



Dan Richard, CPA, CA, CAFM

Director of Finance, The Usand Group



Throughout his career, Dan Richard, CPA, CA, CAFM has committed himself to continuous learning and developing his professional skill set. “I have always tried to challenge myself, especially with my education,” Dan explained. “Initially I wanted to study to become a doctor. However, during my first year at the University of Manitoba, I was really not enjoying school.” Realizing that he wanted to work towards a challenging but also enjoyable career, Dan chose to become a professional accountant. He enrolled with the University of Manitoba’s Aboriginal Business Education Partners and established himself to move directly into an accounting designation program after earning his Bachelor of Commerce (Hons.). “When I decided I was going to work towards becoming an accountant, I knew I wanted to get a designation,” Dan said. “I knew having it would recognize all my studies and would also make me a lot more marketable for employment.”

Dan joined a small accounting firm now known as The Exchange Group before graduating from the University of Manitoba. He stayed with them to article while he completed his designation. After five years with the firm, he was ready to move on and accepted a new role with a credit union working as a controller. He was only with the credit union for a year when another great opportunity came up. “I was hired by a brand new organization called First Nations of Southern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority (Southern Network) as their CFO,” Dan explains. “I had always wanted to work for an organization that also benefitted First Nations. When I was articling, I carried out a number of audits on Child and Family Services (CFS) agencies so I was already familiar with the organization. It was a great fit.” First Nations of Southern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority played a large role in the devolution of child welfare and paved the way for a major restructuring of the Child and Family Services System in Manitoba. “We helped contribute to one of the biggest changes to CFS in Canada by giving control back to the aboriginal community by creating four new authorities. It was an amazing experience.” Dan was with the Southern Network for just over 11 years and saw it grow from a staff of five to forty-five.



In the summer 2014, Dan left his role as CFO and joined The Usand Group as their director of finance. The Usand Group specializes in securing innovative, customized financial solutions for projects that strengthen the financial and social wealth of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. “I was happy to find an opportunity that still allowed me to work with indigenous communities, just in a different way,” Dan says.



“We’re project and client driven. My role involves doing financial analysis to determine a client’s needs and understand what projects they want to achieve. We develop financial plans that work specifically for each client and work with them to accomplish their goals.” Projects can range from economic development initiatives to business expansion or renovations.

Through his designation and education, Dan has developed a thorough understanding of financial statements and business analysis. “The skills I have learned through the program are still very applicable today,” Dan says. “While my role at The Usand Group is very dynamic, accounting is always in the background and there for me to draw from.”

The knowledge and experience Dan has gained has also been a great asset in giving back. Along with being a mentor to aboriginal youth, Dan serves on multiple boards. Dan has been with the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association (AFOA) of Manitoba for ten years. He is a past Board Chair with AFOA Canada and has served on their board for seven years. AFOA also offers it’s own designation program that relates to working with or for aboriginal organizations. Dan became a Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager (CAFM) in 2005.

“I’ve always enjoyed learning,” Dan says. “I actually had to write an exam about six weeks ago. It was the first in a long time! I’m now officially a licenced mortgage specialist through Castle Mortgage. I’ve added this role to my career on a part-time basis.” For Dan, it is important that every day on the job is different. “I’ve been able to work with so many great organizations and meet many interesting people. My career has given me the opportunity to be open to developing new skills. I love having the freedom to do different things every day while also having a great work-life balance.” When he’s not volunteering and has a moment to step away from his very busy career, Dan enjoys spending time with his wife and three children. This includes travelling whenever they can (their favourite destination being Disney World!).

Work-life balance and an exciting career are just a few reasons why Dan became a professional accountant. “The CPA designation is very portable; no matter what industry or organization, you can work wherever you want. If you ever want to start your own business, the designation program equips you with the skills and knowledge to run it professionally and financially. I really find that it’s just a perfect fit for anyone who is interested in business. The real question is: Why wouldn’t you become a CPA?”