

CANADIAN
Traveller
PRESENTS

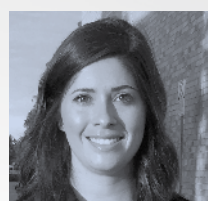
SEPTEMBER 2018

— *The Top* —

40

UNDER

40



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— *The Top* —

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The future is bright

"STAY HUNGRY, STAY FOOLISH." – STEVE JOBS

Welcome to the first-ever issue featuring *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40." The idea for this initiative came about at a monthly round-table our team hosts with travel professionals representing every sector of the industry. Our mandate is to discuss challenges and consider solutions, with the goal of ensuring a prosperous future for the travel industry at large.

Succession planning has been a major part of the conversation, though the more we've unpacked that notion, the more we've come to realize that the problem is rooted much deeper, often in a disconnect between travel companies and the educational programs that are preparing young people for careers in this field. We've found that travel & tourism graduates aren't always aware of the breadth and depth of opportunities available, and as such, unsure where to begin when the time comes to venture out on a career path.

Further, with so many people in the industry at managerial, directorial and C-level positions reaching the age of retirement, it led us to wonder: Who is the future?

Thus was born *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40." We believe in the importance of looking forward, recognizing young talent and acknowledging travel professionals beyond the common scope of outbound tour operators that the travel trade media so often focuses on. And we are proud of the final candidates, though it was not easy to get here; 150 nominations were submitted, so suffice to say, the competition was tough.

This project has not been without its challenges. From the beginning, the search for our "Top 40 Under 40" has been bigger than *Canadian Traveller* – it's about showcasing the leaders of tomorrow.

So, we are eternally grateful to the partners who recognized the importance of such an endeavour and stepped up to make it possible.

In addition, this exercise has been a stark reminder of the lack of diversity in Canada's travel industry. Of the nominations we received, most were Caucasian, which raises the question of whether or not we're doing enough to create opportunities for people of colour, people with disabilities, and when it comes to positions of leadership, for women. After all, travel is an industry that should truly represent the globe. It's safe to say that we're falling short, though I'm hopeful that this is one area in which we'll see positive change going forward.

Indeed, the industry we love so much has a fair share of shortcomings, but ultimately, what we're taking from this project is that the future is bright. There are individuals, like those profiled in the following pages, who are rising through the ranks – entrepreneurs, innovators, disruptors – and leading the charge for change.

In an effort to bridge the gap between tourism students and the industry, we're excited to be sharing this issue with them as well; we're certain that the stories here will inspire their aspirations.

Regardless of whether you're just starting out in the travel industry, on your rise to the top or have a successful career well underway, we invite you to take your time reading through this magazine and getting to know the awesome individuals whose journeys are shared throughout. We hope that you, too, will be excited for what is yet to come.

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Ryan Albright, Covered Bridge Potato Chips • BY LIZ FLEMING

For Ryan Albright, dedication and perseverance is what it's all about. Raised on a potato farm in Harland, New Brunswick, Albright understood from a very early age that the things you want in life don't necessarily come easily.

"But that's OK," he laughs. "I was raised with a good work ethic on the farm and that's what's made everything possible."

During a co-op year in high school, Albright learned the account management side of the family's farming business from his mother and decided he would one day take over the operation. That time came in his early twenties.

"We'd had a bad year for selling our potatoes – and that made things very tough. We weren't processing any of our own product at that point, and relied completely on our customers. I knew we had to find new markets."

Sleeping in a tent or staying in cheap motels, Albright scoured the U.S. for these new markets and soon, other New Brunswick farmers, caught in the same bind, were turning to him for help. The hard work paid off; new customers were lined up, a brokerage business was born and then he and his brother, Matt, purchased the family farm.

The experience sparked an idea.

"I suddenly thought: Why not process our own potatoes and make chips?" Albright says.

From that flash of inspiration came Covered Bridge Potato Chips, not only a great snack food company but also one of the most popular agro-tourism attractions in New Brunswick.

From the beginning, the Covered Bridge factory was designed with tourists in mind. Even the company's name refers to the area's best known attraction – the world's longest covered bridge. Visitors to the factory get a unique opportunity to learn about the process of growing potatoes, to watch videos explaining how the Albright family farmed in 1955, and to see how that farm has grown into the thriving potato chip manufacturing operation they're witnessing from behind glass.

Friendly tour guides wearing overalls, plaid shirts and straw hats offer insights, answer questions, provide fresh hot bags of chips and invite guests to taste-test all 40 unique flavours. (Note: don't miss the lobster-flavour or the "storm chips," a "flurry" of flavours in one bag – always popular during wild winters and a favourite with the media!)

Although last year, Covered Bridge Chips saw 350 tour buses bring nearly 50,000 people to visit, the factory tours aren't a significant money-maker for the business. But, that doesn't mean Albright doesn't see them as essential to success.

"For the first four years, I led all the tours myself," Albright says. "No matter what I was doing when a motor coach pulled up, I'd put on a plaid shirt, pull on the overalls, grab a straw hat and do the tours. Introducing people to the product during a tour is the best way to get them thinking about us. They'll remember the factory and the samples and the next time they go to the grocery store, they'll be looking for Covered Bridge chips."

The business is too big now for Albright to host tours, but he misses them. Instead, he attends tourism and food shows across North America to promote his famous chips, and also travels through New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada as a whole. Take a look at the back of one of the millions of bags of Covered Bridge chips sold across North America and you'll get the story of picturesque Harland, NB – population 900 – and that famous covered bridge. When people plan a trip to the Maritimes, Albright wants them to think of touring the Covered Bridge factory – and when they eat his chips, his goal is to get them excited about New Brunswick.

A recent expansion at the factory included enough washrooms to service large bus tours, more antique equipment from the farm, an expanded viewing hallway to create a tour loop and a special miniature replica of the covered bridge – perfect for selfies! For 2019, Albright's developing an interactive, smart-phone-friendly, self-guided tour as well as a short video for motor coach drivers to play for their clients prior to arrival.



POST-SECONDARY:
Various Courses
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
President, Covered Bridge Potato Chips
CURRENT JOB:
President, Covered Bridge Potato Chips

Albright is not only a leader in the tourism industry, but also a champion for rural Canada. Since the first chips rolled off the production line in 2009, giving Albright and his two employees something to sell to the local retailers they drove to visit in his old Toyota Corolla, Covered Bridge has experienced incredible growth. Today, he employs nearly 100 people, is always hiring and has provided a huge boost for employment and tourism in New Brunswick. We shouldn't be surprised. Growing up on a farm in the Maritimes taught Albright a few things – like the value of hard day's work and the belief that a rising tide lifts all boats. ■

Jordana Botting, Viking Cruises • BY OLIVIA LITTLE

All Jordana Botting ever wished for was a career that would make her want to tap dance to work every day.

Evidently, she's found it in the travel industry.

Now the director of business development for Viking Cruises, Botting began her career with Expedia CruiseShipCenters, where she was named "Rookie of the Year" for highest agency sales within the first two years of operation, and also recognized as a Top Agent in Western Canada by suppliers. She then moved on to Norwegian Cruise Lines, acting as a business development manager in Vancouver before moving on to a brief stint with the company in New York City.

But alas, she made a move that many a travel professional do – she took a step back from the industry.

During what she has dubbed "The Year of Jordana," she was involved with Sick Kids Hospital, Ronald McDonald House and the Children's Wish Foundation. Her passion for animals took her to South East Asia, where she set off on a volunteer-tourism expedition with the Surin Project, working alongside the Mahouts and their elephants. She also spent time learning to code HTML and JavaScript while familiarizing herself with digital design.

"This time was invaluable and helped me as I made the next step in my career," she says.

And as it always does, the pull of the travel world drew her back.

"I read this book by Sam Walton and he used to tap dance to work," she recalls. "When I looked back on my career, my happiest was when I was representing a product that I believed in."

And judging by her resume, that product seems to be cruising.

In 2015, she took on the director of cruise product role at itravel2000, which evolved into a post with Tully Luxury Travel. In that time, she played a part in increasing cruise revenue by 38 per cent year-over-year and developed training modules for travel advisors.

She then moved on to Travel Professionals International with a focus on implementing a national consumer-focused marketing strategy for the network and re-designing both B2B and B2C e-mail strategies.

"For many years I had my eyes set on working with Morris Chia and I was able to finally check that off my list," Botting tells us. "Pulling on all my past experience, growing new skills and having a great team to mentor – but most of all, still being able to help our valued advisors grow their business brought me full circle."

Now having landed at Viking Cruises, she's building relationships with travel advisors across Eastern Canada on behalf of the luxury brand.

"I'm in a position where I'm able to work and do what makes me happy," she says. "I'm happy every day when I get up and go to work."

And given Viking's vast portfolio of itineraries, she is constantly learning new things. "Last night I was working till one in the morning – though technically I wasn't working; I was just studying river cruise itineraries, and to me, that's fun."

Founded in 1997, by Norwegian Torstein Hagen, Viking Cruises started out as a small family-run company of only four Russian river ships. Now, it's among the world's leading river cruise lines and a leader in small ship ocean cruising. Family values are important to the company culture, Botting says, and touches of the Hagen family can be found throughout their sailing experiences.

Being a part of a company with such strong family ties is Botting's favourite part of her role at Viking, though seeing her travel partners succeed is a close second.

"It's amazing to see the small business owners succeed," Botting says, referring to cruise nights that allow Viking partners to sell more than a million dollars worth of cruising. "And I'm the one helping them."

Botting feels every victory with them.

"I just had an agency in Grimsby, Ontario, sell a world cruise this week. Being able to call her and hear her excitement over selling the cruise is amazing," she says. "It makes my heart feel good."

Good enough, it seems, to keep her dancing to work every morning. ■

POST-SECONDARY:

Sales & Marketing Diploma,
Mt Royal College

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Cruise Sales Manager,
Expedia CruiseShipCenters

CURRENT JOB:

Director, Business
Development,
Viking Cruises



Jeff Brown, Ontario Parks • BY SARAH HARRIS

From an early age, Jeff Brown found a passion for nature as an outdoor educator.

"I was fortunate when I was younger; I spent a lot of time in the outdoors – in Ontario specifically," he says. "And, as a younger person, and growing into that, I really fostered this love of the outdoors and local travel. So, I started guiding canoe trips and that was really my first entry into the travel industry."

Now senior marketing specialist at Ontario Parks, Brown admits that those years were no doubt impressionable, as he introduced people to nature and helped thousands of tourists of all ages experience and truly connect with Ontario for the first time.

But the road to get to his current post was anything but linear, having first started in the professional world as a trained biologist. With time spent developing educational programs that connected tourists with the outdoor world in Osoyoos, British Columbia, Brown was able to integrate scientific research and his understanding of nature with personal and up close experiences. This helped people to better understand the ecosystems that they were interacting with, in a more in-depth capacity.

"I was also active in media relations, appearing in several outlets including a documentary on the British Columbia knowledge network, several CBC news broadcasts and several travel and lifestyle magazines promoting visitation to the region," Brown says of his time in B.C.

He went on to earn his Master of Science degree by completing research in how to better conserve threatened rattlesnakes in high volume tourist areas, work that has been published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

This love of nature and science cemented his career path in the Canadian parks industry. After a few more years working with the B.C. government, Brown made a return to Ontario where he earned his Bachelor of Education, which eventually led to his current position with Ontario Parks. And it's in this work that he continues to promote the diverse Canadian landscape to local and international travellers, earning him this "Top 40 Under 40" appointment.

Despite his varied successes both at home and across Canada, Brown says he is most proud of his development and implementation of the Learn to Camp program. Now in its eighth year, the initiative is aimed at helping urban populations and new Canadians experience camping for the first time, an achievement particularly close to his heart.

"The program development was really exciting, but where I get really proud in those moments was in the park on the weekend," he says. "You would have a group of eight families come in really nervous, and by the end of the day, you're around a campfire making s'mores – a total change. You can see that transformation happen over a day and that's where I think the reward really comes in with that program. It was a really cool experience to be able to be there on the ground floor and build something that had such a strong impact for so many people."

Of this milestone, and many more along the way including his recent push to promote the Ontario Highlands, Brown humbly awards praise to the people around him.

"I want to recognize that while I am highlighting some achievements I am proudest of, these were not accomplished alone," he admits. "Along the way, I've had a long list of mentors, partners and co-workers who have helped me grow and prosper in this industry!" Specifically, he refers to his current manager as someone who continues to help him learn and grow – which he affirms is something we can never stop doing.

But praise goes both ways; the nomination putting him forward for a title in *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40" says: "I've worked in Canada's tourism industry for over 25 years. In my opinion, Jeff Brown is one of the best tourism representatives I've ever worked with."

A big claim, but one that makes sense when you learn about his accomplishments, his perspective and his vision for the future.

"The travel industry is unique in that the success of one business means the success of others," Brown says. "In that light, we are all working towards the same goal: to enhance travel to destinations for the benefit of many."

POST-SECONDARY:

Master of Science,
University of Guelph /
Bachelor of Education,
University of Ottawa

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Multiple Positions, YMCA

CURRENT JOB:

Senior Marketing Specialist,
Ontario Parks



He's been the deserving recipient of a number of awards through his time with Ontario Parks, including (but not limited to) an Innovation award from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry for the Learn to Fish Program (2015), an Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Award (2014) and was named Innovator of the Year by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (2013).

Though there are no doubt great things in store for this scientist-turned-communications manager, for now, he plans to continue making a difference within the Ontario Parks parameters. As he says, "I'm just getting started." ■

Jen Burke, The Travel Corporation • BY OLIVIA LITTLE

Fourteen years and six roles later, Jen Burke has made a home at The Travel Corporation since graduating from Humber College in 2004. She started in the reservations department and progressed through the company, now holding the title of global digital project manager.

Sure, it's rare for someone of Burke's generation to have stayed with the same company for so long. But this longevity is what she calls one of her proudest accomplishments – "just being able to have my career progress through the company in the way that it has," she says.

The Travel Corporation is a four generation, family-run travel organisation, operating 29 brands such as Trafalgar, Contiki and Insight Vacations, with tours available in more than 70 countries. As such, you can imagine that there's a demand for malleable talent internally. And Burke's found a way to adapt as needed.

"I work across a number of different projects with all of our different brands and teams, situated all around the world," she admits. "It's never boring."

In the earlier years, her roles included operations coordinator, web services manager and project & process manager. Now, she's part of the Global Digital Team and has played a critical role in many important ventures.

For example, she helps lead the TTC Agent Academy, an e-learning platform for travel agent partners.

"It's actually a lot of fun," Burke says. "I make sure that they're creating courses that are beneficial to our travel agents, so that they know who our brands are and what they can offer to our guests."

She's also helped with the roll-out of the "TTC 10 Year Wallet" travel initiative: "We can take guests through their travel plans for the next 10 years with all the destinations and types of travel we offer," she explains. "We make sure that clients that may have been with us on a European guided vacation know that we can take them on their African safari as they continue to plan out their bucket lists."

On top of all that, Burke has led TTC's Office 365 transformation, a pivotal shift of modern productivity for the entire business. Office 365 moves professionals from the desktop to the Cloud, and allows for easier file sharing and collaboration with the use of different apps. The apps are available on any device so professionals can work anywhere and anytime.

This has been no easy task – Burke is in charge of making sure that training for this new technology reaches their eight offices around the world – that's 3,500 of her closest colleagues. Though laborious, she says this shift has been nothing short of rewarding and already sees the ways in which it's helping to boost productivity.

"I've always been keenly interested in how to make the most of my time," Burke says. "Watching people go through that shift and understand why it's important and learning how much more productive they can be, those sort of cases remind me why I do what I do."

On a day-to-day level, she works with a team to manage several of TTC's websites and given that there are many brands within the organization, she's bound to have a favourite.

"One of my favourite areas of work is continuing to enhance our not-for-profit foundation, TreadRight's website with our team," she says. "They are insanely inspiring and remind me every day that with travel we have a responsibility to help the communities we visit across the globe by leaving a positive social and economic impact."

Personally speaking, travel has been a major goal in Burke's life since high school. She said it was this passion that initially inspired her to pursue a career in the industry, but the guests are a large part of what motivates her today.



POST-SECONDARY:

Travel & Tourism,
Humber College

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Reservations Agent, Trafalgar

CURRENT JOB:

Global Digital Project Manager,
The Travel Corporation

"I love the fact that they're continually happy with our trips," she says. "The guests are at the heart of everything we do." It's true; at The Travel Corporation, the company-wide philosophy focuses on being "Driven by Service" to all of its guests.

That said, her love for the job is also rooted much closer to home. "I work with a lot of great people and they're the reason that I'm still here."

She points to individuals like Jeff Element, Duwayne Moore and Dan Christian at The Travel Corporation as mentors in her career and admits, "Without them, I doubt I would have realized how inspiring travel can be on a daily basis."

"They say millennials don't stay in one job for very long but this is a misconception," she says. "For those of us that find the right company with the right people, we stay." ■

Timothy Chan, G Adventures • BY CANDICE WALSH

As life goes, it was during a planned career break that Timothy Chan found himself amidst an intense three-month application process for his current role at G Adventures. A frequent traveller with the company, he just couldn't turn down the opportunity to apply for a position on the public relations team – a field he had been working in since beginning his career. Eight years later, Chan finds something new to love about his work every day.

From media relations and crisis communication to working with the company's founder, Bruce Poon Tip – not to mention social and digital media responsibilities – no two days are the same for Chan, whose journey into PR began in 2005 when he started volunteering for experience. He went on to work for an independent publicist, as well as for the Toronto International Film Festival.

Travel had always been a big part of Chan's life. "Both my parents were immigrants, and after coming to Canada they made it a priority to travel, even if it wasn't hopping on a plane," he says. "We actually travelled across Canada in our station wagon and saw most of the country, and we saw a bit of the U.S. and parts of the Caribbean."

But it wasn't until his adult years that Chan truly became a travel enthusiast.

"I went on my first big trip to East Africa with G Adventures [known then as Gap Adventures] – Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. It really opened my eyes. I realized that although people might be very different in many ways, at the end of the day, we're very much the same. We all want to be loved, happy, fulfilled and safe."

Next, Chan made his way to Peru then India, after which point he decided it was time for a break; his career in PR was on the upward swing, but he needed to invest in self-reflection. Chan's goal was to travel to China to visit the family members he had never met before, but as he was planning for this trip, there was a job posting with G Adventures that he was clearly qualified for.

