



# **SPEAKER BUREAU**

## **2025-2026**



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## **Dr. Odiri Ajakpovi**

### **Manager, Talent Acquisition**

Red River College Polytechnic

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#### **Industry:**

Human Resources

#### **Topics of Interest:**

Entrepreneurship

Leadership

Change Management

Artificial Intelligence

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



I have always been fascinated by the way people and organizations grow through change. That curiosity has guided me across three continents and through more than 15 years of work in human resources, change management, and digital transformation.

Today, I serve as Manager of Talent Acquisition at Red River College Polytechnic, where I lead strategies to bring in the right people and create opportunities for them to thrive. For me, talent acquisition is not just about filling positions, It is about shaping the future of an institution, building inclusive practices, and making sure people feel they belong.

Over the years, I have led change management transformation projects, built recruitment strategies from the ground up, and designed leadership programs that continue to make an impact long after they launched. I have worked with organizations in education, consulting, corporate, and non-profit sectors, but the common thread has always been people, helping them find meaning in their work and supporting leaders to see what's possible.

Beyond my professional role, I give back to the community through volunteering, supporting organizations that share my passion for equity, community, and development. Teaching and mentoring are also close to my heart, and I continue to guide emerging professionals and students as they chart their own paths.

# Simisola Ajayi

## Leadership Giving Officer

University of Manitoba

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### Industry:

Nonprofit/Education

### Topics of Interest:

Fundraising/Development

Stakeholder Management



Simisola Ajayi is the Leadership Giving Officer for the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba. She is responsible for building and strengthening relationships with donors, alumni, and community partners to support strategic priorities and enhance the student experience. Before joining the Asper School of Business, Simisola gained experience as a Business Development Manager in the technology sector, where she honed skills in relationship-building, strategic engagement, and identifying mutually beneficial opportunities.

Simisola approaches philanthropy as more than fundraising; she sees it as a relationship-based business discipline grounded in communication, and long-term value creation. Her approach integrates principles of marketing, strategic communication, and stakeholder engagement to support meaningful connection within the Asper community.

Simisola is an early-career professional committed to lifelong learning and building expertise in nonprofit business strategy and institutional development. Her interests also include organizational leadership, the evolving role of philanthropy in higher education, and how nonprofit environments use business principles to create measurable outcomes.

Simisola is passionate about sharing her experience with the next generation of business leaders. She hopes to help students understand that Donor Relations is not simply about requesting support, but about cultivating authentic partnerships that shape futures, open opportunities, and create long-term impact.

# Jesse Boychuk

## Development Manager

Longboat Development Corporation

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### Industry:

Real Estate Development / Private Equity

### Topics of Interest:

Finance

Law

Construction

Leasing



# Longboat

Jesse Boychuk is currently working for Longboat Development Corporation, a commercial real estate developer in Winnipeg. He is responsible for managing development projects from acquisition to disposition. He is also responsible for finding and evaluating new investment opportunities.

Jesse graduated from the Asper School of Business in 2018 with a major in Finance. During his time in Asper, he was involved in the Co-op program, various student groups, and completed a semester abroad in Munich, Germany. Since graduating from Asper, Jesse has obtained the Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst (CAIA) designation.

Jesse also sits on the Board of Directors at SAM Properties, who own and operate affordable housing in Winnipeg.



# Bailey Catania

## Recruitment Services Advisor

Birchwood

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### Industry:

HR in Automotive

### Topics of Interest:

Marketing

Human Resources

General



# Birchwood

Bailey Catania is a dynamic professional and recent Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) graduate from the Asper School of Business with a double major in Human Resources Management and Marketing.

Currently working as a Recruitment Services Advisor at the Birchwood Automotive Group, Bailey brings a strategic blend of HR and marketing expertise to the forefront. With a passion for relationship-building and talent acquisition, Bailey actively shapes a talented workforce and fosters a successful, collaborative environment.

Beyond the office, Bailey thrives on maintaining an active lifestyle through regular fitness routines and spending time enjoying the outdoors with friends, showcasing a well-rounded personality that enhances both personal and professional spheres. With a keen eye for detail, a drive for excellence, and dedication to maintaining a balanced and active lifestyle, Bailey is poised for continued success in human resources and the business world.

# Andrew Chudley

**Vice President & Account Executive**  
AON

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**Industry:**

Commercial Insurance & Risk Management

**Topics of Interest:**

Marketing

Risk Management

Commercial Insurance

Cybersecurity



Andrew Chudley provides advice and solutions that give his clients the clarity and confidence to make better decisions to protect and grow their business.

With over a decade in the insurance industry, Andrew manages complex insurance programs for large-scale organizations across industries such as retail, manufacturing, real estate, financial services, and aviation. He helps companies navigate our increasingly volatile world to find stability and build competitive advantage.

Accessing the global insurance market, Andrew aligns both traditional and alternative risk transfer methods with his clients' strategic goals and objectives. Andrew takes pride in being a dynamic advocate for his clients. For example, when a business is brought to a standstill following a ransomware attack, a water pipe bursts on the upper level of a high rise, or a lawsuit gets served, Andrew is there to engage insurers and oversee the response.

Andrew completed his Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) at the I. H. Asper School of Business in 2017 with majors in Marketing and International Business. He went on to obtain designations including Chartered Insurance Professional (CIP), Canadian Accredited Insurance Broker (CAIB), and Canadian Risk Management (CRM). He is currently pursuing his MBA through the University of Warwick.



