

The background is a dark blue grid with various light blue icons: a document with a checkmark, a cloud, a pencil, and a magnifying glass. The text 'CPA' is centered in a large, bold, white font.

# CPA

**The tool  
you need  
to succeed**

**Whether you're working on a home improvement project or a work project, the right tool for the right job makes all the difference.**

**In the business world, that tool is the Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation.**

The CPA designation—Canada's globally recognized accounting and business credential—provides all the skills and knowledge you need to succeed in your career. Because CPAs develop a wide range of useful skills, from problem solving and critical thinking to technical competencies, they're highly desired in today's organizations, especially as the world becomes more data driven. And CPAs aren't just dealing strictly with financial data either. Being a CPA means you have the skills and knowledge to interpret all kinds of big data in different sectors of the economy.

As a CPA, you'll be recognized for your ability to help businesses navigate uncertainty, and they'll rely on you to not only analyze the data and the financials, but also make recommendations from them. You'll be seen as a credible and trusted advisor and a recognized leader. Plus, you'll be compensated well, too. In 2018, the average salary of an Alberta CPA was \$175,000 according to a 2019 CPA Profession Compensation Study.

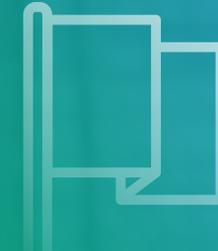
And if you'd rather blaze your own trail and become an entrepreneur, being a CPA will also give you all of the skills you need to start a thriving business. From budgets, projections,

and forecasting to networking and communication skills, you'll develop the business acumen you need so that you can be your own boss.

In the following pages, you'll encounter the stories of Alberta CPAs who filled their tool belts with useful skills that have taken their careers to new heights. Being a CPA allowed a surety underwriter to become a regional vice president; a non-profit accountant to enact social change and make peoples' lives better; an entrepreneur to break into cloud accounting and provide services to small businesses; a research scientist to switch to auditing to carve out a fulfilling career; and an auditor to pursue their passion as a published author and Certified Leadership Coach.

You'll also find information about how CPAs are adapting to rapid technological changes and using the skills they gained from the designation to add value to their organizations, as well as how CPA Alberta supports those on their CPA journey.

If you're looking to fill your toolbox with the skills that will carry your career into the future, choose the best business credential for the job—choose to become a CPA.



# CPA: The tool for inspirational leadership

By Kate Austin  
Photography by Trudie Lee Photography

## John Thorpe reflects on how the designation helped him get to where he is today

When **John Thorpe CPA, CMA** graduated from university with a bachelor's degree in marketing, accounting was the furthest thing from his mind. It wasn't that he disliked working with numbers or had no interest in finance—it just wasn't something he focused on. Fast forward a few years into working in the surety industry as an underwriter, however, and John realized he wanted to get the designation to help further his career goals.

"I was looking for ways to broaden my skillset, as well as find a way to differentiate myself from my peers and competitors," says John. "There weren't many people in my company or even across the surety world that had the CPA designation." The designation helped John stand out, and today, more than 13 years after starting with Trisura Guarantee Insurance Company, he is the Regional Vice President, Prairies.

While being in a leadership role has always come naturally to John, whether that was in school or on sports teams, getting the designation helped him develop his technical and soft skills—for example, coaching and public

speaking. It also made him a stronger insurance underwriter. "That gave my superiors confidence in my ability to take on more responsibility, and they trusted my decision making," says John.

Becoming a leader is about more than just getting into a leadership position, however. To be a great leader, John recommends that you remain curious and approach situations with an open mind. He also believes the best leaders will take a genuine interest in their coworkers, understand what those coworkers do every day, and figure out how to best support them. And, of course, leaders need to be creative problem solvers who are interested in lifelong learning.

"I think all those things make good leaders," says John. "But I would say leading by listening, being curious, and focusing on the growth and development of your team are what make really good leaders."