"It was very serendipitous," Chan laughs. "In many ways it was my dream job, and if I got the job, I would get to travel as part of my role, and if I didn't get the job, I would travel anyway." But Chan's application made it through hundreds and after a number of interviews, he landed the role.

Chan is clearly passionate about everything G Adventures stands for. He says that one of G Adventures' best assets is its work with Planeterra, a non-profit incubator which helps to identify community partners in destinations where G Adventures travels. Planeterra develops community-based tourism projects on the pillars of transportation, food, handicrafts, accommodation and experiences. These projects become a part of G Adventures' itineraries. Chan describes this process as a "hand up" model versus a "hand out."

But having travelled with the company before, he says he was already an ambassador and advocate for the company before even joining the team. "For me, working for a company that I can stand behind and genuinely champion for makes a whole world of difference," he says.

And it's clear that he fits in well with the company, making his mark and earning a whole slew of accolades. He's twice earned the G Adventures Honey Badger Award, which is given to an individual who demonstrates strong innovation in a role for positive impact on G Adventures and its people.

His first award was for a career break campaign that he launched when he joined the team. He was able to leverage his own views for planning a career break, and then he reached out to potential travellers to figure out what was holding them back. People said they were scared of getting lost, scared of the unknown, scared of loneliness – and so Chan created a program to position G Adventures as a solution to those problems. His efforts were met with plenty of television and radio coverage: 173 media stories in total.

POST-SECONDARY:

Bachelor of Applied Arts,
Media Studies, University
of Guelph-Humber

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Public relations manager,
G Adventures

CURRENT JOB:

Public relations manager,
G Adventures



His second Honey Badger Award was for a recent campaign around International Women's Day, with the aim to create a conversation and to highlight tourism's ability to empower females and promote gender equality.

Looking ahead, he hopes to continue doing what he loves but he's eager to also be a mentor. "Giving back through mentorship is huge for me and I always make time to connect with new grads entering the industry," he says. "I'm so grateful to several mentors throughout my career that have generously given me time and insights and feedback." ■

Adriano Ciotoli, WindsorEats • BY MEGAN HONAN

Windsor, a city with the slogan ‘One of Ontario’s best kept secrets,’ may not be entirely off-base. But the tagline may have sung untrue, if not for resident Adriano Ciotoli.

Growing up, Ciotoli wanted to be a chef. That is until a little accident with a sharp object quickly turned him away from the profession. So, he made the logical choice and switched gears, attending university to become a computer systems technician. Eventually, he found he didn’t like working for someone else and knew he wanted to be his own boss.

And so was born WindsorEats.

Ciotoli saw the city of Windsor as a goldmine for food and drink experiences and wanted to put his town on the map. But more than that, he set out to answer the common conundrum to hit households after 5 p.m.: where to go for dinner?

“We’re a privately owned destination marketing organization,” Ciotoli says.

“We promote the Windsor region as a food and drink tourism destination. We have everything from restaurants, wineries, breweries, bakeries and anything else you can think of.”

In a city as small as Windsor (population: 329,144), Ciotoli was shocked at the large restaurant chain mentality – especially considering his home is the fourth-most multicultural city in Canada. Ciotoli originally built WindsorEats as a restaurant guide for the region, showcasing locally-owned and operated establishments. But as the business grew at a rapid rate, so did the wealth of opportunities.

“We noticed gaps within the industry here in the Windsor area, so we started offering cycling tours and walking tours. Now we run our own festivals like the Windsor Craft Beer Festival and our Whiskytown Festival,” he explains.

Today, WindsorEats offers countless foodie experiences, all curated by Ciotoli and his sister. Options range from Friday Night Lights Bike Ride – where hundreds of neon-lit cyclists can be found partaking in a pub crawl on two wheels – to Drinks of Walkerville, where participants can learn about smuggling and gangsters during the prohibition era.

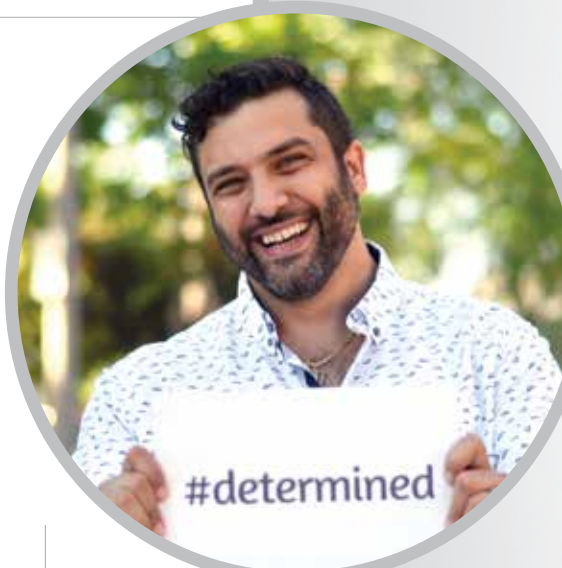
But that’s not to say Ciotoli hasn’t faced challenges in his career. When WindsorEats started off, a massive hurdle was convincing prospective tourists that Windsor is more than an automotive manufacturing town. He found himself scratching his head, wondering how he was going to change the perception of an entire city. With perseverance, charm and a little luck, that prejudice slowly disappeared.

“The idea that Windsor is nothing special is so completely false,” he says. “It was a challenge at first to really get people to understand how much is here. Now, it’s unbelievably incredible to see visitors experience Windsor for the very first time. They are absolutely blown away and we regularly see customers come back with friends. They’re all a part of helping break down misconceptions.”

And as WindsorEats has one big year after another, so does Ciotoli. Within the past two years, he and his business have been recognized as Tourism Champion of the Year by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario; the Small-Medium Sized Tourism Business of the Year by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada; and more personally, Ciotoli was named Alumni of Distinction by St.Clair College.

“It has been a really, really big year. I don’t even know how we’ll top next year,” he admits. “Maybe reaching for global recognition? It’s tough, because in today’s world, things change so rapidly. Especially in tourism. What we’re doing now is revamping our tours. We’re putting a fresh spin on it and that’s going to be the theme for us in the new year.”

If you were to ask his friends, they would say Ciotoli is persistent, being a strong believer that nothing is impossible – it just hasn’t been done yet. Ciotoli jokes his friends would also call this trait annoying. Still, he continues to dream-up big plans for the next five years.



POST-SECONDARY:

Computer Systems Technician - Networking, Information Technology, St. Clair College

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Owner, WindsorEats

CURRENT JOB:

Owner, WindsorEats

“I would love to bring some of our experiences to other cities. It’s on our radar to bring bike and beer tours, as well as wine trail rides, to other wine regions. I guess Prince Edward County is our next logical location, but we’ll see when the time comes.”

If you ask Ciotoli what’s on his must-eat food list in Windsor, it’s hard for him to say. But he’s happy to share where you can usually find him:

“There’s a local bar here called Phog Lounge. CBC did a contest a few years back to find some of the best live music in Canada and Phog Lounge won it,” he shares. “It fits only around 60 people, but they’ve had some incredible bands play there. They have five different poutines and live music; what a kickass time!”

Next pints on him. ■

Steph Clovechok, Tourism Saskatoon • BY TERRILYN KUNOPASKI

You don't need to speak with Steph Clovechok long before realizing that she's a force.

As the vice-president and director for destination innovation at Tourism Saskatoon and in her role at Travel Alberta before that, the young professional has made a name for herself thanks to the new perspectives, new practices and, quite frankly, the disruption she brings to the space.

Her father ran operations for Princess Tours in Canada, where she spent 13 years at the beginning of her career. She was only 17 when she guided her first tour – a bus of 52 passengers from the UK making their way through the Canadian Rockies – and even at such a young age, she was acutely aware of the importance of her work.

"I remember standing in front of them all, my hip perched on the arm rest of the first seat in the motor coach with the microphone in my hand thinking: what a gift," she says. "What a gift to share my little piece of the world with so many people at one time."

She's since made it her mission to make tourism the gift that keeps on giving in whatever space she's working, always looking for new partnerships and ever the disruptor.

Among her long list of accomplishments at Travel Alberta, Clovechok spearheaded the organization's first OTA campaign with Expedia, Travelocity and Orbitz – no small feat, given that many hotel shareholders were not in favour of OTA relationships, she says. Still, the initiative proved successful and today, the organization's Expedia partnership has surpassed \$1 million. (She since led a similar initiative with Tourism Saskatoon that drove more than 2,000 room nights as a result.)

In her first year with Travel Alberta, Clovechok was nominated for the Crusader Award – the first employee to receive this nomination within their first year of employment. Then, one month before going on maternity leave to have her second child, she was promoted to take on the new post of manager, experience development.

"I worked to successfully 'heat map' the province and create a development strategy for Travel Alberta," she explains. "This strategy identified gaps in experience type but also, in critical mass of experiences. I was able to identify immediate opportunities for development and set a three year strategy that would frame development of Southern, Central and Northern Alberta. This strategy is still being used today."

Upon her return from mat leave, Clovechok targeted the Canadian Badlands and Southern Alberta. As one who sees potential in unrecognized opportunities, she established important partnerships and went on to create a "Day in the Life of a Miner" tour at the Atlas Coal Mine just outside of Drumheller, AB and worked closely with a family ranch in Bindloos, AB to establish the Bar Diamond Guest Ranch, offering a four-night onsite stay.

In all, she developed 40 export-ready experiences in Alberta before moving on to Saskatoon, Clovechok tells us, all made possible by the support of "the amazing team of individuals that I have been lucky enough to work around." But in everything she accomplished, the need for Indigenous incorporation, consultation and partnership was paramount, perhaps influenced by her upbringing as an adopted member of an Indigenous family.

One proud accomplishment for her was as a member of Rendez-vous Canada's 2017 planning committee, at which time she led a partnership with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) to have the event open – for the first time in its history – with Indigenous protocol and procedures.

"The first day of RVC 2017 will be one I will never forget," she recalls. "All Chiefs of the Treaty 7 First Nation opened RVC with a grand entry, prayer and endorsement of the tourism industry doing business in their traditional territories."

Now, Clovechok is working to foster partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Saskatoon area while focusing on the development of Indigenous-owned and operated tourism experiences.

A lot of other things have changed in her wake; for example, for the first time in the organization's history, it has export-ready experiences to take to market. She's focused energy on developing relationships with Northern partners, "knowing that alone as a city destination, I cannot penetrate the markets I desire without a connection to the wilderness in the north," she says. She also established partnerships with



#fearless

POST-SECONDARY:
Bachelor of Arts,
Leisure & Tourism,
University of Calgary
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Guide, Princess Tours
CURRENT JOB:
VP & Director,
Destination Innovation,
Tourism Saskatoon

the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce and the Saskatoon and Region Economic Development Association.

Further, Clovechok periodically teaches a tourism course at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology while doing her own course work with Destinations International. She sits on the Destinations International Advocacy Committee and works on a sub-committee for performance reporting.

"Tourism opens our eyes to the world and its people, breaking down walls of perception and assumption to find understanding," Clovechok says. "Tourism is truly in my veins and I will work to make the world a better place through tourism for the rest of my career." ■

Jillian Dickens, Bannikin Travel & Tourism Ltd. • BY LIZ FLEMING

Jillian Dickens has never been afraid to roll up her sleeves and take on the job she thinks needs doing. That's how she got started in the working world when she was only 11, as a summer deckhand on commercial fishing boats in Northern British Columbia.

"My father and mother's side of the family are fisher people. My dad still fishes most of the year," she says. Her tasks started with washing dishes and sorting fish, but as she got older, more responsibilities on the deck came her way, and eventually, she was half-share on her dad's boats and others.

"I did that every summer during high school and through post-secondary," Dickens says. "This stuffed my wallet nicely to go travelling which is when my interest in travel really began."

She looks back on that period in her life as formative years, though can't say for sure if her work ethic comes from the work itself or if she can credit her parents. Regardless, the physical labour and often dangerous conditions of the job "taught me joy in hard work," Dickens says, "which has helped me in my career to always look for the angles, make a plan and dig into it to make it happen."

She eventually moved on to a bit more cerebral lifestyle, working as a newspaper reporter for small town newspapers, such as the Western News in Tofino, on Vancouver Island. While Dickens enjoyed journalism and the west, it was eventually time for a change so she headed north-east, landing a job in Nunavut as a newspaper reporter.

From there, she moved on to a role with Nunavut Tourism, working in marketing and communications, taking well to the diversity of tasks.

Dickens stayed with Nunavut Tourism for three years and might have stayed longer, had she not attended a Destination Canada conference in Banff where she met her now-husband, Chris. The rest, as they say, is history; life soon thereafter took her to Toronto, where she landed a job with expedition cruise company, Cruise North. That then led her to another northern adventure travel company – Arctic Kingdom – which is where another key connection was formed.

"I had a lunch meeting with Shannon Guihan, my current business partner and fellow "Top 40 Under 40" recipient," she recalls. "It turned out we'd both been thinking about developing some kind of agency to work with adventure travel companies. Shannon was thinking about opening a consulting company for the operational side of niche travel and, the more we talked, the more we thought we had complementary skill sets. We knew after just that one lunch that we could put something great together. Shannon's really good at getting things done so she sent me a proposed scope of services and we just jumped in."

That was eight years ago.

The two make for a well-balanced pair, changing the lead as needed and relying on each other as they share the reins. The focus of Bannikin Travel and Tourism is on niche, adventure and luxury travel. They provide client services in marketing, social media and content development, as well as media and trade relations, plus destination development – particularly nature-based and outdoor product development and marketing.

"Under Jillian's watch, Bannikin's clients have enjoyed huge success, both in new travel trade relationships won and consistent feature coverage in Canada's top newspapers and magazines," says the nomination that landed her a spot on *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40" list. "Trade successes include landing new partnerships with Thompson Family Adventures, Mountain Travel Sobek and Adventures Abroad, ultimately securing legacy business that will generate revenue and arrivals for decades to come. Media wins include the New York Times, L.A. Times and Globe and Mail, each ultimately securing direct bookings and arrivals for her clients."



POST-SECONDARY:

Journalism,
Langara College

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Marketing & Communications
Coordinator, Nunavut Tourism

CURRENT JOB:

Director, Bannikin
Travel & Tourism Ltd.

And aside from what they do for Bannikin clients, the way Dickens and Guihan operate their business internally is worth noting; recently, they introduced the unique opportunity for their team to work abroad for one month each year, "expanding their personal and professional development, inspiring creativity, and gaining new connections to bring home and spark further growth," the nomination reads.

2018 marked a huge stepping stone for the company, with a new office now open in Hong Kong. The move combines their team's extensive work with outbound tour operators in Asia and offers expertise, connections and guidance to reach the Asian adventure market.

What's next for her and Bannikin? Who knows for sure, but no doubt whenever she decides on her path, she'll be digging in to make it happen ■

Annie Ewing, TTI Travel • BY MEGAN HONAN

Back in 2013, you could find Annie Ewing wandering the streets of Angers, France in search of hidden architectural gems, and chateau hopping on the weekends. She was there teaching oral expression classes to middle and high school students, prepping them for their final-year exam. But, in her spare time, she was jetting off to other European destinations to take in each of their unique offerings.

She fell in love and she fell in love hard – with travel, that is. At the end of her teaching year, she knew she didn't want her journey to end. So, she sent out a tweet to a few travel companies she admired asking the proverbial question, "How does one get paid to travel?" She received her answer fairly quickly: "You join the travel industry, of course!"

This set Ewing on a new path. Upon returning to Toronto, she reached out to her family's travel agent to inquire more about the industry. He suggested the best way to learn was an internship at a travel agency, which she was able to secure at TTI Travel. After the internship, she went on to work for Perfetto Traveler and then Bannikin Travel and Tourism.

She then made a return to TTI, where she now works as a luxury travel advisor. Ewing spends her days planning and booking trips for high net-worth and millennial clients. She plays the role of fairy godmother to those with an unlimited budget and big dreams, making every trip customized to her client's specific wishes.

"My favourite part of the job is building relationships with my clients, many who were connected to me personally before becoming clients," she says. "So the trust they put in me to book travel – not only theirs, but also that of their families – is huge. It feels really good to have people's trust and to be able to show them what I can achieve for them professionally."

"Friendly, collaborative and ambitious, Annie's professional and personal identity is evolutionary and entrepreneurial, and she emphasizes professional insight and personalized service as the key to advisor success. She is bilingual, has travelled to 25 countries, and is a vocal advocate for the support of young travel advisors – and isn't afraid to share her thoughts on what it means to be an advisor in these changing times," her nominator wrote. "She is vocal about her opinions as they pertain to politics and feminism, especially when they impact the travel community. Personally, I believe we need much, much more of this approach to political-social-professional branding if our industry hopes to continue competing with other global players."

But Ewing remains humble, sure that the best part of the gig is the element that she was chasing in the first place: the travel perks. Ewing considers herself lucky that she gets to travel for work three to five times a year. She seeks out the hottest new locations for clients and test-drives potential tours to ensure they have a little bit of everything.

"I guess for somebody my age, I have a lot more travel experience than most of my peers. I'm able to talk about travel in the same way that my clients understand it because thanks to my job, I get to travel like them, right? So I can confidently speak about extremely expensive, luxurious experiences as if they're speaking to someone in their inner circle."

Though she admits that working in the travel industry has its perks, Ewing is quick to point out it's not all sunshine and rainbows; it also means juggling multiple moving parts that are often out of your control.

"It's all about managing your clients' expectations as they go into a booking with you. Then, it's making them as happy as you can after something has gone wrong," Ewing says. In the end, though, she believes it all comes back to how much you put into your business.

POST-SECONDARY:
Bachelor of Arts,
History & French,
St. Francis Xavier University
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Leisure Team Intern,
TTI Travel
CURRENT JOB:
Luxury Travel Advisor,
TTI Travel



While Ewing may still be in the learning phase, she is excited by the prospect of growing her client base over the next five years and adapting alongside an ever-changing industry. For her, the current wave in the travel industry is selling your experience; in the new age of social media, everything must be Instagramable, more personalized, more special, she says.

"The scale of what people can imagine for themselves in luxury travel continues to grow. But people are looking for the personal aspect of travel that connects them more to the humans around them, rather than the excessiveness of the experience," she tells us. "I like being a part of that." ■

Shannon Guihan, Bannikin Travel & Tourism Ltd. • BY BRITNEY HOPE

Shannon Guihan isn't one for buzzwords. Frank, canny and acutely self-aware, the tourism expert has dedicated her career to responsible destination and product development for the better part of 20 years – way before concepts like overtourism and sustainability were on-trend.