# Damian Crowley

**Business Development Officer**  
Economic Development Winnipeg

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**Industry:**

Technology, Non-profit, Agriculture

**Topics of Interest:**

Marketing

Accounting

Entrepreneurship

Leadership

Non-profit Management



Damian Crowley has spent time in the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors with a commitment to leadership, entrepreneurship, and community impact.

Damian has directed transformative learning programs for a small-scale charity, fostering leadership among Grade 5 to Grade 12 students. He was also responsible for managing partnerships, donor relations, and sponsorships, as well as facilitating multiple fundraising campaigns with greatest success of a \$100,000 fundraising campaign.

Damian has founded a premium merino wool e-commerce apparel company focused on product development and marketing. Simultaneously, he also designed an application streamlining corporate volunteering processes, emphasizing the intersection of business and community impact.

Damian is currently a key contributor at Economic Development Winnipeg by collaborating with entrepreneurs, large scale companies, and non-profit associations. He is focused on driving capital investments and job creation within the Agriculture, Life Science, and Transportation sectors for the Winnipeg Metropolitan Area.

Damian highly emphasizes impactful leadership, entrepreneurial spirit, and community dedication, while being committed to shaping the economic landscape, while seamlessly navigating both for-profit and not-for-profit spheres.

# Braeden Demchuk

**Recruitment Consultant**  
Summit Search Group

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**Industry:**

Recruitment

**Topics of Interest:**

Leadership

Recruitment

Executive Search

Hiring

Employee Retention



Braeden Demchuk is a Recruitment Consultant with Summit Search Group. His focus lies on Manitoba and Saskatchewan placing professionals in roles that reveal their full potential, and empowering clients by creating high performance teams.

After almost a decade of experience in Healthcare Sales, Technology, and Sports Management, Braeden found his true passion in building relationships and connecting others. Prior to his career as a Recruitment Consultant, Braeden has collaborated with numerous Medical Professionals in the field of Optometry. He has also dedicated his time to industry-leading technology firms, such as Apple. Outside of his profession, Braeden takes pride in being a Managing Director of an Incorporated Not-For-Profit Sports Organization, which focuses on enabling a wide range of athletes, from Novice to World Cup levels.

During Braeden's time in Academia, he studied Business Administration at Red River College. Braeden considers himself a lifelong learner that brings an enthusiastic approach to each and every interaction. He values staying up to date following the latest industry trends and is always excited to absorb new information. These qualities have resulted in a natural ability to identify the needs of those around him, and to seamlessly implement modern solutions.

Braeden's active participation in a wide range of communities has created a network founded from action and trust. He believes that his career in recruitment will allow his partners to experience enhanced levels of performance, satisfaction, and fulfillment.

## Fiona Dunn

RBC

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### Topics of Interest:

Recruitment/Onboarding  
Orientation/Employee Lifecycle  
Offboarding/Unions  
Resume/Interviewing  
Manufacturing  
Co-op  
Workforce Diversity



Fiona Dunn is an HR Generalist at PTI Transformers, focused on recruitment and employee lifecycles, and labour relations. Some of Fiona's duties include managing PTI's Co-op program, attending career fairs, coordinating site visits and tours, and hiring students each semester for engineering, human resources, finances, R&D, and operations sectors. She also oversees employee engagement through PTI's engagement survey and recognition program. Fiona has taken courses through Predictive Index and Achieve Centre for Leadership on topics including talent analysis, dealing with difficult people, and hiring strategies.

Fiona is a CPHR Candidate, Asper MBA Candidate, and a member of the Young Associates. Fiona sits on the Rugby Manitoba Board of Directors, Nominations Committee for Rugby Canada, and on her three teams' boards. She also coaches high school rugby and volunteers as an advisor for the Alpha Gamma Delta sorority at University of M. Outside of work and board commitments, Fiona plays roller derby and handball.

# Justin Evenden

**Senior Account Executive**  
FlexNetworks

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**Industry:**

Telecommunications

**Topics of Interest:**

Leadership

Sales

Governance



Justin Evenden is a business development and technology leader with a track record of building high-performing teams and achieving growth in competitive telecommunications markets.

Previously as *Executive Director, Business Markets* at Valley Fiber, Justin led the turnaround of an underperforming B2B unit; rebuilding the team; implementing a modern CRM; and installing disciplined performance management and forecasting systems. Under his leadership, the business achieved exceptional year-over-year ARR and net-new MRR growth while significantly increasing ARPU and maintaining strong sales efficiency.

Previously, and now currently, as *Senior Account Executive* at FlexNetworks, he successfully launched a new, premium enterprise ISP offering into the Manitoba market; consistently exceeding revenue targets while winning business against established incumbents. Earlier at Manitoba Hydro Telecom, Justin progressed from sales and account management into leading the sales and marketing team, driving ongoing year-over-year growth and expanding fibre connectivity across Winnipeg business parks and rural Manitoba.

Justin holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) from the Asper School of Business. He serves on the board of directors of Access Credit Union, where he has held roles including Vice Chair and Audit Chair, deepening his expertise in governance, risk, and executive-level communication. Outside of work, Justin is a committed community coach in youth sports, an endurance athlete who enjoys running and triathlon, and an avid reader who continually invests in personal and professional development.