John also believes that leaders should constantly look for ways to make themselves better. "I think it's all about continuous learning, finding areas where you think you're maybe not as strong, and trying to improve on them," he says. In the CPA profession, continuous



**Leading by listening, being curious, and focusing on the growth and development of your team are what make really good leaders.**

**John Thorpe CPA, CMA**

learning is highly valued, and there's no shortage of strong leaders who pursue professional development to be the best leaders they can be. And while you shouldn't forget about your strengths, improving on your weaknesses will keep you from stagnating and make you a stronger, more well-rounded person.

"If you want to be a leader in your business, you can do that," says John. "Taking initiative and showing your employer or your manager that you're interested in being a leader goes a long way."





# CPA: The tool to change careers

By Quinta Iticka  
Photography by Laughing Dog Photography

## Bibitha Thomas demonstrates that the CPA designation is attainable, regardless of someone's current or previous career path

Change is constant in life. (Recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted that the business environment can shift considerably in a blink of an eye.) Regardless of the reasons behind any changes, professionals need to be adaptable and have a growth mindset; they also need to be ready to learn new skills that enable them to remain employable and continuously bring value to organizations.

**Bibitha Thomas CPA** has an extensive background in the science field, but when she moved from India to Canada, finding work was initially challenging. "I have a master's degree in chemistry, and I used to work as a research scientist/medicinal chemist for one of the largest contract research organizations in India. I successfully delivered numerous compounds to various pharmaceutical clients all over the world," says Bibitha. "However, during our first four years in Canada, I travelled across the country with my family hoping to find a job."

When Bibitha couldn't find a suitable opportunity, she decided to switch paths. Rather than pursue another career in the science field, she set her sights on becoming a CPA. "I was looking for a fulfilling career, not a job. I wanted to make sure that after completing my studies, I would be able to find a career that provided financial stability and the ability to grow," says Bibitha.

At first glance, science and accounting seem to have nothing in common. But Bibitha, who is currently the Acting Team Leader for Small and Medium Enterprise Audit at Canada Revenue Agency, says some of the soft skills she cultivated as a research scientist are highly valuable in her current role.

"Attention to detail is a big one," says Bibitha. "In my previous career, I conducted lab experiments and



### I was looking for a fulfilling career, not a job.

**Bibitha Thomas CPA**

created compounds that formed the building blocks of medications. Small errors in handling these compounds could render them unusable. Similarly, when auditing financial statements, I need to pay attention to every detail because errors can lead to inaccurate adjustments."

Her CPA skills have also provided her with valuable technical skills, boosted her confidence, and given her credibility.

To other professionals considering a career change, Bibitha says, "The journey to becoming a CPA is not an easy one; however, if you believe in yourself and remain determined, your efforts will pay off. Having the designation will create endless opportunities."

A woman with a tiara and a patterned dress is smiling and holding a book titled "101 Quips and Quotes for Tweens, Teens and Twenties to win with" by ADA ADELEKE-KELANI. She is standing in a library with bookshelves in the background. A large green circle on the left contains the text "CPA: The tool to pursue your passion" and a paintbrush icon. A large green checkmark is on the right side of the image.

# CPA: The tool to pursue your passion

Photography by Trudie Lee Photography

## How Ada Adeleke-Kelani found her passion and helps others do the same

Ada Adeleke-Kelani CPA, CA started the journey to her designation as a way of taking a stand against societal expectations. Ada's mother initially wanted her to become a doctor, but Ada felt differently and decided to try accounting. "I surprised myself when I graduated as the best student and the first female ever in the Accountancy department!" Ada says with a grin.

Ada obtained her first accounting designation in Nigeria. When she and her family moved to Canada, she found herself at the beginning of the designation journey again. She was taken aback. "It was hard not to say, 'Are you for real? Do you know how long ago I was designated?'" remembers Ada.

Ada then reframed the situation as an opportunity to expand her mindset and grow her network, all while getting a refresher on the basics of the designation; this experience helped her remain humble. "Having restarted the journey showed me I could do

whatever I put my heart and my head into," says Ada.

That belief, combined with her growth mindset, has served her well over the years—through transitioning from public practice to industry and now in public service. She has also written and published three books (so far!) and started her own YouTube channel known as the *Quip Corner with Ada*—an apt endeavour for someone who describes herself as the "Quip Queen."

