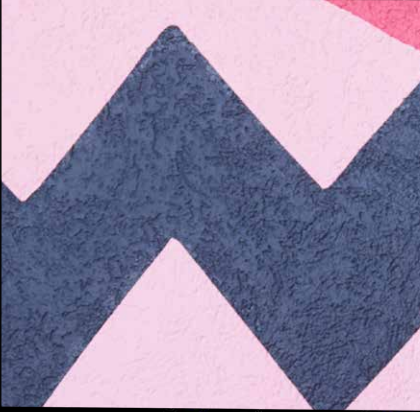


# capitalize

Fall 2020/Winter 2021

Introducing Albertans to the CPA Profession



**A CPA  
designation  
provides the  
soft skills to  
help you see  
the big picture**



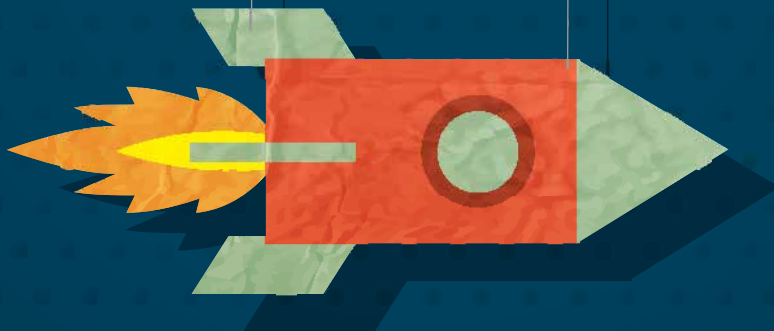
Vartika Satija CPA, CA

 **CPA** CHARTERED  
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ALBERTA



# WE HAVE LIFTOFF!

**Online *Capitalize* is a go!**



**Skip waiting for the magazine's physical copy each term—our brand new website has launched!**

*Capitalize* is the go-to source for students to learn more about the accounting profession, and now you can take it with you on the go. The website's fresh blog-like format feels more like talking to your best friend than attending a lecture, but you'll learn about accounting, the business world, being a professional, and more.

Check out the launch at **[capitalize.cpaalberta.ca](http://capitalize.cpaalberta.ca)**





*Steph Rushton proves it's possible to combine your interests and skills and make a career out of it*

46

## CONTENTS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>2</b> Events calendar  | <b>30</b> Practices to cultivate resilience                        |
| <b>4</b> Meet your 2020/21 CPA Campus Ambassadors                   | <b>32</b> Accounting + film & television = one unbelievable career |
| <b>8</b> A diversity and inclusion primer                           | <b>34</b> Brewing business   |
| <b>12</b> In a league of their own                                  | <b>38</b> Making a difference for the environment                  |
| <b>14</b> Beyond the desk   | <b>40</b> CPA Education Foundation Corner                          |
| <b>16</b> The CPA Certification Program: what students need to know | <b>44</b> Your job-search secret weapon                            |
| <b>20</b> Where in the world is your office?                        | <b>46</b> Turning your passion into a profession                   |
| <b>22</b> The big picture   | <b>48</b> Creating opportunities                                   |

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Visit [capitalize.cpaalberta.ca](http://capitalize.cpaalberta.ca) for even more *Capitalize*!

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# events CALENDAR

## CPA Alberta events

**CPA Alberta virtual information session**  
January 27, 2021, 12:00 – 1:00pm

**CPA Education Foundation Future Professionals Conference**  
February 18, 2021

**CPA Education Foundation Business Challenge Case Competition**  
March 4 – 5, 2021



## CPA Alberta virtual information sessions

CPA Alberta's information sessions are a great opportunity for anyone interested in becoming a CPA to learn more. We'll share details on the CPA program requirements and the enrolment process—and, of course, provide time for your questions! Email [recruitment@cpaalberta.ca](mailto:recruitment@cpaalberta.ca) to learn more.





## CPA Education Foundation Business Challenge Case Competition

The CPA Education Foundation Business Challenge is an intense case competition between students from post-secondary institutions across Alberta. It provides an opportunity for students to experience what it's like to be a professional solving real-world business problems.

## CPA Alberta sponsored events

CPA Alberta partners with post-secondary institutions across Alberta to sponsor events throughout the year.

Some of the events you can look forward to in 2020/21 include a virtual leadership and innovation speaker series with the U of L, Wellness Week at the U of C in January, a Beginner Case Competition in February, and CPA roundtables with the U of C Accounting Students' Association in March. These are just a few of the events you can look forward to, so be sure to check [capitalize.cpaalberta.ca](https://capitalize.cpaalberta.ca) regularly for more!



## CPA Education Foundation Future Professionals Conference

Join us for the first annual CPA Education Foundation Future Professionals Conference and get great returns on investing in YOU! This conference, designed for future business leaders, will give you the skills and mindset necessary for success in the future workforce. You will hear from and meet CPAs working in many different roles and sectors, be inspired by engaging speakers, and have a chance to network with fellow students.

Dynamic and passionate students like you will drive the accounting profession, the business community, and our society into the future. Take the first steps to becoming the professional you want to be at [cpaalberta.ca/futureprofessionals](https://cpaalberta.ca/futureprofessionals).

For an updated events calendar, visit  
[capitalize.cpaalberta.ca](https://capitalize.cpaalberta.ca)!

# Meet your 2020/21 CPA Campus Ambassadors

The 2020/21 Campus Ambassador team is here to assist you on the path towards the Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation. The following ambassadors will be the primary point of contact for students to get information about important events and activities, as well as answers to their questions about the CPA Professional Education Program and the CPA designation.



## **Michael Heung**

*University of Alberta  
mheung@cpaalberta.ca*

### **Why were you interested in becoming a CPA Campus Ambassador?**

I saw this position as an opportunity to become a resource for my peers and to broaden my horizons.

### **What is one thing you wish people knew about accounting?**

Accounting is unique in such that it is not confined to your typical job description. The skills and knowledge you gain from your training open a plethora of opportunities and experiences one might not expect.

### **If you could build your dream business overnight, what would it be?**

I would create a restaurant that combines my passion for food and my love of nature. Alberta is home to various delicious mushrooms, berries, and vegetables that are lost amidst the countless aisles of the grocery store. Creating a sustainable and unique menu would provide new opportunities for a greener future.



## **Caitlin Lafave**

*Mount Royal University  
clafave@cpaalberta.ca*

### **Why were you interested in becoming a CPA Campus Ambassador?**

I want to help students see all the benefits of pursuing their CPA.

### **Why have you chosen to pursue a career in accounting?**

I was inspired by my sister, who just got her CPA!

### **What pump-up jam do you listen to before a big test or presentation?**

"All I Do is Win" by DJ Khaled, featuring T-Pain, Ludacris, Snoop Dog, and Rick Ross.

## Your on- campus contact



### **Shekinah Lim**

*Red Deer College  
slim@cpaalberta.ca*

**What are you looking forward to most about being a CPA Campus Ambassador?**

This year I'm looking forward to being creative in reaching my colleagues virtually. Finding a way to keep the students engaged and informed about CPA opportunities, information, and events during this pandemic will be interesting and quite a challenge.

**Why have you chosen to pursue a career in accounting?**

The reason I decided to pursue accounting is because of one of my accounting instructors. She always valued her students and their hard work and was always ready to give guidance.

**If you could build your dream business overnight, what would it be?**

I would build either a coffee shop or a restaurant and have it run as a family business. Coming from a culture with tight family connections, I've always wanted to spend more time with family and be able to grow a business with them.



### **Branden McNaughton**

*NAIT  
bmcmnaughton@cpaalberta.ca*

**What are you looking forward to most about being a CPA Campus Ambassador?**

I have a passion for helping others, so I am looking forward to educating students and providing them with the knowledge they need to pursue and become enthusiastic about the CPA designation.

**Why have you chosen to pursue a career in accounting?**

Accounting is the foundation for all businesses. There are unlimited growth opportunities and a wide range of different industries you can work in.

**If you could build your dream business overnight, what would it be?**

My dream business would be to own a tea house on the summit of a mountain in Canmore to provide hikers with a welcoming and scenic place to rest, recuperate, and have some great food.



### **Annie Nyereyemhuka**

*University of Lethbridge  
anyereyemhuka@cpaalberta.ca*

**Even if you're not on campus, how do you plan to fulfill your CPA Campus Ambassador duties?**

By virtual means. Since our campus will be holding classes online this fall, this presents a great opportunity to reach students.

**What is one thing you wish people knew about accounting?**

Accounting is more qualitative in application than it is quantitative.

**What is something people might be surprised to know about you?**

I can speak four different languages.





**Michelle O'Brien-Sobus**

MacEwan University  
msobus@cpaalberta.ca

**Even if you're not on campus, how do you plan to fulfill your CPA Campus Ambassador duties?**

With the possibility of limited face-to-face options, I plan to reach out to students through social media and the school's web pages, so I can connect with students directly to talk about the program. I also want to reach out to the school's professors, who can email their accounting classes and let their students know they can reach me if they have any questions or would like information.

**How do you think technology will impact the future of accounting?**

Technology will improve data collection and reduce manual entry, allowing us to focus on precision and freeing the accountant's time to pursue cost-saving measures and increase profitability.

**What pump-up jam do you listen to before a big test or presentation?**

"Don't Worry, Be Happy" by Bobby McFerrin!



**Jay Park**

University of Calgary  
ypark@cpaalberta.ca

**What are you looking forward to most about being a CPA Campus Ambassador?**

I am truly excited to meet and network with students who are starting to look beyond their degree. I am looking forward to the opportunity to meet current CPAs and learn from their experiences, as well as the other ambassadors from different universities.

**Why have you chosen to pursue a career in accounting?**

I learned early on the diversity of a career in accounting, especially if you can get your CPA designation. I loved the idea of formulating and analyzing finances and the many different sectors/industries I would have opportunities in. In addition, the job security was no doubt something that was very attractive to me.

**What pump-up jam do you listen to before a big test or presentation?**

My pump-up jam has to be "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba or "September" by Earth, Wind & Fire.



**Rebecca Rutherford**

SAIT  
rrutherford@cpaalberta.ca

**Why were you interested in becoming a CPA Campus Ambassador?**

I felt that being a CPA Campus Ambassador would open up possibilities for networking with like-minded people and allow me to become more knowledgeable about the ins and outs of pursuing my CPA.

**What is one thing you wish people knew about accounting?**

I wish people were more aware of the benefits of efficient and organized paperwork processes. The benefits afforded through a dedicated accountant far exceed what a person can accomplish on their own.

**If you could build your dream business overnight, what would it be?**

A non-profit agricultural animal welfare and education charity that benefits the community and health of people and animals worldwide! I would like to have a sanctuary that educates and heals people in need and where exploited animals can live peacefully.