# Andrew Ferris

**Program Director, Children's Miracle Network**  
Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba



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## Industry:

Non-Profit / Healthcare

## Topics of Interest:

Non-Profit/Charity/NGO Management  
Fundraising/Business Development for Non-profits  
Cause Marketing  
Corporate Partnerships



**Children's  
Miracle Network**

Andrew Ferris is a seasoned fundraising professional with a passion for driving impactful change in the nonprofit sector. He holds a postgraduate degree in Fundraising Management from Humber College School of Business, building upon his foundation from the University of Manitoba.

Andrew began his career at the Sick Kids Foundation in Toronto, where he played a pivotal role on the corporate partnerships team during their historic \$1.3 billion capital campaign, the largest in Canadian child healthcare history. His strategic acumen and dedication helped forged critical partnerships that significantly bolstered fundraising efforts.

Transitioning to Global Philanthropic, Andrew honed his expertise as a consultant, collaborating with numerous nonprofits across Manitoba to optimize their capital campaigns and operational strategies. His deep understanding of donor relations and campaign management proved instrumental in achieving fundraising goals and fostering sustainable growth.

Since 2019, Andrew has served as the Program Director for the Children's Miracle Network in Manitoba, where he oversees a robust annual fundraising portfolio exceeding \$2,000,000. He leads the organization's engagement with national corporate partners, leveraging their support to enhance healthcare outcomes for children across the province.

Andrew's career is characterized by a relentless commitment to bridging philanthropic goals with community impact, making him a respected leader in the nonprofit fundraising landscape. His strategic vision and ability to cultivate meaningful partnerships continue to drive transformative change in children's healthcare and beyond.



# Simon Garfinkel

## Associate Lawyer

Taylor McCaffrey LLP

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### Topics of Interest:

Law



**TAYLOR**  
**McCAFFREY**  
LAWYERS

Simon is a civil litigator at Taylor McCaffrey LLP with a broad practice. He regularly represents clients in corporate disputes, defamation actions, personal injury claims, construction disputes involving contractors, builders, and owners, as well as various regulatory proceedings.

Simon has appeared before all levels of court in Manitoba, including the Manitoba Court of Appeal and the Court of King's Bench, as well as before numerous administrative boards and tribunals. His experience includes both advancing and defending claims, giving him a balanced perspective on litigation strategy.

In addition to his litigation practice, Simon is actively involved in firm recruitment and mentorship initiatives.



# Corinne Gusnoski

**Business Development Manager**  
New Media Manitoba

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**Industry:**

Economic Development & Technology

**Topics of Interest:**

Tech & Interactive Digital Media

Leadership & Community

Professional & Career Development



**NMM** New Media  
Manitoba

As a passionate Winnipegger, Corinne Gusnoski is committed to enhancing our community through economic development and volunteering. As New Media Manitoba's (NMM) Senior Manager of Business Development, Corinne leads strategic initiatives that help grow Manitoba's interactive digital media.

Supporting companies in video game development, extended reality, and more, she manages NMM's Business Development Programs that drive revenue generation, market expansion, and job creation. This includes GameBiz Lab, a program helping new and aspiring video game studio owners to gain industry-related business knowledge to facilitate their success. Prior to joining NMM, Corinne assisted in attracting, retaining, and expanding companies at Economic Development Winnipeg (EDW). While on EDW's Talent team, she coordinated international recruitment missions, including one to Argentina focused on finding experienced tech talent to relocate to Winnipeg.

Committed to community engagement, Corinne volunteers with the Young Associates including serving on the Board, JDC West, and the We Believe in Winnipeg Toastmasters Club. She also enjoys judging for entrepreneurship competitions through the Stu Clark Centre, having competed in several competitions herself as a student.

While studying in Asper, Corinne attended two exchange terms (in Singapore and Sweden), volunteered with AIMS and Business Banquet, and participated in the Asper Co-op Program. She majored in Human Resources and International Business.

As an ambassador for Winnipeg and all of the opportunities here, Corinne believes strongly in celebrating our city and working towards a more equitable future.

## Kieran Hall

**ERP Accountant/Controller**  
Price Industries Ltd.

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**Industry:**

Manufacturing

**Topics of Interest:**

Accounting



Kieran graduated from the Asper School of Business in 2021 with a B.Comm majoring in Accounting & Marketing and was involved with many extra-curricular activities through the CSA and JDC West. After university, Kieran spent 3 years at a Big 4 accounting firm working on audit and assurance engagements for Private companies. Additionally, prepared both personal and corporate tax returns for clients. Kieran completed the CPA designation program in 2024 and started at Price Industries in 2025. In his current role, Kieran is the controller for one of manufacturing divisions as well as supports and works on the ERP transformation side the organization is going through with his experience in audit and accounting. Kieran loves to be involved in the community through volunteering with Folklorama.

# Adam Henry

## Managing Partner

Rockmoor Wealth Management

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### Industry:

Financial Planning

### Topics of Interest:

Finance

Entrepreneurship

Leadership



With a passion for helping clients achieve financial peace of mind, Adam brings over five years of experience in wealth management. Holding the CFP® and CIM® designations, he specializes in personalized financial planning for retirees, business owners, and professional hockey players. A graduate of the Asper School of Business with a double major in finance and accounting, Adam combines technical expertise with a warm, client-focused approach.

Before transitioning to wealth management, Adam played minor professional hockey and served as captain of the University of Manitoba Bison Hockey Team—an experience that shaped his leadership and commitment to teamwork. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Robyn, and their daughter, Wren. He also remains involved in the hockey community as assistant director of player development with The Laker Hockey Academy.