Ada's life experiences and other life lessons are the basis for the quips in her first book, *101 Quips and Quotes That Will Charge and Change Your Life*, and her other books that make up the 101 Quips and Quotes collection.

In addition to her other hats, Ada is a Certified Leadership Coach. She calls herself "the Diamond Cutter" because she helps people "carve out" and polish their brilliance—just like she did in her life when she started from scratch and gained her designation in Canada.

"I love love love helping people discover and deploy—and in some cases, discover and deepen—their brilliance," says Ada.

"You shouldn't let failure stall you or success stagnate you" is something Ada constantly reminds herself and others. "Are you learning? Are you growing? Are you glowing wherever you go? That's important."



You shouldn't let failure stall you or success stagnate you.

Ada Adeleke-Kelani CPA, CA

Ada uses these and other questions to help others discover their brilliance and their passion and, ultimately, excel. "We all need to determine what our purpose is and pursue it with passion to have a fulfilled life," she believes.



# Bright futures ahead

Technology, artificial intelligence, and automation are making our lives easier, but there's a certain apprehension that comes with them—especially when it comes to our careers. But those seeking the CPA designation don't need to worry. In fact, those who have the designation are primed to excel in a world driven by data and technology.

The accounting profession is no stranger to technological advancements, from tax and auditing software to Power BI and beyond. With each advancement, CPAs have embraced the change it brings to their careers and leveraged technology so they can focus their efforts on what matters most: creating value within their organizations. Instead of focusing on transactional work, CPAs can now use their professional judgment and critical thinking skills to examine data to ask questions, gain a better understanding of the big picture, and help their organizations navigate uncertainty.

CPAs have moved from being producers of information to being interpreters of data and providing recommendations. As part of a regulated profession, CPAs adhere to a code of conduct and ethics, which enables organizations to trust that their CPAs can inform them on the best course of action for a given situation. More than ever before, senior leadership benefits from CPAs who can provide insight and even foresight.

It can be tough, however, to keep up with technology, but CPAs have learned to be future-ready by embracing change and proactively planning for career transitions and transformations. This essentially means they're adopting a growth mindset and being ready to learn, unlearn, and relearn. By being adaptable and open to lifelong learning, CPAs will continue to thrive in an ever-changing professional landscape.

While technology will always be evolving, having the CPA designation ensures you'll stay relevant and continue to bring value to any employer.



# CPA: The tool to create social change

By Kate Austin  
Photography by Laughing Dog Photography



## Megan Boe shares how being a CPA helps her improve the lives of others

Megan Boe CPA began her career the same way many accountants do: working at a firm. But after taking a position to lead non-profit audits at that firm, Megan realized she wanted to be a part of something bigger. “If I’m going to get up and go to work every day, I want to work for an organization that’s actually making a difference,” she says. In 2013, she moved into the non-profit sector, where she’s been ever since.

Megan is passionate about social change. While it can take many forms, such as action against climate change or being involved with animal welfare, it’s helping people that makes Megan tick. Knowing that real people are impacted by decisions that come out of the financial advice she provides keeps her going on those nights when she’s working until 10:00 pm.

Having the CPA designation has given Megan a sound understanding of financial information and the ability to tell the stories behind the numbers. And because working at a non-profit is highly collaborative,

it’s also given her the skills to see the big-picture financial situation and bridge the gap to her colleagues running the programs so that everyone is on the same page.

“I can’t do my job without understanding programs and what’s happening on the ground, just like they can’t do their jobs without understanding what’s going on financially,” says Megan. “I empower other people to understand the financial information they need to inform decisions.”

The designation also adds a level of credibility to the work Megan does. “As a CPA, you demonstrated that you complied with all the ethics. It puts more validity on your credentials as you sit around the table,” she says. “Having your CPA gives authentication to the skillset you bring.”

Megan believes that if you want to be a part of social change, you need to figure out what you’re passionate about and find your place, whether that’s working for a non-profit organization like she does or through



Having your CPA gives authentication to the skillset you bring.

