These competitions develop abilities that are difficult to replicate in traditional classrooms,” says Trish. “Students learn to think critically, communicate clearly, work as part of a team, and make decisions with limited information—all while under time pressure.”

She points out that these aren’t just academic skills—they’re career skills. “Case competitions also provide students with stories and examples they can draw on in job interviews, giving them a competitive edge,” she says.

A lasting impact

Trish also notes that “students who get the most from case competitions are those who embrace feedback, remain coachable, and continuously seek improvement.”

She encourages students to focus on learning, rather than winning. “The ability to learn from setbacks and return stronger is often what separates good competitors from great ones,” she says. “Winning is certainly rewarding, but some of the greatest growth occurs when students observe teams that outperform them.”

Students echo that sentiment and often describe case competitions as one of the most valuable parts of their university experience. Reflecting on their experiences, what they value most are the friendships and connections made that extend well beyond the competition itself.

Growth, insight, and opportunity. That’s the deal with case competitions. 

The CPA Education Foundation Business Challenge Case Competition

The CPA Education Foundation Business Challenge Case Competition gives students across Alberta this exact kind of hands-on opportunity. Each year, teams from public degree-granting post-secondary institutions come together to work on a case provided by a real Alberta business.

In March 2026, the Business Challenge was hosted in Edmonton for the first time in its 18-year history. Held at the Renaissance Edmonton Airport Hotel from March 4 to 6, the three-day event brought together top student teams to compete for a \$10,000 prize.

While the “competition” label might suggest rivalry, the Foundation’s competition is equally about connection and growth. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity and immerse themselves in the experience.

“We want the students to come away from the Business Challenge invigorated, not defeated,” says **Erin Schwartz CPA, MPACC**, Director of the CPA Education Foundation. “While our goal is to help them hone their business acumen and experience what it’s like to be a professional working to solve real-world business problems, we also want them to realize that, even if they don’t win the competition, they have already won just by being there.”

As this year’s hosting hotel was right next to the Edmonton International Airport, participants had the unique opportunity to tour the airport campus, gaining insight into the scale and complexity of operating an international airport—an experience tied directly to the event’s case partner, Edmonton International Airport.

“This was a one-of-a-kind situation that will be hard to replicate, for sure!” Erin says.

Where are they now?

Where has your career taken you since your time as a CPA Alberta campus ambassador?

Following my time as an ambassador, I started at PwC in the assurance group right out of university. I wrote and passed the 2024 CFE and obtained my CPA designation shortly after. Currently, I am still with PwC as a new manager in our assurance practice.

Looking back, how did your experience as a campus ambassador influence your career or personal growth?

My time as a campus ambassador was a great way for me to immerse myself in the CPA designation and become more connected to the long-time professionals in the designation and those just starting their journey, like myself. I learned from both parties and applied the lessons learned as I navigated the early stages of my career.

If you could go back and give your student self one piece of advice, what would it be?

If I could give my student self one piece of advice, it would be not to be too shy to ask as many questions as possible when given the opportunity. As a student, it is so important to learn as much as possible about the different avenues available to you as a CPA candidate, and there is an endless number of events focused on providing you with the insights you need to find the best path for you. As a student, I always felt guilty asking too many questions; however, on the other side you realize everyone is there to support you and is more than happy to provide you with further insights.

Do you have a favorite quote, motto, or mindset that guides you in your career?

I would say the most important thing is your attitude. Especially at the start of your career, I have seen students and early professionals with the best attitude who find the most success. Smile as much as you can, don’t be afraid to laugh, and be dedicated to whatever path it is you start on. 



Name: **Jay Park CPA**

School:
University of Calgary

Years since being an
ambassador: **6**

capitalize: **NEXT EXHIBIT**

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