# Daniel Heschuk

## Program Development Specialist

University of Manitoba, Faculty of Science

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### Topics of Interest:

Entrepreneurship

Leadership

Science and Technology

Interdisciplinary Communication



Dan is a perennial learner who is driven to support the STEM community and create real-world impacts in areas that they care about. Over the course of his university degrees (B.Sc. and M.Sc.), he has numerous research experiences ranging from working on a game reserve in South Africa, to working with DNA of the extinct American Mastodon. His passion for everything science and technology has led him to pursue a career where he may support scientists in applying their research and see their big ideas realized.

Working for the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Science, he helps entrepreneurial researchers access the necessary supports, while also acting as a point of contact for external organizations who look to access scientific talent and expertise. He additionally works to develop experiential learning opportunities for students to support their science communication, networking, idea generation, amongst other skills.

# Cora Hildebrandt

## Controller

Terracon Developments Ltd.

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### Industry:

Real Estate Construction, Development and Leasing

### Topics of Interest:

Accounting/Finance  
Construction and Leasing  
Non-Profit



Cora Hildebrandt grew up in Oakville, Manitoba and moved to Winnipeg to attend the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba. During University, she was involved in the Commerce Students' Association as Events Ticketing Manager in 2018/2019 and became the Vice President Finance for the years 2019/2020. She majored in accounting and graduated receiving her Bachelor of Commerce in 2020. She started working at MNP for a Co-op term in Winter of 2019 and accepted a full-time offer with the firm post-graduation. While working at MNP, she began articling to obtain her CPA designation and wrote her final exam in September of 2022. Cora officially received her letters in January of 2023 where at graduation she received the Canada Life Leadership Award for excellence in academics, community and within her workplace.

In 2023, Cora moved on from MNP to become an Assistant Controller at EPLS and switched roles to Controller at The Hansch Group of Companies in 2024, better known under the name Terracon Developments Ltd. Here she spends her time evaluating leasing proposals for financial stability, working on business valuations for potential acquisitions and various other financial and non-financial issues and problems that the companies face. Cora spends some of her free time volunteering for a Board of Directors, Swimmingly Inc. which she holds the position of treasurer. They are a non-profit, charitable organization that aims to improve the lives of youth with exceptional needs through affordable and accessible one on one swimming and water safety instruction. When she is not working or volunteering she enjoys spending time travelling, reading, outdoors at the lake or on the golf course.

# Jenna Hnatishin

## Chief Operating Officer

Manitoba Technology Accelerator

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### Industry:

Non-Profit

### Topics of Interest:

Entrepreneurship

Marketing

International Business



As a passionate, lifelong Winnipegger, Jenna Hnatishin works to grow communities and networks to help startups and scale-ups succeed. Jenna is Chief Operating Officer for the Manitoba Technology Accelerator, where she oversees all operational aspects of the company's strategy, helps set strategic goals, and oversees the flow of operations.

Through MTA InvestCo, Jenna works to make connections across Canada to facilitate investment into startups and scaleups in Manitoba. Through this model, MTA has been able to deploy over 3MM into its startups.

Jenna also works with a number of international companies through MTA Startup Visa Program, which is aimed at attracting international start-ups and scale-ups to Manitoba. Through this role, Jenna has expanded MTA's reach into international markets by building distribution channel relationships in countries such as UAE, India, Iran and China. Jenna continues to support MTA's vision of building scale-up companies and making Winnipeg the start-up capital of Western Canada.

Jenna graduated from the Asper School of Business with a focus Finance and Marketing. She is also a certified project management professional.

Jenna is a passionate leader dedicated to building a sustainable environment within Manitoba's growing tech community. A current passion project of hers is spearheading an initiative involving Winnipeg's emerging start-ups and existing technology leaders that will bring alignment to Winnipeg's Start-Up and Scale-Ups around a united position.



# Carson Horsburgh

## Senior Consultant

MNP LLP

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### Industry:

Commercial Real Estate - Appraisal &  
Property Tax Recovery Services

### Topics of Interest:

Accounting  
Finance  
Entrepreneurship  
Leadership  
Law  
Real Estate  
Valuations



Carson Horsburgh is a Senior Consultant with MNP's Property Tax Services team, based in Winnipeg. Carson specializes in commercial property assessment and taxation, with a focus on the valuation of commercial real estate across Manitoba. Carson is a dedicated advocate for property owners and taxpayers, combining analytical expertise, public sector experience, and industry-specific knowledge to deliver practical, results-oriented solutions.

Carson's experience includes assessment appeals, municipal property tax exemption work, and strategic advisory services across a wide range of asset types. He provides clients with well-rounded insights into complex assessment challenges and is committed to building long-term relationships that support a deeper understanding of each client's business and objectives. Carson began his career in commercial real estate with the City of Winnipeg's Assessment and Taxation Department, where he focused on the valuation of income-producing properties. His experience in both public and private sectors enhances his ability to navigate municipal processes and advocate effectively on behalf of clients.

Carson holds an Honours Bachelor of Commerce (B.Comm(Hons)) from the University of Manitoba's Asper School of Business, a Post-Graduate Certificate in Real Property Valuation, and a Diploma in Urban Land Economics from the University of British Columbia. He is also a professionally designated assessor (AAM - Accredited Assessor, Manitoba) and appraiser (P. App. AACI - Accredited Appraiser, Canadian Institute).