**Garrett Storms**

*Concordia University of Edmonton  
gstorms@cpaalberta.ca*

**What are you looking forward to most about being a CPA Campus Ambassador?**

Having the opportunity to introduce those who are interested in learning more about the world of accounting to all the possible doors and paths that a CPA designation can create.

**What is one thing you wish people knew about accounting?**

I think a lot more people would have a fascination with accounting if they realized how much forecasting, analyzing, and dissecting of information goes on behind the scenes.

**What is something people might be surprised to know about you?**

I love to cook, but my baking skills need some serious work.



**Isra Tanweer**

*University of Lethbridge (Calgary campus)  
itanweer@cpaalberta.ca*

**Even if you're not on campus, how do you plan to fulfill your CPA Campus Ambassador duties?**

Technology enables us to connect with people in an instant. Even though the in-person experience is extremely valuable, given the circumstances, the way forward is through virtual information sessions, presentations, and coffee chats. One-on-one sessions are a great way to give and receive information from the comfort of one's home.

**How do you think technology will impact the future of accounting?**

I believe technology can increase functionality, improve accuracy, improve processing times, and enhance external reporting.

**What is something people might be surprised to know about you?**

That I am also a makeup artist.

**HELLO  
I AM...**

*Someone who  
can help!*

# A DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PRIMER

By Sarah Maludzinski  
Photography by Laughing Dog Photography  
and Trudie Lee Photography

Diversity and inclusion are more than an HR policy—they are part of an organization's fabric. But what does this look like in action?

Shafana Mitha CPA, CMA





“Diversity and inclusion” sounds like one of those HR phrases that may be an organizational “nice to have,” but isn’t necessarily a must have. That couldn’t be further from the truth! Diversity and inclusion should be fundamental to an organization for many reasons, not the least of which is its bottom line.

---

## What is diversity and inclusion?

Diversity and inclusion are essentially two sides of the same coin. Diversity is about the mixture of differences and similarities, while inclusion is about recognizing the needs of these diverse individuals or groups.

“Diversity and inclusion are about bringing value to people’s lived experiences,” says **Shafana Mitha CPA, CMA**, Acting Senior Financial Officer and Executive Director at the Government of Alberta. “In the workplace, enabling a person’s experiences to be valued, respected, and appreciated—particularly because of their diverse background—is what makes workplaces inclusive.”

According to a 2016 study from the Australian Institute of Company Directors, attempting diversity without also having an inclusive culture doesn’t cut it. Organizations with an inclusive culture are:

- 2x as likely to meet or exceed financial targets
- 3x as likely to be high-performing
- 6x as likely to be innovative and agile
- 8x as likely to achieve better business outcomes

There are many reasons for an organization to embrace and uphold diversity and inclusion—higher productivity, innovation, and retention are just a few. When employees are empowered to be themselves, they are more likely to show up and be productive.

---

## What does diversity and inclusion look like in the accounting and professional worlds?

In many organizations, however, diversity and inclusion can amount to little more than a policy on HR’s desk. Policies can set the tone for an organization, but it’s even more important to ensure diversity and inclusion are completely enmeshed in the culture.

“Starting with the board and the senior management, they really have to believe that there is value in diversity and inclusion so it goes beyond having policies,” says **Theresa Jang FCPA, FCA**, CFO at Stantec. “And it has to be authentic.”



Theresa Jang FCPA, FCA

**“Starting with the board and the senior management, they really have to believe that there is value in diversity and inclusion so it goes beyond having policies. And it has to be authentic.”**

Theresa Jang FCPA, FCA

In accounting—and most professions—diversity and inclusion have not always been part of the culture. “It wasn’t something that ever came up early in my career,” recalls Theresa. “[Now], it’s become part of the dialogue.... It’s been surfaced, and it’s talked about a lot more, and I have to believe that as a result, there’s been some progress made.”

Shafana would agree: “The function or the role of the profession is already changing constantly, so what employees need, the type of lived experiences they have—that’s changing at the same time.

“You’re seeing how hiring is changing, in terms of looking at what types of lived experiences organizations really need. For example, is there someone who can think from a different perspective about how an economic downturn is going to impact financial reporting or priorities in forecasting?”

**Mina Church CPA**, a Senior Accountant at BDO who has only been working professionally for less than four years, says that even in her time, she’s seen a lot of change. “In just these years, things have shifted,” she says. “Now we get weekly emails regarding diversity and inclusion, and there are all these policies in place. [My firm is] very active in trying to ensure that everyone—doesn’t matter race, gender, etc.—is included. And if they’re not, we now have a diversity team employees can reach out to.”




Mina Church CPA

## How can someone determine if an organization is diverse and inclusive?

Younger generations—those who have recently entered the workforce or will be soon—are significantly more likely than previous generations to consider diversity and inclusion important factors when looking for a new job or being loyal to an organization, according to research from Deloitte, including the *2018 Deloitte Millennial Survey*.

For those new to the professional world who want to ensure they work for an organization that aligns with their values, Theresa, Mina, and Shafana suggest doing a little bit of research on any potential employer:

- Study the job listing. Is there a statement or commitment related to diversity and inclusion? Is the language inclusive of different genders, cultures, abilities?
- Check their website. Do they have a diversity and inclusion policy? Is the board and/or senior leadership diverse?
- Look at their staff directory. Does it seem diverse? Does the organization appear to be following their policy?
- Read the press. Are there any red flags about this organization in regards to diversity and inclusion?
- Reach out to an individual at that organization. How do they feel about their employer’s diversity and inclusion efforts?
- Ask questions in the interview. What does the organization do to further diversity and inclusion? Do they offer ongoing training and development to all employees?
- Follow your instinct. Does this feel like a place you can bring your whole self to work? Do you feel like you’re going to have to be a different person to fit in with those you would be working with? 

**“My firm is very active in trying to ensure that everyone—doesn’t matter race, gender, etc.—is included. And if they’re not, we now have a diversity team employees can reach out to.”**

Mina Church CPA

**“In the workplace, enabling a person’s experiences to be valued, respected, and appreciated—particularly because of their diverse background—is what makes workplaces inclusive.”**

Shafana Mitha CPA, CMA



## What is unconscious bias?

“Unconscious biases are mental processes that operate outside of our consciousness, intentional awareness, or control,” says Shafana Mitha CPA, CMA, Acting Senior Financial Officer and Executive Director at the Government of Alberta. “Our unconscious biases are mental blind spots that we are unaware of.”

There are many types of bias. For example, we can be biased toward people who are more like us or to assess their competency or lack thereof based on some aspect of appearance or identity (often related to a stereotype). Biases are very much linked to an organization’s ability to be diverse and inclusive.

But this can change, says Shafana. Instead, we can work “to create a culture of conscious inclusion...by becoming more self-aware of our own unconscious biases so we can make conscious efforts to interrupt them.”

Below are Shafana’s suggestions for interrupting unconscious biases:

- **Become aware of your biases:** Think about your first impressions of people and track any surprises or revelations.
- **Challenge your assumptions:** Listen to people with different perspectives; ask clarifying questions to reveal any judgments you may be making.
- **Ask for and act on feedback** on your own possible biases.
- **Make becoming aware of bias a collective effort:** Create a culture where people feel comfortable talking about their biases in a constructive way.
- **Assign work in a fair and transparent manner:** Set transparent standards for allocating projects and tasks; rotate the responsibility for some tasks, such as taking meeting notes and organizing agendas.
- **Ensure all voices and perspectives are heard:** Make space for others to speak; acknowledge colleagues voicing their ideas and opinions.
- **Give credit** where it’s due.
- **Be a role model:** Articulate your commitment to reducing bias; share aspects of your journey toward reducing biases when appropriate.



Meagan Schroder CPA, CGA (left)  
Tope Roth CPA, CGA

# IN A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

By Sharon Ruyter | Photography by Laughing Dog Photography

## Two CPAs share how they built a successful firm on their own terms

From the outside, **Tope Roth CPA, CGA** and **Meagan Schroder CPA, CGA** were originally an unlikely pair when they started working together in 2008. The only thing they seemed to have in common was their jobs at the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). If they'd been told back then they would one day co-own a business, they might not have believed it.

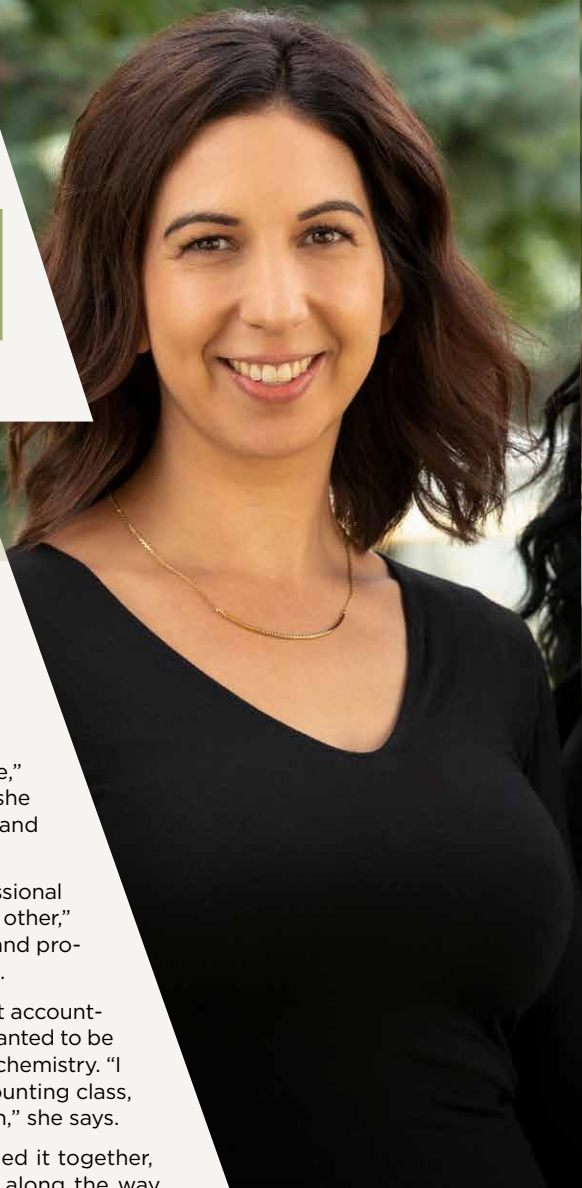
"Tope has a very vibrant personality. I was a quiet little mouse," remembers Meagan. "Her desk was close to mine at CRA, and she would come over to my desk to chat. She kept coming back, and eventually, she invited me to hang out, so I decided to go."

Tope and Meagan are now co-owners of Roth Schroder Professional Corporation (Roth Schroder PC)—"an accounting firm like no other," as stated on their website—where they hang out regularly and provide their clients with the personal attention they deserve.