It's certainly been inherent for the business owner's trajectory. A summer job as a sea kayak guide during Newfoundland's first tourism boom inspired a Master of Science in tourism and environmental management from Oxford Brookes, and then roles with Butterfield & Robinson, Michelin Food & Travel and the TreadRight Foundation – not to mention the creation of Bannikin itself. Guihan has presented at conferences on overtourism and climate change, sat on committees for responsible hotel carbon initiatives, and is currently sitting on committees with the World Travel & Tourism Council and World Animal Protection.

Simply put, this tourism leader knows her stuff – a growing asset in an industry where top brass prefer to wax romantic about the joys of travel over developmental transparency. And for Guihan, a career in this industry requires much more than a love for globetrotting – it's about recognizing tourism's potential (and ethical imperative) for supporting the communities it operates within.

"A lot of people have a 'passion for travel,'" Guihan says, citing another catchphrase. "That doesn't mean tourism is the place for you. If you don't understand it as a business, well, you're kind of missing the point."

It was this recognition that led to the inception of Bannikin, which began in a living room with a two-person team seven years ago. It has since tripled its business in destination development (media, marketing & trade relations) with offices in both Toronto and Hong Kong.

"I knew there were small destinations and tour operators that needed help in sales, marketing or development," Guihan explains of the initial idea. "We wanted Bannikin to be a brand that could give small destinations and tour operators the support they needed, while celebrating what made them special in the first place."

Bannikin's strategy is grounded in helping destinations yield the most out of their current visitors, while protecting the cultural fabric and environmental qualities that allure travellers from the start. Guihan and her team then work with brands to support those qualities with thoughtful communications and product development. It's slow work by design – and not always easy in a business that puts a premium on indulgence – but from where Guihan's sitting, it's an essential effort.

"You need to protect the parts of a destination that make it unique, not just sell them," she says. "Because wherever or whatever you're selling, it's not just your product – it's someone else's home."

Guihan's desire to provide principled, research-based services to growing brands remains an ongoing goal today, and the entrepreneur says they sometimes do need to turn down clients that don't meet certain operational standards.

"We have to feel good about their projects and their business models, because at the end of the day, we lose sleep over that," she admits, pointing out that they usually steer clear of all-inclusive resorts and are very selective when working with cruise lines.

And she doesn't mince words when it comes to the realities of tourism – there's simply no time, especially if Canada's industry wants to succeed in the decades to come. On that score, the tourism expert is also an advocate for better supporting young professionals, something she feels is lacking in a bottom-heavy, sales-focused industry where the types of roles people aspire to don't turn over fast enough.

Walking the walk, Guihan implements what she believes should be basic employment standards into Bannikin's workplace culture, such as benefits, annual reviews, and a professional development budget.

"I want our team to feel good about their jobs – because so much of our industry is tough," she says. "So, we spend money on them, we have a work-life balance – and we don't use travel as a carrot."



POST-SECONDARY:

Master of Science,
Tourism & Environmental
Management,
Oxford Brookes

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Sea Kayak Guide,
Stan Cook Sea Kayaking

CURRENT JOB:

Director, Bannikin Travel
& Tourism Ltd.

Guihan invests in her own professional development as well; she recently completed a certificate in project management at Toronto Schulich School of Business, and wants to continue to face her love-hate relationship with public speaking.

"You can always be better," she reflects dismissively. After nearly two decades of dedication to responsible tourism, Guihan is loath to take credit for any positive effect on tourism, citing her clients as the true catalysts for change.

"I'm behind the scenes, genuinely," Guihan says. "I'm impactful through the really good business people I work with. I sell services – they're selling experiences to the consumer. *That's* the impact." ■

Lauren Harris, Orion Travelinx & Voyageur Travel • BY MEGAN HONAN

Grandfather. Father. Daughter. Lauren Harris is the third in the line of a generational family travel business. Harris' grandparents first opened their doors in 1982 in a tiny shop in Bloor West Village in Toronto, Canada. From there, her father went on to acquire the agency from her grandparents and the family business hasn't slowed down since.

But while she may have been born into the industry, don't think for one second that Harris hasn't earned her spot at the big kids' table.

After starting out her post-secondary career at Guelph University, Harris found herself lost in the overwhelmingly large class sizes and simply felt like a number. She switched her major three times, though eventually decided university wasn't for her and dropped out.

"I came home and spoke to my parents about what I was doing and said I think travel would be really interesting to get into and something I'm really passionate about," she says. "I've grown up travelling my entire life and they've always been incredibly supportive of me in whatever I do. So they said, 'Sure, but what's the plan?'"

And so she set out to build one. After attending the Ensemble Conference in 2010 in Orlando alongside her father, her eyes opened to the magnitude of the travel industry and she enrolled in Georgian College's Tourism and Travel program, graduating two years later – top of her class.

"On completion of my diploma, I decided I wasn't quite done with school and decided to go to Switzerland for an International Tourism and Events degree program," she says. "I had a great time travelling around and doing a lot of studying. I really just fell in love with Lucerne."

When she graduated, Harris was ready to dive head first into the travel world. But there was a catch: "The deal with my dad was always that you can't work in the agency until you have experience outside of it. It didn't matter if I was flipping burgers or working in retail, but I had to have my own experience to learn who I was and what I wanted."

So, she landed at the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies as a project assistant where she learned to work alongside a team organizing events and developing projects like ACTA Campus and associated websites. She wore many hats that year, but most importantly, she prepped for approaching her father to join the family business at Orion Travelinx and Voyageur Travel.

"He was really open and willing to speak with me about that and he needed help with marketing and business development, as well as bringing in corporate clients," Harris recalls. "So he hired me and I've been there ever since."

"Dedicated" is the obvious adjective that describes Harris. Today, you can find her refining the company's social media campaigns, assisting advisors in just about every department, or sussing out and pitching value propositions to new corporate clients. That's not to say she doesn't face challenges; she knows that travel is one of the only things that you buy without receiving anything tangible in return, so ensuring their clients enjoy their experience is her top priority. In turn, Harris' role is ever changing and keeps her on her toes, but it's clear she's up for the challenge.

When she's not working away at the agency, Harris keeps busy within the travel world. Sitting on the Ensemble Travel Group Program Committee, UNIGLOBE Technology Committee and the Blazers Focus Group, it can be hard to keep up with her. Just when it seems like she has hit her limit, she surprises with a new venture or goal. Currently, Harris is focusing on the future of youth in the travel industry.

"What I'm working on right now is bettering my relationship with my professors at Georgian College. I know that there are a lot of students who need some guidance, so I'll be stepping into a greater role there in the near future trying to encourage young people to join the industry," she says. "I want to show them the vast number of roles that are available to them."

POST-SECONDARY:

Bachelor of Arts, The International Management Institute (IMI University, Luzern)

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Summer Job, Orion Travelinx

CURRENT JOB:

Manager of Business Development & Marketing, Orion Travelinx & Voyageur Travel



She also dabbles in her second love, basketball. After playing the sport throughout high school and varsity ball at college, she is taking a pause due to an injury. But that doesn't stop her from coaching a young girls basketball team and fostering the love of the game within them.

Harris is almost an anomaly – a secret unicorn of sorts – in the travel agency world. She's young and passionate about everything she touches. In an industry that's lacking in attracting youth, she's not only helping smash those statistics, but ensuring the industry – and her family's legacy – will continue for years to come. ■

Nicole Havers, Tourism Vancouver • BY TERRILYN KUNOPASKI

Shortly after Nicole Havers was named one of *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40" recipients, she left her job at Tourism Vancouver after seven years with the organization and hit the open road.

The plan had been in the works for some time, but now, she and her husband are making their way through Europe, Central and South America, Australia and New Zealand, travelling and volunteering until July 2019.

"I was inspired by a few friends and colleagues who have taken similar journeys and have returned renewed and ready to dedicate themselves to their next chapters," she says. "I'm not entirely sure what my next career move will be, but I'm excited to have a year to consider interesting projects and opportunities."

It's likely a welcome break for Havers, who has been successful in her career thus far, most recently as marketing manager, meeting and convention sales at the tourism office. And while she pursues this year of jet setting, it's no doubt that she's being missed by her colleagues.

"Nicole goes the extra mile to work with our clients and local hosts on executing activations that give back to the community and drive social change," reads the nomination putting her forward for "Top 40 Under 40" recognition. "Whether that's marketing a 'Brain Fair' for a neuroscience conference or serving on the committee for an international bird week, she is eager to help incorporate a higher sense of purpose for those travelling to Vancouver to attend a conference. She helps to drive legacy – a very important part of our industry."

The nomination also references Havers' "creative vision," which she describes from a perspective perhaps not often considered.

"Some people think creativity is only reserved for artistic people, but it's not," she says. "I was fortunate to have learned graphic design from my father at a young age and it has definitely helped to give me tools to visualize solutions. But I think being creative is about tapping into our own curiosity and asking important questions that lead to unexpected but strategic results. Questions like: Will this make an impact? How can this be a little more clever or delightful? Who do I need to involve to make this 10-times better? I think having these types of questions constantly running in the back of my head has played into my success."

This vision has led to a number of wins for Havers and, in turn, Tourism Vancouver. In 2016, the city played host to the Professional Convention Management Association Convening Leaders conference; Havers had a key role on the marketing committee, which won the BC Chapter of the American Marketing Association (BCAMA) Marketing Excellence Award and Destination Canada's Explore Canada Awards of Excellence for Most Innovative PR Campaign award. In 2017, the meeting and conventions team won a record number of large citywide conferences.

"This is due to the relationships and trust the sales managers have built with their clients, and also because of the creative bid presentations, videos, campaigns and content I create for them," Havers reflects. "Some bids require me to work with the local organizing committee on months of lobbying, e-newsletter creation, social media management, website development, custom video series, trade show booth design, professional bid documents and multimedia presentations. Those bids are definitely the most challenging but certainly the most rewarding when Vancouver is selected as the host destination."

She also refers to a social media program coined "Social Concierge" that she developed; in an effort to thank conference organizers for hosting their event in Vancouver, the team looks for opportunities to gift attendees with personalized gifts and memorable hand-written notes.

The list of duties and accomplishments goes on, though beyond Havers' role as a marketing manager, she was also a trainer, change manager for technology solutions and event planner. Before her departure, she was serving on the internal brand advisory committee for the Vancouver destination brand project, and the rebrand of its network partnership conference ambassador program. Plus, Havers spent several years managing the British Columbia Institute of Technology's (BCIT) Practicum Student work placement program for the meetings and conventions department at Tourism Vancouver – a role which she admits was "always a rewarding experience."



POST-SECONDARY:

Bachelor of Commerce, Entrepreneurship, Marketing & Finance, Royal Roads University

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Sales & Marketing Coordinator, Meetings & Conventions, Tourism Vancouver

CURRENT JOB:

Taking a one-year career break to travel

Why does she make time for these extracurricular initiatives?

"Why not?," she says. "When you live and work in one of the best places on earth, it's rewarding to give back to the organizations that make it so. I have all the time in the world for community and arts events and environmental efforts."

As for what values she holds paramount on a professional basis, Havers lists three: creativity, resourcefulness and dependability.

"I think the first two go hand in hand and I aim to never simply take the path of least resistance when faced with a challenge," she explains. "Dependability is a value that I admire in colleagues and when teams can truly rely on each other, that's where the magic happens." ■

Adam Hodge, Goway Travel • BY MEGAN HONAN

Adam Hodge is a big believer in the transformative power of travel. Maybe that's why he's so set on helping shape the next generation of travel professionals. Travel, in his eyes, is not simply an interest, but a way of life.



POST-SECONDARY:
Bachelor of Commerce,
Hospitality & Tourism
Management, Ryerson University
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Odd Jobs, Goway Travel
CURRENT JOB:
Marketing Manager,
Goway Travel

Some might say travel literally runs through Hodge's veins. His father, Bruce Hodge, founded Goway Travel back in 1970. Today, the company offers exclusive, small-group tours, promising 'something special.' Hodge grew up travelling with his family and always knew the industry was his calling. So, when the time came for post-secondary studies, he enrolled at Ryerson for Hospitality and Tourism Management.

It wasn't long after graduating before the siren call of travel took its permanent hold. Hodge spent a large part of his twenties backpacking across the world and finding ways to work within the travel industry whenever and wherever possible.

"Whenever I had summers off or I took a semester off, I would be backpacking. I worked for family friends overseas, like in Namibia for a safari company, and in Australia for a cruise company," he says. "It was really formative."

The backpacking didn't end there, though. After graduating, he spent time in Europe as a tour guide and an entire year travelling across Asia on the cheap. Hodge has earned the title of "well-travelled," visiting more than 50 countries throughout his young life.

Since 2010, Hodge has been a permanent member of the Goway team. He started off in sales as a travel agent but quickly found his niche in marketing. Today, he is the marketing manager for the company and couldn't imagine doing anything else. If you ask him what a typical day looks like, he'll tell you there is nothing typical about his days. "I'm kind of involved in everything," Hodge says. "Right now we're producing two brochures, we just produced a print magazine and are focusing on big projects. We have a new CRM we're integrating as a company called Salesforce. It's always changing, really."

Hodge has earned the title of “well-travelled,” visiting more than 50 countries throughout his young life.

He acknowledges the projects in passing, but judging by the words of his nominator, Hodge might be a bit modest. “As Adam’s star rises, so does Goway’s,” the nomination reads. “Under his guidance, the company has custom-designed two travel blogs that attract tens of thousands of monthly readers. During Adam’s tenure, Goway has also re-designed the print edition of Globetrotting Magazine and greatly expanded the company’s online presence. As well, under Adam’s leadership, the marketing department has grown in size and responsibility and he now handles all the company’s marketing needs with a team of professional designers, writers and coordinators. He is also the driving force behind a multi-year brand review that aims at reinvigorating Goway’s branding and design for the years to come.”

In his spare time (which is few and

far between), Hodge is a team member of Toronto’s Young Travel Professionals (YTP). The YTP group helps cultivate the future of the travel and hospitality industry through a community of young travel professionals, united by their dedication and love for seeing the world. Hodge helped launch the YTP Toronto chapter and remains active in the community as the digital content editor.

“I’m quite sure that I’ll be in the travel industry for some time. It’s our industry and we, as young people, get to decide its future. I think it’s interesting to imagine what it’ll be like with this generational shift. The largest group in our industry are in their fifties and sixties. It’s not just passing an industry to someone a few years younger, but you know, literally a generation or two behind them,” he tells us.

Through speaking with Hodge, it’s clear that he himself has that special kind

of talent and persistence in seeking new perspectives. When asked what makes him special, he’s left without an answer. But when asked why he loves his job, his answer is this:

“I think all in all, working in travel allows me to feel quite connected to the world around me. Where when you see hurricanes or events happen overseas, stuff in the news that affects the travel industry, it affects you. You may have been there before or work directly with companies in affected areas. It tugs at you in a different way. It’s a connection.”

In the next few years, you’ll still be able to find Hodge making a name for himself in the travel industry. More than that, you’ll find him on a mission to shape it.

“I do really like the marketing side of travel. I do actually think there’s a lot of work to be done and I think I’ve got more than enough to keep my hands full.” ■

GOWAY CONGRATULATES INDUSTRY LEADERS



Goway Travel is proud to see General Manager of Marketing, **Adam Hodge**, and General Manager of Goway’s Islands Division, **Bronwyn Hodge** included in the prestigious Canadian Traveller’s Top 40 under 40 list for 2018, recognizing leadership, initiative, and young talent in Canada’s travel industry.

We’re thrilled to see our young leaders take Goway’s tradition of innovation into the future.

CONGRATULATIONS
ADAM & BRONWYN!

40 UNDER 40
PRESENTED BY CANADIAN TRAVELLER

Goway 

Bronwyn Hodge, Goway Travel • BY DAVID LAO

It was nearly 17 years ago when Bronwyn Hodge started her first job at Goway Travel, where she was tasked with jobs like putting together brochures and working at the reception desk. It was the type of role that almost any child born into a family business can relate to, though at the time, it wasn't known for sure whether or not she'd be building a future with the company that her father, Bruce, established more than five decades ago.

"I got into travel at a young age, working odd jobs as a kid in the mailroom and things like that," she reminisces. But it was in actually travelling that really piqued her interest in the industry overall, which she did frequently with her family and later, independently.

Whilst completing her Bachelor's degree at Queens University, Hodge was able to gain work experience while travelling the world. She landed an internship at TravelCuts and also worked as housekeeper at a resort in the Australian Whitsunday Islands (which, she'll tell you, was the hardest job she's ever had).

Hodge's first stint in the industry upon graduating was as a travel consultant at Flight Centre in Sydney, Australia, and after two years there, she moved back to Canada – and back to Goway.

Since then, Hodge has accrued experience working in the various departments throughout the company – in accounting, sales and even product management. At one point, she embarked on a three-month sabbatical to backpack through Asia, and later returned to Goway in the position of general manager, Islands.

Under her leadership, the Islands department has seen revenue nearly double in the last two years, "and we are on track for another successful year in 2018," she says.

But there's more to it than that; Hodge's impact on the business is far greater than she lets on, according to the nomination that led to her place on *Canadian Traveller's* list of "Top 40 Under 40."

"In the past four years as general manager, Bronwyn has raised the profile of Goway's Island Division by appearing in a series of videos in partnership with Tahiti Tourism and Air Tahiti Nui, extending Goway's reach while also demonstrating her personable approach to sales and service. She has also collaborated with Cook Islands Tourism and USTOA on their new 2018 campaign, 'Why We Travel,' testifying to the transformative power of travel,"

her colleague writes in the nomination. "Bronwyn has also greatly expanded the scope and efficiency of her division. She has improved the training of internal staff and agents, expanded the product line and reservation team, and introduced more incentives and rewards to ensure that her team remains competitive and attracts the best professionals for the job. She has worked tirelessly to deliver competitive pricing, train and support the travel agent community, and innovate the marketing and design of Goway's Islands products."

Still, Hodge is quick to share the credit. "I believe a leader is only as good as their team, and I feel my greatest accomplishment is the ability to build a team of motivated and talented people that I work alongside," she says. "Travel agents currently rate their booking experience with Goway's Islands team at 89 per cent for overall service, product and destination knowledge."

Plus, Hodge played a key role in establishing Goway's recently-created Annual Awards, which celebrate individual achievements within the company.

No doubt, she's inherited some of her business savvy and knack for positive, productive leadership from her father, who remains one of her biggest sources of inspiration.

"He still works at Goway and is driving the company to the next level, so he definitely is an inspiration for all of us in a way to continue on that legacy," she says. It's perhaps from him that she learned the value of integrity, which she takes seriously on both personal and professional levels.