# Nirdosh Kaur

## Claims Associate

Walmart Canada

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### Topics of Interest:

Mentorship & Coaching

Motivation & Mindset

Technology

Public Speaking & Communication

Leadership

Entrepreneurship



Nirdosh Kaur is a dedicated professional with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Engineering and a diploma in Business Information Technology from Red River College. Since immigrating to Canada in 2019, she has built a diverse career combining technical expertise and client-focused roles.

Currently working as a claims associate at Walmart, Nirdosh continues to develop strong analytical and problem-solving skills while actively pursuing broader long-term goals in technology, mentoring, and public speaking.

With a solid background in IT, including experience as an application developer and mentor, she has worked closely with clients on project management and community initiatives, such as supporting Indigenous language preservation.

Passionate about continuous learning and personal growth, Nirdosh volunteers with the We Believe in Winnipeg Toastmasters Club and recently began her public speaking journey by also volunteering at TEDx Winnipeg. She enjoys sharing insights on personal and professional development, motivation, and problem-solving with diverse audiences.

In addition to her professional and academic pursuits, Nirdosh is exploring entrepreneurship by developing a clothing boutique. She looks forward to contributing to the Asper School of Business community by mentoring students, sharing practical knowledge, and fostering connections that enhance the overall student experience.

# Selena Levandoski

## Director of Operations

Robin Electric Co Ltd.



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### Industry:

Construction

### Topics of Interest:

Leadership

International Business

Case Experience

Ethics

Neurodivergence in Business



Selena Levandoski is an Asper Alumnus, graduating in 2018 with majors in Finance and International Business. During her time at Asper, Selena participated in a variety of case competitions, such as JDC West Debate, CFA Societies Canadian Ethics Competition, Queens Ethics Competition, and the Alberta Not-For-Profit Case Competition.

In her previous role of Director of Product at Palliser Furniture Ltd, Selena was responsible for the creation and execution of Palliser's product strategy, market positioning, and value-orientation. Operating globally in Canada, Mexico, Indonesia and China, Selena's focus on understanding international markets has proved critical to her success. Selena now works as Director of Operations for Robin Electric Co Ltd.

Diagnosed with ADHD at 26, Selena has realized the importance of meeting people where they are at by finding individual solutions that drive collective results. She is fundamentally rooted in the importance of teamwork, community, and growth. This has led Selena to contribute to herself and others through active participation in Athena Leadership, head-coaching Asper's JDCW International Business team, and captaining two volleyball teams.

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being" – Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

## Suraj (Raj) Lakhi

### Associate Lawyer

MLT Aikins LLP

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#### Industry:

Law

#### Topics of Interest:

Tax Law with respect to Canadian  
Controlled Private Corporations  
Intergenerational transfer of businesses  
General Corporate Law matters  
Incorporation, the basics



**MLT AIKINS**

WESTERN CANADA'S LAW FIRM

Raj Lakhi is an associate lawyer with MLT Aikins LLP. He was called to the Manitoba Bar in May of 2022. Raj practices in the field of taxation, including personal and corporate tax planning, corporate reorganizations, corporate/commercial law, and the use of trusts and estate planning.

Prior to the completion of his Juris Doctor at Robson Hall, Raj completed his Bachelor's of Commerce degree through Asper School of Business with majors in accounting and human resource management/industrial relations. His undergraduate studies in taxation and policy ignited an interest in the law, particularly tax law. In law school, he pursued courses related to income tax law, corporate taxation, and taxation of trusts and estates.

Raj's wealth of extracurricular and volunteer endeavors have shaped him into an empathetic leader and advocate in the community. He has worn a number of hats, leading teams and committees, teaching and mentoring students, and organizing and executing charitable events. Raj served as an intern with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and volunteered with Pro Bono Students Canada, where he worked on a project for the Manitoba Law Reform Commission.

As a volunteer with Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council, he helped refugees complete documentation for their refugee claims. While in law school, he also developed and oversaw charitable projects as part of the Community Outreach Committee and raised funds for prostate cancer research as team captain of the Robson Hall Movember Team.

# Marissa Naylor

## Marketing Coordinator

Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship

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### Industry:

Marketing and Communications

### Topics of Interest:

Marketing

Entrepreneurship



Marissa Naylor is a multifaceted leader in marketing, communications, and entrepreneurship known for turning strategy into impact across industries. Her career spans the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, with a strong focus on building brands through strategic marketing efforts.

As Marketing Coordinator at the Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship, Marissa leads national campaigns that support student innovation and entrepreneurial growth. She is also the founder of Marissa Naylor Photography, a wedding and brand photography business she launched in 2015, where her primary goal is to leave a positive impact on her clients through candid images that showcase storytelling. Her work has recently earned her a nomination for Women Entrepreneur of the Year.

Marissa's approach blends creative storytelling with data-informed strategy, honed through leadership roles and board service, including with IABC Manitoba. Beyond the boardroom, she represents Canada internationally as a Team Canada tenpin bowler bringing the same discipline and focus to her professional life.

Whether she's leading strategy, building a brand, or speaking on stage, Marissa is driven by purpose, growth, and empowering others to pursue bold, multifaceted careers.



## Nick Noonan

### Associate Lawyer

Fillmore Riley LLP

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#### Industry:

Law

#### Topics of Interest:

Law

Finance

Ethics

AI



# FillmoreRiley

Nick Noonan is a lawyer with a background in corporate law, finance, ethics, and taxation. His academic journey began at the Asper School of Business, where he received a Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Finance. During his time at Asper, he was a member of the Varsity Bison Swim Team. Afterward, he pursued a law degree at the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Law, where he graduated with a Juris Doctor, ranking second in his class. During his time there, he received a number of academic honours. Beyond academics, he demonstrated leadership in several initiatives including his position as the Student Body President and co-founding the Darius Maharaj Hunter Memorial Scholarship.

