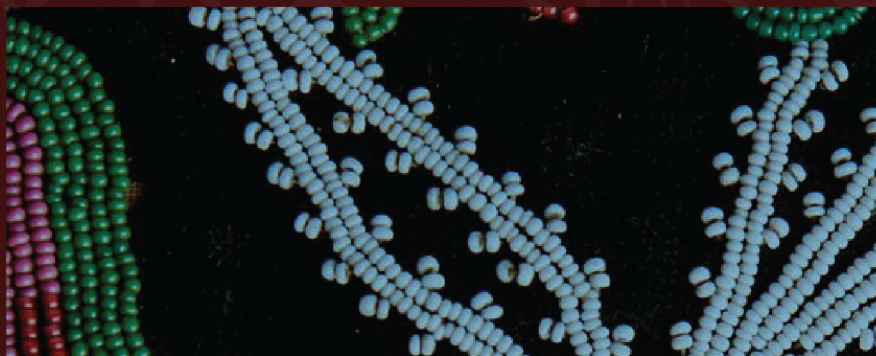


INDIGENOUS LEARNERS IN ACCOUNTING INITIATIVE (ILA)





CONTENTS

3	CHANGE THE FACE OF ACCOUNTING
4	WHY SUPPORT ILA?
6	KEY COMPONENTS OF THE INITIATIVE
8	EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS VOICES

CHANGE THE FACE OF ACCOUNTING

SUPPORT THE INDIGENOUS LEARNERS IN ACCOUNTING INITIATIVE

The Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Alberta (AFOA Alberta), the Chartered Professional Accountants Western School of Business (CPAWSB), CPA Alberta, CPA British Columbia, CPA Manitoba, CPA Saskatchewan, and CPA Canada are proud to introduce the Indigenous Learners in Accounting (ILA) Initiative. This world's first program is designed to address systemic barriers and increase Indigenous representation in the accounting profession, in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

ILA aims to catalyze meaningful change and reconciliation for Indigenous peoples. By enhancing financial literacy, building employable skills, and supporting Indigenous professionals, this initiative not only addresses inequities but also lays the groundwork for a more equitable and prosperous future.



WHY SUPPORT ILA?

ILA emerged from a commitment to understanding the unique journey of Indigenous individuals pursuing careers in accounting and finance, with a desire to improve social and economic outcomes for Indigenous learners. Delving into the experiences of Indigenous learners, a research study uncovered 32 intricate barriers, each woven into the fabric of personal, familial, institutional, and societal realms. These barriers, ranging from financial insecurity to systemic racism, cast shadows on the paths of Indigenous learners, hindering their aspirations and potential.

In response, ILA stands as a beacon of hope, guided by a profound recognition of the challenges faced by Indigenous learners. It confronts the insidious grip of social biases, aiming to dismantle barriers that stifle progress and perpetuate injustice. ILA embraces the richness of Indigenous cultures, advocating for inclusivity and understanding within educational and professional domains. It seeks to mend the cultural divides that fracture communities and impede success, fostering reconciliation and transformation on a profound level. Through ILA, we embark on a collective journey, driven by compassion and a fervent desire for equity and empowerment.





Key Components of the Initiative

01

Cultural Relevance

ILA courses are crafted and instructed by Indigenous knowledge keepers, guaranteeing that the curriculum mirrors Indigenous content, context, and cultural understandings. This infusion of Indigenous wisdom enriches the learning journey for everyone and equips CPAs to engage in thoughtful, culturally inclusive decision-making.

02


Increased Representation

By actively recruiting Indigenous instructors, ILA aims to increase Indigenous representation in the accounting profession. This not only benefits Indigenous learners but also enriches the profession by diversifying perspectives and experiences.

03

Strong Support Network:

ILA provides a comprehensive support system for Indigenous learners, including mentorship programs, tutoring, and networking opportunities. This support system, led by Indigenous individuals, acknowledges and addresses the challenges faced by Indigenous learners in pursuing accounting education. By fostering a sense of community and belonging within learning families—groups who learn together in cohort settings—ILA ensures that Indigenous learners have the support and resources they need to thrive academically and professionally.