Megan Boe CPA

volunteering or some other kind of giving. “It comes down to your own personal values,” she says. Regardless of your passion, everyone has something they can contribute.

“Achieving social change is important to me because we don’t live in a perfect world, and there is a lot that everybody can do to contribute in different ways and to create a more equitable society.”



# IT ALL ADDS UP

## The CPA designation + your degree (in any discipline) + existing credentials = success!

The CPA Certification Program—which consists of the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP), practical experience, and the Common Final Examination (CFE)—is designed to provide future CPAs with the knowledge and skills to succeed in any role they take on.

CPA PEP is a part-time, two-year, post-graduate program consisting of six modules. The modules are delivered through a blend of online and classroom learning, and self-study. The CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) delivers the program in Western Canada.

To qualify for admission to CPA PEP, an applicant must have an undergraduate degree (in any discipline) from a recognized post-secondary institution. Applicants also need to successfully complete any required prerequisites through CPA preparatory courses or a post-secondary institution.

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).

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

## PATH TO BECOMING A CPA

Practical Experience Requirements (PER) 30 Months



# Set yourself up for success

The CPA certification program teaches you more than just accounting principles and how to crunch numbers (although those are important, too!). From critical thinking to communication, you'll learn a valuable suite of skills that will prepare you to excel in the business world.

Throughout the program, you'll develop important enabling competencies, like the ability to problem solve and make decisions; learn how to communicate effectively in both oral and written situations; and increase your leadership and teamwork skills. Plus, you'll be expanding your critical thinking and analytical skills, too. And when you combine your technical and enabling skills together, you'll be set up for success no matter where your career takes you.

## The massive future in accounting

You might be wondering what you can do with all of those skills after you've developed them. As data becomes more and more prevalent and important in our lives, organizations are increasingly looking to their CPAs to help them navigate uncertainty and plan for the future.

Being a CPA means you operate under a code of conduct, standards, and ethics; this ensures you'll be seen as a trusted advisor who is credible, as well as someone who can take data, analyze it, and provide recommendations. You'll be relied on for your professional judgment, and through continuing professional

development, you'll remain up to date and be able to provide value to your current and future employers.

While technology will continue to make our lives easier, CPAs will continue to adapt and embrace it and, more than anything, prosper. A CPA's ability to create strategic outcomes from the data they analyze—data that they would have once had to spend time compiling themselves—means organizations will increasingly rely on them to be data stewards. And this goes beyond financial data; CPAs are increasingly coming into contact with other kinds of data, from governance to social data, and are applying their skills to ask strategic questions and tell the story the data creates.

No matter where your career takes you, you can be sure that the CPA certification program will give you the skills you need to succeed. And regardless of where you are in your CPA journey, CPA Alberta is here to support you.

A man with short brown hair, a goatee, and glasses is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a dark grey V-neck t-shirt and has extensive tattoos on both forearms. He is standing in an office with a computer monitor, a microphone, and a whiteboard in the background. A large blue circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and author information.

# CPA: The tool to pave entrepreneurial ground

By Kate Austin  
Photography by Trudie Lee Photography

## Joel Leclerc shares what it means to be an entrepreneur in cloud-based accounting

As more and more of what we do becomes cloud-based, it should come as no surprise that the accounting profession is following suit. Although cloud-based accounting is still in its infancy, people like **Joel Leclerc CPA, CGA**, founder of Accounting for Humans, are paving a path for it to take off.

Joel started his practice in 2014, but it wasn't always cloud-based—he only made the transition in early 2020. "I think I've been trying to get there for a long time but never really saw a clear path into it," he says. "I wanted to be sure I could make it work before diving in." After chatting with someone who already had an established cloud-based practice and bouncing ideas around with them, Joel decided to take the plunge himself.

Having the designation helped make it possible for Joel to be an entrepreneur in an area of accounting that's still growing. "The CPA designation equips accountants with the ideal academic background and skillset to open and manage a business successfully," he says. "Having strong financial and business skills out of the gate was immensely helpful in launching my accounting practice."