Nick holds a Master of Laws (LL.M) degree from Harvard Law School. His thesis, supervised by Professor Noah R. Feldman, explored the intricate relationship between shareholder primacy and ethics in corporate governance.

Currently, he is an Associate Lawyer at Fillmore Riley LLP, focusing on transactional, tax, corporate, and commercial matters. His prior experiences include clerking at the Federal Court of Canada and the Manitoba Court of Appeal.

As a member of the Young Associates Speaker Bureau, Nick looks forward to engaging with Asper School of Business students, sharing his expertise in law, finance, and leadership, as well as contributing to the academic and professional development of future leaders.



# Matthew Oswald-Sieben

## Owner

The Railway Financial Group

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## Industry:

Accounting

## Topics of Interest:

Accounting  
Entrepreneurship  
Leadership  
Sales



THE RAILWAY FINANCIAL GROUP  
LTD.

From inventory counts to coffee roasting, moving trucks to controllership, and architectural blueprints to entrepreneurship – Matthew’s narrative speaks volumes about resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to making a meaningful impact across diverse industries.

As a bonus, and conversation starter, feel free to ask him about bow-hunting bears, scuba diving, motorcycles, or how he started his career selling suits.

## Charlie Polet

### **Analyst, Investment Solutions** Independent Advisor Solutions

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#### **Industry:**

Financial Services

#### **Topics of Interest:**

Finance

Entrepreneurship

Leadership



I graduated from the University of Toronto in June 2024 with a Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in Finance. I was also a part of the Varsity Blues Football team during my time at UofT.

I began my career at Wellington-Altus Private Wealth after graduation, returning after having worked there as a summer student heading into my final year of school. I started with their Products & Platforms team who provided due diligence and supervision to the firm's investment product shelf.

In January 2025 I moved over to Wellington's investment fund manager subsidiary, Independent Advisor Solutions, who oversee Wellington's managed account solutions. In my current role, I support our CIO in delivering best-in-class investment solutions to our advisors.

I am also a CFA Level 3 Candidate.

# Riley Proulx

## Director

Indigenous Business Education Partners

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### Industry:

Higher Education

### Topics of Interest:

Leadership

Indigenous Education

Community Building

Fundraising and Donor Relations



**ASPER**  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



**INDIGENOUS BUSINESS  
EDUCATION PARTNERS**

Riley Proulx is a Métis man from Winnipeg, with family roots throughout the Red River Valley. He has held multiple roles relating to program development, relationship management, and stakeholder engagement throughout his life. He holds his Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) from the Asper School of Business and the Leadership Intensive Program Certificate from Asper Executive Education.

Since graduation in 2019, Riley has been working for Indigenous Business Education Partners (IBEP), a department in the Asper School of Business. He progressed from Student Intern to Director. As Director of IBEP, he works to support Indigenous business students through program development, academic supports, and community building.

Riley co-chairs two committees within the Asper School of Business; the Committee on Indigenous Business Scholarship and the Visionary Indigenous Business Excellence (VIBE) Awards Committee. Community development and support have always been part of Riley's core tenets. Through his work on these committees, Riley has the opportunity to assist in both the fundraising and the disbursement of funds in order to promote Indigenous community building with the Asper School of Business.

In his free time, Riley enjoys sports, cycling, weightlifting, and weekly trivia nights with friends.

## **Andrew Saygnavong, P.Eng**

**Technical Sales Engineer**  
WD Industrial Group/Safety

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**Industry:**

Manufacturing and Construction

**Topics of Interest:**

Entrepreneurship

Leadership



Andrew Saygnavong, P.Eng, works as a technical sales engineer for both WD Industrial Group and Safety Base Ltd. WD Industrial Group is a manufacturing and rep agency for various industries including waterworks, water and sewage treatment plants, and building mechanical equipment. Safety Base Ltd is a manufacturing of frangible breakaway couplers for traffic lights, light poles, highway signage, and luminaires. Andrew's mission in his role is to supply products and create custom solutions to put into customer's projects.

# Steve Setka

## Sales Manager

InXpress Winnipeg

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### Industry:

Freight, Logistics, Trucking

### Topics of Interest:

Supply Chain / Logistics

Entrepreneurship

Leadership

Sales



Steve Setka is a freight broker and sales professional. As a co-owner of InXpress Winnipeg, he excels at setting targets, leading a sales and operations team, and achieving results that the organization is looking for. As a voracious reader and podcast listener, he spends a good amount of time learning, growing, and applying tactics and strategies to benefit the business and his personal life.

Outside of work, he enjoys travel, playing and watching sports, engaging in a natural and alternative healthy lifestyle, political volunteerism, and church worship ministry. Steven has recently gotten married in September of 2024 and looks forward to being a future father and family man. One piece of advice that Steve recommends to young aspiring business owners, leaders, managers, and contributors is to create an insatiable desire for personal and professional discipline.

