

2023 CPA Manitoba

MEMBER RECOGNITION SPOTLIGHT



Message from CPA Manitoba's President & CEO

On behalf of CPA Manitoba, congratulations to the ten members who are being celebrated through the Member Recognition Program in 2023. A special acknowledgment to Paul Wright, FCPA, FCA who received the Lifetime Achievement Award in honour of his six decades of impact to his workplace, the profession and the community.

This year's recipients include trailblazers, visionaries, mentors and leaders who embody what it means to be a CPA. While each have taken their own career journeys, the commonalities they share are a dedication to representing the profession with integrity and a desire to give back to charitable and non-profit organizations that need their expertise.

The positive impact that is made in all corners of our province by our members who dedicate their time and energy to volunteerism is deserving of an applause. Thank you to our members who offer their knowledge and passion to serve our communities.

The Member Recognition Program exists so that we can put the exceptional contributions of our members in the spotlight and showcase the great work we do as CPAs. By taking the time to nominate someone, you play an important role not only in the life of a future award recipient, but also in encouraging others to make a positive difference. I encourage you to nominate a member whose contributions should be recognized.

Congratulations to all,

Geeta Tucker, FCPA, FCMA
President & CEO, CPA Manitoba



Lifetime Achievement Award

The CPA Manitoba Lifetime Achievement Award is bestowed to a CPA who has brought honour to the profession by sustained distinction in service to the profession, career or community.

CPA Manitoba Lifetime Achievement Award

Paul Wright, FCPA, FCA

When it came to learning the value of hard work and dedication, Paul Wright got an early start.

Born in Souris, Manitoba, Paul came from modest roots. After losing his mother as a toddler, Paul was raised by his father and paternal grandmother.

"I didn't have a typical childhood or some of the advantages other kids had," he explains, recognizing how fortunate he was to have people looking out for his best interests. "I was very grateful for family and friends who guided me through such a challenging period. Their kindness and generosity are attributes I strove to pay forward throughout my career."

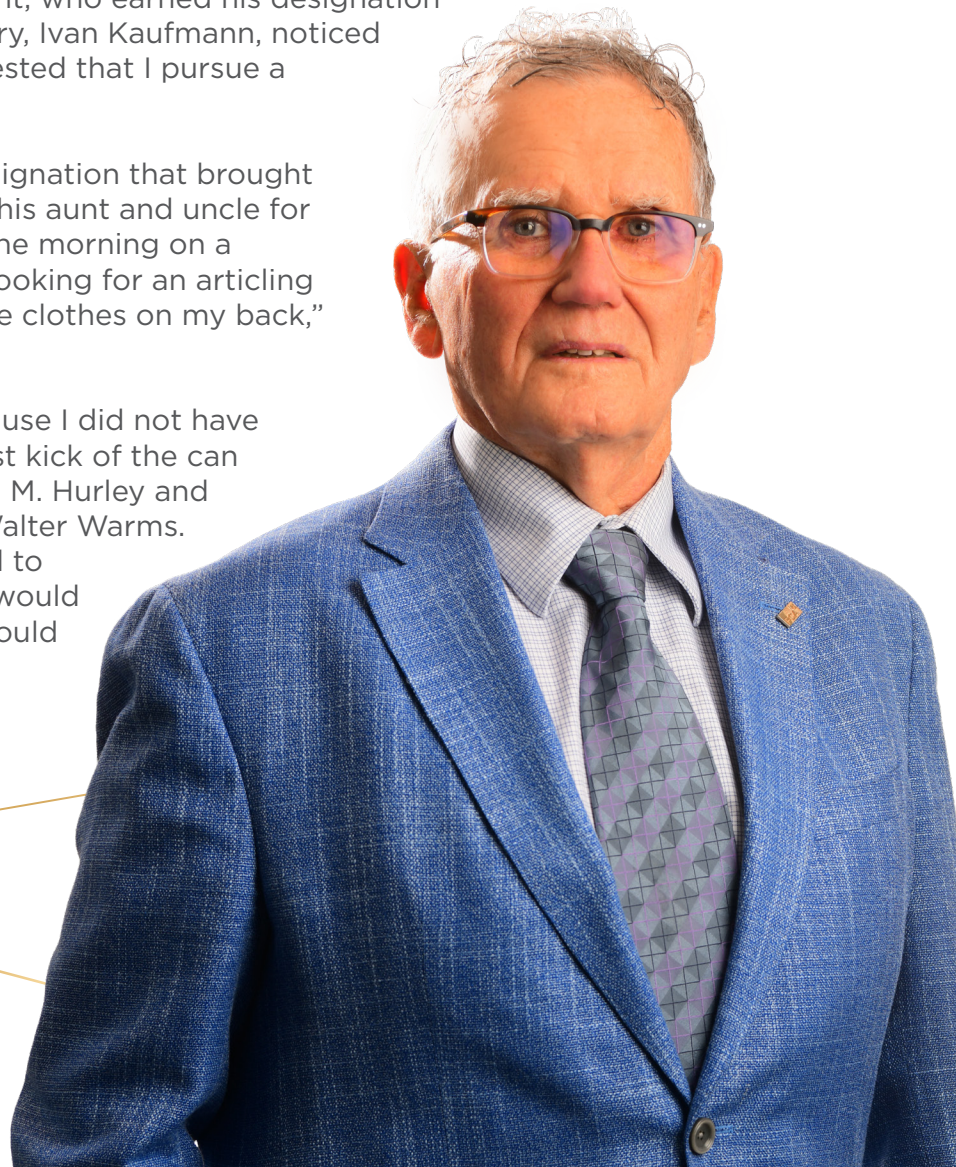
At the young age of 13, Paul took odd jobs in Souris including working as a mechanic's assistant and at the local pool hall. It was his perseverance and exceptional work ethic that set him down the road to secure a job at Souris Creamery, where the seeds of his prolific career would take root.

