



# CPA: YOUR PASSPORT TO SUCCESS



**CPA**

CHARTERED  
PROFESSIONAL  
ACCOUNTANTS  
ALBERTA





**CPA:  
YOUR  
PASSPORT  
TO SUCCESS**

**Y**our passport speaks volumes about you. A well-used passport and the stamps gained from moving to a different country indicate you are adventurous, fearless, adaptable, curious, and interested in new opportunities. Passport stamps tell an exciting story about where you've been and the path you've taken to get to where you are, but did you know there's a preeminent and renowned career "passport" that can help guide your future and its success?

If you are an internationally trained professional looking to carve out a successful career path in Canada, consider getting a brand new "passport to success" stamped with three letters—CPA.

The Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation is Canada's globally-recognized accounting and business credential. It opens gates to unlimited career opportunities around the world and grants you entry into an exclusive network of business professionals known for their strategic thinking, leadership skills, and business acumen.

This "passport" and its exclusive stamp signal to employers, clients, and the business community that you are highly qualified in a wide range of skills and areas of expertise. Employers instantly recognize that you have the training to help them navigate any business environment; clients trust your ability to deliver top-notch and invaluable services; and the business community respects your credentials and trusts your advice.


As a CPA, you stand out among your colleagues, climb the corporate ladder faster, and even earn more. Ultimately, your career flourishes because of your ability to provide strategic insights on projects.

The CPAs featured in the pages of this publication—**Ayo Abu, Clark Monson, Qi Chen, Aleem Rattani, Maryna Bityutsky, and Esteban Rivera**—did not hesitate to obtain their CPA designation when they arrived in Canada; they leveraged their international qualifications to become Canadian CPAs. Today, they're thriving in various roles and industries across Alberta.

Their stories are a testament to the diversity and wide range of available opportunities that exist within the CPA profession. The stories also highlight the flexibility the CPA skillset provides professionals, which enables them to operate their own businesses, choose their employers, change careers seamlessly, and enjoy work-life balance and hobbies. Many CPAs have also overcome language barriers and landed their dream jobs.


As an internationally trained professional, you're no stranger to new adventures and pursuing new opportunities. So why not take the next step in your professional journey and elevate your career by pursuing a CPA designation? The journey may be challenging, but the "destination" and all the career possibilities that come along with it are well worth it.



A portrait of a woman, Qi Chen, CPA, CMA, standing outdoors. She is wearing a dark grey, high-collared, long-sleeved dress with a large bow at the neck and a matching belt. Her hair is pulled back, and she is smiling slightly. The background features a modern glass skyscraper and a traditional building with a red roof and yellow lattice fence. The sun is shining brightly, creating a lens flare effect.

Qi Chen CPA, CMA





# Navigating the language barrier

By Sarah Maludzinski | Photography by  
Laughing Dog Photography

*Qi Chen crosses barriers  
with her hard work and  
kind personality*

# Navigating the language barrier



Qi Chen CPA, CMA

“I can’t believe how poor my English was,” recalls **Qi Chen CPA, CMA** with a laugh. “Even just at the supermarket! I wanted to say, ‘Thank you. Have a good day.’ And I practiced tons of times before I could make it a sentence.”

Qi moved to Canada from China, where she spoke the Szechuan dialect

of Mandarin, more than 15 years ago. Though she learned some English in high school, Qi says it was “more about how you can pass the exam” than using the language in real-life settings.

According to Qi, one of the biggest differences between Mandarin and English is the order in which words

## Navigating the language barrier

are arranged. “For example, in English, first we say what we’re going to do and then add other details, like time and location,” she says. “In Mandarin, we start with where and when, and then what we are doing.”

Qi believes being interested in a topic gives her an incentive to learn a new language and makes it much more interesting. For her, that means improving her English by keeping up to date on finance-related news, reading a lot, and talking with her coworkers. Since obtaining her CPA designation, Qi has worked “almost all the positions in finance” and recently started a new adventure (her dream job!) as an Investment Analyst with the City of Edmonton.