## Zain Shah

### Manager, Used Vehicle Services

Birchwood Auto Group

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#### Industry:

Automotive Retail

#### Topics of Interest:

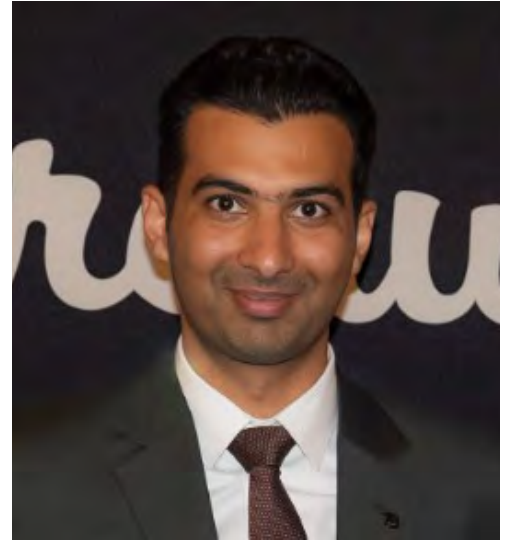
Supply Chain / Logistics

Entrepreneurship

Leadership

Operations

Change Management



**Birchwood**

My professional journey began after graduating as an international student from the Asper School of Business with a B. Comm in 2021. During my studies, I had the opportunity to join Birchwood as a Business Analyst Co-op Intern, which evolved into a full-time Business Analyst position upon graduation.

In 2023, I was promoted to Asset Manager, taking on the responsibility of leading Birchwood's central Appraisals & Pricing team. This role allowed me to further develop my leadership skills & contribute towards significant operational improvements by leading multiple projects, including streamlining customer trade-in experience as well as development & implementation of a market analysis & forecasting software.

Recently, I have transitioned into a new leadership position, now leading & overseeing Birchwood's central Used Vehicle Services division. I am a member of two operations committees at Birchwood: the Used Car Committee where I work with executives, directors, & GMs to streamline our used vehicle operations groupwide, and the Wellness & Inclusion Committee where I work with fellow committee members to roll out team member wellness & inclusion initiatives.

Committed to continuous improvement, I have earned a Black Belt in Lean Six Sigma, graduated from Birchwood University's Leadership Academy, and am currently pursuing my Automotive Dealership Management designation through Georgian College.



# Ashley Smith

## Studio Manager

Ubisoft



### Industry:

Video Games

### Topics of Interest:

Leadership

Strategy

Human Resources

Innovation

Diversity & Inclusion

Professional & Career Development



Ashley Smith is the studio leader for Ubisoft Winnipeg. Ashley helped open the AAA video game publisher's Winnipeg studio in 2018. She is passionate about her career bringing together local and global tech talent in Winnipeg's techno-creative district and supporting women in the tech & video game industry.

Ashley's career path has been non-linear. She went to 3 Universities (STFX, U of Winnipeg, U of Manitoba), changed majors twice (Science to Arts, Psychology to Sociology) in her four year degree, finally graduating in 2009 with her Bachelor of Arts, Sociology (honours). She also switched careers from social work (she was a community support worker and Immigrant Settlement worker) to HR where she has worked in several industries; transportation (CN Rail), manufacturing (Masterbrand), technology (Bold Commerce), and video games (Ubisoft). And now leading the Ubisoft Winnipeg studio as the managing director.

The competitive advantage/edge Ashley has brought in her career is embracing change when new interests and passions have been sparked. She wasn't afraid to change careers or roles. Her work in social work and HR has given her unique skills and perspective for her career now as a leader of a AA video game studio.

# Brennan Slater

**Senior Project Manager**  
Cambrian Excavators Ltd.

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## **Industry:**

Heavy Civil Construction

## **Topics of Interest:**

Leadership

Project Management

Systems Implementation



Brennan works as a senior project manager for Cambrian Excavators Ltd. He is a professional Engineer registered with Engineers Geoscientists Manitoba and has been an active member since graduating from the University of Manitoba in spring 2018.

With over a decade of experience working in the heavy civil construction industry, Brennan is currently responsible for the leadership of a project management team, reviewing cost estimates, management of construction projects, and implementation of operational systems within the organization.

Brennan has a passion for growth and continuous improvement, with a focus on advancing construction management processes and systems to improve efficiency, professionalism, and increase output. He is also passionate about leadership and works continuously to develop the ability to lead and influence others.

He currently serves as the secretary/treasurer on the Young Friends of Engineering Board, is a member of the Friends of Engineering finance committee, and volunteer on the United Way annual golf tournament committee.

Beyond work, Brennan prioritizes his family, friends, fitness, and personal finance. He also enjoys working on projects at the cabin and travelling.

# Mikal Sokolowski

## Associate Lawyer

Restall & Restall LLP



## Industry:

Legal Services

## Topics of Interest:

Law

*Restall & Restall* LLP

Mikal Sokolowski is a lawyer at the law firm Restall & Restall LLP, which has served Manitobans since 1909. Mikal practices law primarily in the following areas: corporate/commercial law, labour/employment law, residential and commercial real estate law, wills and estates law, and family law matters (excluding contested court-related matters).

Mikal grew up in the East Kildonan / Elmwood area, where he graduated from Miles Macdonell Collegiate while playing football and hockey. He then graduated from the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba and attained his B.Comm.(Hons) degree. Mikal graduated with distinction and majored in Marketing and Human Resource Management. After attending the Asper School of Business, Mikal worked as a Human Resource Manager at UPS and later at Red River College as a Student Service Advisor.