"I was performing all sorts of tasks, which included some bookkeeping," says the astute and esteemed accountant, who earned his designation in 1967. "The manager of Souris Creamery, Ivan Kaufmann, noticed my proficiency with numbers and suggested that I pursue a career as an accountant."

It was the decision to pursue his CA designation that brought him to Winnipeg, where he stayed with his aunt and uncle for six years. "I came to Winnipeg early in the morning on a transport truck and walked the streets looking for an articling position with no credentials and only the clothes on my back," he says, with a chuckle.

"I received rejection after rejection because I did not have a Grade 12 French mark, but near the last kick of the can you could say, I went to the firm William M. Hurley and Company where I was interviewed by Walter Warm's. He hired me under one condition - I had to pass the Grade 12 exam and if I failed, I would have to work anyway. The rest as you would say, is history!"

Paul credits Walter with playing an immense role in his life, both professionally and personally.



CPA Manitoba Lifetime Achievement Award

“Other than my wife and family, Walter has to be among the most important influences in my life,” adds Paul, who married his wife Margaret in 1969. “Nearly every pivotal moment in my career was influenced in some part by Walter. And, although we didn’t always see eye to eye, it was our ability to come out on the other side that allowed us to forge such a strong connection.”

Although a general practitioner, it was at Thorne Gunn that Paul became enamoured with taxation – a specialization that would follow him throughout his career. After ascending through the ranks from Staff Accountant to Tax Manager, Paul was approached by Walter once again; this time with an exceptional opportunity – born was Warms Rogers Wright. They merged with Coopers & Lybrand in 1990, which later became PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

Over the course of his tenure as Partner with PwC, Paul worked tirelessly as a trusted advisor to hundreds of medium-sized businesses throughout the community. Among clients, which in many cases are relationships that have lasted decades, Paul has cultivated a stellar reputation for sound advice.

“Each experience gave me a new lens through which to view the value of my contributions,” notes Paul, who retired as Partner from the firm in 2005, but stayed on as a consultant until 2021, and now works with clients independently. “I found helping individuals and businesses with tax planning and organizing their finances very satisfying.”

For Paul, it was about more than just the numbers. It was the manner in which he conducts himself where his reputation truly shines.

“His trademark is his relationship-based approach to his practice,” says Margaret, his wife of more than 50 years. “He not only guides individuals and enterprises but remains deeply interested in their families, their life journey and accomplishments.”