Qi recalls preparing a lot more for classes and presentations than her classmates when she did her MBA at the University of Alberta. “I would preview the textbook before class and then review again after the class. Other students...didn’t need to prepare at all and could listen and talk during class.”

The most challenging scenario to navigate, Qi says, is casual chatting. She can’t prepare for it, and it can be more difficult to pick up on context. But Qi says she lets her personality and her work speak for her, which help with the language barrier.

“People like to talk to me because they know I am interested, kind, and always trying to provide professional suggestions or help. I don’t worry too much about my grammar and the words,” she says. “I care more about the two-way communication and the energy flow among people.”

She still uses a lot of Mandarin in her personal life because she has built a community around her of mostly immigrants, including her elderly parents. “I am probably in the worst situation to practice everyday English,” Qi says. “So if I can do it, most people can do it as well!”

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“People like to talk to me because they know I am interested, kind, and always trying to provide professional suggestions or help.”

- Qi Chen CPA, CMA

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Aleem Rattani CPA, CA

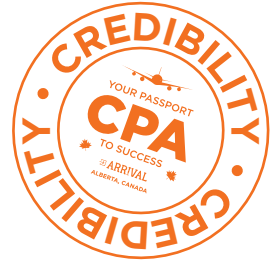


# Changing careers

By Kate Austin | Photography by  
Trudie Lee Photography

*Aleem Rattani shares how  
he went from working at a  
firm to being a recruitment  
consultant*

# Changing careers



**A**leem Rattani CPA, CA is no stranger to change. Originally from East Africa, he moved to Australia before eventually coming to Canada in 2012. A year later, he earned his Canadian designation through a Reciprocal Membership Agreement.

Moving to Canada was pretty seamless for Aleem, not only because he already had family and friends living here, and Australia and Canada are pretty similar from an accounting perspective, but also because of his CPA designation. “It’s easily recognizable,” he says.



Aleem Rattani CPA, CA



## Changing careers

“Having the CPA letters behind your name gives you credibility.”

That doesn't mean it was all breezy, however. “The biggest transition was the weather and learning to drive in snow and ice,” recalls Aleem. “I was pretty nervous on the roads for the first couple of years because Australia doesn't have any snow or ice.”

Aleem began his career working at firms. However, after meeting up with a friend with a similar background who worked in recruitment—an Australian CPA who also got their Canadian designation through reciprocity—Aleem decided to give recruitment a try. Thanks to his CPA designation, that transition was easy. Now, three years later, he's a Senior Recruitment Consultant and Account Manager at Recruitment Partners Inc.

“It's an exciting career. You get to talk to people all day long, which I enjoy, and you sort of get to leverage your education and experience because I'm basically placing accountants,” says Aleem. “I focus solely on placing CPA-level skillsets, so in terms of that transition, I'm talking to CPAs all day long.”

The skills and knowledge Aleem gained through the CPA program have benefited his career change in other ways too. “The CPA designation is not just about accounting,” he says.

“It helps give you a broad, sweeping understanding of business in general, which helps you talk to any manager or any professional in a different discipline.”

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**“Having the CPA letters behind your name gives you credibility.... [The designation] helps give you a broad, sweeping understanding of business in general.”**

**- Aleem Rattani CPA, CA**


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For any CPA looking to change careers, Aleem has some tips.

“Look at the market right now and try to get a sense around what the overall trends are,” he says. “Try to choose a career where there's basically some longevity to it, both in terms of industry and in terms of the role itself.”

He also says it's worth looking at and following trends beyond your local geography because the CPA designation is a worldwide-recognized accreditation.

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# From studying English to opening a firm

By Kate Austin | Photography by  
Laughing Dog Photography



**Esteban Rivera CPA, CGA**

***Esteban Rivera  
reflects on  
becoming an  
entrepreneur in  
Canada***



# From studying English to opening a firm



Being an entrepreneur is risky, but if you don't give it a shot, you'll never reap the benefits.