Her work involves a lot of collaboration, she says, particularly with the sales department, marketing team and product managers. Day to day tasks include developing new product, marketing that product, and organizing and participating in various conferences and events.

POST-SECONDARY:
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology,
Queen's University
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Odd Jobs, Goway Travel
CURRENT JOB:
General Manager,
Islands at Goway Travel



Relationships are important in this industry, too, Hodge says, though she's now taking some time to focus on those at home with the birth of her first child. But you can count on her making a return to Goway, she says, where she looks forward to taking on a new management role at the company and continuing to play a role in its future. ■

Lisa Israelovitch, Umapped • BY DENISE HEFFRON

As luck would have it, Lisa Israelovitch, CEO and co-founder of Umapped, met her business partner at her wedding; today, both the marriage and the business are thriving. Perhaps though, luck wasn't a factor at all for this determined and dynamic entrepreneur. When something is important to Israelovitch, she's all in, in all ways.

Umapped is an itinerary technology platform to behold – a game-changer for the travel industry. It's innovative, cutting-edge technology provides a collaborative trip experience that quite simply, "exists to help enable travel professionals," Israelovitch says. It is designed to aid business growth, boost efficiency, increase revenue and allow travel sellers to stay connected to their customer throughout the entire journey – pre, during and post travel. Of course, the travelling public benefits in a big way as well. Out are the static, cumbersome stacks of paper; in are the tools of today – real-time updates, curated content and mobile messaging.

Prior to entering the world of tech and travel, Israelovitch spent a year studying overseas at Tel Aviv University before continuing her education back in Canada. Here, she attended the University of Western Ontario where she minored in psychology and earned an honors degree in business administration in 2002 from the prestigious Richard Ivey School of Business.

Putting her background in business to work, Israelovitch secured a position with Intrawest as part of the team at The Village People, an internal consulting division and braintrust of the corporation. This unique opportunity allowed her to participate in a startup within a public company. More startups were to follow, including Live Work Learn Play in 2005, a development and consulting company that she launched with one of her mentors.

In 2013, Israelovitch's entrepreneurial drive plus keen interest in innovation and travel inspired her to co-found Umapped with partner, Thierry Wong. "I love growing business," she explains, "and I had a vision for Umapped – to enrich the traveller journey with cutting-edge, intuitive technology." Describing Umapped as "truly collaborative," she emphasizes, "we need this – it's no longer something nice to have, but rather a necessity."

"Have big dreams and grow into them." This is a maxim her mother impressed upon her at a young age and something that still resonates today. When explaining her view of entrepreneurship, Israelovitch tells us: "I am growing into my dreams. It's about always getting traction along the way. You can't really teach entrepreneurship – it's not usually a home run that makes companies great. I focus on hitting singles."

Indeed, Umapped has been hitting a lot of singles. Since its inception, the company has steadily gained momentum and recognition. Shortly after launching, Israelovitch was the recipient of the Stephen Bronfman Foundation award for Emerging Entrepreneurs in Montreal and a winner in The Quebec Entrepreneur Program. In addition, the company has been recognized by heavyweights Phocuswright and Sabre and earlier this year, was selected by Plug and Play Ventures to participate in its travel and hospitality accelerator.

She is quick to point out that the accolades are meaningful to her in that they recognize the entire group's efforts. "It means we've done something well; that Umapped is creating a positive impact," she comments. "I am thankful for the team, and I credit the team." Today, the Toronto-based company is home to 16 employees, with others coming in and out for projects. Impressively, the company boasts retail giants Virtuoso and Ensemble as clients.

She counts on her family for support and explains that she and husband Rob are "equal parents." Her mom helps too, and because of this strong network, Israelovitch can work, travel, and carve out some time to get involved in her daughter's school and community initiatives. When asked for the one word that describes her best, she offers "" – grateful to her family and "incredible" team."

In a world that is highly competitive and notoriously male-dominated, Israelovitch's star continues to rise. Navigating this world isn't always simple, she admits:

"The gender gap is still very real, but I am seeing more and more female founders, entrepreneurs and investment... I believe great companies need great women at the table, at the top and we are seeing this more and more."

Since her wedding day, Israelovitch has been setting both the travel and tech worlds on fire. She's also happily raising her two young daughters Jade and Cammy. It's no small task, but for Israelovitch, her approach to work-life balance is a holistic one. She explains, "I think being a mom of two has made me even more ambitious – I want to have an impact and make the work I do really matter."

As Israelovitch continues to grow into her dreams, there is no doubt that the travel and tech industries will watch with great interest, and of course, cheer on each and every single she hits along the way. ■



POST-SECONDARY:
Business Administration,
University of Western
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Co-Founder, Umapped
CURRENT JOB:
CEO & Co-founder,
Umapped

Jen Langlois, Suite Trip Travel • BY CANDICE WALSH

It never really stops for Jen Langlois, the owner of Suite Trip Travel based in Thorold, Ontario.

Priding herself on having built a strong customer service-focussed operation, Suite Trip Travel is one of the few members of Travel Professionals International (TPI) to have an actual storefront. Langlois' business specializes in Caribbean destinations – everywhere from Antigua to Cuba to Panama.

"My days are chaos!" she says. "I do everything; I'm a travel agent, so I'm always here during the day. Our office is open Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and I'm always answering phones, writing e-mails, giving price quotes and making bookings."

While Langlois doesn't manage a team, she does work with other agents who are home-based. In fact, it is in part her collaborative spirit that earned her a nomination for *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40" recognition.

"Jen is a successful business woman and has the grit to take her company where ever she wants to go," reads the nomination. "Jen shares her expertise and best practices with her fellow advisors to help others succeed as well... She believes in providing her clients with exceptional service. Her attention to detail and focus on 'getting it right the first time,' I believe, is the driving force behind her success."

Certainly, this strategy is not employed by accident; Langlois confirms that her priority is giving clients the highest quality service possible, which seems to be paying off – repeat clients are not unusual for Suite Trip Travel.

"I always give the best service possible, which is why I think we get so many referrals and so many clients coming back to us," Langlois says. "I base my whole business on referrals. We don't advertise or do any kind of promotions."

Having superb organizational skills is also essential to how Langlois runs her business, she says. "If you're not organized, there's no way you could possibly keep up. Everyone always tells me that they don't know how I keep up with it all. You have to be organized; you have to keep yourself in line with not getting distracted during the day. You have to keep organized files."

Those skills are something that Langlois has perfected over her years as a travel advisor, though she calls her path to get here "kind of random."

At 19-years-old, she started researching careers that might interest her and she came across a two-year program to study business and sales marketing at Niagara College. For her internship, she reached out to a friend who was working as a travel agent for Lakeview Travel and asked if she could join the team. "I thought it might be interesting, and then I never left."

Travel has become a big part of Langlois's life since then, and nowadays, she travels with her husband for up to six weeks a year. "We have been taking a lot of really cool vacations over the last couple of years," she says. "We did Africa, Southeast Asia, Tahiti – we've done a lot of big trips in preparation for having kids."

She has also made a name for herself in the industry, garnering several prestigious awards over the years, including Travel Agent of the Year from the Caribbean Tourism Organization which recognized her achievements as a top producing travel agent with a commitment to developing Caribbean tourism, plus her sales are repeatedly recognized among the best in Canada with major hoteliers in the region.

As for Suite Trip Travel's future: well, things are about to get a whole lot more exciting for Langlois and her husband.

"We're having a baby in November, so everything is going to change," she says. "I'm still trying to figure out how I'm going to juggle all that, and it's definitely going to change the dynamic of everything and my ability to be working all the time."

Although she doesn't plan on expanding or growing the business for the next little while, she's determined to keep up with work and everything she has built so far. With her work ethic and organization skills, she'll no doubt be able to pull it off. ■

POST-SECONDARY:
Business & Sales Marketing,
Niagara College
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Intern, Lakeview Travel
CURRENT JOB:
Owner & Travel Advisor,
Suite Trip Travel - TPI



Kylik Kisoun Taylor, Tundra North Tours • BY DOUG O'NEILL

Kylik Kisoun Taylor's passion for the North is palpable when he speaks: "The Arctic has such raw power. Everything is so big here and untouched. People are longing for that. The 'great adventure' for a lot of people is going north. My family has been up here for generations and generations," he says. "My connection to this place, especially around the Beaufort Delta, is pretty deep. It's the Inuit culture, it's the lands, it's the animals. It's the sense of community. I think the world needs to see this way of life, to see just how beautiful it is."

Getting the world to "see this way of life" is what drives Taylor on a daily basis as owner-operator of Tundra North Tours, which he launched in 2006 with the mentorship of local elders and family members.

Taylor, who's of European, Gwich'in and Inuvialuit descent, was born in Inuvik but grew up in Northern Ontario. He was 16-years-old when he returned to Inuvik to spend time with his mother and his Northern family.

Tundra North Tours is based in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. That's where Taylor and a handful of seasonal staff aim to "give visitors to the Arctic an experience of a lifetime," whether it's a tour of Inuvik, a boat or flight tour to Tuktoyaktuk, or a drive down the famous Dempster Highway to the Arctic Circle. But the tours, as Taylor envisioned them from the outset, are not designed to be look-and-see outings: "I spent a lot of time talking to elders and realized that I didn't want to lead half-day trips in groups of 40. Anyone can build a fishing lodge, anyone can lead canoe trips or boat excursions, but only we can tell our story authentically."

And it's this approach that has garnered him recognition, Canada-wide. "Kylik is the next generation of Northerners, marrying old-world traditions with modern day business savvy," says his nominator. "Since 2006 he has been bringing awareness and benefit to his culture and community through tourism, film and media. Having created the only Indigenous-owned and operated Canadian Signature Experience in the north, he is well on his way to creating change in the tourism industry."

But being such an influencer was never quite part of the plan. Taylor was in his teens when he decided that tourism would be a viable path to follow – but he had no plans whatsoever of starting

his own company. He was working part-time in a friend's travel agency in Inuvik, doing administration work and odd jobs, but then a couple things happened: A group of Chinese tourists came into his workplace one day asking for help. Their pre-booked Arctic plane excursion had been cancelled at the last minute, leaving them with no options. "The travel agency where I worked wasn't a tour operator so I did some fast thinking," Taylor says. "I don't know where I got the savvy to do what I did but I just jumped in: I found a pilot who'd fly these visitors further north. I located a couple taxis that would escort them around. I even called my grandfather and asked to borrow his boat so they could have an excursion on the water."

"And the best part of the story," recalls Taylor laughingly, "I was just a teenager with no credit cards. I didn't even have my own e-mail address. I collected money from the tourists and paid the pilots and the drivers with envelopes stuffed full of cash. I just wanted to ensure that everyone got paid!"

As his "sideline business" grew, Taylor began to attract more attention from his local community as well as tourism officials. "I guess people liked what I was doing," he admits. A government program provided the budding entrepreneur with some funding and also supported his application for a bank loan that enabled him to start his very own travel company.

When not putting in 80-hour weeks at Tundra North Tours and spending time with his young daughter, Taylor is busy promoting Indigenous tourism and contributing to local cultural projects like the annual Sunrise Festival. He's on the Indigenous Tourism Board of Canada, and was one of the two dozen Canadian tourism delegates who travelled to China on the recent trade mission to promote travel to Canada from Asia.



**FIRST JOB
IN TOURISM:**
Administration,
Rapid Travel
CURRENT JOB:
Owner & Guide,
Tundra North Tours

"It's a ridiculous amount of work but I can't imagine doing anything else," Taylor says. "I love my Indigenous culture and I feel that Indigenous-based tourism benefits everybody. Not only does it create jobs, but everybody who comes up here and sees our way of life and experiences our lifestyle goes back home with a better understanding of our culture and who we are as a people." ■

Dave Laveau, Quebec Aboriginal Tourism • BY DOUG O'NEILL

"I'm proud to be First Nations. I'm 37 years old and each day I wake up, I'm conscious of the pride I have in my Indigenous heritage – but that's not something my grandfather could always say," recalls Dave Laveau, executive director of the Quebec Aboriginal Tourism (QAT).

"Life was different for my grandfather," Laveau says. "I know that he wasn't always comfortable to tell people about his First Nations background. It's only two generations later but my experience today is so different from his time."

Laveau, who's also vice-chair and founding member of the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, believes that a lot has changed over the years; he believes there's a greater understanding of Indigenous culture – a shift that he credits, in part, to tourism, which he calls "a tool for creating bridges, for helping to build relationships, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people."

Building relationships and forging strong connections between various groups and diverse communities has been at the heart of Laveau's entire career in tourism – a career that was nowhere on his radar when he completed his degree in political science in the early 2000s: "I don't think I knew what tourism marketing was when I was fresh out of school."

Laveau, who's been in his current role at Quebec Aboriginal Tourism – the oldest Indigenous tourism organization in Canada – since 2010, says he relied heavily on industry mentors to teach him about tourism marketing when he stepped into his first industry job at Wendake Tourism in 2007. The relationship-building side of his job, however, has always been second nature to Laveau.

"I often tell people that it's in our First Nations DNA to interact with people," he says. "We did that long ago with the French and the English. It's one of the most important parts of my job. There are so many groups involved in Aboriginal tourism."

The QAT's official mission is: "To offer to the 220 Indigenous entrepreneurs of Quebec that are involved in the tourism industry a representing body that aims to defend their interests and stimulate their development while offering them a range of products and services fostering the development of their businesses." That's a challenging mandate, but one Laveau has embraced wholeheartedly.

Visitors to Quebec have the opportunity to learn about First Nations heritage through a variety of experiences, such as the two-day "Among the Hurons" experience with the Huron-Wendat First Nation community and the four-day "Wachiya – Hello in Cree" experience in Eeyou Itseeche Baie-James. "None of these would be possible without people meeting, creating and working together," Laveau says.

Under his leadership, the QAT has established key partnerships with such entities as Parks Canada, Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (SÉPAQ, the provincial park authority), the influential National Geographic GEO magazine and Air Canada: "We've also nurtured relationships on the local level. For instance, in Quebec City we've held food festivals which Indigenous food producers partner with non-Indigenous restaurant owners to educate people about First Nations cuisine. Five years ago, many of these people didn't even know of each other."

Laveau's strategic and inclusive initiatives have resulted in a 158 per cent increase in the association's membership, and the overall budget has tripled since he was appointed to the lead role. It's estimated that QAT connects with 1.2 million visitors each year, sustaining approximately 3,500 jobs – and generating an estimated \$169 million in economic benefits.

In 2017, Laveau joined the board of Destination Canada, becoming the first Indigenous person to hold such a position with the Crown Corporation. He's also been an effective ambassador on the world stage. Just last year, he spoke at the Sorbonne University in Paris.

"Tourism in Canada has its challenges, of course," Laveau admits. "Many seasonal enterprises find it hard to retain staff, for instance. And for many of our Indigenous experiences in more remote parts of Canada, there's the high cost of air transportation." But he's optimistic – especially in Quebec, where he's witnessed "a huge leap in the numbers of Indigenous youth who are opting to study tourism."

POST-SECONDARY:

Political Science,
Laval University

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Marketing Coordinator,
Tourism Wendake

CURRENT JOB:

Executive Director, Quebec
Aboriginal Tourism



Laveau's own future? "I love the relationship-building part of my role, which is something I can apply in other areas, quite likely politics one day." In the short-term, he is playing an instrumental role in the creation of a \$60-million Indigenous cultural and tourism embassy in the old port of Montreal, which was announced on National Indigenous Peoples Day in June 2018. "This will be a high-quality experience in the heart of a large urban centre that showcases the beauty of our Indigenous culture."

For Laveau, it always comes back to partnerships and relationships. "When two people of different backgrounds connect and learn about each other, there's always a positive result," he says. "That's what drives me." ■

Benjamin Leblanc, Iron Kettle Bed & Breakfast • BY MEGAN HONAN

Nestled in the tiny town of Comber, Ontario, lies a stately, 1876 manor with whimsical arched windows and a Southern-style front porch. The Iron Kettle Bed and Breakfast has become a premier fixture in the town, with its historic nature and indescribable charm, but it's the chef and innkeeper that has people flocking.

With today's headlines splashed across the front page of newspapers titled, "A generation of innkeepers hit retirement age," and "Where did all the innkeepers go?" it doesn't take long to see the high turnover of baby-boomers who took on Bed and Breakfasts as the last stop before retirement. Now, they're handing over the keys to a new generation – those like Benjamin Leblanc-Beaudoin – who are bringing a new meaning to the words "host" and "home."

When working as a part-time front desk agent for The Westin Ottawa, Leblanc-Beaudoin found he loved interacting with customers and making them feel at home. But what he didn't expect was the overwhelming urge to pursue the travel industry as a career path. He decided to leave university and enrolled in the Culinary Arts program at La Cite Collegiale. From there, he set out to explore more of the world and add travel experience to his resume. He stepped onto the international stage at Le Violon D'Ingres Paris, a Michelin-Star restaurant, and never looked back.

However, he never intended to become an innkeeper. That is, until the universe seemed to conspire in his favour. In July 2013, Leblanc-Beaudoin and his newly wedded wife, Ginette Tremblay, spent their wedding night at a B&B – but not just any B&B. It was The Iron Kettle. After falling in love with the property, they discovered it was for sale. By April 2014, they officially called it home.

When you stay with Leblanc-Beaudoin, you can expect to be treated like family. While he strives to be a good tourism partner for his region and a local food enthusiast, he ultimately would describe himself as a family man.

"I have a two-year-old son and a wife. Everything I do is for them. We have a very personal business, as people come into our home as a getaway. Also, all of our staff is family," he says. "What's great about that is we're able to instill our values into our business practice through them."



POST-SECONDARY:
Certificate in Culinary Arts,
La Cite Collegiale
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Front Desk Agent,
The Westin Ottawa
CURRENT JOB:
Owner, The Iron Kettle Bed
and Breakfast

"It's hard to do it on your own in the tourism world. It can be kind of lonely out there trying to settle down and grow up. With my wife being my business partner, we do everything together and that's what makes me successful."

As The Iron Kettle Bed and Breakfast continues to grow, everyone is eager to share their dreams for the future of the B&B. "It's been a challenge to just stick to our vision; just to say as a business owner, 'No, this is what we do.' I've been pretty stubborn about our vision. We're sticking to it," Leblanc-Beaudoin says.

In the next five years, this entrepreneur has big plans for his little town and growing business. With the purchase of a new building just down the road from the B&B, his dream of owning a restaurant is coming to fruition.