Looking back over his six decades of practice, Paul says one of his most memorable experiences was becoming executor of one of his client’s estates at the mere age of 31, an experience he says, “played a significant role in his career”. It was a relationship he maintained for over 50 years and is a testament to his profound character.

“This was the first of several executorships I took on throughout my career,” he adds in a humble and soft voice, explaining that he really didn’t know what he was committing to when he agreed to be executor. “I became a stable force in their lives, not only financially, but also in providing support to help fulfill their needs. These appointments evolve into endearing familial relationships and have become something I truly cherish doing.”

Best known for his deep commitment to philanthropy, Paul encourages people to lead with generosity and support their community. In this, he is a particularly effective role model, alongside his wife, Margaret. Together, they were the face of the ‘Endow Manitoba’ campaign for three years, which is a giving challenge for more than 50 community foundations. Paul has also played a significant role in contributing to other organizations, including the Winnipeg Foundation and Health Sciences Centre.

CPA Manitoba Lifetime Achievement Award

“Margaret and I have small-town prairie roots,” explains Paul, who throughout his illustrious career mentored dozens of young accountants in the process of completing their studies. “Volunteerism serves as an opportunity to lend my experience and skills to help others become vibrant members of society. I feel a deep sense of gratitude to call Manitoba home and volunteerism is a key pillar in our province’s rich history and future.”

He has served on several boards in the public and private sectors, including the ICAM Foundation, Lions Learning Centre, Versatech Charitable Foundation, Riverview Health Centre Foundation, and SJR School and Foundation. He was also a member of The Asper School of Business Associates for 20 years.

Despite his vast accomplishments as a professional, Paul never saw himself as an example for others to follow.

“I am deeply honoured and truly humbled to be included among those amazing and distinguished members who have received the CPA Manitoba Lifetime Achievement Award,” he says. “Above all else, I owe this award to those who have trusted me to handle matters that, in many cases, dictated their futures.”

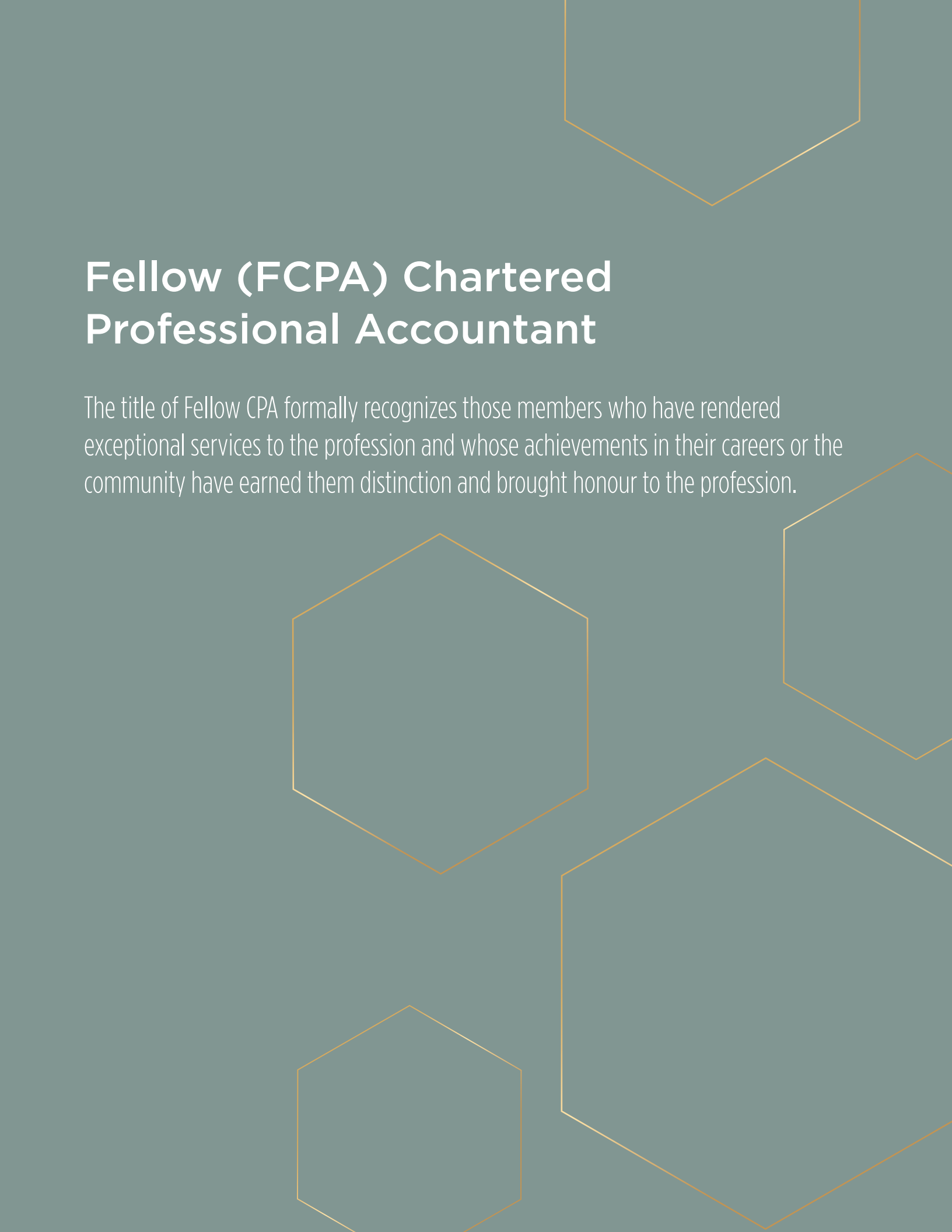
Paul takes the recognition in stride, preferring to keep the attention on a community that has given him so much.