Just ask **Esteban Rivera CPA, CGA**, Principal and Senior Consultant at Newriver Professional Corporation. When he arrived in Canada in 2001, he had only planned to spend six months here studying English.

But after falling in love with Alberta and finding out he could get his Canadian designation, Esteban decided to stay. He already had his Venezuelan designation, so getting his Canadian designation was a natural next step.

And the next step after that? Opening his own public accounting firm, of course.

Esteban wanted to provide a more client-centred approach to accounting, which wasn't possible at the firm he was at. Despite buying his first house, having a then-one-year-old baby at home, and the risk and uncertainty that comes with being an entrepreneur, Esteban decided to open Newriver Professional Corporation in 2012.

The first six months were tough. "I started doubting myself," recalls Esteban.



Esteban Rivera CPA, CGA

From studying English to opening a firm

**“Be out there. Be a face. Go to events. Go to places where you can meet people. Don’t be afraid of exposing your ideas.”**

**- Esteban Rivera CPA, CGA**

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But what started as one client quickly grew into many clients, and business is doing well. Esteban believes internationally trained professionals who want to be entrepreneurs need to rely on three things: adapting to change, networking, and trusting the knowledge they gained from becoming CPAs.

First, internationally trained professionals need to be adaptable. “We cannot sit down and wait for things to happen,” he says. That includes not only adapting to a new culture, but also adapting your skills and education to a new environment.

Second, having a network is crucial, but it can be difficult for internationally trained professionals to create one when they first arrive

in Canada. Esteban’s advice? “Be out there. Be a face. Go to events. Go to places where you can meet people. Don’t be afraid of exposing your ideas,” he says. “You’re as big as your network is.”

Lastly, Esteban says his CPA designation provided him with the knowledge and tools he needed to succeed as an entrepreneur: “Being a CPA provides the knowledge. It gives you the skills. It opens tons of doors. Not only here in Canada, but in the world.

“When people hear that you’re a CPA, they say ‘Okay, this person is prepared. This person is responsible. This person is a professional who knows what’s going on,’” he adds.

For Esteban, having his designation gave him the flexibility he needed to start his own business. “As CPAs, we have the skills, education, and resources to do anything.”



# IT ALL ADDS UP

## **The CPA designation + international 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 [admissionadvising@cpawsb.ca](mailto:admissionadvising@cpawsb.ca).



# PATH TO BECOMING A CPA

Practical Experience Requirements (PER) 30 Months



**Academic Prerequisites**

Required for admission to CPA PEP:

- Undergraduate degree in any discipline
- Specific subject area coverage obtained through post-secondary institutions (refer to transfer credit guide) and/or CPA preparatory courses.

**Core 1**

**Core 2**

**Common Core Modules**  
Six integrated core competency areas:

1. Financial Reporting
2. Strategy and Governance
3. Management Accounting
4. Audit and Assurance
5. Finance
6. Taxation

**Elective 1**

**Elective 2**

**Elective Modules**  
Candidates choose any two modules:

- Assurance
- Finance
- Performance Management
- Taxation

**Public Accounting candidates must choose:**

- Assurance
- Taxation

**Capstone 1**

**Capstone 2**

**Common Capstone Integrative Module**

- Leadership skills
- Professional skills
- Integration of competencies

**Capstone Exam Preparation Module**  
Candidates must successfully complete this exam preparation module in order to write the Common Final Examination.

**Common Final Examination**

1. **Candidates must demonstrate breadth** in all six core competency areas
  2. **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

**CPA Designation**

----- CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) -----



# Breaking down **MRA,** **RMA,** and **MOU**

Although most candidates achieve their CPA designation through the path outlined on page 15, agreements exist to allow members of recognized international accounting bodies to become Canadian CPAs and registered members of CPA Alberta.