Both women discovered they were naturally quite good at accounting after coming to it from other interests. Tope initially wanted to be an environmental chemist because she loved math and chemistry. "I did a year where I tried things out, and I took one accounting class, but I was struggling because I wasn't paying attention," she says.

After realizing her grade was in jeopardy, Tope pulled it together, passed the class, and made a pleasant discovery along the way. "When I actually started studying, I realized I was really good at [accounting]," says Tope.

Similarly, Meagan entered NAIT's business program intending to study marketing. "It's funny because, in high school, all I knew was accounting had something to do with numbers, and...I thought, 'No way. I will never touch that,'" she says.





After she took an accounting class, however, she discovered marketing wasn't the best fit for her, and it "just didn't feel comfortable." Luckily, accounting did.

What also felt comfortable and natural was Tope and Meagan's desire to create a business built on mutual respect and understanding. "Having a business partner really made opening my own firm a lot less scary because Tope is someone who can relate. What I've learned is not a lot of people can relate," says Meagan.

It's no secret the accounting profession has historically been male-dominated, and though strides have been made to close the gender gap, the profession still has work to do when it comes to diversity, inclusion, and equity—especially for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. However, Meagan is Indigenous and Tope is Black Canadian, and as Women of Colour in the accounting profession, they are breaking new ground and challenging people's expectations of what owners of a professional corporation should be or look like.


The significance of their firm's existence didn't occur to either woman when they first started Roth Schroder PC; however, their experiences—both good and bad—have validated their decision to own their business and work with diverse communities.

"I don't fit in the standard accounting world. I stick out like a sore thumb and beat to my own drum. I'm just not a person who conforms," says Tope. Tope is originally from Winnipeg, which boasts the largest Indigenous population of any major Canadian city, and her upbringing informs her work with Indigenous communities and gives her a sense of belonging. "I like that I fit better," she says. "In the Indigenous community, I'm able to be exactly who I am and do what I love."

Meagan is used to the comments she receives when people realize she is Indigenous. "You're Indigenous, and you have a business? Wow! There's always the 'and,'" she says.

Meagan is proud of her heritage, but she hopes for a day when comments like that are not the norm. "I want it to come to a place where me being Indigenous doesn't matter and doesn't play a part," says Meagan. "I want people to realize that we are just like anyone else."

While they're breaking barriers, Meagan and Tope are also leading a prosperous business and are more than happy to share their secret to success. "I'm sure some of it is luck, but Tope is a really great business partner to have. I never could have gone into business with any other person. We call ourselves business besties," says Meagan.

She explains their relaxed but professional atmosphere is another thing that sets them apart from other firms. "We don't judge each other; we don't make each other feel uncomfortable," agrees Tope. "We built this firm being exactly who we are." 

**"I don't fit in the standard accounting world. I stick out like a sore thumb and beat to my own drum. I'm just not a person who conforms."**

Tope Roth CPA, CGA

# BEYOND



# DESK

By Andrew Moore



## Dave Minhas proves that being a CPA is more than just an office job—it's an invitation to a new and exciting career

The world is a fast-changing place. Technology changes the way we work, which in turn changes the skills we need to be successful. Exciting, isn't it? **Dave Minhas CPA, CA** thinks so. It's this never-ending cycle of change and growth that keeps things interesting, or in Dave's words, makes every day different.

From a self-proclaimed awkward accounting student to a savvy business leader, Dave knows a few things about change. While studying at Ryerson University in Toronto, Dave received some career-altering advice in preparation for entering the workforce as a CPA.

"That was when I changed my mindset around what it means to be a CPA," recalls Dave. "One of my professors pulled me aside and explained that it's not just about the numbers—it's about people. That resonated with me because it's a different view from what you learn in high school, where they really focus on technical skills. Both are correct: You certainly need basic technical skills, but the soft skills are more important in my view."

Dave has used that advice to propel his career forward. As the Managing Partner at Pivotal LLP, a Red Deer-based accounting firm, Dave uses his passion for relationship-building to help grow the firm and its business, all while making meaningful, lasting connections in the process.

"When working at an accounting firm, you're dealing with successful entrepreneurs [who] own multiple businesses and are super passionate about them," says Dave. "You're learning from them about their industries, and they're learning from you. That's the exciting part of what we do. I can honestly say every day is different—it flexes your brain muscles."

Dave's passion for helping people build their business is not only evident through his work with the firm and his clients, but also through his commitment to sitting on multiple boards and committees—opportunities Dave attributes to his CPA designation.

"I travel a fair amount, and when you talk to the person next to you and tell them you're a CPA, they instantly recognize and respect you," says Dave. "There's a lot of credibility associated with the CPA designation, and it's afforded me so many different opportunities. If I didn't have the CPA designation, I would not be where I am today."

Another factor Dave contributes to his success is the breadth of experience he gained working for a small firm. Every firm or business will have something unique to offer, so he suggests prospective CPAs do their research and find somewhere that's a good fit.

"When you're starting out, you should see the whole picture and figure out what area you want to specialize in," recommends Dave. "It's all about building your toolkit in the first few years of your career. I was fortunate when building my skillset at Pivotal. I got to see a file from start to finish and see how different businesses and industries operate. It was critical."

Ultimately, Dave stresses the importance of being open to change. The way CPAs work is always going to evolve, but if you can successfully pair the technical skills with the soft skills, you'll be in good shape for an exciting and successful career. And of course, every day will be an exciting new adventure. **C**

*If you want to see Dave in action, check out the Hesje CPA Knowledge Centre's CPA Smart video series and watch Dave talk about his work with community boards.*

**"When you're starting out, you should see the whole picture and figure out what area you want to specialize in."**

Dave Minhas CPA, CA



# The CPA Certification Program: what students need to know

The CPA Certification Program—which consists of education, practical experience, and a final examination—is designed to provide future Chartered Professional Accountants (CPAs) with the knowledge and skills to succeed in business.

## Degree and prerequisites

An undergraduate degree (in any discipline) from a recognized post-secondary institution is required for admission to the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP). In addition to an undergraduate degree, prerequisite courses must be successfully completed.

A transfer credit guide for Alberta post-secondary institutions is available online at [www.cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Transfer-Credit-Guide](http://www.cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Transfer-Credit-Guide).

## CPA Professional Education Program

The CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) is a graduate-level program delivered part-time over two years. The program includes six modules designed to develop six technical competencies and five enabling competencies. In Alberta, the national CPA PEP is delivered by the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB). CPAWSB delivers CPA PEP to all candidates in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut who are pursuing their CPA.

Candidates will take CPA PEP while working in a relevant position. For candidates, their CPA PEP education, coupled with practical experience, will complement the development of CPA competencies.

CPA PEP uses a variety of learning methods to help students develop their skills. The program combines online learning, self-study, classroom learning, and teamwork to help CPA candidates develop the competencies expected of Canada's pre-eminent professional accountants.



## #CPASATHOME

Louisa Ferrel CPA, CA  
True Büch Kombucha

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way Chartered Professional Accountants (CPAs) work; however, it didn't change the fact that CPAs were still working hard to support Albertans. Our #CPAsAtHome social media campaign highlighted some of those CPAs, including Louisa.

## Modules

Six modules comprise CPA PEP. The program begins with two core modules that are common to all CPA candidates, followed by two elective modules (of which there are four options). Upon completion of these four modules, all candidates are required to complete the two "capstone" modules.

The modules are:

- Two common core modules, which all CPA candidates must take, focusing on the development of competencies in management and financial accounting, and the integration of the six core technical competency areas.
- Two elective modules, which allow CPA candidates to develop deeper skills in their areas of career interest. Four electives are offered: assurance, performance management, tax, and finance. All candidates must choose two of the electives; candidates pursuing careers in public accounting must choose assurance and tax.
- A capstone integrative module that focuses on the development of the enabling competencies, such as leadership and professional skills, and the integration of core competencies.
- A capstone examination preparation module, which prepares CPA candidates for the Common Final Examination (CFE).

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## Registration into the CPA Professional Education Program

Students are encouraged to apply for conditional acceptance into the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) prior to the completion of their required courses and degree. Registration as a CPA candidate is required prior to registering for specific modules; however, candidates are encouraged to register for modules once they've submitted their application.

Once a student has applied for CPA PEP, there is a registration validation period in which transcript assessment, verification of degree, and verification of prerequisites will occur. After verification, the student may then participate in Core One.

Module registration deadlines are typically six to eight weeks in advance of the module start date. Please refer to the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) website for key module registration deadlines: [www.cpaawsb.ca/cpa-pep/schedule](http://www.cpaawsb.ca/cpa-pep/schedule).

For more information about becoming a CPA, please visit [www.cpaalberta.ca](http://www.cpaalberta.ca); call CPA Alberta at 1-844-454-1245 (toll-free); or email [gettingstarted@cpaalberta.ca](mailto:gettingstarted@cpaalberta.ca).

To inquire about your eligibility for CPA PEP and admission support, please visit [www.cpaawsb.ca](http://www.cpaawsb.ca); call CPAWSB at 1-855-306-9390 (toll-free); or email [cpaapplication@cpawsb.ca](mailto:cpaapplication@cpawsb.ca).

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## Entrance requirements for the CPA Professional Education Program

### Bridging into the CPA Professional Education Program

For students who have completed their degrees but have not obtained the necessary prerequisite courses for the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP), or for students who do not have a degree,\* there are two options:

#### 1. CPA preparatory courses

CPA preparatory courses are a suite of 14 courses that provide all knowledge requirements for admission to CPA PEP. These courses are available in an accelerated format and are delivered part-time, with options for self-study, online, and classroom learning. Students complete only the courses they require.

Students are eligible for enrolment if they have successfully completed one year (30 credit hours) of post-secondary studies or three years of relevant work experience.

*\*Students are still required to complete a degree before admission to CPA PEP.*

Please contact CPA Alberta at 1.844.454.1245 or email [gettingstarted@cpaalberta.ca](mailto:gettingstarted@cpaalberta.ca) to learn more about preparatory courses.

#### 2. Prerequisites through a post-secondary institution

Students can register for the business and accounting courses they are missing through a post-secondary institution approved by the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB). A transfer credit guide is available online at [www.cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Transfer-Credit-Guide](http://www.cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Transfer-Credit-Guide). Students will only take the courses they need for entrance into CPA PEP.

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## Practical experience

In addition to formal education, candidates are required to complete a term of relevant practical experience. The knowledge and competencies gained through practical experience complement those developed through CPA PEP. To develop as a professional accountant, CPA candidates must gain relevant, paid employment that is progressively challenging. For the period of practical experience to begin, individuals need to be registered with the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) as a CPA candidate, be employed in a qualifying position, and have a mentor.