Mikal then received his Juris Doctor (J.D.) from Robson Hall at the University of Manitoba, where he graduated third year with the third-highest standing in his class. He further achieved the highest mark in Constitutional and Administrative Law. While receiving his J.D., Mikal was heavily involved in student governance at Robson Hall, most notably when he served as the Manitoba Law Students' Association President, where he amended the faculty's policies, implemented capital projects for new study areas and gender-neutral washrooms, and advocated for students' interests. Mikal was also the Head Student Editor of the Manitoba Law Journal, where he assisted in publishing many journal issues and has various publications to his credit.

## Brynn Todd, CPA

### Senior Accountant

Doane Grant Thornton LLP

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#### Industry:

Public Accounting

#### Topics of Interest:

Accounting  
Leadership



Brynn Todd works at Doane Grant Thornton LLP (DGT) (formally Grant Thornton LLP) where she is a Senior Accountant. She started her career at DGT approximately four years ago after graduating from Asper in the spring of 2021. Brynn received her CPA designation earlier this year and has been enjoying helping mentor others through the CPA program while at DGT.

In her free time, Brynn enjoys hanging out with friends, walking her dog Norman, reading, cooking, and golfing. During University, Brynn played golf for the University of Manitoba Women's Golf Team and her family have been members at the same golf course for as long as she can remember.

During Brynn's time at Asper, she was very involved with the Commerce Students' Association, holding positions on both the General Council and the Executive Council. Brynn loved making connections with many different students, meeting business leaders, and giving back as much as she could. Brynn says, "I'm looking forward to continuing to give back through the Young Associates."

# Charlotte Vis van Heemst

**Career Consultant and Sessional Instructor**  
Asper School of Business

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**Industry:**

Career Education

**Topics of Interest:**

Marketing

Entrepreneurship

Leadership

Clean Technology & Renewable  
Energy



Charlotte Vis van Heemst is a purpose driven career development & communications professional with 10 years of experience working in various key-industries in Europe and North-America. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a specialization in Management Support, in addition to a Career & Employment Coach Certificate from the University of Winnipeg. Charlotte is committed to using her global perspective and cross-cultural experience to lead and advance career education initiatives.

Charlotte currently works at the Asper School of Business as a Career Consultant and Sessional Instructor, where she continues to do work rooted in supporting business students on their career journeys. She is a Certified Leadership Coach (CLC) and serves as an active member on The Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) West advisory board. On the board, she contributes her communication talent and expertise of AI and technology to advance career planning and development services in collaboration with career professionals across Western Canada.

Charlotte is a recipient of the 2023 CACEE / ACSEE Regional Recognition Award - Canada West.



# Hayley Yamamoto, CPHR Candidate

## Human Resources Specialist, Talent Acquisition

Payworks



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### Industry:

Human Resources

### Topics of Interest:

Recruitment/Talent Acquisition

Candidate Experience

Career Coaching (resume, cover letter, interview prep, etc.)

HR/Applicant Tracking Software

Other Human Resource Topics



Hayley Yamamoto graduated from the University of Manitoba's Asper School of Business with a Bachelor of Commerce (BComm) (Honours) degree in 2021, majoring in Human Resources (HR) and Marketing. While studying at Asper, she was involved with a variety of programs including the Asper Exchange Program, Arni Thorsteinson Study Exchange Program, Commerce Students' Association, JDC West, and more.

After graduation, Hayley wanted to combine the skills and knowledge she gained throughout the program in both HR and Marketing and joined her third Co-op work term employer, Payworks, full-time. Payworks is a leading expert in the field of total workforce management solutions, providing cloud-based Payroll, Human Resources, Employee Time and Absence Management to businesses across Canada. At first, her role comprised of a broad array of facets in the HR sphere but she quickly found her niche as Human Resources Specialist in Talent Acquisition. Hayley manages full cycle recruitment across Canada for all areas of the business, including Sales, Customer Service, IT, and Product Management. She is highly involved in candidate experience, Payworks' employer branding, and the company's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives – all of which are areas of passion for her.

Hayley has also represented Canada at international folklore festivals around the world as a dancer with La troupe jeunesse de l'Ensemble folklorique de la Rivière-Rouge, and is a lifelong volunteer at Folklorama's Japanese Pavilion.

# Joshua Zaporzan

## Owner & President

Audax Adventures



### Industry:

Consulting, Technology

### Topics of Interest:

Marketing

Entrepreneurship

Sustainability

Clean Technology & Renewable Energy



Joshua Zaporzan has built, invested in, and led several successful new ventures across multiple industries, including a successful exit from his company Longball Athletics in 2020.

In 2020, Joshua began working as the Co-Founder & CEO of H2MB Inc., a pioneering company in the clean technology and renewable energy industry that is working towards building Manitoba's first green hydrogen production, storage, and distribution facility. H2MB's mission is to write the next chapter of our energy industry by providing the lowest cost delivered green hydrogen in Canada as the world works towards a zero emissions future, fuelled by renewable energy.

In addition to his role as the CEO of H2MB, Joshua and his team at Audax Ventures, a Venture Studio and Software Development Company, works with, and invests in, early stage technology companies across a variety of industries, helping them to launch, grow and exit their innovative businesses.

Joshua's influence extends into leadership roles and community involvement. He is the Board Chair of the Young Associates and a member of the Manitoba Government Premier's Business & Jobs Advisory Council. As a speaker, Joshua frequently engages with community leaders and students, sharing his entrepreneurial insights and experiences. He also serves as a judge in numerous business plan and pitch competitions across Canada, continually seeking opportunities to mentor and inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs.