

MEMBER PROFILE

KAMEELA BUDHIA, CPA

AUDIT SENIOR
DELOITTE



The Republic of Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It's home to Victoria Falls – the world's largest waterfall – and an intricate ecosystem that features almost all of Africa's famous animals. It's also the country that Kameela Budhia, CPA grew up in.

"I lived in Zambia on a farm and attended a private high school there," Budhia recalls. "Living in a country like that, there weren't a lot of opportunities and there's much work to be done in the way of gender equality."

Dreaming big, upon graduating high school at the age of 17 she boarded a plane to Waco, Texas to study at Baylor University.

"After high school, I didn't know what I wanted to study. I enjoyed the sciences and both my parents had backgrounds in science – it's what they took at university – so I started at Baylor thinking that might be what I would enjoy too. After a couple years in the pre-medical program I could tell it just wasn't for me," she explains.

That's when she decided to consider a business-oriented career.

"My dad actually had his own business, a furniture factory, and so I had firsthand exposure to what a career like that might be like," Budhia says.

Budhia set her focus on Baylor's business school, which

would turn out to be the first step in a journey towards her CPA designation and current role as Audit Senior with Deloitte Caribbean and Bermuda.

"Once I decided on a business path I also had to consider carefully where I would work after university. I chose Canada. There are a lot of great things about the country. It



I learned a lot moving from Zambia to Waco to Winnipeg and I wanted to continue having those experiences.



offers better opportunities to stay after graduation with its post-grad work permit. It seemed like a friendly, welcoming, family-oriented country and it worked out that it is."

At age 19 Budhia chose to enroll in the Asper School of Business Co-operative Education Program at the University of Manitoba and continued her studies in Winnipeg because of family living in the city.

"I moved from Waco to Winnipeg in January. I didn't understand what -30 degrees Celsius was until I experienced it. I had never even seen snow before. It was very

challenging at first. I had to worry about frost bite for the first time. I had to learn how to dress for the winter while also learning a new city and culture.”

Still not knowing exactly what area of business she wanted to focus on, she ended up working towards a double major in finance and accounting.

“My first co-op term was at Manitoba Hydro International. They have projects all over the world and as someone who has travelled a lot that really appealed to me. It also helped me see that accounting was something I was really interested in.”

“ I knew the CPA designation would be a good step for me because it opens a lot of doors. ”

She followed that experience with two co-op terms at Deloitte.

“One of the reasons I chose Deloitte was because of its international presence and the opportunity to travel and work. I had learned a lot moving from Zambia to Waco to Winnipeg and I wanted to continue to have those experiences.”

After graduating from the University of Manitoba in 2014 she set her sights on the CPA designation.

“I knew the CPA designation would be a good step for me because it opens a lot of doors. The biggest thing is that it doesn’t limit you at all. As a CPA you can work in insurance, for a huge manufacturing company, start your own business or work in finance. It’s also recognized all over the world. When I moved to Bermuda it was completely transferrable. I didn’t have to prove my knowledge or write an exam. The designation stood with me.”

Budhia attended the CPA Manitoba Convocation in 2017 after successfully completing the Professional Education Program (PEP).

“After obtaining my designation, I was looking for the next step in my career. I knew someone from the Deloitte Winnipeg office who had gone down to Bermuda and so after chatting with him I decided to apply.”

She applied in July and by August had an interview. In September she was off to the scenic island in the North Pacific home to fewer than 70,000 people.

“Bermuda is a really interesting place to work. The work we do is mostly related to financial services which is something I hadn’t had a lot of experience with. There are also people from all over the world working here. I’ve worked with

people from Africa, Ireland, Chicago, Australia and some from Bermuda too which makes for some fascinating conversations.”

Plus, the weather is a Winnipegger’s dream.

“Well, it’s not -30 degrees Celsius that’s for sure. It’s really nice. The weather is always warm and there are a lot of outdoor activities: I’ve tried wind surfing, wake boarding and a lot of snorkeling. The ocean is a two-minute walk from where I live and there are some world-renowned beaches about a 15-minute drive away.”

Looking back at her time in the CPA PEP, Budhia has some advice for those working towards the designation today.

“Run your own race. We all learn at a different pace and the program is flexible. At the end of the day, everything they teach you is important so try your best and you’ll get through it.”

She also shared some specific advice for those starting their work experience.

“ Don’t be afraid to voice your opinions or ask questions... You might be surprised to learn how much your ideas can help... ”

“Don’t be afraid to voice your opinion or ask questions. Sometimes you may feel like you’re afraid to say what you think because you don’t know enough but it’s through speaking up and asking questions that you learn. You might be surprised to learn how much your ideas can help if you just voice them.”

And if you haven’t made up your mind about the accounting profession like Budhia before her co-op experiences at the University of Manitoba?

“I think some people’s idea of accounting and what it actually is, is a little different. They may just imagine that we sit at a desk and crunch numbers on spreadsheets all day. That might be one function of our job but there’s so much more to it. For example, I’ve gone to a metal factory to count parts. I’ve gone to a hog farm to watch how bacon is made. You get a good picture of the whole organization, you don’t just see one piece, and because of that, you will experience some very interesting things.”