Another advantage to having the designation is that it helps with work-life balance. For Joel, this means he can use his free time to play guitar, spend time with his dogs and cat, and draw or write.

Moving to cloud accounting has opened the door for Joel to work with small businesses and young entrepreneurs who prefer a more modern and tech-forward approach, which are the kinds of clients he always wanted to work with.

"I think cloud accounting really empowers us to become small business specialists," says Joel. "It can have the greatest impact for small businesses and can augment their finance capabilities in a budget-friendly way."

Joel finds working with small businesses rewarding because he has the opportunity to provide them with high-impact services like monthly management reporting and cash flow forecasting, which can be



**The CPA designation equips accountants with the ideal academic background and skillset to open and manage a business successfully.**

Joel Leclerc CPA, CGA

difficult for these businesses because they don't have a full-time CFO or controller. Plus, with nearly one-third of small businesses failing in the first three years, it helps to have a CPA who's got their back.

"I think accountants can play a huge role in helping small businesses become more financially savvy and resilient," says Joel.

For anyone who wants to be an entrepreneur, Joel has some advice: "Make sure to find connections with like-minded people on the same path, whether in entrepreneur communities or just staying in touch with other CPAs," he says. "Don't be afraid to ask for help early and often."



# Supporting you every step of the way

When you embark on your CPA journey, CPA Alberta will be with you no matter what stage you're at. When you're in the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP), we've got events like our CPA PEP Talks webinars, which give you tips and tricks for acing the modules, and our Case Writing & Marking Parties, where you get the opportunity to write a never-before-seen case in preparation for the Common Final Examination. And if that's not enough for you, we've also got a whole host of other resources at [cpaalberta.ca/EmployerRelations](http://cpaalberta.ca/EmployerRelations).

And if you're looking for general information about the CPA certification program, we've got you covered there, too! Our Snack & Chat Info Sessions usually go over program prerequisites, the admission process, the CPA PEP structure, practical experience requirements, and resources available to CPAs, candidates, and employers. Book a session today! Email [EmployerRelations@cpaalberta.ca](mailto:EmployerRelations@cpaalberta.ca).

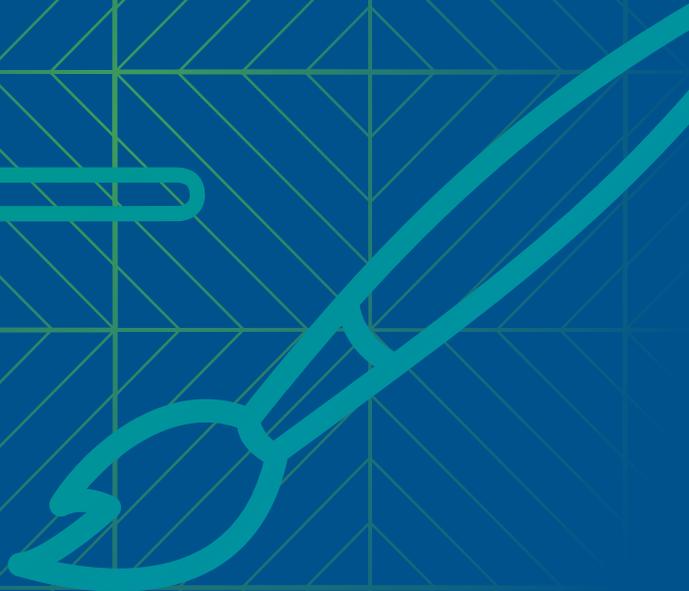


## CPA SNACK & CHAT INFO SESSIONS

You've got questions, we've got answers! Our in-person and virtual Snack & Chat Info Sessions are an excellent opportunity for you and your staff to become familiar with the requirements of the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP).

Snack & Chat Info Sessions typically cover program prerequisites, the admission process, the CPA PEP structure, practical experience requirements, and resources available to CPAs, candidates, and employers.

Book your in-person or virtual session today!  
Email [EmployerRelations@cpaalberta.ca](mailto:EmployerRelations@cpaalberta.ca) to get started.



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