"We just purchased that last month. It's super exciting, but it's scary because it's all I want to do right now," he tells us. "I want to get in there and paint and stuff, but we're going to take it slow and do it right."

Taking it slow is exactly what has helped Leblanc-Beaudoin conjure up one over-arching goal in his mind. "I knew I wanted to make this business in our very small town of about 600 people. I set out when starting this business to put my town on the map. That's kinda my thing."

It's clear that with Leblanc-Beaudoin leading the pack, the future of innkeepers is in good hands. If you want to discover more about the town of Comber, how to cook a solid rack of lamb or require a book recommendation, you'll know where to find Leblanc-Beaudoin: at the B&B, with the kettle on. ■

Ruida Lu, Tourism Toronto • BY OLIVIA LITTLE

For five years, Tourism Toronto had been actively developing a bid in hopes of hosting the largest Chinese delegation to ever visit Canada. It's been a challenge to make it happen, but finally, the deal is done; the city is set to host an estimated 10,000 visitors with Amway China and its top distributors in 2020.

It's in part thanks to Ruida Lu, who joined the destination marketing organization last year and devised an innovative incentive plan to woo the decision makers. Perhaps all in a day's work for the manager of business events sales and service – China, as he focuses on bringing new business to his city.

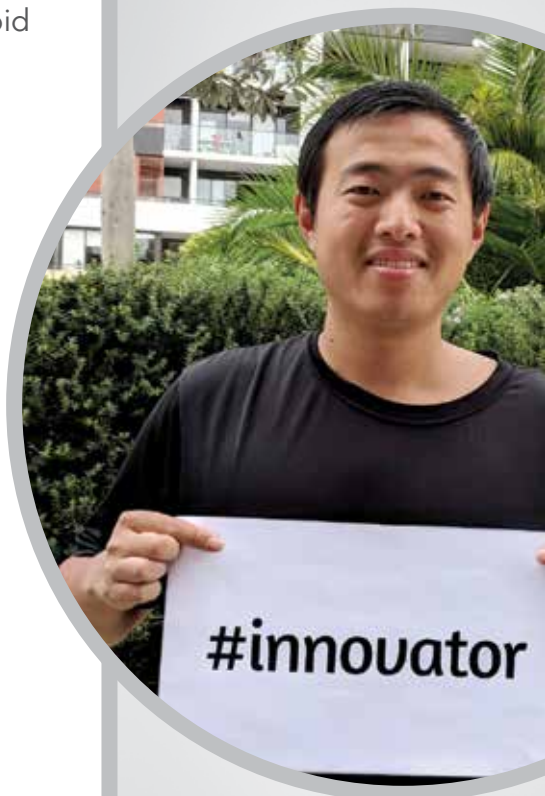
Having won the Amway bid against some of the biggest destinations in the world is a huge accomplishment for Tourism Toronto, and for Lu. It is expected to bring \$80 million in spending to the city, showcasing Toronto's global force in the tourism industry.

"Our mission is growing the visitor economy for Toronto," Lu says. "It's

rewarding seeing the groups come and boost so many different parts of the travel industry with transportation, hotels, restaurants, attractions and just knowing that you're a part of getting the industry accelerated."

It's in connecting Toronto with the rest of the world that Lu has found his groove, always eager to show-off the city to people he knows will then become ambassadors in their home country.

"You're building a strong bond between two nations through a unique, one-of-a-kind experience, and you know those travellers are leaving Toronto with memories that will last a lifetime. That's what matters," Lu says. "They've



POST-SECONDARY:

International Bachelor of Business Administration, York University

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Rob MacIsaac
Innovation Fellow, UP Express

CURRENT JOB:

Manager, Business Events
Sales & Service – Asia/China,
Tourism Toronto

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You're building a strong bond between two nations through a unique, one-of-a-kind experience, and you know those travellers are leaving Toronto with memories that will last a lifetime.

experienced Canada, they've contributed to our economy; it's really a win-win situation."

The 27-year-old already has an impressive CV, having worked in rail, travel retail, and now, the tourism board space. He began his career in the industry with UP Express as the first non-graduate student ever named a Rob MacIsaac Innovation Fellow. In his role on the business development team, Lu led the integration initiatives on interline ticketing and customer service with VIA Rail Canada, and because of his accomplishments, was shortlisted as a finalist for Metrolinx's 2015 Linx Award for delivering excellent and innovative service to B2B partners.

Further, Lu is the lead of product and partnerships at a start-up online travel agency, sits on Toronto Transit Commission's Customer Liaison Panel, is a member of the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), and also obtained the Certified Incentive Specialist (CIS) certification in 2017. Not to mention, he also holds travel counsellor and supervisor/manager certification from TICO.

Lu first got into the travel industry after participating in a few exchange programs during his time at York

University's Schulich School of Business, where he earned his International Bachelor of Business Administration (IBBA). An internship then took him to Uganda one summer, helping villagers start their own businesses. This involved educating, training and providing them with the necessary tools so that their businesses would thrive, he explains. He then found a placement in Netherlands during his third year of post-secondary studies and went on to travel extensively, visiting 19 countries in just six months.

But Lu calls Toronto home and he's certainly proud of his city.

"Sometimes it's not about the big things that make us famous on the world stage," he says. "It's about the little interactions that each visitor has here, when they eat that delicious peameal sandwich at St. Lawrence Market or get scared on the CN Tower EdgeWalk. Those are the small moments that will live with them forever."

He believes both Toronto and Canada deserve more recognition and attention, which is starting to happen thanks to efforts by both Tourism Toronto and other tourism offices from coast to coast.

"It's about showcasing a great country and a great city to visitors who have never been here," Lu says. "It's a great pleasure for me to be a part of the mission; to show them this is the place I call home and this is how great my home is." ■

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Ryan McElroy, Travel Agency Tribes • BY LIZ FLEMING

If you ask Ryan McElroy, CEO of Travel Agency Tribes, what he sees as the next big trend in travel, you might be surprised by his answer.

"What I really see is that people are going to start changing their focus to value moments over things," he says. "I think we're soon going to see a generation that wants to get off social media more often to go out and actually experience travel."

It's a hopeful theory and one you might not expect from a guy who's built an empire on the power of social media. Surprisingly, the more he talks about it, the more it begins to make sense: McElroy believes in the experiential power of travel; he just believes that the best way to share that belief – and inspire others to share it – is in the digital world.

We could stretch the point and say that McElroy's career in the world of tourism and hospitality began in 2000, when he worked for a year at the Holiday Inn Select, or even during his three years as a bartender at Second City Pearson International Airport, but those were simply jobs that provided him with the background in customer service that he needed.

Six years with Collette (during which he was made a member of the prestigious President's Club) made for the serious training ground that he needed for what lay ahead – and provided him with the 'aha' moment that changed the course of his career.

McElroy, who describes himself as "an entrepreneur through and through," worked closely with travel agencies during his Collette years, which provided both the insights and the epiphany he needed. Dedicated travel agents, he realized, were entirely focused on serving their customers, helping them with flights, bookings and tour plans and that left no time for the crucial task of self-promotion and online communication.

"Technology makes all kinds of things possible but only if you have the time to put it to work for you," he explains.

The travel agents he worked with at Collette provided the perfect test case.

"I could see that those travel professionals knew they needed to update to more powerful websites... They needed to put out regular e-newsletters and they needed to develop a powerful online presence. They were just so busy working with their clients that they didn't have the time to do it themselves."

That realization was the 'aha' that led McElroy to co-found Travel Agency Tribes in April of 2011, a dynamic company created to meet the digital and technological needs of travel agencies.

"Ryan has taken our industry by storm and is providing both suppliers and retailers with a proprietary technology package that drives customers in doors and also offers excellent content via a number of methods," says the original "Top 40 Under 40" nomination for McElroy. "He never stands still and is always looking at improvements and different ways to change the industry and keep it moving."

Case and point is the mission of Travel Agency Tribes. "What we provide is a service that allows those professionals to concentrate on what they do best – making dreams come true for their clients," he says. "My associates and I take care of their digital presence, ensuring that their messaging and their online presence is entirely consistent with their brand."

McElroy says that what he loves most about the travel industry is that there's never a dull day, and never a time when something interesting isn't happening. He and his associates at Travel Agency Tribes prides itself on staying on top of that ever-changing, shifting world so they're aware of the latest developments; they take that knowledge and spin it into exciting new opportunities for travel professionals.

As he says, when you know what people are thinking and talking about in the world of travel, "you can really make your brand stand out."

An avid traveller himself, McElroy's favourite destination so far has been Innsbruck, Austria.

POST-SECONDARY:
Hospitality & Tourism
Management, Humber College
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
District Sales Manager, Collette
CURRENT JOB:
CEO, Travel Agency Tribes



But he's a man who's open to a whole world of travel experiences, so it isn't surprising that what tops his current must-see list is a place that couldn't be any more different from Austria. McElroy's dream travel plan is to explore India. "It's a destination that seems to offer a bit of everything and I'm really looking forward to experiencing it all," he says.

A really great tour of India is something McElroy recognizes he'll want help to plan, but he has no worries about knowing where to find the expertise he'll need. "When I go, there'll be a lot of pieces but luckily, I know a whole lot of great travel agents who can help me put it all together." ■

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and all nominees.

CANADIAN
Traveller

Jason Merrithew, Merit Travel Group • BY DENISE HEFFRON

Jason Merrithew can't precisely remember what his first job was, but he believes that it was either stuffing ticket wallets, delivering tickets, or manning the front desk reception at Merit Travel. He grew up in the industry, spending his summers working at the successful travel enterprise built by his parents, Michael and Louise. One of his favourite summer duties involved helping out with golf tournaments by running hole in one contests and promoting the Merit brand. Not bad as far as summer jobs go, but it was just that – a summer job – and a career in travel wasn't always in the cards.

Upon completing a degree in politics at Queen's University, Merrithew had a view to working in the world of finance. Back in Toronto, he began to search for opportunities and while doing so, continued to help out at Merit. Eventually, he committed to staying for one year to onboard a new client and see the project through to completion.

Of course, life doesn't always turn out as planned and before long he was on the full-time staff, first as marketing manager for the student specialty brand, travelcuts. Perhaps this path was inevitable. "It's in my blood," he admits, though points out that it was his choice to join the team – there was no pressure from the parents, and in fact, he is the only child of three that works in the family business.

As the company grew, so did Merrithew's responsibilities and in 2014, he moved into the role of vice-president, Merit Travel Group, which allowed him to dive deeper into the company and the world of travel. In this senior position, he honed his business development skills and took the lead on supplier relations, a daunting task for even the most seasoned travel professionals. Fortunately, he wasn't deterred.

Merit Travel and Merrithew continued to flourish in tandem and in 2017, he was appointed to the role of president. He now oversees the organization's flagship brand, tasked with growing the leisure travel business in Canada and leading the international expansion of the leisure travel brands. This challenging role includes overseeing 190 employees, though Merrithew is the first to admit that he can't do it all himself. He is a trusting manager that believes in hiring top talent and empowering his capable team. "Surround yourself with people who have skills

that you don't have and acknowledge your weaknesses," he advises. "Build a team that will deliver."

That mindset is one commonly associated with great leaders, which is what Merrithew is recognized to be by his nominator, who says his leadership, his value for education and his innovative practices are among reasons he is deserving of a "Top 40 Under 40" title. "When it comes to the future of travel, Jason Merrithew is leading the charge," the nomination reads.

And given his experience and his role, it's no surprise that Merrithew is a champion for the agent community; he believes that travel agents possess transformative powers. Elevating the travel experience is a preoccupation of Merrithew's, and his enthusiasm on the topic is palpable. He describes himself as an "advocate for the evolution of the industry" and believes that both travel agents and technology play a critical role. The real secret sauce for Merrithew is when travel and tech work together. "You can't see something as a tool if you are afraid of it. We need to change the conversation, break new ground and keep looking forward," he explains. "Our clients use technology and agents need to understand technology and be a part of that process – tech can be an incredible resource. We need to embrace tools that make us better, faster and let us interact with clients in a new way – in the platforms that our clients want to be engaged in."

In July of this year, Merit founders Louise de Grandpre and Michael Merrithew announced their intention to leave Merit and enjoy some well-deserved time off, but the younger Merrithew plans to stay on to continue growing the successful business that his parents invested 27 years in creating. He says, "I feel a responsibility; my career is my focus right now."



POST-SECONDARY:

Bachelor of Arts,
Political Studies,
Queen's University

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Odd Jobs, Merit Travel

CURRENT JOB:

President, Merit
Travel Group

While he tends to log long hours these days, it's not all work and no play. Merrithew is enjoying life with wife Maegan and travels when his schedule permits. He is also an avid skier and golfer, but his dream vacation involves neither. When asked what his bucket list trip would be, he had only one word to say. "Gorillas." It's his dream to visit Rwanda or Uganda and see the gorillas. Fortunately for him, a Merit travel professional can make this dream come true. After all, unforgettable travel experiences are Merit's specialty. ■



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Ryan Mikucki, Travel Agency Tribes • BY DENISE HEFFRON

In his first year of university, Ryan Mikucki was exploring the idea of becoming a chiropractor and as a program pre-requisite, he enrolled in a course called Introduction to Leisure Travel; this course changed everything. He quickly switched gears, and in 2006 he graduated from the University of Manitoba with a degree in Recreation Management and Community Development.

Industry mainstay and guided tour company Collette gave Mikucki his first shot in the business. He says he was “lucky” to land the position of business development manager for Manitoba-Saskatchewan but his numerous achievements and upward trajectory within the organization would indicate that Collette too, was lucky.

For 10 years, Collette was his home and during this time, Mikucki won award upon award for sales achievement, relocated to Calgary, and moved up the ranks until he eventually settled into the position of director of sales in 2015. It was in this role that his understanding of the business deepened as he tackled complex duties such as negotiation, managing and coaching, budget planning, sales development and strategy. He credits numerous mentors for helping him along the way including former boss and Collette vice-president, Ron Lonsdale. “I was young,” Mikucki says. “Ron was my manager and my coach, and I learned a lot from him. I saw his work ethic and he taught me that collaboration is critical.”

In 2017, it was time to branch out and Mikucki joined Travel Agency Tribes as vice-president of business development. This innovative company assists travel agencies in growing their business through the utilization of digital marketing solutions. “We help manage websites for travel agents; we assist with social media management, e-newsletters, and we consistently upload blog content and special offers,” he explains.

As digital solutions continue to gain traction in the travel world, Mikucki stresses that Travel Agency Tribes provides a much-needed service that fills a gap for agents. “Today, we live in a digital world, and we need to highlight the power behind strengthening travel agents and agencies’ online presence.... Many are comfortable with their traditional marketing approach, but if they don’t adapt or learn about the current marketing trends, they have the potential of falling behind,” he cautions. The team also teaches, coaches and consults.

Mikucki is fiercely committed to both the company and his travel agency partners; he also remains as goal-oriented as ever, emphasizing that “failure is not an option.” Within the first six months of joining Travel Agency Tribes, this go-getter increased revenue by an impressive 25 per cent, signed on key suppliers and was instrumental in creating a new revenue stream for the company.

He is admittedly self-motivated but also readily expresses his gratitude to his own tribe who has contributed to his hustle. “I am very fortunate in terms of the family support I receive,” he shares. “Even though I am a self-starter and goal oriented, throughout my entire life my family has pushed me to achieve my goals. The work ethic of my parents has helped mould me into who I am today.” He adds, “I’m also lucky to have a wife that understands my work life, and she is with me every step of the way, always cheering me on. Overall, I feel like my family is my number one fan.”

When speaking with Mikucki, words such as energetic, determined and persistent come to mind. Equally, though, his easy way also invokes words such as friendly, fun-loving and considerate – a person who not only appreciates what he has but thoroughly enjoys what he has. As a newly minted vice-president in a growing organization, work is a priority these days, but Mikucki makes time for his passions, most notably, travel.

POST-SECONDARY:
Bachelor of Recreation
Management and
Community Development,
University of Manitoba
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Business Development
Manager, Collette
CURRENT JOB:
VP, Business Development,
Travel Agency Tribes



“Wherever I travel, I seek an opportunity that takes in an adventure component,” he says. “While on a trip to South Africa, I went Great White Shark Cage Diving in Gansbaai, outside of Cape Town. Talk about an adrenaline rush!” Up next, Morocco this fall.

Mikucki is no stranger to the pleasure of a good adrenaline rush, and it’s no surprise that one of his favourite sayings is, “Action cures fear.” He works hard, he plays hard, and he consistently pushes himself. What’s next for Mikucki? “Continuing to build the business,” he says. “We’ve signed on a big partner that’s very present in North America.” For now, the identity of the partner remains confidential. “Stay tuned,” he continues. “There’s more to come.”

Indeed – as if there was ever any doubt. ■

Gavin Miller, Flight Centre • BY SARAH HARRIS

When it comes to his secret to success, Gavin Miller might say it's been putting up his hand before he knew he was ready. Always eager to take on new opportunities as they are presented, he credits his passion, desire and willingness to learn – versus any formal qualifications – as factors that have led him to where he is today.

But the path to becoming executive vice-president, retail division, Flight Centre Canada, was not always so easy; in fact, he applied to the company three times at home with no luck before landing a retail position while he was travelling in Australia.

At the time, the young professional didn't realize the scope of opportunities available in travel and tourism, though "quickly realized that it was far greater than I thought it would be." Within his first six months, he knew this was the industry in which he would build a career.

Since those days in Australia, Miller has worked his way through the ranks in just 15 years with a company that's only been in Canada for 23 years, earning a leadership position by demonstrating perseverance, curiosity and foresight.

"Gavin has managed to inspire and motivate our people by exemplifying and living by the company core values of egalitarianism, irreverence and ownership," says the individual who nominated Miller for *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40." "He has a deep passion for our business and always strives to put our people first."

And it's a conscious decision for Miller, whose dedicated pursuit of positive change inspires him daily. He says that Flight Centre has "found a way to allow people to succeed in a way that suits their DNA," though perhaps too humble to take credit for his role in this company-wide accomplishment. According to the nomination:

"Under his short two and a half tenure in his current position, Gavin has: introduced flexible working options, flexible leave options and incentive-based conferences to overseas destinations;

created a leadership development and succession plan within the business; and is constantly looking at new ways to motivate and inspire our people. The result has been an incredible turn around in the business both in terms of increased profit and increased tenure amongst staff. And, Canada is in the running for the company's global award of most improved nation."

Building a productive work environment with a positive company culture is obviously important to Miller, who does not take his responsibilities lightly.