This award comes on the heels of another prestigious accolade. In 1999, he was awarded the Fellow Chartered Accountant designation – one that holds significant meaning, as he was nominated by his peers.

Whether it’s through mentoring, his executorships, or volunteering, Paul hopes that his work behind the scenes will inspire others and provide positive reinforcement to the world around him.

Among his many achievements, which include his vast coin collection, his greatest legacy is his role as husband, father of three, and grandfather to five incredible grandchildren.

“It may sound eccentric, but there have been many people and signs that have led me to where I am today. From Walter Warms to the recurring letter ‘M’ and number ‘13’ – I was in school for 13 years, we opened Warms Rogers Wright on the 13th floor of the Richardson building, and purchased a cottage at Falcon Lake, which happened to be lot 13, block 13,” he explains. “Each instance has had some bearing on my life. If there’s one piece of advice I can offer to future CPAs, it’s to follow the signs.”



Fellow (FCPA) Chartered Professional Accountant

The title of Fellow CPA formally recognizes those members who have rendered exceptional services to the profession and whose achievements in their careers or the community have earned them distinction and brought honour to the profession.

Fellow CPA (FCPA)

Edward Cotton, FCPA, FCMA

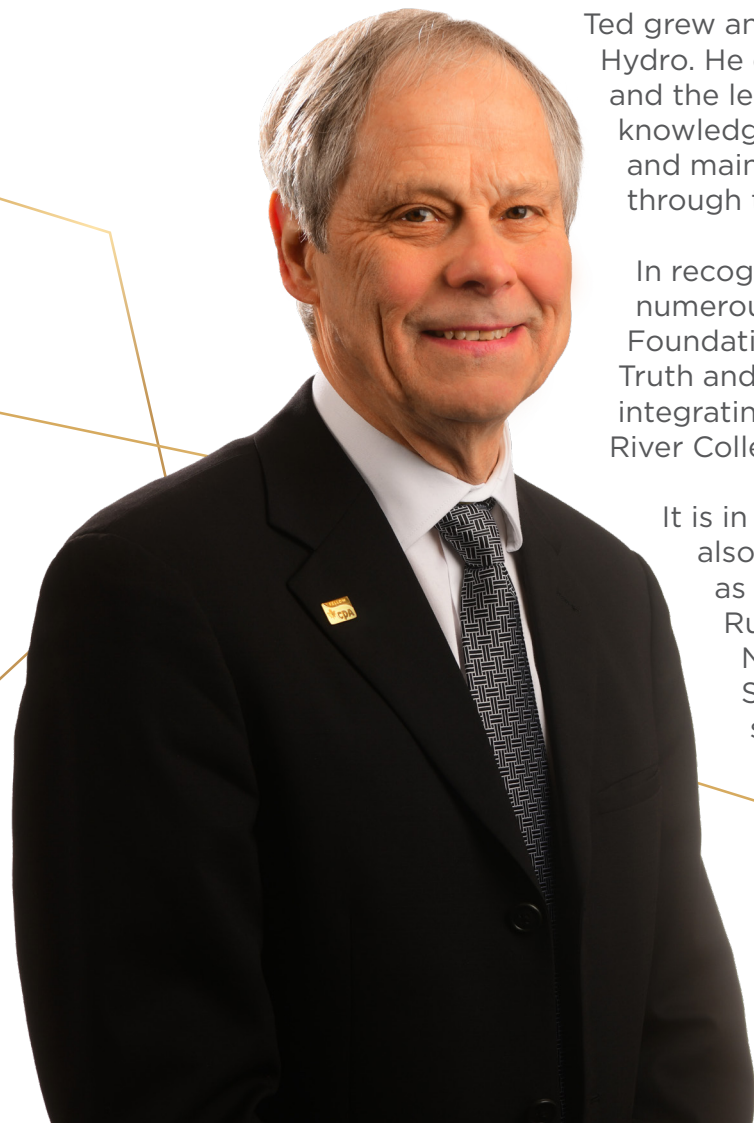
Since earning his designation in 1982, Ted has consistently demonstrated a high level of integrity, leadership, and professionalism, adding value to organizations and those around him. His pursuit for excellence and his varied skillset were honed over his 46-year tenure with Manitoba Hydro before joining Red River College Polytechnic in 2014 as an Instructor and currently Academic Coordinator for Applied Commerce and Management Education. In his current role, Ted participates in the hiring and scheduling of instructors, counsels students about courses, and addresses other student issues – responsibilities that he directly attributes to his customer-driven experience at Manitoba Hydro, where he led a multi-disciplinary team in planning, directing and controlling revenue protection, customer and advanced metering systems.