## RMA and MRA

### Reciprocal Membership Agreements (RMAs)

Members in good standing of the following recognized accounting bodies might be eligible to obtain the Canadian CPA designation through a **RMA**:

- Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales
- Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia & New Zealand
- Institute of Chartered Accountants Ireland
- Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland
- The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants
- The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants
- Institute of Chartered Accountants of Zimbabwe

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### Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)

Members in good standing of the following recognized accounting bodies might be eligible to obtain the Canadian CPA designation through a **MRA**:

- CPA Ireland
- Instituto Mexicano de Contadores Públicos
- American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (limited states)

For more information, visit [www.cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Internationally-Trained-Individuals](http://www.cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Internationally-Trained-Individuals).

## Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

A **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** exists between Canada's CPA bodies and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) as well as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI).

Members in good standing of ICAP or ICAI who are interested in becoming CPAs in Canada are:

- Exempted from all CPA PEP modules;
- Strongly encouraged to complete Capstone 1 and Capstone 2; and
- Required to pass the Common Final Examination (CFE).

They may also need to complete 30 months of relevant practical experience.

For more information, visit [www.cpaweb.ca/future-learners/apply-for-admission-to-cpaweb/mou-members](http://www.cpaweb.ca/future-learners/apply-for-admission-to-cpaweb/mou-members).

# Frequently asked questions

by internationally trained  
professionals interested in  
becoming CPAs in Canada



# I would like to become a CPA. What is the enrollment process?



## Step 1:

**To start the admission process, visit the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) portal at [my.cpawsb.ca](https://my.cpawsb.ca) and create a profile.**

Once you create your profile, you will receive two emails:

- A welcome email outlining next steps.
- An email containing a link to create your profile password. Your profile only becomes active after you create a password.

## Step 2:

**Request and pay for a CPAWSB transcript assessment.** The transcript assessment determines your eligibility to enroll in CPA PEP and indicates any outstanding prerequisites, which can be fulfilled through CPA preparatory courses or a post-secondary institution.

## Step 3:

**Arrange for your post-secondary institution to submit your official transcripts and documents to CPAWSB.** Applicants with non-Canadian degrees must submit a third-party verification of their international transcripts.

All official documents must be mailed directly by the issuing institution(s) in a sealed envelope to:

**CPA Western School of Business**  
201, 1074 - 103A Street SW  
Edmonton, Alberta T6W 2P6

Continued 



## Step 4:

**Review your transcript assessment results.** To view your results, log into “My CPA Profile” and click on “Program Admission” and then “Transcript Assessment.”

## Step 5:

**Submit an application to enter the CPA Professional Education Program or take CPA preparatory courses.**

For more information about the admission process, visit [www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/apply-for-admission-to-cpawsb/international-non-canadian-degree](http://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/apply-for-admission-to-cpawsb/international-non-canadian-degree).



## What is the difference between the transcript assessment done by third-party organizations and the assessment done by CPAWSB?



Third-party organizations such as World Education Services (WES) validate general educational credentials from other countries. They confirm your level of education in Canada, based on Canadian standards.

The CPAWSB assessment determines an applicant's eligibility to enter CPA PEP and any prerequisites they might need to complete. Internationally trained professionals interested in pursuing the CPA designation must first request a third-party transcript assessment and have the third party send the documents to CPAWSB.

## Can I pursue the CPA designation from abroad?



You can request a transcript assessment while living abroad. But to pursue the CPA designation, you must reside in Canada.

To complete CPA preparatory courses in Canada, applicants must hold a study permit. To pursue the CPA certification program, CPAWSB recommends that candidates hold both study and work permits, since the program has an education and a practical experience component.

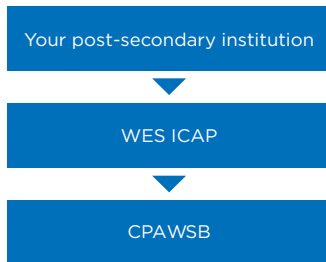
## Does it matter which third party assesses my transcripts before sending them to CPAWSB?