Your support is crucial in ensuring the success of the Indigenous Learners in Accounting Initiative. Your contribution will improve social and economic outcomes for the Indigenous learners while paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse accounting profession.

EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS VOICES

BREAKING BARRIERS, FORGING FUTURES



Ashley's Story

When CPA candidate Ashley entered the Indigenous Learners in Accounting Initiative, she was overcome with a mix of nerves and excitement. She recalls the immediate sense of belonging she felt on the very first day. "I felt like I was surrounded by family," she shares with a smile.

The program's unique atmosphere, carefully crafted to foster support and collaboration, played a pivotal role in dispelling any initial apprehensions. Ashley emphasizes the genuine camaraderie among her fellow students, noting that the supportive environment laid a foundation for her to believe in her own success.

Ashley is breaking barriers and forging a path for future Indigenous women in the business world. Ashley, a proud Métis woman, shares her transformative experience within the program and highlights the profound impact it has had on her academic and personal journey.

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Indigenous Instructors and Mentors:

One of the standout features of the Indigenous Learners in Accounting Initiative is its commitment to providing a culturally enriching experience. Ashley notes, "Our instructor is Indigenous, my mentor that I was assigned is also Métis, which was really cool." This deliberate inclusion of Indigenous role models allows students like Ashley to see themselves reflected in their instructors and mentors, providing both inspiration and guidance.

Group Activities and Supportive Network:

Ashley's experience extends beyond the classroom, with the program incorporating various group activities and networking opportunities. During lunch hours and breaks, students engage in meaningful conversations, exchanging insights and supporting each other's growth. The emphasis on teamwork creates a collaborative community that goes beyond academic pursuits, fostering a supportive network that is essential for success.

The Power of Mentorship:

For Ashley, mentorship holds a special place in her heart. Reflecting on her own journey, she acknowledges the impact of having strong women mentors early in her career. "Mentorship has been really important to me," she states, underscoring the importance of seeing oneself in future leaders. The program's commitment to developing mentors within the Indigenous community is a testament to its dedication to creating lasting change.

Unexpected Benefits:

One unexpected benefit that stands out for Ashley is the connection she formed with her mentor. "He's just another person who's there, really, like in your corner," she expresses. This additional layer of support, beyond the academic setting, has proven invaluable, offering encouragement and assurance during challenging times.

Building a Future of Empowered Women in Business:

As Ashley progresses through the Indigenous Pilot Initiative, her hope is to see the program continue to foster mentorship and support for Indigenous women in business. "If we can kind of build that into the process, I think that would be a wonderful achievement," she shares, envisioning a future where more Indigenous women can see themselves succeeding in the world of business.

Ashley's journey with the Indigenous Learners in Accounting Initiative is a testament to the transformative power of education and community support. As she paves the way for future Indigenous women in business, the program stands as a beacon of empowerment, breaking down barriers and creating opportunities for success.



Karin's Story

“IT’S MADE THE DIFFERENCE OF BEING ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL AGAIN ESPECIALLY WITH ACCOUNTING...”

Karin Omeasoo, a member of the Samson Cree Nation in Maskwacis, Alberta, has always harboured a keen interest in finance. Her journey into accounting began with various courses and stints at financial institutions. However, the opportunity to delve deeper into her passion arose with the Indigenous Learners in Accounting Initiative.

“The opportunity for this program came when it was suggested by a co-worker... I immediately agreed to apply... It’s affordable,” Karin shares, reflecting on her decision to join the initiative in May 2023.

For Karin, the impact of the initiative has been profound. “I have a better understanding of my current position... It’s made the difference of being able to participate in school again especially with accounting,” she notes. Overcoming challenges of cost and time, the initiative, developed and offered to her community, aligned seamlessly with her work schedule and aspirations.

Reflecting on her journey, Karin emphasizes the significance of community and cultural inclusion within the program. “I really enjoy the inclusion of our traditions, the consideration of our culture and backgrounds,” she expresses, highlighting the welcoming environment fostered by instructors and peers alike.



Through connections forged with fellow learners, Karin finds motivation and support. “The connection between students is really nice... It’s opened up new friendships,” she remarks, underscoring the collaborative spirit cultivated within the initiative.