A strong supporter of the profession, Ted has demonstrated a genuine passion for accounting education. This is best exemplified by his role as an Accounting Instructor with Red River College, his involvement as a Panelist and Lead Panelist for CPA Capstone 1, and his twelve years spent as a Moderator for CMA Manitoba's Strategic Leadership Program. His contributions have shaped the minds of so many members and students in our province. Beyond that, Ted also served as a member on CMA Manitoba's Conference Committee for fifteen years.

Ted grew and fostered a culture of mentorship while at Manitoba Hydro. He dedicated himself to ensuring that existing leaders and the leaders of tomorrow were equipped with the skills, knowledge and expertise required to grow the company and maintain its success – a practice that has followed through to his role with Red River College Polytechnic.

In recognition of his accomplishments, Ted has received numerous accolades, including the 2019 CPA Manitoba Foundation Impact Recognition Award and the 2022 BRAVO Truth and Reconciliation Excellence Award, for his efforts in integrating Indigenous principles into programs at Red River College.

It is in his extensive community volunteer roles that Ted also truly shines. Notable involvements include serving as Compensation Committee Chair with Diocese of Rupert's Land, Finance Chair with St. Matthews Non-Profit Housing Inc. and Finance Chair with St. George's Anglican Church, a role he has held since 1992.



Fellow CPA (FCPA)

Marion Pernarowski, FCPA, FCA

Marion's commitment to creating leaders, inspiring people, and collectively delivering the highest quality work in an inclusive work environment is exemplary of the characteristics expected of a leader in the profession. With more than four decades of experience, including two decades running her own firm prior to joining MNP, Marion earned a reputation for exceptional client service, which is evident in the long-term relationships she has built with a diverse set of clients. More notably is her reputation as a trailblazer in advancing opportunities for women within the industry.

As one of the first two females hired by Thorne Riddell in Winnipeg in 1977, Marion broke barriers and helped lay a path for women entering the field. She is admired for consistently demonstrating that it is possible for women to succeed in a corporate environment while still raising a family and being an authentic, caring, and honest leader. Today, she is Partner and Business Advisor with MNP's Assurance and Accounting team, where she works one-on-one with small business owners and professionals, helping them with all aspects of their business.