The preferred assessment is a WES course-by-course International Credential Advantage Package (WES ICAP). If you submit a third-party verification that is not a WES ICAP, the third-party assessment must be completed by one of the registered assessment services within the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC).

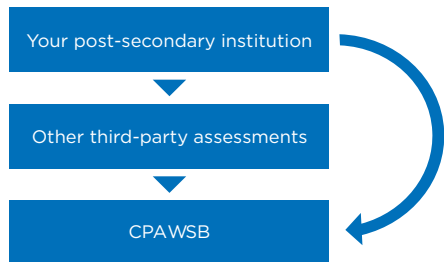
Requesting a WES ICAP simplifies the transcript assessment process. Here's what the difference looks like:

### WES ICAP assessment



WES submits the report and your official post-secondary transcripts to CPAWSB on your behalf.

### Other assessments



CPAWSB requires the transcript assessment report from the third party as well as your official transcripts from your post-secondary institution(s).

## What level of English do I need to pursue the CPA designation?



CPA PEP and CPA preparatory courses require high English proficiency. CPAWSB suggests that applicants have a minimum of Grade 12 English or a Canadian Language Benchmark level of eight before applying to CPA PEP.





# Support for internationally trained professionals

The CPA designation opens doors to a world of career opportunities across the globe. However, getting those three letters—CPA—can be financially and mentally taxing, especially for internationally trained professionals who might not have any credit history in Canada or support from their employers. That's why CPA Alberta encourages those in CPA PEP to take advantage of the following:

## Financial resources

CPA Alberta has partnered with Windmill Microlending to financially support internationally trained professionals interested in pursuing the CPA designation in Alberta. Through this partnership, CPA candidates can receive low interest loans from Windmill Microlending to finance their CPA studies. Windmill prioritizes

clients who don't have any Canadian credit history, and a Windmill loan is a great way to finance your CPA education if you are new to Canada.

For more information, visit Windmill Microlending at [windmillmicrolending.org/cpa-alberta](http://windmillmicrolending.org/cpa-alberta).

## Candidate resources

When you embark on the journey towards becoming a CPA, you will have support from your future profession along the way. In fact, CPA Alberta's Employer Relations team is focused on helping candidates succeed in CPA PEP. The team collaborates with recent CPA PEP graduates to create initiatives and resources that guide candidates every step of the way—from Core 1 to the final exam.

Some of these resources include CPA PEP Talks, a popular speaker series

where recent graduates provide their tips and tricks on different topics; Case Writing and Marking Parties, an opportunity for candidates to practice responding to and debriefing a case; blog posts on various topics such as time management and how to master key technical topics; and so much more.

For more information about these resources, visit [www.cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Employers/Candidate-Resources](http://www.cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Employers/Candidate-Resources).



## Scholarships for CPA PEP candidates

The CPA Education Foundation—the charitable arm of the CPA profession in Alberta—offers the following scholarship opportunities to ease the financial stress on CPA candidates:

### **Claire Dallaire CPA, CGA, CPA PEP Encouragement Award**

The Foundation grants a \$2,500 award annually to one CPA PEP candidate who meets this criteria:

- Submits an application letter;
- Is bilingual (English and French);
- Is a mature candidate (an individual who has been in the workforce for at least three years); and
- Demonstrates financial need.

### **David Bentley FCPA, FCA and Janet Bentley CPA PEP Excellence Award**

Funded in collaboration with the Edmonton Community Foundation, this \$3,500 award is granted annually to one CPA candidate who has begun training in a public practice setting to become a designated accountant. Selection is based on involvement in volunteer activities, satisfactory performance in CPA PEP, and an expressed interest in pursuing a professional accounting designation.