"There's one burden that I carry on my shoulders and that's the fact that the team I work with every day makes decisions that will influence 1,000 people's lives," he says. "And so it's really important to me to take that great honour and give it the integrity that it deserves."

This, in part, means working with a business that has high moral and ethical values. Even still, Miller also recognizes that the success of Flight Centre and the travel industry overall is much bigger than any one person or business. He strongly believes in the transformative power of travel, recognizing its ability to drive incredible change in people's lives and communities around the world. "These are a couple of factors that fuel my drive each and every day," he says.

"If you're going to work in an industry where you sell a product, travel is the best product to sell," he continues. "Everyone wants it, and its life-changing."

With that, of course, comes great responsibility, which is why Miller emphasises the need for consumer education, especially as it relates to ethical and sustainable travel.

"If one by one, we can have these conversations with our customers about the importance of going to visit whales on a whale watching tour versus certain parks or a dolphin encounter in the Mayan Riviera, that's important," he says. "And it may seem insignificant, but every little conversation that we have can make a positive change."



POST-SECONDARY:
Bachelor of Arts,
Geography & Planning,
University of Victoria
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Travel Consultant,
Flight Centre (Australia)
CURRENT JOB:
Vice-President Leisure,
Flight Centre

These values play into the goals Flight Centre sets with its partners, "whether it's around local employers within a community, or ensuring that we're making good, environmental, sustainable decisions," he says. "We need good thought leadership in the travel industry; good representation from every generation, every walk of life, every background. And what I hope we can do as a leadership group and industry is inspire the next generation to know that travel is not only a great place to have a career, but it actually does more good in the world than many other industries around." ■

Tim Morgan, Virtuoso • BY DENISE HEFFRON

Be good to people: words Tim Morgan lives by. This sound advice for one and all and an admirable guiding principle has surely aided Morgan's journey to the top of the travel industry.

A Winnipeg native, Morgan is enjoying a career that has thus far been both diverse and plentiful. His road to success began making \$1 per service as a choirboy at Winnipeg's St. Matthew's Anglican Church – today, he is the newly-appointed director of business strategy for Virtuoso in Canada and managing director of NigelKane, a Toronto-based investment business that he not only runs, but owns.

Of course, in between choirboy and business owner, there was the requisite schooling, a few jobs and much hard work. At the start of his career, Morgan held several positions in technology and marketing communications working as a writer and on-air host.

In 2005, he graduated from the University of Winnipeg armed with a BA in economics and a minor in business. That same year, Morgan entered the world of travel and began a 13-year stint with TPI (Travel Professionals International), a Canadian-owned independent travel agency network. During his tenure, he held three senior-level positions – director of marketing & communications, director of corporate development, and rounding out his final six years at TPI, vice-president. It was there that Morgan learned the business, climbed the ladder, and ultimately solidified his position as an industry leader.

A breeding ground for entrepreneurial vision and spirit, TPI provided Morgan with opportunities to learn and contribute while working side by side with the company's founder, Morris Chia. Before long, Morgan was a central figure in the organization, active in strategic planning, high-level negotiations, training initiatives and tech implementation. Most significantly, he worked closely with TPI advisors, helping them to build their business and succeed in the home-based space.

He is quick to credit his former boss and serial entrepreneur Chia as having “an incredible impact” on his career, and Morgan looks back on his time at TPI with fondness and respect. “We were a great team,” he says. “Morris gave me a solid foundation and a home. He also gave me many of the tools and resources that I use today – above all he trusted me and encouraged me to branch out on my own.”

It would seem the entrepreneurial bug more than rubbed off. This past year, Morgan made the move to Toronto to expand his horizons and bring together like-minded individuals in order to enhance possibilities and profitability for all stakeholders. He explains, “I realized the opportunities through networking and getting out there – you can't be the best at everything. Sometimes people take on too much. You need focus – you need help. I'm simply taking the things that I love and focusing on just those things – people, travel, technology and media.”

When speaking with Morgan, people and relationships come up time and time again; they are deeply meaningful to him, and he readily acknowledges his gratitude to all who have crossed his path and impacted his life. He is close to his family, particularly his parents, whom he credits for his love of travel and his penchant for hard work. “Their dedication and work ethic is what motivates me and drives me. They teach by example and I try to follow their example in everything that I do,” he says.

Boosting the profile of the travel business and giving back features significantly in Morgan's life as well. True to his collaborative ideals, he has spent much time contributing to the industry at large and is an active and willing participant – he has previously served or continues to serve as a board member for Virtuoso, Air Canada Vacations, Unmapped, Travel-Bound, and Voyages a la Carte (Agencia Global). On a personal level, he gets behind causes that advance the quality of life and promote equal opportunities for those who are marginalized such as Canadian Women's Foundation, UN Women, Rainbow Railroad and The 519.

POST-SECONDARY:
Bachelor of Arts, Economics,
University of Winnipeg
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Director of Marketing, TPI
CURRENT JOB:
Director of Business Strategy,
Virtuoso & Managing
Director, NigelKane



Morgan's nominator describes him by saying, “An open mind, an innate sense of what is right and what is beautiful, and how we can grow from the travel experience: Tim's keen instincts allow him to skillfully connect like-minded people in the industry; he is an outspoken ambassador for exploration of new destinations and new cultures; and last, but certainly not least, he truly is a highly respected member of the travel community.” ■

Kirk Morrison, Tourism Regina • BY MAGGIE GILMOUR

As a bartender at a sports bar for four years, Kirk Morrison, 26, was able to see first hand how sports brought together people for loud and joyous celebrations: watching the game and downing a beer seemed to solve most problems, big and small.

His bar also gave away Super Bowl trips to groups of friends. “The winners always said, ‘Oh, we have always wanted to do something like this but it just was too expensive, and it takes too much planning and coordinating,’” Morrison recalls.

After getting his Bachelor of Business Administration at the University of Regina and working as a management consultant for a couple of years, Morrison landed a job that let him bring together his fierce love of sports and his love for the city of Regina. As director of events, conventions and tradeshow at Tourism Regina, he is part of a team that promotes the city as a destination for events like golf tournaments or Canadian Hockey League national championships.

Under Morrison’s leadership, Regina was recently named the number one destination with a population less than 500,000 to host a national or international sporting event by the Canadian Sports Tourism Alliance.

“The recognition was well timed as it acknowledges the work of many stakeholders in what is to be a successful and busy year of hosting national and international events and conventions in Regina,” he says. These events include the Skate Canada International, Tim Hortons Brier and U Sport Women’s Basketball Championship, to name a few.

And this is no small feat: these major events draw tens of thousands of unique visitors to the region, contributing up to \$50 million in economic benefit within Saskatchewan.

Morrison is particularly proud of the city’s role in playing host to a major LPGA Tour event, the 2018 CP Women’s Open, which took place at the Regina’s Wascona Country Club this past August.

And while Morrison admits Regina has all of the physical infrastructure needed to stage big sporting events, a big draw is the giving spirit of the people: “People in Saskatchewan love to come out in droves and help at events,” Morrison says; the LPGA event, for example, depended on the efforts of 1,200 volunteers.

According to a 2015 Statistics Canada survey, Saskatchewan had the highest rate of volunteerism in the country. The survey finds 56 per cent of people in Saskatchewan volunteered their time in 2013, compared to 44 per cent nationally. “What this means is that any organization considering staging an event can be confident that there will be a huge amount of volunteers showing up to help out,” Morrison explains.

Live events are a passion for him; some of his most vivid memories include attending Patriot games in Boston, wild tailgate parties all over the U.S., and of course, Toronto Blue Jays games. Morrison flew to Toronto in 2013 – the year the Jays made the playoffs – and recalls the feverish mood: “The whole country was going nuts; people were living and dying with that team, sports bars were full of fans from coast to coast... I mean, it was just awe inspiring,” he recalls.

Morrison’s latest venture is a continuation of his love for live events: he’s co-founded an app called Krugo, which will allow groups to choose a location they want to travel to, learn about live events that are happening in that location, and then book event tickets, flights and accommodations with a few clicks.

“So for example, a group of four friends living in Toronto might plan to go to Chicago this winter, and they could use the app to find out that there is an NFL game and a Beyoncé concert... then they could book tickets to the game, the show, a condo or set of hotel rooms, and flights to and from Toronto,” Morrison explains.

The app allows one person to book for the whole group; and then informs the other members of the group how much they owe; or, it calculates the amount each person owes and lets them book separately. It’s his own experience that led to the inception of the idea; Morrison has travelled all over the globe with friends and says the long cascade of e-mails and texts it took to get everyone



POST-SECONDARY:

Bachelor of Business Administration,
University of Regina

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Director of Events, Conventions
& Tradeshow, Tourism Regina

CURRENT JOB:

Director of Events, Conventions
& Tradeshow, Tourism
Regina CEO, Krugo

organized showed him how badly this app was needed; “I wanted to take the hassle out of planning and booking group travel so the focus could be entirely on enjoying the experience.”

He’s an innovator at heart, and perhaps this is what fuels him. “I think the travel industry is ripe for disruption,” Morrison says. “New technologies are changing the way that people travel and it is important to support new entrants that will help shape that future.” ■

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40|40

Jennifer Neary, Once in a Lifetime Travel • BY MAGGIE GILMOUR

As a child, Jennifer Neary was a Girl Guide and a competitive dancer, so spending long stretches of time on planes, trains and automobiles was normal for her.

As she matured, she worked for non-profits and was constantly on the move; in her roles as senior manager at Arthritis Canada and Scouts Canada, she travelled to New Orleans, Lima, Cusco, Athens, Dublin, Beijing, Phoenix, Houston and New York City, and every Canadian provincial capital.

In 2015, Neary, now 35, was at home on maternity leave, and started doing some travel booking and trip organizing on a part-time basis. She thought her efforts would just be a side hustle, but three years later, the side hustle is now a full-time travel agency that employs four and brings together Neary's formidable talents as a wrangler, organizer, travel booker and general behind-the-scenes wizard planner.

Neary's agency, Once in a Lifetime Travel, is built on supporting "successful millennial women who will be able to connect with the current generation of travellers," says the nomination that put forward Neary's name. "Jennifer has three other agents working under her agency's name, all of whom are millennials at different stages in their lives with a focus on different niche markets. This gives her endless possibilities in meeting her goal in becoming the go-to agency for millennials in our province. Having only been in business for two years now, she is exceeding expectations and quickly closing the gap on this goal."

The team at Once in a Lifetime Travel does all the traditional things you'd expect from a travel agency (booking flights and hotels, all-inclusive properties and cruises) but Neary's main focus is on youth travel and destination weddings, all inspired by the ventures of her younger years.

"On an average day, I'm usually organizing and planning custom trips for clients, or designing a once-in-a-lifetime experience for youth who are travelling to Italy with a teacher to learn about history," she says. Her focus on destination weddings (which makes up 40 per cent of her business) evolved because all her friends were getting hitched and she all of a sudden found herself as a wedding planner/travel coordinator.

"I stood in three weddings last summer; I'm at an age where all my friends are getting married so I plan destination weddings by day and help with bridesmaid duties by night," Neary jokes.

Top destinations for destination weddings remain Ocho Rios and Montego Bay in Jamaica, Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic, and Cancun and the Riviera Maya in Mexico. Given that many of her clients hail from Newfoundland and it was snowing in June, the desire to say "I do" under a blisteringly hot sun makes sense.

In an age where many make travel plans by clicking a few times on a booking site, Neary says her ability to personally curate trips and use her vast network of personal connections puts her head and shoulders above online services. For example, a group of 50 female choir singers from B.C. just came to Newfoundland, and Neary used her connections in the local music world to line up performance opportunities for them *and* give them a custom tour of the province.

The group went "up the shore" to the community of Ferryland on the Irish Loop, went on a hike to the Ferryland Lighthouse and had a picnic, ventured all "around the Bay" along the coastline of Conception Bay, spent the day in Brigus, visited Cupids (the first incorporated British Colonial town), travelled to the tiny fishing villages of Trinity and Salvage, went whale watching and iceberg spotting, checked out the Elliston Puffin Site to take pictures with auks, learned about inshore fishing techniques, explored Terra Nova National Park, and visited the Marine Interpretation Centre in Newman Sound.

Oh, *and* they also sang their hearts out at local musical venues.

The point is: "There is just no way a computer could come up with that itinerary!" Neary says.

Adam Pothan, Clicct Solutions • BY CANDICE WALSH**POST-SECONDARY:**

Bachelor of Arts, Memorial University of Newfoundland

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Business Owner, Once in a Lifetime Travel Canada

CURRENT JOB:

Business Owner, Once in a Lifetime Travel Canada



But this not-so-traditional travel advisor does more than just organize trips; sometimes she also packs a bag and leads them. She also teaches dance classes at a local St. Johns studio and is escorting 50 dance students to New York City this December to see Broadway shows and participate in a dance workshop with the Rockettes.

Plus, she's the executive director of the Shallaway Youth Choir, and travelled with the choir (the group numbers 100) to Johannesburg and Capetown this past summer.

"I like to be busy," she says, which seems like a vast understatement. ■

There's no such thing as a typical workday for Adam Pothan, who has definitely earned the title of "jack of all trades." One moment he may be working on web development or vendor management, and the next, he's onto accounting and supervising online bookings.

But this young entrepreneur is a travel professional at heart, and has built a career in solving problems for other travel professionals.

CEO and chief architect at Clicct Solutions, Pothan's company is a tour operator software provider catering to clients across Canada and beyond. And he comes about his role in the business (and as an entrepreneur) honestly; Pothan started out working as a summer student for his mother's business, CIT Tours, which specializes in European vacations.

"I did a lot of IT, and while I was there, they had a system that wasn't working for them," Pothan recalls. "I started coding something that would help with some of the functions they needed. And it just kept getting bigger and bigger."

Eventually, word got around about Pothan's innovative software, and soon, he began offering support to other businesses. Before he knew it, he had built a little company of his own.

And so, Clicct was born. That was seven years ago.

In the beginning, his focus was on small tour operators but things have since expanded. While the Clicct team is small (just four people!), there's no denying its might.

"We're always looking for the next client, to see who we can take on," Pothan says, though quick to admit "we don't want to jump into something too large at the moment because we still have our own limitations." ►

**POST-SECONDARY:**

Bachelor of Science, University of Guelph

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

IT, CIT Tours

CURRENT JOB:

CEO & Chief Architect, Clicct Solutions

What began as a simple way to manage inventory has grown to become a complete business solution

Regardless, Pothan is confident in the quality of his software and says that it can support almost any tour operator. The objective? To bring about efficiencies.

"In a general tour operator structure, there might be many different systems that handle accounting, bookings and dealings with suppliers," he explains. "Our software can do all of this with just one system." This reduces the margin for error: there are no duplications of work and no mistakes between multiple systems – it's a tight, all-in-one package.

"The birth of Clicct Solutions was due to a need in the travel software business for a solution that had the flexibility, pliability and low-cost entrance fees that smaller niche tour operators were looking for," reads the nomination for Pothan's place on *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40" list. "What began as a simple way to manage inventory has grown to become a complete business solution for FIT, ITC, group operators & coach

tour companies... In this ever-changing world of travel tour operations, Adam is continuously on a voyage to discover and deliver solutions for these companies that are not currently available."

Having grown up in a very travel-oriented family, perhaps it just makes sense that Pothan would want to help other small businesses with the tedious day-to-day operations. That said, things have not necessarily been easy for him in the journey to grow Clicct. Pothan admits that in the beginning, he felt stretched thin – even alongside a very capable team.

"We really had to work with our clients to figure out some of the complex data structures and complex functionality they needed to run their business," he says. So it took some resilience to overcome the challenges.

"I use the word 'resilience' to refer to the fact that sometimes it doesn't seem like it's going to work out," he says, "but as a team, we've all been able to put a

lot of effort in it, and we make our clients happy."

The future looks bright for Clicct, which Pothan intends to continue growing at a manageable pace. "We're going for a slow growth, where we know what we're taking on, and making sure each new company is happy." That is to say: he's not interested in biting off more than he can chew.

Moving forward, Pothan expects his role to continue to fluctuate, though perhaps become more focused at some point.

"I'll likely always be involved in most things, but I will probably get a little more specialized," he says. What does that mean, exactly? "Moving more towards managing the business, moving more into sales and making sure things like that get done rather than passing some of the effort back to my programmers." With Pothan's experience, there's no doubt he'll do it. ■

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Melissa Reiter, G Adventures • BY MEGAN HONAN

When you hear the word “lawyer,” most people immediately conjure up an image of a stuffy old man in a stuffy old suit. But if you’ve had the pleasure of meeting Melissa Reiter, you’ll know she blows that stereotype right out of the water. While she is the director of legal and privacy officer for G Adventures, it’s obvious she loves her job and even more obvious that she loves the unconventional.

Starting off her career in law, Reiter kept her fingers crossed, hopeful that her path would lead to international law or that her work would require frequent travel. But she never imagined she would work directly within the travel industry. After spotting a posting for a job with G Adventures, she knew she had to take a shot at making her dreams come true.

She’s now been with the company for more than three years, building a mini-empire in the kingdom that is G Adventures. “Working in travel just adds that additional layer of excitement to something that I love already – which is travel,” she tells us. “Whether I’m interacting with people in another location or we’re actually fortunate enough to go to that place, it’s the thing that makes me jump out of bed in the morning and just go, ‘OK – how lucky am I that I get to do this?’”

As her team continues to grow from her original one (wo)man show, Reiter has been on a mission to build relationships. She set out to make the legal department an ally to the entire team, not a roadblock. Reiter found the best way to do this was by interacting with every department and establishing her place as an insider. Unsurprisingly, they were quick to include her in conversations to help innovate their next big idea.

“Often, someone has a really exciting idea or they want to innovate. People say, ‘Oh, the lawyer is going to stop it or say no to it or try and keep the innovation from moving forward.’ Our job is to work with the team and help them innovate, but do it in a way where we’re not going to hit obstacles as we get down the road,” she explains. ➤

POST-SECONDARY:
Bachelor of Arts, McGill University | Juris Doctor, Queen’s University
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Director of Legal & Privacy Officer, G Adventures
CURRENT JOB:
Director of Legal & Privacy Officer, G Adventures



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Keith Robinson, Dark Sky Guides Ltd. • BY LIZ FLEMING

And her efforts don't go unnoticed. "Melissa has always been recognized by her peers as someone who is open and accessible, who operates with a collaborative and consultative approach, with a focus on building relationships and trust within the business and key stakeholders," says the nomination. "She works tirelessly with all departments of the business to improve awareness and education on compliance and legal requirements."