Eager to share her wisdom, experience, and expertise, Marion has been a mentor to many CPA practitioners, including her son who followed in his mother's footsteps and obtained his designation. Marion has served as a member on CPA Manitoba's Practice Inspection Committee and ICAM's Office Practice Assistance Committee, as well as being an ICAM Ambassador for Regional Engagement.

Outside of the profession, Marion is a pillar of the community. Her strong presence can be seen in many spheres of life in Dauphin. Her long list of accomplishments includes sitting on the Executive Committee for Lorrain Manor, Dauphin Minor Hockey Association, DRCSS Band Council, MacKenzie Band Council, the 2004 Manitoba Summer Games - Dauphin, Dauphin Kings and Dauphin & District Community Foundation. In her role as a board member for Skate Dauphin, she diligently worked to keep fees down to ensure more children and families could afford to skate – a testament to her exceptional leadership and commitment to helping make Dauphin a great place to live, work and raise a family.



Fellow CPA (FCPA)

J. Craig Sheldon, FCPA, FCA

Known for his deep-rooted dedication to the profession, thoughtful leadership and exceptional business acumen, Craig has had a fulfilling and vibrant career with Richardson International Limited (RIL). After taking on progressively senior positions within the firm's finance division, including Assistant Vice President of Finance and Vice President of Finance, Craig was appointed to Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer in 2015, where he has built a team of well over a hundred accounting professionals, of which about 70 hold the CPA designation. Under his leadership, Craig has helped set the company on a path for long-term success in terms of funding, financing, and strategic growth.

Over the course of his 25-year career with Richardson, Craig helped champion the firm's transition to IFRS, lead the establishment of its in-house CPA Development program, and was instrumental in its acquisition and financing of Agricore United (2007), Viterra (2013), as well as Wesson Oil (2018), and Italgrani (2021), which helped the company grow into one of Canada's largest privately held agribusinesses.

Outside of his vast career achievements, Craig has brought his drive for continuous learning and commitment to excellence to the broader community. In addition to mentoring several CPAs within his finance team, Craig has been an engaged volunteer with several not-for-profit and community organizations, which earned him ICAM's Community Service Award in 2012 and the City of Winnipeg's Merit Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution and exemplary leadership and service to the community.

Noteworthy in Craig's volunteer efforts is his extensive leadership involvement with United Way Winnipeg, where he has and continues to serve in several capacities. Under his leadership, Richardson's United Way fundraising campaign was the number one workplace campaign in Winnipeg. He also served as Vice Chair of the Victoria Hospital Foundation, President of the Richmond Kings Community Centre, and President of South Winnipeg Community Centres, where he played a key role in bringing together community stakeholders and advocating for a regional recreation facility for the residents of south Winnipeg.



Fellow CPA (FCPA)

Michael Stevens, FCPA, FCA.IT

An astute leader, enthusiastic mentor, and principled professional, Mike's dedication to the profession and community-at-large truly demonstrates what it means to be a CPA.

Mike's career has been storied and multi-faceted. With the introduction of microcomputers to the business world, Mike was an early adopter/pioneer in converting clients from manual accounting to new automated computerized accounting systems. A Chartered Accountant specialized in Information Technology (CA.IT), Mike has led numerous clients in their IT strategic planning. Over the years, he has worked with organizations across North America within a variety of industries to lead over 1,200 strategic and business plans. As a Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE), Mike has personally led over 60 financial analyses for forensic and fraud investigations, including providing litigation and expert witness testimony for clients in court, arbitration and mediation with numerous cases being reported in the media.

His exceptional reputation has led to his current role as Chief Executive Officer and Managing Partner for Exchange Group, where he oversees two companies in the group. Since becoming the firm's Managing Partner, the firm has expanded locations in Manitoba, more than doubled the firm's revenues and team members, and expanded its client delivery across North America, and more recently, internationally.

Mike is a strong advocate of employment equity, diversity, and inclusion. Through purposeful policy choice and hiring practices, he has created an inclusive team that includes people who are Indigenous, newcomers, and LGBTQ2S+. In 2022, Mike directed the hiring of a Ukrainian refugee into the firm's solutions consulting practice to provide support for the individuals moving to Manitoba due to the conflict in Ukraine.