Applicants or nominators must:

- Submit one application letter stating why the applicant or nominee should be considered for the award;
- Demonstrate the applicant's or nominee's financial need and an express interest in pursuing a professional accounting designation;

- Provide proof of the applicant's or nominee's enrollment in CPA PEP;
- Demonstrate the applicant's or nominee's satisfactory academic standing in CPA PEP;
- Provide proof of the applicant's or nominee's employment in a training position in public practice; and
- Submit at least one nomination letter to support that the applicant or nominee has demonstrated involvement in volunteer activities.

### **Sahar Saeidi Memorial New Canadian Award**

This \$2,500 award is available to an individual who became a new Canadian or permanent resident in the last five years (i.e. on or after January 1, 2017).

To be considered, applicants must:

- Be Canadian citizens/permanent residents and residents of Alberta;
- Provide proof of new Canadian or permanent residency status, and the date that status was obtained;
- Be enrolled in CPA PEP;
- Demonstrate satisfactory achievement in their academic or professional training program;
- Submit a letter, or a two to three-minute video, outlining why they are planning to pursue a career in business or accounting; and
- Submit a letter of support from a current instructor or training principal, manager, or supervisor.



Clark Monson CPA, CA



A scenic view of a golf course with a pond and autumn trees. The foreground is a green lawn with scattered fallen leaves. In the middle ground, a calm pond reflects the surrounding trees. The background is a dense line of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and green. Two people are sitting on the grass near the pond, looking towards the water. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

# The big picture

By Sharon Ruyter | Photography by  
Trudie Lee Photography

***Clark Monson explains  
how maintaining his  
hobbies helps him thrive***

# The big picture



Clark Monson CPA, CA

There are only 24 hours in a day and **Clark Monson CPA, CA** doesn't take that for granted. Clark lists the following as just some of his hobbies: landscape photography, piano, guitar, mountain climbing, reading, and playing the cello—all while working as the Accounting

Manager at Lancaster Capital Advisory Corp. and being an engaged husband and father!

Clark describes himself as someone who likes to have a lot going on. He credits his piano teacher mother and former all-state choir singer father



## The big picture

for cultivating his passion for music at an early age. That nurtured desire for adventure and exploring new things is partly why he accepted a job opportunity in Calgary, and moved his family from Texas in 2014 to be closer to his in-laws and the Rockies, where he could enjoy mountain climbing and landscape photography.

The move to Canada came with the typical grind of a new job and stress. “I had to learn to put in long hours sometimes if I wanted to take time off,” says Clark.

However, Clark finds maintaining his hobbies benefits him professionally. The creativity he brings to photography or music translates well into his role as a CPA. “Creativity is an essential part of being a CPA,” he explains. “So much of what we do is about finding creative solutions to solve various business and client needs.”

If you are a busy CPA looking for a hobby, Clark recommends starting with what sparks your interest. “Once you find an interest, make time to learn about it,” he says. “Also use the internet. It’s a great way to learn whatever you’re trying to do.”

However, Clark cautions against spending too much money upfront. When he started getting into

“When I’m out in the mountains, there’s a sense of contentment and gratitude that I live here, that I’m alive, and that I have the physical and mental capacities that I do.”

- Clark Monson CPA, CA

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photography, he purchased a cheap camera to practice and slowly upgraded his equipment as he fell more in love with the hobby.

When Clark camps or spends time in nature with his family, he is often the first to rise and the last to go to bed because of his pursuit of the next great shot. And while his sleep is sometimes sacrificed, the cost of pursuing his hobbies will always be priceless.

“When I’m out in the mountains, there’s a sense of contentment and gratitude that I live here, that I’m alive, and that I have the physical and mental capacities that I do,” he says. “It’s gratitude for everything I have and it’s good to be reminded of that.”





# A balancing act

By Quinta Iticka | Photography by  
Laughing Dog Photography

*Ayo Abu discusses how she  
balances her professional  
and personal lives, and offers  
tips to internationally trained  
professionals*

**Ayo Abu CPA, CGA**



# A balancing act



**S**triking a balance between family and career can be fulfilling. It makes us better parents, better coworkers, and better members of the community. But is work-life balance attainable?