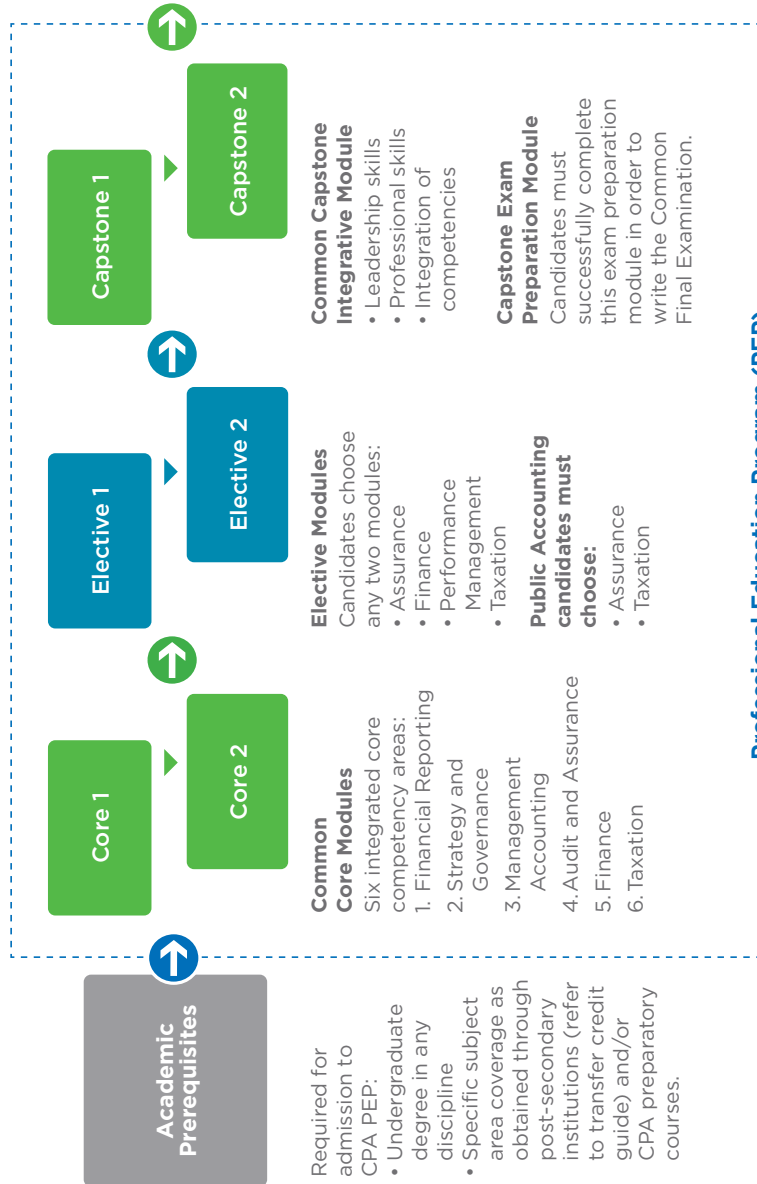
There are two routes to obtain practical experience requirements:

- **The Pre-approved Program Route (PPR)** in which future CPAs gain relevant experience by choosing a position from a wide range of employers pre-approved by the profession.
- **The Experience Verification Route (EVR)** in which future CPAs demonstrate competence and gain relevant experience at a chosen employer.

Future CPAs can gain experience through either route or a combination of both. The profession may accept up to one year of experience earned prior to registering with the profession. The minimum practical experience requirement for both routes is 30 months; this includes an allowance of up to 20 weeks of time away from work (including vacation time).

# CPA Professional Education Program Overview

Practical Experience Requirements (PER) 30 Months



1. **All candidates must demonstrate breadth** in all six core competency areas
2. **All candidates must demonstrate depth** in two core competency areas:
  - Financial Reporting or Management Accounting *plus*
  - One other core competency area

**Public Accounting candidates must demonstrate depth in:**

- Financial Reporting
- Assurance

Professional Education Program (PEP)



There are five common elements that support both routes:

1. Candidates gain relevant experience and develop as a professional accountant in a minimum of 30 months.\*
2. Candidates' experience must be appropriately supervised.
3. Candidates must record detailed reports at regular intervals.
4. Candidates must meet and discuss their progress at least semi-annually with a CPA mentor.
5. Candidates' experience is assessed by the CPA profession.

*\*Practical experience requirements for public accounting practice and professional accounting practice are recognized separately from practical experience requirements for certification.*

### CPA Practical Experience Self-Assessment Tool

This tool is intended for individuals who have not yet had their experience assessed by a provincial/regional body but want to understand how their

current or prospective position might align with the CPA technical competency requirements for purposes of the experience verification route. To access this self-assessment tool, visit <https://pert.cpa-services.org/student/TrialAssessment>.

### CPA mentorship

Mentorship is a mandatory component of the CPA Practical Experience Requirements (PER). The focus of the CPA mentorship program is to help future CPAs achieve their enabling competencies. CPA candidates who work in the Pre-approved Program Route (PPR) will be matched with a CPA mentor by the organization that offers the program. CPA candidates who choose the Experience Verification Route (EVR) are required to seek out their own CPA mentor in order to find a successful fit. Recognition may be given for a total of up to 12 months of experience earned prior to registering with the profession. After that time, the qualifying period of practical experience cannot begin until CPA candidates have a CPA mentor. CPA Canada has developed a number of valuable resources to assist CPA candidates in finding a mentor.

Please visit [www.cpacanada.ca/practicalexperience](http://www.cpacanada.ca/practicalexperience) for more information.

# BUILD THE BEST YOU

## GET ENGAGED

Increase your personal equity through creative holistic development, diverse work and mentorship that motivates.

## FIND BALANCE

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**Wilde and Company**  
Chartered Professional Accountants



**Wilde Advisory Group**  
Accounting | Law | Consulting

# WHERE IN THE WORLD IS YOUR OFFICE?

By Sonya Nguyen | Photography supplied

## Three CPAs talk about their experiences living and working abroad, proving a CPA designation can really take you anywhere

What do you picture when you think of where a CPA works? Does the beach come to mind? Well, maybe it should!

A CPA designation is widely recognized and respected in many countries around the world. CPA Canada has several Mutual Recognition Agreements and Reciprocal Membership Agreements with international accounting bodies, which increase the global portability of the designation and remove the stress of rewriting exams to transfer credentials to a different country.

*Capitalize* spoke to three CPAs to get their first-hand stories of combining their passion for travel with their career.



### Jaclyn (Jackie) Kirk CPA, CA

Director, PricewaterhouseCoopers

#### Cayman Islands

Jackie Kirk CPA, CA didn't have a big a-ha moment that led her to realize she wanted to go into accounting. Instead, what she knew was that she wanted a career that would let her travel the world.

From observing her mother's experiences as a bookkeeper, Jackie knew accounting offered flexibility. More importantly, Jackie knew becoming a CPA could open up international doors for her.

"I knew that no matter where I went, I could use [my CPA designation] since accountants are needed all over the world," says Jackie.

After graduating from Mount Royal University, Jackie looked at larger firms, knowing they'd have more global opportunities. Her eventual offer from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) even came in a travel suitcase! "It was perfect for me," says Jackie.

While at PwC, Jackie worked with a client in Jersey, one of the Channel Islands off the shore of France, and travelled regularly between Calgary and Jersey, which ignited her travel bug. "It just opened up my horizon a lot more to what was out there in the world," she says.

That experience eventually led her to work for PwC in Jersey and the Cayman Islands, where she now lives. But Jackie says one of the hardest parts about moving abroad—and doing it more than once—is that you have to prove yourself every time. "But I think it makes you stronger in the long run because you don't just rest on your laurels," she says. "You go out there, and you prove yourself again...and you test yourself."

Jackie's biggest advice for someone who might want to work abroad: Just do it. Go for a year and see what happens. "I don't know anyone who has ever regretted it," says Jackie.



**Jonathan MacKenzie** CPA, CA  
Risk Advisory Manager, Deloitte

### Australia

Jonathan MacKenzie CPA, CA always knew he wanted to work abroad. The only question was: Where in the world did he want to do that?

Born and raised in Calgary, Jonathan attended Mount Royal University and knew having a CPA designation would open global doors. “That was one of the things that made me interested in the accounting profession,” he says.

Jonathan is fortunate to work at a firm that values global mobility and has a program in place to help staff work abroad. Of course, it also “helps to know somebody who knows somebody,” says Jonathan.

So in 2017, after leveraging his network and interviewing for a job over Skype (which was quite novel at the time!), he packed up his life in Calgary, where he worked as a Senior Consultant for Deloitte, and made the move to Melbourne.

One of his biggest hesitations about moving abroad was that dreaded “9,000-hour workweek” you sometimes hear of in large cities. Jonathan didn’t want to make this massive move just to work all the time; he wanted to meet people and “do the things you enjoy about living in a city abroad,” he says.

Luckily, that 9,000-hour workweek isn’t typical of Melbourne, and he says the work culture is actually less formal. He has plenty of time to explore all Australia has to offer. “I’m really an outdoors kind of person,” says Jonathan. “I’ve gotten to enjoy the very different landscape [in Australia]. You have the really nice coastlines here. It’s beautiful.”

From the very beginning, Jonathan knew he wanted his designation in order to explore the world. “If you want something that can take you around the world, it’s worth it because it works,” says Jonathan. “It has genuinely given me a skill set that I can use anywhere in the world.”



**Ian Conn** CPA, CGA  
Financial Controller, Switchworx

### Bermuda

Ian Conn CPA, CGA is no stranger to moving abroad. Born in Scotland, Ian moved to Calgary in his teens, where he took a bookkeeping class in high school, piquing his initial interest in accounting.

But Ian has also always wanted to prioritize travel, even early in his career. What better way to do that than by leveraging his CPA designation and accounting experience? “In my first role, I put down on my professional development reports for years that I wanted to travel for work. The opportunity never arose in that role, but it was always a goal of mine that I kept fresh in my mind every year,” says Ian.

Fortunately, Ian was eventually headhunted by Switchworx to work as the Financial Controller in Bermuda. “One day, the phone rang, and it was a recruiter out of Bermuda,” says Ian. “And he goes ‘Hi. How would you like to live in Bermuda?’”

Initially, Ian assumed it was a scam (a pretty appealing one!). But after six months of interviews, he did indeed land the job in Bermuda, where he now enjoys his ideal work-life balance. “There seems to be an increasing acceptance of a 50- or 60-plus-hour workweek in North America, whereas the ability to have a life outdoors year-round in Bermuda has been amazing,” says Ian.

“The most enjoyable part for me—it’s not that I don’t enjoy being at work because I do quite enjoy my job—but knowing that I can head to the beach or out on the boat at the end of the day is huge,” he says.