Looking ahead, Karin envisions herself utilizing her newfound knowledge to contribute to her community’s financial landscape. “My plan is to work in my community in the accounting field,” she asserts, poised to make a difference.

To the donors and supporters of the Indigenous Learners in Accounting Initiative, Karin extends her gratitude. “The opportunity to have a program like this for indigenous students is so very important and worthwhile... I’m grateful for the support and encouragement that has been provided,” she expresses, recognizing the pivotal role their contributions have played in shaping her educational and career journey.

Peter's Story

“PLEASE STAY WITH THIS EFFORT... AND HELP LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD IN CANADA”

Peter Kirby, from Taku River Tlingit and residing in Atlin for 25 years, embodies a steadfast commitment to serving his community's interests. Recognizing the pressing need for financial management skills in his homeland, Peter embarked on a journey fueled by a thirst for lifelong learning and a desire to uplift his people.

“The need for financial management in our community is high... I want so badly for many of our young people to take this training,” Peter expresses, reflecting on his motivation to pursue accounting and participate in the Indigenous Learners in Accounting Initiative.

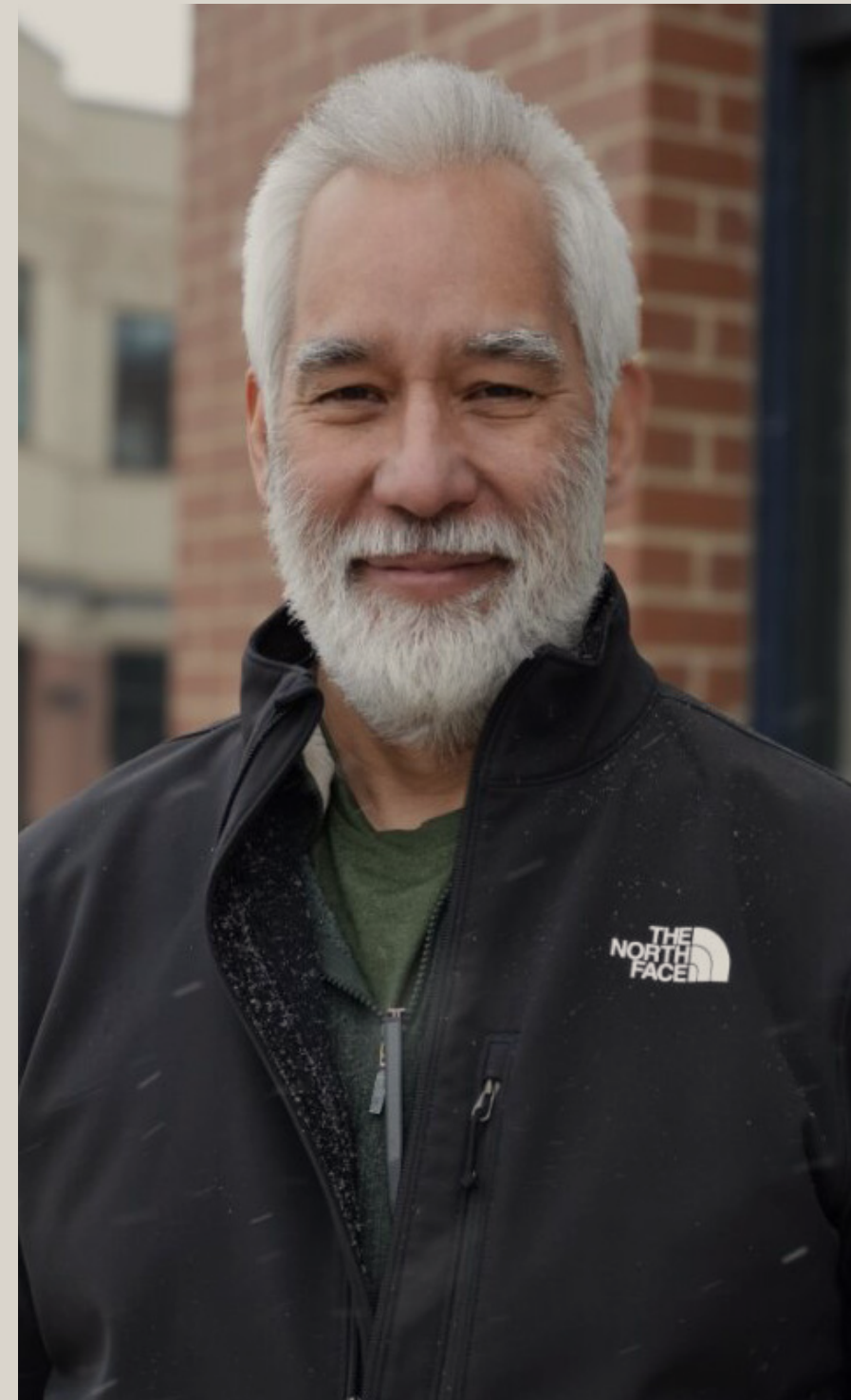
For Peter, the initiative has been a beacon of hope, offering not only educational opportunities but also a profound understanding of the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada today. “It has demonstrated that some people understand the challenges FN people have... as Canada tries to heal from its colonial legacy and systemic racism,” he shares.