As G Adventures continues to expand, so does Reiter's contributions to the team. She recently played an instrumental role in the company's acquisition of five world-renowned, UK-based brands in two significant and complex transactions – Just You, Page & Moy, Travelsphere, Swan Hellenic and Voyages of Discovery. She is now responsible for legal affairs for these businesses, as well as responding to the day-to-day legal challenges faced by G Adventures' operations around the world.

It's hard to imagine that Reiter has much free time, but somehow she manages to balance volunteering and mentoring in the law community on the evenings and weekends. She was recently a board member for JVS Toronto, a charity providing employment services, training, education and vocational services to persons of all ages and backgrounds in Toronto and York Region including persons with disabilities, youth and new Canadians.

She also has a hand in shaping the future generation of the legal community as a mentor on The Association for Media Literacy's End User License Agreement (EULA) program. The EULA project explains the terms and conditions for popular websites such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat in plain language that is easily understandable to kids and teens. But mostly, Reiter enjoys working with the law students to create training materials and presentations for the kids.

"I always felt if you have legal skills, then you have a duty not just to use them to make money, but also to use them for good," she says.

And put them to good, she does. "The reason I got my law degree wasn't just to provide value to myself. It's something you should spend a ton of your time on, using it towards the community and towards making a contribution beyond yourself. I really enjoy it and I'm so lucky." ■

Some people are born into a career and that was certainly the case for Keith Robinson, one of the co-founders of Dark Sky Guides Ltd. His grandparents laid the trail by moving to Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta in the 1950s, where they began a small tour boat company.



POST-SECONDARY:

Bachelor of Commerce, Tourism Management & Marketing, University of Calgary

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Captain, Tour Guide, Waterton Inter-Nation Shoreline Cruise Co. Ltd.

CURRENT JOB:

President & Co-Founder, Dark Sky Guides Ltd.

As anyone who's ever worked in a family business will tell you, it's all hands on deck all the time, so by the time Robinson was six, his career in tourism had already started.

"I got to clean the boat and do anything anyone else didn't want to," he laughs.

He eventually graduated to different roles as he grew, driving the tour boats and then giving the commentary. Today, Robinson and his family own and operate four tour boats in the Park, the largest able to accommodate 165 guests.

For some people, a thriving tour boat business would be enough, but Robinson and his brothers had other ambitions. Although they're all still actively involved in piloting and maintaining the boats, they've found new excitement and a fresh sense of autonomy by working with Parks Canada to create a second guiding business for Waterton Lakes National Park: Dark Sky Guides Ltd.

The concept of celebrating and exploring the dark is new for many visitors but it's something that the Robinsons have always valued. Being fortunate enough to grow up in the Park, they were used to the absence of light pollution but for many of their urban guests, being in the dark – completely – is a whole new experience.

Last year, their fledgling business got a huge boost when the International Dark Sky Association named Waterton National Park a Dark Sky Park and applied the same designation to Glacier National Park, just over the border in Montana. As far as Robinson knows, this was the first such transnational designation.

So, what's involved in getting that coveted label?

"An area has to prove that it has incredibly starry skies and that means almost no light pollution," he explains. "In Waterton Lakes National Park, Parks Canada has fitted outdoor lights with special equipment to reduce light emission and that's been great." To help, the Robinsons are now working to encourage people in the local private sector – those not bound by Parks Canada – to do the same.

"The good news is that what we're suggesting won't cost any more, after the initial up-front cost of changing over, and it will be more efficient."

Most importantly, in addition to the human benefits, species that rely on dark skies at night will be healthier since light pollution can actually be damaging to their health.

Robinson and brothers are now busy promoting Dark Sky Guides, offering two varieties of tours – the first, a basic discovery experience that takes guests to the end of the road, away from highways, where the guide sets up two telescopes and introduces the concept of the night sky. A second, more adventurous tour, sees guests outfitted with headlamps to enable them to hike 20 to 40 minutes into the back country for a similar introduction to the night sky.

The feedback they've had so far from locals and tourists alike has been great and the plan is now to mould Dark Sky Guides.

"Right now, we're the owners and the operators but we'd really like to be able to run more than one tour a night – so that means we'll need staff," Robinson says. "And we'd like to develop other attractions. Because 35 per cent of Waterton Lakes National Park was burned by forest fires last year, we lost a lot of backcountry hiking trails. That was another great reason for us to concentrate on Dark Sky, to create other opportunities to enjoy the Park."

His community involvement and work towards a greater good were themes continually brought up in the multiple nominations putting Robinson forward for a place on *Canadian Traveller's* list of "Top 40 Under 40." In addition to his own initiatives, Robinson is involved with various organizations, including the local municipal government body and the Waterton Chamber of Commerce.

He's also invested a lot of time in learning, taking courses such as "Astronomy: Exploring Time and Space" from the University of Arizona, "Origins – Formation of the Universe, Solar System, Earth and Life" from Natural History Museum of Denmark, University of Copenhagen, and "Dino 101: Dinosaur Paleobiology" from the University of Alberta.

"When he's not engrossed in some Waterton-related project, Robinson loves to travel the world, and constantly evaluates tourism businesses to pick up new-and-improved best practices, while at the same time, critically analyzing entire destinations' service offerings and marketing efforts," one nomination reads. Sounds like someone worth recognizing to us. ■

Christian Roussin, WestJet • BY DAVID LAO

To his colleagues at WestJet, Christian Roussin "is filled with passion for the industry."



"He is savvy in his strategic approach with our agency partners and is well respected in the industry," his nomination for *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40" reads. And it seems like it's working for him.

Today, Roussin is one of only seven business development managers (BDM) representing WestJet in Canada. Each day, he's tasked with managing and building business relationships for the airline and WestJet Vacations throughout Quebec, and while it might seem like a daunting task, Roussin says that it's a job he loves.

The role of working in sales as a BDM, however, wasn't the career he originally saw himself having. "I was working in the hotel industry and the restaurant industry when I was younger, and I was a chef at the time, I was looking for something new," Roussin says. "It wasn't exactly the thing I wanted to do at this time, so I saw on TV an advertisement about tourism school, and everything started from there."

POST-SECONDARY:
Business Administration,
University of Quebec /
Collège April-Fortier
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Call Centre Agent, Tours Chanteclerc.
CURRENT JOB:
Business Development
Manager, Quebec, WestJet /
WestJet Vacations

Roussin decided to take a chance and enrolled at Collège April-Fortier, eventually initiating his venture into the travel business as a call centre agent at Tours Chanteclerc.

"When I was younger, I never really had the chance to travel," he says. "I always had been working in guest services and guest relations, and I always liked to work with people. I think it was the best avenue to take, so everything started at this time." ➤

Meghan Simpson, My Gypsy Skies • BY BRITNEY HOPE

The role of a call centre agent was only the beginning of a life in travel for Roussin, who knew that he wanted to work as a part of a sales team. Leveraging his experience from his time at Tours Chanteclerc, he moved to take a job working as a travel agent for Sears Travel in Laval, a stint in which he says he learned a lot about the industry.

"It gave me all the tools to know the market, all the competitors, all the partners, the companies with which I was dealing," Roussin says.

After almost six years at Sears Travel, he once again decided to move on, taking an opportunity to work at TravelBrands as a business development manager. His passion in sales and business development set him on a track for success, leading to a sales representative role with WestJet in Quebec and Ottawa. He was then part of the team to launch WestJet Vacations in Quebec in 2010. And, he won the title of Travel Trade Sales Representative that same year.

In 2016, Roussin became the director of sales & marketing at Voyages en Direct before moving back to WestJet in January 2017, assuming the position he is in now. Roussin says that one of the things about his job as a BDM that he likes the most is the diversity in his workload.

"We're doing a lot of different things and this is what I like from my job because there's no week that looks the same as the others," he says. "I'm on the road to meet travel agents and owners, conducting trainings about the airline and WestJet Vacations product and attending conferences nationally."

Working in the field he loves, Roussin has his eyes set forward on growing with the industry and WestJet, citing the airline's Dreamliners and international expansion as things to look forward to in his career.

"I'm always willing to grow as a person and professionally and that's giving me the drive to continue and make WestJet shine in Canada, and now internationally," he tells us. "I think it's important to work with your heart, and work with your passion because when you work with your heart people know they can trust you. You're building this partnership and business relationship because you're talking about real things and people can feel it." ■

Ever since she was five years old, Meghan Simpson knew she belonged in the sky.



POST-SECONDARY:
Commercial Helicopter
Pilots License
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Odd Jobs, Ram Head Outfitters
CURRENT JOB:
Owner/Operator,
My Gypsy Skies

"I would actually get really bad motion sickness," the now 29-year-old helicopter pilot admits of flying in her father's Supercub PA18 bush plane over Northern Canada. "But I didn't care – I'd beg my dad to take me out because I loved being up in the air."

A third-generation outfitter, Simpson spent her childhood summers working at her family's hunt camp in the Northwest Territories, mastering everything from cooking on the trail to leading guests on tours into the bush on horseback. When she turned 18, she climbed into a helicopter to do a test flight with her dad, and instantly fell in love.

"I always aspired to pilot planes," she recalls, "but nothing compares to flying a helicopter. Being at the top of a mountain – being free to go where you like – it's the closest thing you can get to being a bird."

Fast forward 25 years, and Simpson has become a rare bird indeed. As one of the only female helicopter pilots in Canada who owns her own touring company, My Gypsy Skies, she's been changing perceptions in the otherwise male-dominated helicopter industry ever since she obtained her pilot's license at 19.

"I don't know any other women who have started a business like mine," says Simpson, who got her start flying for her family's business.

"Some people don't even want to fly with women – they request male pilots only," she admits. "When I was 19, my job was to pick up the [mostly male] hunters and take them to camp. They didn't even like the idea of getting into the helicopter with me... By that point, they'd come so far, I just gave them the choice: stay on the mountain, or fly to camp with me."

Those who know Simpson won't be surprised by the story; she's always done things on her own terms. Armed with the determination to one day start her own tourism business, Simpson decided to forego college after high school in favour of acquiring her pilot's license.

Those who know Simpson won't be surprised by the story; she's always done things on her own terms.

"I tried it for six months, but in the end, I didn't need college to know I wanted to fly," she recalls, adding that she certainly didn't want for an education. Helicopter pilots undergo rigorous training and regular reviews, including an annual proficiency check that includes engine failure procedures, hovering manoeuvres and mountain-specific emergency preparation.

At 20, Simpson had accumulated her requisite hours (commercial licenses require 100 hours of flight experience), and began honing her skills at her family's hunt camp. By the time her parents decided to retire and sell the camp, Simpson had spent eight years flying in and around the Mackenzie Mountains, and convinced them to keep their Robinson R44 helicopter so she could start a company of her own.

"I've wanted to start a tourism business for a long time," she says. "I

always knew I didn't want a nine-to-five job."

In March 2018, Simpson celebrated the one-year anniversary of My Gypsy Skies, which offers a variety of leisure-based helicopter rides throughout Northern Canada. A small operation that thrives on personal service, Simpson flies passengers into the wilderness for remote picnic lunches, fishing trips, and even dabbles in the ever-popular heli-elopement trend, taking couples to far-off mountain foothills with a photographer for a private experience in a breathtaking setting.

Simpson's approach is influenced by the hospitality she's experienced during her own extensive travels throughout Australia, New Zealand and Thailand, as well as acquaintances she's made through her membership with Whirly Girls, a U.S.-based female helicopter pilot organization.

"It's great having women to talk to about the industry," she reflects on the group, which works to support and promote fellow female pilots. "They say things like: 'You don't have to look tough. Just show that you're capable, don't take any bull – and don't try to be someone you're not.'"

Sound advice for a born trailblazer like Simpson, who's had big plans for herself ever since she climbed into her first bush plane, and isn't about to let things like age or social norms put her off track.

"One thing that's hard – I get asked a lot when I'm going to have kids," says the pilot, entrepreneur and wilderness outfitter. "It's frustrating. Some people say I should be planning a family right now. I do want kids, but I'm also always looking for the next exciting adventure – and for right now, that adventure is my career." ■



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Dené Sinclair, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada • BY DOUG O'NEILL

In a 2017 TedX talk in Winnipeg, Dené Sinclair shared a particularly memorable encounter she had with a Bedouin guide in Jordan that reinforced her belief in the power of sharing stories.

"A friend and I were travelling through the Wadi Rum desert with a Bedouin guide who recounted stories he'd heard from his father, who would talk about the Bear of the North, which we also know as the great constellation Ursa Major," she says. "Our guide also told us that his father used to speak about a people purposely placed on this Earth, far, far away on the other side of the world, who were descended from the stars. Now if you've ever heard the stories of [Winnipeg-based] educator and Indigenous storyteller Wilfrid Buck, [you'd know] that he recounts how the Cree people were descended from the stars. So needless to say my new Bedouin friend was quite impressed that I had spent time with the very people who were descended from the stars."

For Sinclair, director of marketing at the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), that exchange with the Bedouin in the desert was one of the most memorable experiences of her life. "Why was it so significant to me?" she says. "That encounter speaks to the idea that no matter that we came from such different backgrounds and were heading to different futures, in that moment the world was so small and we were connected. In order for that to have happened, we both needed to know where we came from."

And that story says a lot about Sinclair, as recognized by her nominator: "She is a connector. A business builder. A champion of Indigenous peoples, rights, and reconciliation. She is motivated to facilitate story-telling across cultures and languages, and to promote Canada as an amazing country to explore its rich Indigenous history."

Telling the stories of Indigenous peoples across Canada – and helping other Indigenous people share their own stories and experiences – is a significant part of Sinclair's mandate at ITAC. Originally from Selkirk, Manitoba, Sinclair is Anishinaabe, and is part of the St. Peter's Band and a member of Peguis First Nation.

ITAC is a nation-wide association that is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable, authentic, culturally-rich Indigenous tourism industry across Canada. Sinclair, a former media professional, spends her days learning and sharing the stories of Indigenous communities, entrepreneurs and businesses who invite visitors to their territories.

Sinclair is also involved in building regional and local strategies, assists in developing tourism product that will resonate with visitors, uncovering promotional opportunities, and building partnerships with other associations and with industry leaders. Her interests in tourism crystallized when she joined Travel Manitoba as project coordinator in 2006 and rose to the position of international marketing manager when she left a decade later.

One of Sinclair's other passions is sports; she has a background in amateur sports and event marketing, and has worked on the North American Indigenous Games, Canada Games and with groups like the Manitoba Paddling Association and the International Canoe Federation.

She is also busily wrapping up her Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies at Royal Roads University with a focus on Intercultural Communication and Indigenous Studies. As Sinclair explains, "I've been able to explore the connections between tourism, an industry with extractive and exploitive practices towards Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous peoples' ongoing struggles to reclaim our own story, language, land and place in Canada."

In 2016, Sinclair was a finalist in the YWCA Women of Distinction Awards as well as Manitoba Future 40, which celebrates the province's next generation of leaders, builders and change-makers. But, to Sinclair, her greatest achievement is what she's doing now: "Telling the stories of Indigenous peoples across Canada – stories that haven't always been told well. To me, this is an opportunity for us to get to know each other as neighbours and relatives. So many have never visited a reserve or sat down and talked with an Indigenous person. The stories we're telling now are providing conversation points that will bring people together."

And in 2014, the young leader was part of a group of women – which included her stepmother and sisters – who spearheaded the Lake Winnipeg Water Walk, a 1,032-kilometre spiritual journey around

POST-SECONDARY:

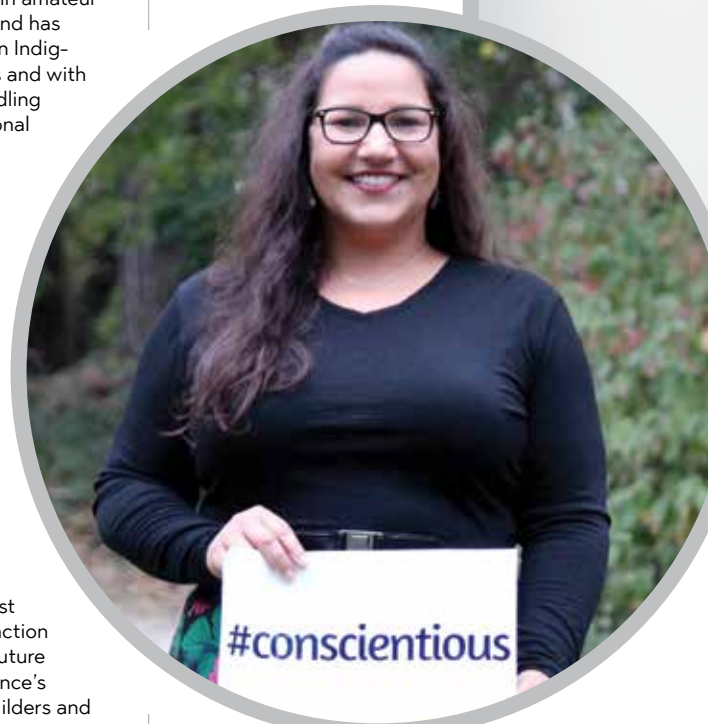
Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies, Royal Roads University

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Project Coordinator/Manager, Travel Manitoba

CURRENT JOB:

Owner, Beendigay Marketing | Director of Marketing, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada



Lake Winnipeg, from Norway House to Manigotagan, Manitoba. "The health of the lake, an important body of water that provided my people with so much nourishment and food for generations, was threatened. In my culture, women are responsible for the care of the water. And that's what we did over 28 days of walking."

In the language of her ancestors, Sinclair would say, "Ingah izitchigay nibi ohnjay," meaning, "I will do it for the water." Sharing the story of that experience – she does it for her people. ■



Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada would like to congratulate 2 of our Team Members, **Dené Sinclair** and **Kylik Kisoun Taylor** for being selected as *Canadian Traveller's* **Top 40 Under 40**. Their dedicated hard work contributes greatly to the success of our organization.



Dené Sinclair
Director of Marketing



Kylik Kisoun Taylor
Director, NWT
Tundra North Tours



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Janice Sousa, Merit Travel • BY DOUG O'NEILL

It pays to be persistent. Even better if that persistence is layered with a measure of optimism. At least, that's been the experience of Janice Sousa, who, in May 2017, landed the plum position of vice-president of business development at Merit Travel Group, one of the largest independent travel companies in Canada (Merit has 420 travel professionals across the country who cater to more than 350,000 Canadians travellers every year).