To sum up, Ian says: “A CPA designation is more of a starting point than a destination.” 🇧🇲





CPAs share their insight  
on how the designation  
provides the soft skills to  
help you see...

# the big picture

As told to Andrew Moore | Photography by Trudie Lee Photography and Laughing Dog Photography

Soft skills can prove to be invaluable when it comes to success in the professional world. They are the non-technical competencies related to how employees work, such as customer service, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork. Some of these skills might come naturally, while you may need to actively work on others.

The key to being a well-rounded professional is to understand how many small pieces come together to create a business—the bigger picture. To help with that, CPAs in various roles and industries shed some light on how they make the most of these skills in the workplace.



# Collaboration



**Paul Groch CPA, CA**  
Partner, Deloitte

## **Why collaboration is important**

Collaboration helps foster innovation, learning, and sharing, with the ultimate objective of delivering greater value. Without it, I don't think I or the teams I work with would be successful or engaged on our projects. Collaboration helps me get the information I need to do my job, provide leading practice and industry insights to clients, increase the efficiency of the teams I work with, and provide greater value to our clients through diverse and inclusive perspectives.

## **Collaboration in action**

Deloitte views a collaborative mindset as a key contributor to delivering value to our clients. It's why no one has an office at our firm, which encourages workplaces that connect our people so we can serve our clients and

communities in new ways. For me, if we're not collaborating, we're not bringing the greatest value we could be. As a leader, I encourage those I work with to use a collaborative mindset in everything they do. And to collaborate across all levels, diversity of thought is key.

## **How to improve your collaboration**

For me, collaboration has been about understanding how I want to engage with teams and clients and the impact that my working style has on others. If you ask me five years from now how I'm collaborating, I'll probably tell you it has evolved. For example, early in my career, I used to send a lot of very detailed emails. Now I send short notes and ask people to jump on a call. You have to try out different ways and see what works for you. My call to action is to learn your working style, talk to others about what you need from them to be successful, and adapt and be flexible in how you work with others.



**Vartika Satija CPA, CA**  
Independent Tax Consultant

### **Why communication matters**

The stereotype is often that accountants are much better with numbers than words and tend to work behind a desk. While this might have been true at some point, the way we work is changing. Accountants are gradually transitioning into the role of trusted advisors, which requires the ability to relate to people, comprehend how businesses work, and convey complex financial and tax information in terms that everyone can understand. In other words, the modern accountant needs to be adept in many forms of written and verbal communication.

### **Communication in action**

I initially started my practice by doing multiple seminars on tax-related topics of interest to entrepreneurs and small business owners. While providing these sessions, I have been able to expand my knowledge and learn extensively

about the different businesses and passions of entrepreneurs. My skills presenting to a broad audience have helped open doors to clients I may not have otherwise been able to connect with. Sharing my knowledge and collaborating with other practitioners and stakeholders expanded my area of expertise and immensely helped me grow professionally and eventually be a successful independent consultant.

### **How to improve your communication**

Communication skills aren't always taught at educational institutions and, in a digitally dominated society, may not come naturally. My advice is to pull yourself out of your comfort zone and seek volunteer opportunities that allow you to learn to deal with different kinds of individuals and learn to work efficiently alone or as part of a team. The first step to improving communication is to identify your strengths and weaknesses. This may be done via engaging in different roles at different associations or stepping out into the community to look for opportunities.

# Communication





**Colleen Dickson CPA, CMA**  
Chief Financial Officer, Arts Commons

### **Why creativity is important**

Accounting is inherently structured and process-driven, so while we might be limited with how we record transactions and present financial statements, we have huge potential in our approach to problem-solving and advancing organizational goals. That's where creativity is critical. As CPAs, we can focus on data interpretation based on our experience or knowledge and use that data to help come up with original solutions.

### **Discover your creative side**

I've been working in arts and culture for more than 10 years, and I've never thought of myself as a creative person in the traditional sense. Typically, we think of creativity as music and art and writing. For me, it was broadening that image. When you do that, you realize that all of us have a creative side. My creativity is problem-solving and critical thinking. It's not just about the financial side; it's about understanding the whole business. When you know how an organization runs, it's easier to collaborate with other departments and develop creative solutions.

### **Putting creativity to work**

I believe collaboration leads to creativity, so you always need to be asking questions—connecting with your team, your peers, your clients. In accounting, we tend to do things the same way over and over again, but sometimes it helps to get visual and map out a problem. When Arts Commons was streamlining its operations, we used sticky notes to visualize the process of issuing a cheque. We must have covered an entire wall in sticky notes. But doing this allowed us to visualize each step, see what was necessary and what wasn't, and pare down the process.



# Drive

**Janice Anderson CPA, CA**

Director, Technical Accounting  
and Financial Reporting Advisory  
Services, Nutrien

**Why drive is important**

Drive is the force that propels a successful career. I consider it the motivating factor when considering my actions or inactions in a situation. A mentor once told me that “no one is going to fight for you but you,” which is advice I took to heart. The advice isn’t about being aggressive or argumentative, but about creating your own opportunities and going above and beyond. Drive also comes hand-in-hand with genuine interest and passion for your job. For me, having genuine interest and passion for what I’m doing increases my drive to succeed at my goals.

**Drive in action**

When I was a manager at PwC, I was asked to speak on a volunteer basis at some accounting conferences—a lot of people had turned this down, but I sought out approval to go ahead with it. I spent a lot of additional time and effort preparing for my presentations and became one of the regular speakers on this circuit. Not only did it increase my public speaking ability, which is now one of my strengths, but I also made a lot of connections with some brilliant technical accountants. Ten years later, this network was instrumental in me successfully landing my current role.

**Putting drive to work**

Take on the challenging assignments and volunteer to work with difficult colleagues or supervisors. Pivot potential negativity into an opportunity to learn something new and develop soft skills. Changing your mindset about a task can be instrumental to your success.





# Leadership

**Darryl Delwo CPA, CMA**  
Chief Financial Officer, Noralta  
Technologies

## **Why leadership skills are important**

Leadership plays a critical role when it comes to defining an organization's culture. Because of this, leaders must possess the skills necessary to inspire and empower employees. Culture is the competitive heartbeat and advantage any organization has; thus, having a leader who understands this advantage, and is disciplined in practicing it and conveying it throughout the organization, is the most important fundamental element of building a successful team and organization.

## **Leadership skills at work**

Many of my engagements have involved working with distressed organizations leading significant change-management initiatives. Having strong leadership skills has allowed me to take a vision from the board of directors, translate it to the operational team, and execute the plans—ultimately resulting in enhanced cultures and daily functions. Leadership skills have allowed me to connect the right people to the organization's vision and strategy, and identify and solve any approaching hurdles.

## **Start building leadership skills now**

Ensure you are disciplined in asking yourself “why?” and intimately understanding it. Seek out and immerse yourself in as many difficult scenarios as you can. The most significant learnings come from the most challenging situations we overcome. Continue to be open to listening to others about what they love doing and what they don't, and look for opportunities to provide feedback. To gain experience in this area, I would suggest becoming active in an organization, such as the Canadian Centre for Advanced Leadership in Business (CCAL). CCAL focuses on helping the next generations of business professionals become better leaders.



# Resiliency & Adaptability



## **Jason Wong CPA, CMA**

Senior Recruitment Consultant,  
Recruitment Partners

### **Why resiliency and adaptability are important**


Within the sphere of accounting specifically, adaptability is important to maintain your skills and remain relevant. At the end of the day, debits are on the left and credits are on the right, but with the pace of change in the technology we use, if you are not adapting, you will be left behind.

### **Resiliency and adaptability in action**

Throughout my career, resiliency and adaptability have been vital. It has been only 18 years since I graduated university—a short amount of time when you're talking about a career—yet in that time, the tech bubble burst, we saw the global financial crisis

(GFC) unfold, and now we're adjusting to the new reality of a COVID world. During the GFC, I changed careers and became an accountant. In 2018, I started a new career in recruitment. In the grand scheme of things, my own resiliency has allowed me to weather those economic changes and change careers as I have grown and developed, both personally and professionally.

### **Keep an open mind**

Becoming a CPA is a great career move. If you have an open mind, you can truly make it into anything you want. While it's impossible to know what will happen in the next 20 years, being resilient in the face of adversity and being adaptable in the face of change will allow you to stay engaged with the work you do and remain relevant, regardless of where your career takes you. 



# PRACTICES TO CULTIVATE RESILIENCE

By Sheri Thibau

**Developing your resilience during the good times can increase your ability to face life's inevitable bad times. How do you build a practice that works for you?**




Life is full of challenges. Being human means no one gets through life unscathed. We all experience stress, adversity, tragedy, and loss. One way we can learn to ride the waves of pain and challenge—instead of drowning in the upheaval—is through building resilience.

Psychologists define resilience as the ability to thrive in the face of adversity. Some think it is an innate characteristic, possessed by a select few. However, anyone can learn and cultivate resilience.

Developing resilience is a unique and personal process. Each of us has different skills and qualities, so try out a variety of strategies and practice what works best for you. Here are several strategies you can start with:

- **Practice self-compassion.** Self-compassion involves addressing your own suffering with empathy and kindness. This can be challenging. One way to practice self-compassion is to consider how you would offer support to a friend in the same situation and write yourself a letter saying those things.
- **Practice self-care.** Self-care is practicing the behaviours that make you feel better—in the long run. So, self-care is more like sweating it out at the gym when you feel like sitting in your PJs on the couch. Positive practices for self-care include eating nutritious foods, drinking lots of water, engaging in physical activity, maintaining good sleep habits, sticking to your budget, and getting outside daily.
- **Practice relaxation.** Relaxation techniques can lessen stress and help you settle into rest mode. Practices include meditation and breathwork. When we are stressed, we tend to breathe very shallowly or even hold our breath. By taking a normal in-breath and making sure the out-breath is long and controlled, we signal to ourselves that we are safe.
- **Practice connection.** Positive social connection is essential for our physical and psychological well-being, especially in times of adversity. Connecting face-to-face with empathetic people who listen and offer support alleviates the isolation that occurs with stress or trauma. Alternatively, connecting over Skype, Zoom, Messenger, phone, or text are great ways to stay connected with loved ones during the pandemic.

- **Practice focusing.** Focusing your attention on the present interrupts your thoughts and decreases stress. Take time to really watch the sunset, notice the sound of your cat purring, perceive your favorite smell, or appreciate how fruit tastes.
- **Practice gratitude.** Gratitude helps shift our attention away from our pain and widens our perspective. Keep a gratitude journal or try a gratitude challenge with a friend by texting each other something you are grateful for each day for 10 days.
- **Practice curiosity.** Curiosity adds meaning to our lives and offers a wider lens to view the world. Explore what fascinates you. Do things you have never tried before. Be fully present with others. Ask questions. Be willing to be wrong. Learn something new.
- **Practice playfulness.** Playfulness decreases stress and increases positive feelings such as joy and vitality. Be silly, smile, laugh, sing, dance, play with your pets, have a game night, joke around, watch comedies.