Navigating through obstacles of time, finances, and self-worth, Peter finds solace and support within the initiative and the broader community it fosters.

“Every single person in this group is positive, encouraging, supportive,” he notes, highlighting the transformative power of encouragement and solidarity.

Through connections forged with fellow learners and mentors, Peter gains invaluable perspectives, recognizing the diversity of challenges and the importance of tailored support. “One size doesn't fit all,” he asserts, emphasizing the individualized approach embraced by the initiative.

Peter's aspirations extend beyond personal success, aiming to serve his community tirelessly. “To serve my community for as long as I am helping,” he affirms, driven by a profound sense of purpose. “Please stay with this effort... and help level the playing field in Canada,” he implores, recognizing the longlasting impact their contributions will have in empowering Indigenous voices and fostering positive change for generations to come.





Ryanna's Story

Ryanna Bourke, a proud Gwichin/Cree mix from the Northwest Territories, embodies resilience and determination in her pursuit of a successful career in accounting. As a Financial Services Assistant at Aurora College and a devoted single mother to her daughter Crimson, Ryanna's journey reflects her unwavering commitment to building a brighter future for herself and her family.

Motivated by her passion for finance and a desire to further her education, Ryanna seized the opportunity to participate in the Indigenous Learners in Accounting Initiative. "My supervisor suggested I take this course... I'm so grateful she did," she shares, highlighting the pivotal role of support and encouragement in her educational journey.

Through the initiative, Ryanna found not only academic enrichment but also a profound sense of belonging and purpose.

“SEEING SUCH FRIENDLY FACES... MAKES THE LEARNING ATMOSPHERE FEEL A LOT MORE ACCEPTING AND WELCOMING..”

“Attending the [in person] sessions has given me confidence and makes me feel like I'm on the right path,” she reflects, emphasizing the transformative impact of the program on her career aspirations.

Navigating the challenges of balancing full-time work and single motherhood, Ryanna found solace in the self-study format of the initiative, enabling her to pursue her educational goals while accommodating her busy lifestyle.

Reflecting on her journey, Ryanna acknowledges the profound influence of her daughter Crimson, whose presence has instilled in her a sense of responsibility and determination. “Everything I do will affect her. I have her childhood in my hands and cannot mess up,” she shares, underscoring the profound impact of motherhood on her career choices.

Through connections forged with fellow learners and mentors, Ryanna finds solace and camaraderie, fostering a sense of community within the program. “Seeing such friendly faces... makes the learning atmosphere feel a lot more accepting and welcoming,” she notes, highlighting the importance of supportive networks in her educational journey.

Ryanna aspires to obtain her CPA designation, aiming to achieve her long-term goals in accounting and make a meaningful impact in her chosen field. “Thank you very much for your generosity and ongoing support. I appreciate everyone that has had a part in making this program available for Indigenous learners,” Ryanna expresses, recognizing the profound difference their contributions have made in her life and the lives of countless learners like her.



For more information about supporting the Indigenous Learners in Accounting Initiative:
cpaweb.ca/ILA

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