**Ayo Abu CPA, CGA**, Accountant at D.F. Boiler Tube Industries, believes it is if you align your professional goals with your personal circumstances.

When her family first arrived in Canada in 2016, Ayo's three daughters were

10 months old, three, and seven respectively. She decided to work part-time in order to spend more time with them while also pursuing her accounting designation. "When I started attending interviews, I pleasantly discovered that employers in Canada were quite flexible and supportive, especially of women with young families."

For Ayo, balance is about having the flexibility to spend quality time



Pictured from left to right: Onome, Abraham, Omone, Ayo, and Oshoze Abu



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**“Request your transcripts from your home country as soon as possible to avoid delays in your progress. If you have children, inform your supervisor about your childcare needs in a timely manner. By communicating clearly, you will get the support you need to succeed.”**

**- Ayo Abu CPA, CGA**

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with her family while also delivering her best at work. “My quality time is wrapped up in my family’s quality time. Everyone wants something different. My youngest daughter loves music, travelling, and going to the park; my middle daughter loves outdoor sports; my oldest loves art; and my husband enjoys soccer. When I accompany them on these activities, I feel balanced.”

Ayo says effective time management and structure are also important in achieving balance. Her alarm goes off at 5:30am. Between 5:30 and 6:30am, she packs lunches. Her husband assists her in getting the children ready by 7:00am, and they leave the house by 7:45am.

From a career perspective, Ayo believes setting clear career goals and seeking out the support to reach those goals can help professionals achieve balance. “Once I became a CPA and began networking and engaging in the community, doors began to open for me. My mentor—Janet Schalm CPA, CGA—helped me stay focused, accountable, and use my strengths to my advantage.

“I also had my resume reviewed by CPA Alberta’s Career Services team, and as a result, I was short-listed for an interview. The experience was enlightening,” she adds.

Pursuing a successful career in a new country while raising a family can seem like a balancing act. To minimize the chances of dropping the ball, Ayo offers a few tips to internationally trained professionals: “Request your transcripts from your home country as soon as possible to avoid delays in your progress. If you have children, inform your supervisor about your childcare needs in a timely manner. By communicating clearly, you will get the support you need to succeed.”



A woman with short dark hair, smiling, stands in a studio. She is wearing a black and white striped long-sleeved top tied at the waist and a black knee-length skirt. To her left is a professional camera on a silver tripod. The background is a plain white wall. On the right edge, a portion of a red and white banner is visible.

# Settling in Canada

By Quinta Iticka | Photography by  
Trudie Lee Photography

*Maryna Bityutsky discusses  
the importance of setting  
professional goals to help  
with the settlement process*



**Maryna Bityutsky CPA, CGA and her colleagues at the Centre for Newcomers in Calgary**

(Pictured from left to right: Maryna Bityutsky CPA, CGA, Myra Ricafrente, James Pamatmat CPA, CGA, and Sajina Maharjan)

# Settling in Canada



Typically, internationally trained professionals go through an adjustment period—also known as a settlement curve—when they arrive in Canada. The curve is sometimes characterized by three Fs—fun, fright, and fit.

**Maryna Bityutsky CPA, CGA, CFO** of the Centre for Newcomers in Calgary, acknowledges that although everyone's experience is different, the early stages of the settlement process can be fun. "When my family first emigrated from Ukraine to Calgary, we were very excited to live in such a developed country with so many opportunities. Everything was so new and fresh, and we called our family back home almost every day to share our experiences."

As this initial excitement levels off, internationally trained professionals may experience fear, especially when challenges kick in. In Maryna's case, English was a major obstacle at first. She had studied English in Ukraine and thought she was proficient, but after arriving in Calgary, she realized her Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level was only a four.

(To put this in context, the CPA Western School of Business recommends that prospective CPA candidates have a minimum CLB



Maryna Bityutsky CPA, CGA

**“To successfully settle in Canada, it is important to have short and long-term goals. Know where you want to take your career, create a strategy to get there, and gradually work towards your goal.”**

**- Maryna Bityutsky CPA, CGA**

## Settling in Canada

level of eight before taking CPA preparatory courses or entering the CPA Professional Education Program.)