A true champion of the profession and community, Mike has become a sought-after speaker. His mentorship and training in financial controls and good governance has made a substantial difference for numerous current and aspiring CPAs who have been strengthened by his expertise. Over the course of four decades, Mike has emphasized through firm policies the importance for team members to volunteer their time to support the not-for-profit community. He has also contributed personally to multiple not-for-profit boards and professional advisory committees, including the Zoological Society of Manitoba, Kici Sipi Communications, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, United Way Winnipeg Capital Campaign and Assiniboine Park Conservancy, where he assisted with various capital campaigns and helped develop the organization's first strategic and business plan.





Early Achievement Award

The CPA Manitoba Early Achievement Award is bestowed to members who demonstrate an ongoing commitment and excellence in their professional, community or other volunteer involvement and career achievement within the first ten years of membership.

Early Achievement Award

Denis Freynet, CPA, CA

Throughout his decade-long career, Denis's unique blend of technical accounting skills and sharp business acumen has brought tremendous growth and prosperity to the organizations he has been a part of. After joining PwC Canada as a Senior Associate, Denis was recruited by Shelter Canadian Properties Limited, then Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA), and is now Chief Operating and Finance Officer with Actionmarguerite. His choice to join this leading non-profit health services organization stemmed from a personal desire to pay homage to his family's legacy as Franco-Manitobans.

In his role, Denis is accountable for the annual operating budget, financial statements, management of capital projects and plans, strategic planning, personnel management, and serves as a liaison with the WRHA and the Réseau Compassion Network. Among a multitude of accomplishments, perhaps his greatest achievement was guiding Actionmarguerite, a group of three personal care homes, through the COVID-19 pandemic. Through his leadership efforts, Denis helped shape and improve the future of the organization, which included implementing processes that have since been leveraged across the Manitoba Association of Residential & Community Care Homes for the Elderly (MARCHE) network and the WRHA.

As a mentor in the profession, Denis spent two years supporting and guiding a candidate through the CPA program. He has also been a dynamic member of the community, volunteering on the boards for several organizations including Abri Marguerite Inc., Sara Riel Inc., and Centre Flavie-Laurent, where his evaluation of their facility options at the very beginning in 2019 and 2020 culminated in a brand new facility in 2022. Noteworthy in his volunteer efforts is his involvement with St. Boniface Hospital, one of Manitoba's largest health care facilities, where he has been a strong source of support and member of the Audit & Finance Committee during a time of significant upheaval in the health care system.



Early Achievement Award

Erica Irwin, CPA, CA

Having distinguished herself early in her career as a formidable leader and principled professional, Erica consistently demonstrates the qualities of excellence and integrity. After working her way from CPA Student to Manager of Group Expenses with Canada Life, Erica was recruited to join The North West Company (NWC), one of the most prominent public retail companies in Canada. As Manager of Financial Reporting, Erica is responsible for complex accounting and financial reporting matters, such as acquisitions, business combinations and business dispositions.

While Erica excels in the technical elements of being an accounting professional, it is her commitment to training and leadership in the philanthropic and education space that is truly inspiring. In addition to her accountabilities for corporate accounting, reporting and oversight for the external audit at NWC, Erica helped to establish NWC as a pre-approved CPA training office. This included mapping pre-approved positions, conducting training sessions for new NWC finance team members, and coordinating and facilitating CFE preparation for NWC candidates.

Over the past ten years, she has made a great impact as a mentor, dedicating her time to developing future CPAs. In addition to currently mentoring four candidates, she also serves as a CPA Facilitator and Associate Session Leader.

Beyond making notable contributions to the profession, Erica is an active volunteer in her community. She has held several key leadership roles with many not-for-profit organizations, including Cerebral Palsy Association of Manitoba, Rotary Club of Winnipeg, and recently, the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities, where she hopes to further contribute her time and talents to support broader inclusion of persons with disabilities.