Developing resilience helps protect you from feeling overwhelmed and helps you maintain your psychological balance, especially while navigating high school or post-secondary in extraordinary circumstances. Resilience is emotional currency, providing strength, determination, and a more positive outlook when it is needed the most. 



Sheri Thibeau is a Registered Provisional Psychologist at Cirrus Psychology Services in Red Deer. Cirrus Psychology Services offers counselling and assessment services for children, teens, adults, seniors, couples, families, and groups. Sheri divides her professional time between seeing clients in private practice and teaching at the University of Alberta. In addition, Sheri is currently working on her PhD at the University of Alberta. Her dissertational research is on resilience.






# ACCOUNTING + FILM & TELEVISION = ONE UNBELIEVABLE CAREER

By Ginny Ao | Photography by Trudie Lee Photography

Janet Hamley shares how she uses her financial expertise to produce compelling movies and TV shows

PRODUCTION CPA  
SCENE JANET  
TAKE PDF  
DIRECTOR BRIAN HARDER  
CAMERA TRUDIE LEE  
DATE AUG 5, 2020



**“It’s exciting to combine my creativity with my accounting experience. The process of creating an episode of TV allows me to use my business experience, along with my knowledge and interest in television, to develop a product that will inform, entertain, and educate.”**

Janet Hamley CPA, CMA

Combining a passion for creativity with financial know-how, **Janet Hamley CPA, CMA** is an accounting expert working in a storyteller’s world.

When you envision a CPA, you probably don’t imagine someone reading scripts, making television shows, or shaking hands with actors, directors, and producers—but that’s exactly what Janet regularly does as the Chief Operating Officer and Co-Executive Producer of Prairie Dog Film + Television. Prairie Dog, a Canadian film and television production company, produces content that has been streamed worldwide on Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Hulu and aired on major networks across North America.

With more than 140 episodes of television, a feature film, several documentaries, and countless commercial credits to her name, Janet has found a career that perfectly suits her personality and interests and that expertly integrates her love of storytelling with her strong financial background. Recognized with a CPA Alberta 2020 Early Achievement Award and as one of *Avenue Magazine’s* Top 40 under 40 in 2019, Janet is truly a well-rounded CPA.

“It’s exciting to combine my creativity with my accounting experience,” explains Janet. “The process of creating an episode of TV allows me to use my business experience, along with my knowledge and interest in television, to develop a product that will inform, entertain, and educate.”

When she’s not overseeing accounting and finance, Janet wears the hat of Co-Executive Producer, working with the production team and managing business affairs. She can often be found reading scripts, watching casting auditions, or hanging out on set during shoots—tasks a typical CPA wouldn’t normally do.

Like many, breaking into the film and television industry was something Janet once dreamed of but never thought could be a reality. “Growing up in rural southern Alberta, [working in film and television] seemed like one of those unreachable jobs,” says Janet. “I am very thankful to have been introduced to it through a family member who is a producer in Calgary.”

Today, Janet can say she has made it; however, she continues to focus on her craft and bringing true and engaging stories to life. This is what keeps Janet excited and motivated.

Her most recent projects, the television series *Tribal* and *Blackstone*, both air on APTN and explore real-world Indigenous stories. These projects provide a look into timely and important issues of the world today, which is what drew Janet to them. “I’m passionate about telling stories that have meaning. I want to create stories that are relevant, compelling, and unique,” explains Janet.

Outside of her many projects at Prairie Dog, Janet uses her financial expertise and film and television experience to help community organizations succeed. She volunteers as the Treasurer of the Alberta Media Production Industries Association Board and is a member of the Directors Guild of Canada, Women in Film & Television – Alberta, and the Canadian Media Producers Association. From dishing out accounting advice to helping organizations provide funding support and professional development opportunities, Janet is all hands on deck.

“If there’s anything I can do to use my accounting expertise—which I recognize isn’t very prevalent in the film community—to help, I want to share my knowledge with these organizations,” says Janet. “I want to encourage people to get to know the film and television industry and hopefully help them enter the workforce.” 📺



# BREWING





# BUSINESS

By Sharon Ruyter | Photography by Laughing Dog Photography

## How two CPAs came to own one of Alberta's oldest breweries

**Cameron (Cam) French CPA, CA** and **Zane Christensen CPA, CA** have been craft beer enthusiasts since their university days, but they've been friends for even longer. Since becoming friends 20 years ago in junior high, Cam and Zane have taken similar paths: pursuing business degrees at the University of Alberta and then obtaining an accounting designation after graduation. Their similar career tracks meant the answer was a no-brainer when the two questioned whether they should own a business together. The only question left to answer was the kind of business they would own.

In early February 2020, news broke that the owners of Alley Kat Brewing, the fourth-oldest brewery in Edmonton, had sold their business to a pair of CPAs. "It's kind of funny because I actually applied for an accounting job at Alley Kat in late summer of 2018. [During the interview,] I gave them the spiel of, 'You can hire someone for much cheaper who will do your financial statements and crunch the numbers, but I'm going to be a strategic partner, and this is how I'm going to help you grow,'" remembers Zane.

Alley Kat ultimately went with a different candidate, but the rejection changed Zane's and Cam's lives forever. Alley Kat's general manager told Zane the owners were "getting older" and "looking for more consistent results," rather than rapid growth. "Everything he said to me started piquing my interest. It sounded like the owners wanted to get out," says Zane.

The two had been considering starting a business together for a while, so building off this idea and Zane's spidey sense that the owners of Alley Kat might be looking for buyers, the pair reached out to discuss the owner's succession plan. "We thought, 'Do we open our own or do we go with a brewery that already exists that has the brand and the goodwill?'" says Cam. Being CPAs and strategic thinkers, they went with the latter.

**"Given our CPA backgrounds, we were confident in being able to do our due diligence. We were able to look at the business and really sift through it in detail and get the information we needed to acquire the company."**

**Zane Christensen CPA, CA**

"Given our CPA backgrounds, we were confident in being able to do our due diligence. We were able to look at the business and really sift through it in detail and get the information we needed to acquire the company," says Zane.

Now that the ink is dry, and they're officially brewery owners, Cam and Zane are focused on learning. Neil Herbst, the previous owner, agreed to stay on for a year to help ease them into ownership, and the two are soaking up the benefits of mentorship. They've also made a point to rotate through all parts of the business to learn the ropes and build relationships with their new staff. Cam and Zane have packed beers, assisted the head brewer, built picnic tables for the patio, and because of COVID-19, even delivered beer to the homes of Alley Kat customers.

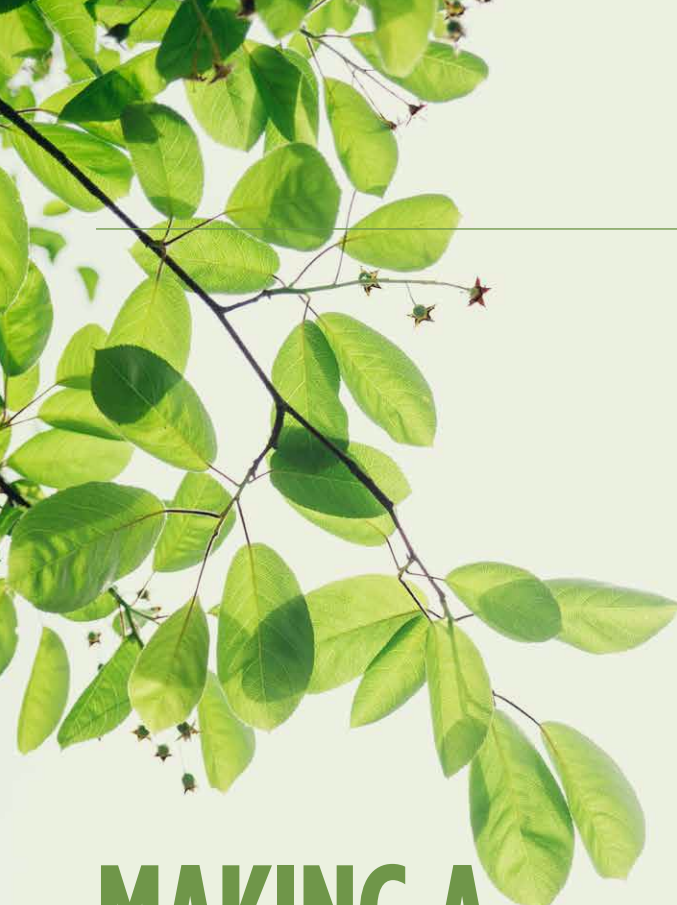
No two days are the same when you're the owners of a brewery, and the fact that two CPAs are guiding one of the most well-known beer brands in Alberta might come as a surprise to others, but the two aren't shocked at all. "I know way more accountants like me and Cam that aren't your typical accountants," says Zane.

"We're all secretly hiding in jobs that you don't think accountants do," adds Cam. Even in the most unlikely places—like your favourite local brewery. 🍺



Zane Christensen CPA, CA (left) and Cameron (Cam) French CPA, CA





# MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

By Ginny Ao | Photography by Trudie Lee Photography

**Maggie Liu shares how you can be more environmentally friendly and the pitfalls you should avoid**

We've all done it. Sometimes it's part of our weekly routine or maybe it's a reward for a hard week. Weekday coffee purchases, weekend takeout orders, bottled water on your grocery list—but do you ever pause and wonder where all this plastic ends up? That's what **Maggie Liu CPA, CMA** thinks about.

Maggie and her husband, Jerry Gao, devote their time and energy to helping the environment as the co-founders of LEAF Environmental Products, an effective, cost-efficient, environmentally friendly product solutions company.

Like most entrepreneurs, Maggie's drive to make a difference started from passionate beginnings. "Jerry and I both love nature. We are fascinated with nature documentaries," says Maggie. "And from time to time, documentaries show sea turtles strangled by a piece of plastic in the ocean. We felt that, as humans and as a society, we needed to do something."

That's why Maggie and Jerry decided to start LEAF, which has grown into a successful company.

LEAF produces numerous compostable products sold through retailers across Canada and used in various business, at universities, in Calgary office buildings, and more. Their products are fully compostable, which makes them an environmentally friendly alternative to single-use plastics—one of the most prevalent threats to our environment. These environmentally sustainable solutions range from garbage bags, dog waste bags, cutlery, and packaging, to even coffee cups and lids.

A champion for environmental education, Maggie wants to raise awareness around the pervasive issue of plastic and pollution. One way she does this is by sharing simple tips you can incorporate to develop a more sustainability-focused lifestyle.