The language barrier frightened Maryna a bit, but also lit a fire in her. She had been a chief accountant in Ukraine and her goal was to become a CPA in Alberta.

“To successfully settle in Canada, it is important to have short and long-term goals,” says Maryna. “Know where you want to take your career, create a strategy to get there, and gradually work towards your goal. Canada provides a wide range of opportunities for internationally trained professionals. If you identify what you want and what makes you happy, the settlement process will be so much quicker.”

In 2012—at age 50—Maryna obtained her CPA designation.

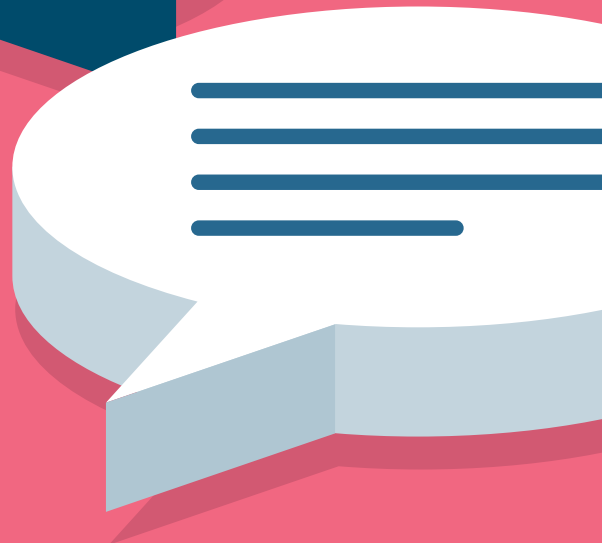
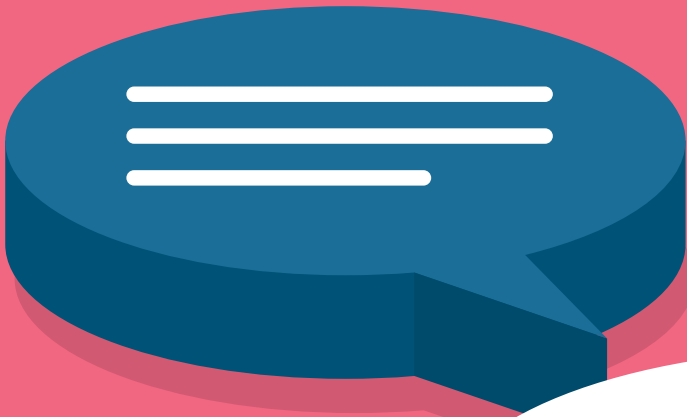
“I passed all my exams on the first attempt,” says Maryna. “The more I succeeded in the program, the more I felt like I fit in the community and workforce. Getting my designation was the best professional decision I’ve ever made.

“The designation opens so many doors—you become more marketable; your salary goes up; you are able to choose what you want to do. I chose to work at the Centre for Newcomers because being an immigrant, I understand the needs of internationally trained professionals, and I want to help make their settlement easier.”



**See Maryna’s tips  
for improving your  
language skills on  
the next page!**

# Maryna's tips for improving your language skills







Maryna Bityutsky/Photography  
by Trudie Lee Photography

### **Take courses**

You learn more than language when you take courses; you also learn about Canadian culture and history.

### **Practice**

One of the best ways to practice your English is to have friends from different cultural backgrounds. They can't speak your native language, so this forces you to communicate with them in English. At first, it is challenging. But eventually, it becomes natural.

### **Listen**

For the first five years in Canada, my family only listened to English news and watched English TV shows.

### **Keep your dictionary handy**

My English/Russian dictionary became my constant companion. Each time I didn't understand an English word, I looked up the meaning. I also got an e-dictionary, which was great for instant translations.



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