Early Achievement Award

Nicole Zajac, CPA, CGA

A transformational leader and advocate for the profession, Nicole's ingenuity, dedication to student development and passion for community show no limits. Her exceptional reputation has led to her current role as Partner and Chief Financial Officer for Penner Oil, where she is responsible for long-term financial operations, strategic planning, and has joint responsibility in the development of the company's management team. In addition to working for Penner Oil, Nicole was also made Partner in Prairie Horizon Consulting Ltd. where she took a new partnership from development to successful operation and revenue generation.

Nicole's appetite for personal growth is unparalleled. While obtaining her MBA, Nicole participated on four case competition teams, ranking second in the world in the John Molson MBA International Case Competition against 35 international teams. Most recently, under her guidance, the business strategy team for the University of Manitoba's Asper School of Business placed first in the prestigious 2022 JDC West case competition. Nicole has also had a tremendous impact on the profession as a mentor to three Penner Oil employees, successfully guiding two to their designations, and currently supporting one through their practical experience.

Outside of her career achievements, Nicole has brought her drive and enthusiasm to a variety of noteworthy organizations. Through her role as Vice-President of Athena Leadership, Nicole implemented a decision matrix for external mentors to ensure membership received a wide scope of mentorship opportunities – a process still used by the current board today. Her commitment to her community is further exemplified by her prior representation on the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) Advisory Committee and involvement with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Asper MBA Students' Association.





Distinguished Service Award

The CPA Manitoba Distinguished Service Award is bestowed to members who have made outstanding contributions to community service or to volunteer organizations, served the CPA profession in a distinguished fashion, or contributed to the development of young CPAs through mentorship excellence.

Distinguished Service Award

Cindy Alexander, CPA, CA

A natural leader with a remarkable ability to notice someone's unique strengths, Cindy demonstrates integrity and enthusiasm in everything she does. After earning her designation in 2008, Cindy worked her way up to Senior Manager with Boone & Partners before embarking on a distinguished career with CPA Manitoba, where she accepted the position of Director, Ethics & Regulatory Affairs. In this role, she helped implement the transitional policies for the unification of the CPA profession in the areas of discipline, CPD, and practical experience review. In 2019, Cindy rejoined Boone & Partners as Senior Manager working largely with for-profit and not-for-profit assurance clients and where she is also responsible for the implementation of professional standards in the firm, providing quality control and mentoring both new and experienced staff.

While Cindy's ethics and professionalism are unparalleled, it is her care for the concerns and passions of others that make her an exceptional leader and role model for developing CPAs. Whether it involves organizing in-house professional development presentations or ensuring all CPA students have an appropriate mentor, as a CPA Program Manager, Cindy has been a treasured resource to the development of her peers. Cindy's impressive volunteer commitments within the profession also include serving as the Manitoba representative on several CPA committees, which include the National Discipline Standing Committee, National CPD Standing Committee, and Western Practical Experience Review Committee.

Thanks to her financial acumen and drive for volunteerism, Cindy has made a significant impact on her community. She has served numerous organizations through several past and present executive positions including, Panda Bear Daycare, Spruce Grove Condominiums and Happiness is... Inc. Daycare.



Distinguished Service Award

Christopher Kauenhofen, CPA, CA

A well-respected leader amongst his peers and clients, Chris is firmly engaged in upholding the high standards of CPAs in Manitoba through all that he does as a Partner at BDO Canada. Over his 26-year career with BDO, Chris has been responsible for providing valued advice to entrepreneurial-minded businesses, in addition to planning and executing audits of private businesses and cooperatives. His areas of expertise include accounting and tax services, business planning and budgeting, and business system reviews.

Since 2007, Chris has been a dedicated volunteer for the profession. He previously served on the Member Activities Committee, University Recruitment Committee and Professional Conduct Committee for the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Manitoba. Since 2015, he has been a member of the CPA Manitoba Complaints Investigation Committee, currently holding the position of Chair.

His tireless commitment and dedication to the community is reflected in countless hours coaching minor hockey teams and serving on the boards of local nonprofit organizations and charities, where he provides oversight for strategic operations and financing functions. Noteworthy in his volunteer efforts is his involvement with the Children's Hospital Research Institute and the Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba, which hold a special place in his heart, having been a patient of the facility as an infant. Chris currently serves as Treasurer for the John Black Foundation and the Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba.



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