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## The reduce, reuse, recycle philosophy

"This is a perfect reminder of the way we should approach our consumption behavior," explains Maggie. "Most plastic products can be avoided if we just reduce our consumption. Any time you want to purchase something, ask yourself if you really need it. Reducing is better than reusing, and reusing is better than recycling."

This small change can not only save the environment, but your wallet as well. Buying a cup of coffee may feel satisfying in the moment, but the waste it produces can have a large impact.



Maggie Liu CPA, CMA

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### Incorporate reusable products into your routine

If you're looking to make a change, you can start small. You're more likely to adopt a new routine if changes are easy—especially if they fit into your day-to-day activities.

"Use compostable produce bags or reusable grocery bags," suggests Maggie. "You can even talk to your neighbourhood grocery store and suggest they provide compostable shopping bags instead of plastic ones. This is just one way to personally champion for environmental causes and plastic solutions."

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### Avoid common mistakes

Maggie acknowledges that switching away from plastic products can be difficult. So if you are going to make a purchase or use plastics, be aware of a common misconception many consumers fall victim to.

"People often purchase biodegradable plastics thinking they are good for the environment. In reality,

biodegradable products are more detrimental to the environment compared to regular plastics," says Maggie.


Biodegradable plastics are manufactured to separate into millions of little pieces of micro-plastics, which are impossible to collect once in the environment. Their small size means they can get into water and soil systems with no means for recovery.

Biodegradable products are far worse than regular petrochemical-based plastics, which can be collected and recycled.

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### Use your voice to make a difference

Maggie encourages younger generations to use their voice to create a positive change for our environment and make an impact in their communities.

"Shape the future. Get involved. Talk to your MPs and MLAs about the rules around plastics," says Maggie. "Numerous nations around the world have already banned single-use plastics, and Canada is lagging behind." 



# “SCHOLARSHIP”

## A FANCY WORD FOR FREE MONEY

Whether you want to call it scholarships or free money, the CPA Education Foundation has the means to support you as you forge your path towards becoming a CPA. We have scholarships for all types of students—take a look at the selection and you may find you’re eligible to apply for more than one!

Post-secondary scholarship deadline: February 28, 2021  
High school scholarship deadline: May 1, 2021

Does volunteering and helping out in your community give you the warm and fuzzies? If so, the post-secondary scholarships below may be right for you. We want students who are passionate about their volunteer activities, have satisfactory academic standing, and have an interest in pursuing the CPA designation. If that sounds like you, we can’t wait to read your submission!

**J. Lorne Baxter FCPA, FCA Memorial Scholarship**  
Value: \$1,500

**David Bentley FCPA, FCA and Janet Bentley Post-secondary Excellence Award**  
Value: \$3,000

**James C. Miller FCA Bursary in Accounting**  
Value: \$1,250

**Peter Kruczko CPA, CA Award in Memory of Gordon Woodman FCA**  
Value: \$2,000

**Richard Schulli CA Memorial Scholarship**  
Value: \$2,500

Are you a born leader and mentor? Do you thrive on helping others succeed, and enjoy being a leader in your community or on campus? If you are a post-secondary student and professionalism, integrity, and leadership are what make you tick, we want to hear from you!


**Don Wilson CA Memorial Scholarship**  
Value: \$2,000

**Kenneth Biggs FCPA, FCA and Leona Biggs Scholarship**  
Value: \$2,000

**CPA Alberta Young Emerging Professionals Award**  
Value: \$2,500

For more information on any of the CPA Education Foundation scholarships, please visit [cpaalberta.ca/foundation](http://cpaalberta.ca/foundation).





Think you know all about the CPA Education Foundation awards for post-secondary students? Think again! Read on for interesting tidbits about our scholarships and apply for ones that pique your interest.

**Calgary CPA Small Practitioners' Forum Award**  
Value: \$1,500

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The CPA Small Practitioners' Forum was first held in Banff in 1984.

**Douglas R. Hagerman FCA Entrance Scholarship**  
Value: \$2,500

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Douglas Hagerman served as a navigator in the Airforce in World War II. The scholarship fund in his name was established by friends, family, and professional colleagues to recognize his significant contributions to the accounting profession.

**Vic Dzurko Generations of Excellence Award**  
Value: \$2,500


**DID YOU KNOW?**

If your parent or grandparent is a CPA, you're a good candidate for this award. No time like the present to follow in family footsteps!

**New Canadian Achievement Award**  
Value: \$2,500

**DID YOU KNOW?**

There is one award available to an individual who has become a new Canadian or permanent resident within the last five years (i.e., on or after January 1, 2016).



Are you a grade 12 student who has a passion for entrepreneurship or giving back to your community? Do you demonstrate good character and leadership skills? If the answer is yes, one of the awards below may be right for you!

**Black and Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC) Success Award**  
Value: \$2,000

**CPA Education Foundation Rural Learners Award**  
Value: \$2,000

**CPA Alberta Young Emerging Professional Award**  
Value: \$1,500


**David Bentley FCPA, FCA and Janet Bentley High School Excellence Award**  
Value: \$2,500

**Empowered Young Woman Award**  
Value: \$2,000

**LGBTQ2S+ Award**  
Value: \$2,000

**Stepping Up Entrepreneurial Spirit Award**  
Value: \$2,000

**Stepping Up in the Community Award**  
Value: \$2,000



If you are Indigenous, driven, and a born trailblazer, then we have an award for you! Regardless of where you are in your academic journey—perhaps you are still in high school or maybe you are a mature student—the CPA Education Foundation proudly offers a variety of awards for your consideration.


**Aboriginal Student Business Award**  
Value: \$2,500

**Alex Tutschek FCPA, FCA Award for Indigenous Student Post-Secondary Achievement**  
Value: \$1,500

**Alex Tutschek FCPA, FCA Award for Indigenous Student High School Achievement**  
Value: \$1,500

**Alex Tutschek FCPA, FCA Award for Mature Indigenous Students**  
Value \$1,500

**Crowe MacKay No Limits Award**  
Value: \$3,750



The CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) is no joke! Don't let the financial burden hinder your motivation to achieve the CPA designation. The following awards are available to those enrolled in CPA PEP and who are in good academic standing. We encourage you to apply for more than one award.

**David Bentley FCPA, FCA and Janet Bentley CPA PEP Excellence Award**  
Value: \$3,500

**Claire Dallaire CPA, CGA CPA PEP Encouragement Award**  
Value: \$2,500



# **VOLUNTEERING: IT'S MORE THAN A SECTION ON YOUR RESUME**

By Nike Fabiyi | Photography supplied

## Kelsey MacLeod, a CPA Education Foundation award recipient, shares how she leveled up her skills through giving back

**STUDENT. COMMUNITY LEADER. #GIRLBOSS.** These are just a few of the words that can be used to describe **Kelsey MacLeod**, the 2020 recipient of the J Lorne Baxter FCPA, FCA Memorial Scholarship.

How did Kelsey make her application stand out among hundreds of CPA Education Foundation award applicants? Volunteering, of course!

Kelsey is no stranger to giving back to her community and has been involved in several on-campus volunteer activities, including being an organizational team member with Students for Literacy and a Tax Reporter for the University of Alberta's Accounting Club.

Most notable, however, is Kelsey's position as the Director of Finance for the Champions of Change student club, an affiliate of Plan International at the University of Alberta (U of A). Plan International is dedicated to advancing children's rights around the world, and the U of A club's primary mandate is to raise awareness for social issues in the local community, including education rights, gender equality, and healthcare access. Through Champions of Change, Kelsey and the executive team were able to organize a Krispy Kreme fundraiser that resulted in a \$3,000 donation of 100 care packages to the Boyle Street Community Centre.

Kelsey notes leadership, public speaking, and organizational skills as the top three skills she's developed through her volunteerism. "Planning and executing events with Champions of Change have helped me build my teamwork and time-management skills. Volunteering has allowed me to be more confident at applying my skills in lower-risk settings," says Kelsey.

Kelsey's dedication to giving back is a great example of how volunteering can become more than a section on your resume—it can have a positive impact on your skill development. According to a 2013 social survey from Statistics Canada, 63 per cent of surveyed volunteers gained interpersonal skills through their volunteer work.

In addition to gaining new skills, volunteering can help students gain industry-specific experience and expand their professional network. So students, do not hesitate when seeking out that extracurricular activity, as it can exceed your initial expectations.

If you're unsure where to begin, Kelsey suggests attending club fairs and connecting with your campus's students' association, but most important is to find a volunteer activity you're passionate about. "There are so many organizations and initiatives you can get involved in, so it's not difficult to find an activity that you're passionate about," says Kelsey.

As Kelsey prepares to graduate in December 2021 with her Bachelor of Commerce degree from the U of A, it is clear her future is incredibly bright. Kelsey plans to enter the CPA Professional Education Program upon graduation, and the profession can't wait to welcome her.

The CPA Education Foundation is committed to supporting students, like Kelsey, along their educational journey. Whether you're an avid volunteer or have appeared on the Dean's list, there is a Foundation award for you!

For a full list of awards and information on how to apply, visit: [cpaalberta.ca/scholarships](https://cpaalberta.ca/scholarships). 

**“There are so many organizations and initiatives you can get involved in, so it’s not difficult to find an activity that you’re passionate about.”**

Kelsey MacLeod, recipient of the J Lorne Baxter FCPA, FCA Memorial Scholarship





# YOUR JOB-SEARCH SECRET WEAPON

By Melissa Maschke

Job competition can be fierce these days, but luckily you can reach for a secret weapon: your soft skills!

It seems now, more than ever, competition for jobs is fierce, and people can feel overwhelmed by all the different job search advice. One secret weapon to increase your chances of success in the job market is to highlight your soft skills.

This is not the time to sell yourself short with over-used phrases (e.g. “people-person” or “hard worker”). Knowing your soft skill strengths will help you discover your added value and bring to life what you can do. Typically, hiring managers relate to stories, not just words. How you differentiate your soft skills from other candidates can significantly improve your chances of getting hired.

Think about it this way: Hard skills will likely get you the interview, but you need soft skills to help you get and keep the job. Use these personal characteristics in all aspects of your job search—cover letters, resumes, and interviews.

## How can you incorporate soft skills into your resume and cover letter?

Take some time to dissect the job posting before you apply:


- Identify and seek out what the employer is asking for. What is important to them?
- Understand what key soft skills (e.g. effective communication skills, teamwork, dependability, adaptability) the employer is looking for. This will help you sell and customize your message to meet their needs in both the resume and cover letter.
- Take this one step further and outline one or two stories that highlight your soft skills.

Aim to show off your soft skills in a concrete way. Soft skills show you in action.

- Example for a resume describing customer service: “Handled floor sales, assisted and advised customers in selecting purchases, and created a sales promotion, which increased ready-to-wear sales by 35 per cent.”
- Example outlining leadership and volunteerism: “During high school, I took the initiative to organize two different fundraising efforts to raise money for our local school band and football team. In both efforts, raised funds exceeded target goals by 65 per cent.”

Ensure each of your selling points describes a skill the hiring manager is seeking, then use an accomplishment statement to show—not just tell—how great a communicator or organizer you are. Use action verbs to show off your achievements.

- Example of communications and customer relations skills: “Improved customer relations with proactive communication and approachability. Leveraged exceptional relationship management skills to deliver superior customer service by quickly assessing inquiries, diffusing issues, and resolving complaints, which resulted in improved response time and reduced rejected orders by 25 per cent.”
- Example of organizational and problem solving skills: “Expert in tracking service-related issues. Developed and implemented reliable shipping and receiving processes and procedures to work cross-functionally, which resolved complaints about ordering, quality control, and returns. Improved turn-around times by more than 25 per cent.”

First-rate cover letters and resumes take extensive planning. Take the time to reflect on your skills, experience, and knowledge. This will give you the perspective to identify and articulate what you have to offer your next employer! 



Melissa Maschke is a Certified Career Development Practitioner and Certified Career Strategist. She has been working in the career development field for more than 20 years. She is currently the owner of Key Employment Services, working with clients to help with all things related to employment prep and career exploration. She also works with employers as a Human Resources consultant. You can find her at [mvcareers.ca](https://mvcareers.ca) or on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/in/melissa-maschke](https://www.linkedin.com/in/melissa-maschke).




# TURNING YOUR **PASSION** INTO A PROFESSION

By Sonya Nguyen | Photography supplied

Steph Rushton proves it's possible to combine your interests and skills and make a career out of it





**Steph Rushton** CPA, CA is the definition of multifaceted. Whether you want to learn about new music from around the world or need some professional accounting advice—Steph is your go-to.

Steph is currently based in Paris—yes, *that* Paris—working as a Music Supervisor with Seven Seas Music and with independent film producers. In her role, Steph sources and licenses authentic international music for film and television projects—not exactly what you’d expect of the stereotypical CPA.

Her path started similarly to many Alberta CPAs: Steph graduated from the University of Calgary with her Bachelor of Commerce in accounting and knew she wanted to pursue her CPA designation. “Accounting is essentially the language of business. It’s a good base to have in any industry and position because you learn so much about the fundamental ways in which a business operates and thrives—or fails. I realized that taking this path would be a good foundation to have and be widely applicable regardless of what direction I took in the future,” explains Steph.


Steph started her professional career as an accountant at EY, where she worked in Calgary and then San Francisco. She earned her CPA designation after her second attempt at the profession’s final examination. “I actually didn’t pass the [examination] the first time,” she says. “I’m a repeat writer! I remember when it happened, I thought the world was over!”

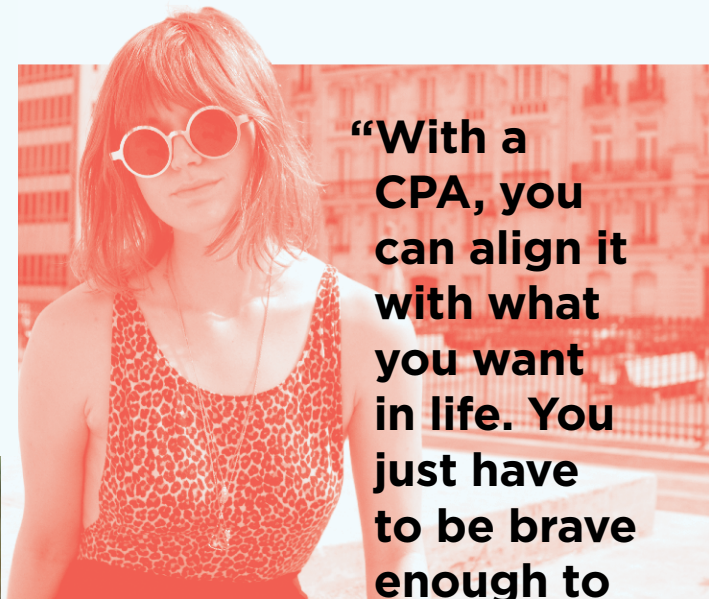
Now, Steph looks back on it as an important learning experience. “Rewriting turned out to be a very fulfilling experience,” she says. “It forced me to debrief my own studying process and determine what worked best for me personally instead of just following the herd.”

While in San Francisco, Steph knew she wanted to pursue other interests and eventually relocate to Europe, so she contacted two female music supervisors she admired. “Both of them were super impressed that I had my CPA,” says Steph. “Even though it’s not directly related to the music industry, I think it spoke to the calibre of my experience, work ethic, and ability to critically think about issues.”

She was offered an internship and, later, a paid position. She then had the opportunity to relocate to Paris, where she is now living her dream of having her own public practice and being a freelance music supervisor. But she’s quick to mention her job is not always as glamorous as people think. Steph still works long hours, and because her international music and accounting clients are in different time zones, she needs to have a flexible working schedule.

But because her public practice work can be done remotely, Steph is able to travel frequently, choose which clients she works with, and dictate her own schedule. “The freedom and control [this work has] given me is incredibly liberating and has allowed me to create the lifestyle I want. Of course you can’t do this when you’re a fresh CPA, but after some years of experience, you can go off on your own, and it’s incredible liberating,” she says.

Steph emphasizes—and proves!—there isn’t one path to having the career you want as a CPA. While a CPA designation can open a lot of doors, you have to tune in to what makes you happy. For Steph, travelling the world and developing and sharing her skills make her happy, so she’s leveraged her designation to take her across the world and do what she’s most passionate about. “With a CPA, you can align it with what you want in life,” she says. “You just have to be brave enough to do it.” 



**“With a CPA, you can align it with what you want in life. You just have to be brave enough to do it.”**

Steph  
Rushton CPA, CA



# CREATING OPPORTUNITIES


By Kevin Spila

## The CPA Education Foundation and its Hesje CPA Knowledge Centre enter a unique partnership with 4-H Alberta

After a stellar first year of podcasts and videos, the Hesje CPA Knowledge Centre is expanding its reach and creating opportunities for high school students in rural Alberta.

Creating those opportunities is what both the Hesje Centre and the CPA Education Foundation are all about. Together, they are funding a partnership with 4-H Alberta—a like-minded, forward-thinking organization focused on building skills for youth in rural communities. The Hesje Centre is excited to share the knowledge of CPAs with more high school students across the province and work with 4-H Alberta to develop new programming and mentorship opportunities. Stay tuned for more as the Hesje Centre has exciting plans in the works.

And what about the podcast? Season two of *Straight From the CPA's Mouth* has shifted gears from profiling individual CPAs to exploring subjects and stories about leadership, business, education, and more. Now, it covers topics like the differences between generations, the power of moving across the world, and the importance of data analytics. For example, in episode six of season two, the podcast delves into the value of volunteering and how getting out of your comfort zone can help you develop new skills and become a more well-rounded member of your community.

Be sure to visit [cpaalberta.ca/Foundation/Hesje-CPA-Knowledge-Centre](https://cpaalberta.ca/Foundation/Hesje-CPA-Knowledge-Centre), where you can listen to all podcast episodes, check out the CPA Smart video series, and stay up to date with the Hesje CPA Knowledge Centre. 

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The CPA Education Foundation's Hesje CPA Knowledge Centre was established thanks to a generous gift from Brian Hesje FCPA, FCA, an accomplished Alberta business leader and community builder. The Hesje Centre, which was established in March 2019, is a virtual hub of resources and materials featuring Alberta CPAs sharing their unique perspectives and vast expertise on a wide range of topics and issues.

# Capitalize CAMPUS STARS

## COMING SOON!

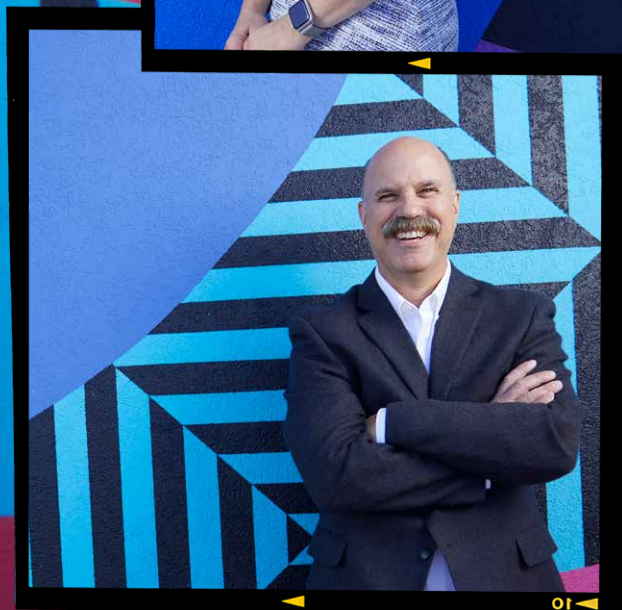
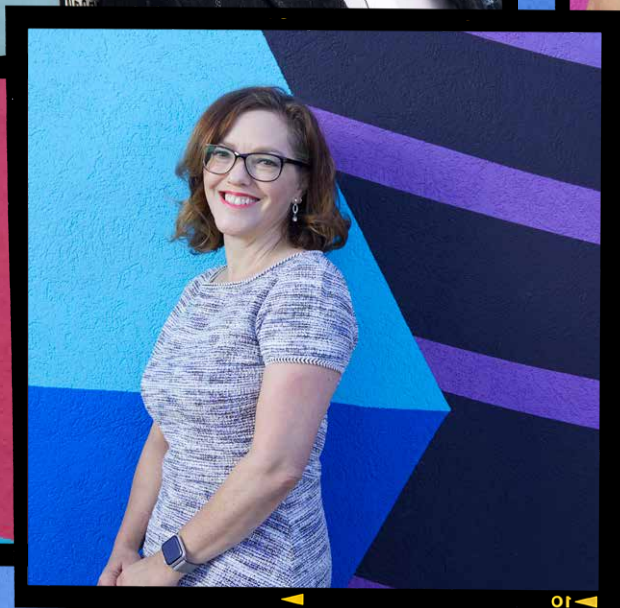
For more than 10 years, we've featured many stars from the CPA profession in these pages. Now, we want to celebrate the stars right on your campus!

Do you know a post-secondary student who is a leader, high achiever, community builder—in other words, a general mover and shaker? Are they already making an impact in their world? Are they EXCELLENT?

Consider nominating this up-and-comer for the inaugural class of *Capitalize* Campus Stars! Nominations can come from fellow students, mentors, educators, or colleagues.

**The nomination form will be available early 2021 on [capitalize.cpaalberta.ca](https://capitalize.cpaalberta.ca), so keep an eye out on our social media channels for updates!**





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