Sousa's combination of persistence and optimism was evident when she made her first foray into the travel business about 10 years ago as trip coordinator of We Trips, which grew out of the not-for-profit WE Charity and Free the Children organization. Sousa was very quickly promoted to director and eventually, to executive director.

"I had limited training in the travel business," she says. "Strike that. I had no tourism training whatsoever. In fact, I don't think anyone on our team back then had much, if any, tourism and travel training. But we didn't let that hinder us as we struck deals. We were persistent. We were a charity with few resources. We didn't know how to be humble. But we were driven. We knew our customer base: students who wanted to travel and make a difference – nothing held us back. Our persistence paid off."

In her six years at We Trips, Sousa learned the travel business first-hand: "My peers in the travel industry taught me so much. I had the opportunity to network with some incredibly innovative people."

She's humble, if you compare her notes to what her colleagues, past and present, have to say about her. Regarding her time at We, one nomination for her "Top 40 Under 40" recognition says: "Janice created products that were previously unheard of in the industry including open youth solo traveller programs, school trips and family experiences, and launched new destinations... She formed partnerships with leading school boards, private schools and universities across Canada and co-created programs to fulfil curriculum objectives."

After her tenure at We Trips, she took on the challenge of head of sales for the Canadian-based online photography business 500px. "But my experience

organizing and promoting travel had left an indelible mark on me. I realized tourism was a career path I wanted to explore some more." She then spent two years as director of sales at EF Educational Tours before joining the Merit family.

The persistence to learn kept Sousa busy at nights and weekends. During this time, she completed her MBA at University of Toronto – Rotman School of Management, with a stint at the prestigious SDA Bocconi business school based in Milan.

In her current role at Merit, Sousa spends much of her day functioning as a sounding board for her team: "I coach. I encourage. I teach. I brainstorm. I actively sell. I work closely with my team to ensure we maximize our opportunities."

And she's not the only one who says so. "Being a true leader means also inspiring those around you," reads one nomination submission. "Janice inspires her colleagues to succeed by creating a culture where hierarchy is irrelevant, and all that matter is that everyone comes to work dedicated to the same goal. She empowers the members of her team, makes them realize their potential and encourages them to realize it."

And she uses those very same skills to give back on a volunteer basis. Sousa's volunteer contributions are numerous. She either volunteers or mentors with such organizations as SheEO (a Toronto-based non-profit that funds female entrepreneurs), MoveTheDial (a global movement with a mission to increase the participation and leadership of women in technology), Venture for Canada, the Women's Executive Network, The Learning Partnership and WomenInTech. Sousa also heads over to Vienna once a year to take part in the Austrian Leadership Program for young leaders under 40. "I enjoy helping young entrepreneurs. I feel especially drawn to the start-up culture," she says.

POST-SECONDARY:
MBA, University of Toronto
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Trip Coordinator, We Trips
CURRENT JOB:
VP, Business Development
at Merit Travel Group



Sousa's greatest achievement? "I'm proudest of my reputation. When I'm asked for a job reference for someone I worked with or supervised 10 years earlier, or two or three job roles later, that tells me the time we had together was positive. I always take that as a compliment."

And her advice for anyone considering a career in travel? "Learn Mandarin or Cantonese. I see that as the next step for our industry. It's one thing to learn Spanish or French – but the opportunities presented by Asia will only continue to grow," Sousa tells us. "And that's something I've always put first: understanding your client." ■

Stephanie Stanfield, Butterfield & Robinson • BY DOUG O'NEILL

Stephanie Stanfield is a seasoned pro when it comes to planning and executing trips. But there is one journey that she didn't chart out in advance – the one that catapulted her from Bedford, Nova Scotia (her childhood home) to where she is today, working and living in Beaune, France.

That trajectory never crossed Stanfield's mind when she was growing up on the east coast, where her family has lived for generations. "Never in my high school or university years did I entertain the idea of one day working in the travel industry in France," says Stanfield, guide manager for Butterfield & Robinson, "especially considering my original command of the French language was absolutely terrible."

Heureusement, Stanfield is now fluent thanks to a couple of immersion programs in Quebec, a teaching stint in St. Etienne, France, and her trademark drive to learn, which explains her rapid career arc at Butterfield & Robinson. Since joining the premier active travel company in 2013, Stanfield has worked her way up from travel advisor, to guide, to guide coordinator, to her current position as guide manager, in which she oversees a busy team of guides, drivers and support staff.

"Not only does Stephanie train and oversee B&R's guide network, but her recruitment, onboarding and management have established a consistent level of quality and service among her team, which nearly every B&R traveller will experience firsthand while on trip," says the colleague who nominated her for this "Top 40 Under 40" recognition. "Stephanie is passionate about delivering the most memorable experience for travellers, which she accomplishes by providing guides with best practices, global support and unique guide events."

Stanfield plays an integral role in event planning for the guide network, from organizing week-long training sessions in Beaune to global guide conferences, and also has responsibilities in selecting and hiring new guide candidates. "She works hard at empowering the guides to bring their own creativity and individuality to their trips but doing so within the famous B&R recipe of what we think makes for the greatest travel experience," the nomination says.

This connects with two important elements Stanfield says she's learned in her tourism career, dating back to her time as a flight attendant with Porter Airlines: "The importance of empathy and service."

"I realized the value of empathy when dealing with customers, especially in the luxury travel market. We don't all live in the same world and live the same lifestyle," she says. "Understanding where people are coming from, appreciating their expectations – and empathizing with them when things don't go accordingly to plan – is hugely important. I learned early on to respond to people's impatience with patience and understanding. That's something I encourage in the guides I train and manage."

As for the importance of service, perhaps that's in the family genes: her family founded the iconic Stanfield undergarment company about 150 years ago. "I can't say enough about the importance of service in the tourism industry," Stanfield says. "Providing good service is something I strive for every day – and a value I impart on everyone I manage. We've been in the business of providing guided tours since 1966. It's good service, whether through a walking guide or a fantastic concierge, that has clients coming back to us."

Stanfield remembers very clearly the first person who inspired her to consider a career in tourism: a city guide in Berlin. "One of the perks of my first teaching job in St. Etienne, France was that I'd have a short break every four or six weeks, which I used to explore Europe as much as I could. On one occasion I visited a friend in Berlin, and on the spur of the moment we joined one of those city walking tours – this one led by a guide from Rhode Island whose parents were born in Germany," she recalls. "At the end of the walking tour, I thought: 'Oh my gosh, what a crazy job. To walk around and talk about a place, explain its history, and present the facts in such a way to engage visitors – and get paid for it!'"



POST-SECONDARY:

Bachelor of Arts, Art History,
Western University

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Flight Attendant, Porter Airlines

CURRENT JOB:

Guide Manager,
Butterfield & Robinson

And look at her now. "Working in another culture is a learning experience, and I feel I've successfully immersed myself in the French culture," she says. "In some ways, I feel like my career hasn't really started. There are so many things I want to try in the tourism business. The hotel business, for instance, piques my curiosity. I know that wherever I land I'll want it to be in a position where I can focus on expanding good service, making experiences more satisfying for the client."

Definitely a journey worth following. ■

Cedar Swan, Adventure Canada • BY CORRINA ALLEN KIERSONS

Some of Earth's most awe-inspiring places are also home to the planet's most extreme climates. Canada's North ranks high among them – magnificent glaciers and snow-capped mountain peaks necessarily come with cold temperatures and routes that are tricky to navigate. As CEO of Adventure Canada, Cedar Swan says that the core of her family's business has always been to introduce Canadians to the North – from the first expedition she experienced for herself, she's wanted to share the sense of wonder she discovered there with her fellow travellers.

"On my very first trip, which I would say was the most transformative experience of my life, I felt like I was at the edge of the world," says Swan, who's now leading her family's decades-old business. "As a 14-year-old, that was the first time I realized that there was so much more out there. As humans, we're a small part of the big picture. I love the idea of helping people be able to feel small again – that there's something so much bigger and grander than the world we exist in."

A career can be a calling, a passion or

a paycheck but for Swan, her chosen profession seems to be rooted in her DNA. Her father founded Adventure Canada in 1987 and she grew up with the company, working in nearly every department (except, Swan jokes, accounting). More importantly, she was raised with its core principles: community, connection and a willingness to tread fearlessly towards the unknown. "Some of the values that I really respected growing up and that I really feel are the foundation of the company are an openness to a completely different culture and to new

experiences," she says. "That is the underlying spirit of the company. [Also] the sense of community, the ability to have fun while you're doing it all, and the ultimate aim: to connect people... to provide the avenues for that."

Making travel about more than the ubiquitous photo of a tropical sunset is an Adventure Canada mandate. For Swan and the company, there are far loftier goals: giving meaning to tourism, opening minds and building a community of like-minded adventurers who are passionate about conservation.

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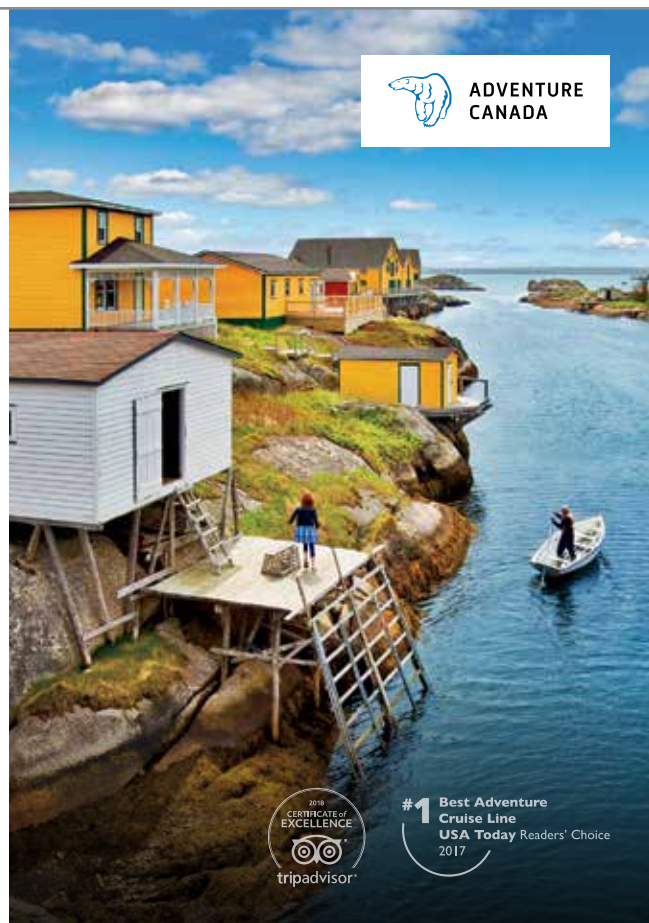


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– Cedar Swan, Adventure Canada CEO
Canadian Traveller's Top 40 Under 40

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Under Swan's leadership, the company has evolved with an eye towards expansion and innovation while also paying tribute to her father's vision.

POST-SECONDARY:

Bachelor of Arts,
University of Toronto

**FIRST JOB IN
TOURISM:**

Mailroom Clerk,
Adventure Canada

CURRENT JOB:

CEO, Adventure Canada

Her company was constructed around those central tenets and they're ingrained in everything she does. "Community, for me, is the backbone of any solid foundation. It provides me with a great sense of confidence and the strength to move forward. It's a really good way to provide and to draw on each other's strengths. When times are tough, you're never there on your own."

And that, it turns out, is one of the biggest benefits of working in a family business: the strong camaraderie that comes from being surrounded by a team that's as invested in the company as you are (Swan's partner, as well as her siblings and their partners, all work at Adventure Canada). But while the Swan kids grew up with the company, they were never pushed to work there. "There was absolutely no pressure one way or the other for any of us to become involved. My parents left us to each decide our own path. I came back from my very first trip and was like, 'This is what I want to do.'"

Running the family business doesn't come without its challenges but Swan manages to balance a respect for the organization her father created with an ambition to grow it. Since she took on the CEO role in 2014, the company's revenues are up 42 per cent while the number of guest adventurers has increased by 39 per cent.

"I always found my father to be extremely respectful and open to new ideas," she tells us. "That was one of his greatest gifts. He was a person that wasn't threatened by new ideas. It gave me a lot of confidence, to have my ideas valued."

Under Swan's leadership, the company has evolved with an eye towards expansion and innovation while also paying tribute to her father's vision. The nomination for her spot on *Canadian Traveller's* "Top 40 Under 40" list, says Swan "believes that fostering connections to people and land is critical to the longevity of conservation work... She's grown up surrounded by the world's foremost adventurers and explorers, and now proudly carries on the work her father started at the helm of Adventure Canada."

For Swan, working with family has been key to her own success *and* to the success of the business. She describes her family as close, supportive and understanding. They're the team that has allowed her to take risks (like signing on to a much bigger expedition ship back in 2014) while allowing her to focus what she considers to be her role in the company: "To uphold the values and maintain a sense of fun and wonder." Perhaps more important, she adds, "We can rise together and share in the success." ■

Gerry Taza, SkyHighCV • BY LIZ FLEMING

Some people will do anything to get a foot in the travel world door. Just ask Gerry Taza, who, in 2016, launched SkyHighCV, a company dedicated to helping professionals from a wide range of backgrounds find their niche in travel.

Taza gets it. He has that passion, too.

His first job in 1994 was as a ramp agent at the Montreal airport. Ramp agents spend their days marshalling aircraft, but never actually get on any. Did that discourage Taza? Nope. He just learned to love the smell of jet fuel.

After finishing college (and he reports that day couldn't have come fast enough), Taza found a job as a flight service specialist/air traffic controller, working in the control towers of airports across Canada.

He hadn't yet hit on the perfect travel career for himself but was working hard and enjoying everything he was learning.

"I'd do anything to be close to air-planes," he laughs.

In 2003, Taza took that passion to new heights, graduating with an MBA in aviation from Concordia University in Montreal. There, he met "outstanding aviation professionals from around the world," and managed to heap more fuel on the flames of his travel passion.

The next couple of years were spent in Chicago, working for United Airlines in network planning and analysis, a job he enjoyed.

But once in a while, we all surprise ourselves by taking an unexpected turn in the road. In 2005, lured by the prospect of a better pay cheque, Taza left the travel world to work in a completely different field.

And he hated it.

"I was making great money, but all I could think about was getting back into the travel industry," he admits.

So he did. A few years later, when the opportunity arose for him to enrol in the Air Canada Revenue Management Training Program, Taza jumped in and was soon creating and delivering revenue management training to airline staff.

That led to a few years of development work with Voyages à la Carte and Flighthub during which time, Taza helped to grow a fledgling start-up into one of the largest travel companies in Canada. It was, in fact, beginning to make inroads in the U.S., when he left to join Huntington Travel and Flight Network to manage and expand their airline relations division.

It might have been having amassed such a range of interesting travel work experiences himself, or it might have been an urge to see just how many other travel career opportunities existed, or it could simply have been that Taza's passion for all things travel is matched by his love of set-ups. Perhaps it was a mix of all three that led to the idea to found SkyHighCV, the dynamic company designed to help professionals find the channels that will lead to fulfilling careers in travel.

"Starting SkyHighCV has been an amazing adventure," he says. "Watching people find jobs and re-engineer their skills has been a total joy. I love helping all kinds of people excel in the travel industry."

It's one thing to work with recruitment and placement generalists, Taza explains, "but they don't get travel. I've never before had the joy of working with a recruitment company that understands the travel industry like we do. There was really a need, and for three years, we've been filling it."

Taza estimates that he's probably now placed 50 candidates in all centres of travel from agencies, to airlines, and hospitality to technology, across all functional areas. He and his associates look for candidates for their database who come from all kinds of backgrounds. The one key requirement is a travel background or education.

"We've placed everyone from accountants to IT developers but every job has been linked to travel."

None of these placements has cost the new employees a cent – the fees are paid by the companies that are hiring. You might think that would be enough to make Taza feel he's making the travel world a better place but he has one more helpful card up his sleeve.

"We've launched a free career counselling program. Four times a year, people are invited to send in resumes and from those entrants, we choose one person to receive three months of phone-in counselling, mentoring, coaching etc. It's great!" he says.

Busy though he is, Taza still finds

POST-SECONDARY:

Master of Business Administration, International Aviation Management, Concordia University

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Ramp Agent, Montréal–Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport

CURRENT JOB:

President & Chief Travel Recruiter, SkyHighCV



time to travel. On his list of adventures-to-come are the Greek Islands and New Zealand, but when interviewed, he was exploring Rome with his teenage sons.

"You don't expect culture and architecture to impress teenage boys so much but seeing the look in their eyes was magic – total awe and amazement at 12 and 13. That's what keeps me in this business – the awe and amazement never fade." ■

Jesse Tiefenbach, d3h Hotel Management • BY DAVID LAO

Jesse Tiefenbach was only 27 when he was appointed partner at d3h Hotels Inc., a company he started working with 10 years earlier in a front desk position. Perhaps it's only natural that he should end up here at such a young age, given that he grew up inspired to work in the hospitality industry, fascinated by the work of his mother who laid the path.

Still, he didn't anticipate things to go quite as they did. "Coming out of high school, I had absolutely zero expectations that I would ever continue to work in a hotel," Tiefenbach admits. "I just thought, 'OK, this is a great first time job, and a great place to kind of start out and start university and go from there.'"

His days as a front desk agent began at the d3h-owned Days Inn in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Fast-forward 11 years, Tiefenbach acts as the chief human resources officer, overseeing 14 properties across Western Canada.

He's held numerous roles with the company in his tenure there. Taking on various customer service positions until 2011, Tiefenbach was promoted to training manager for 10 different properties, during which time, he oversaw the creation of guest and customer service training programs across all departments.

Tiefenbach credits his love for customer service to his dedication to hospitality and tourism. "One reason why I've chosen to stay in the industry is because I do have a deep passion for customer service and guest service, and just making sure the people who do come in our doors have a great experience with us," he says. "I love being able to affect and have a positive impact on somebody's experience in the property, so whatever I can do as a frontline person or in the position I am in today to positively affect that, that's a big motivator for me."

Shortly after d3h launched its Home Inn and Suites Yorkton, Tiefenbach became the hotel's general manager, a role he held until moving into the position of employment and implementation manager, which then led to his current post.

"Each time an opportunity was presented to me, I accepted," Tiefenbach tells *Canadian Traveller*. "This way of thinking has provided me with the chance to truly get to know our business and also the incredible communities we serve. It has really been a privilege to be part of our company's growth and expansion."

Over the past eight years, he has been involved in six hotels – a process he says he's "participated in the openings from the ground up."

Aside from focusing on the growth for the business, Tiefenbach also sets his sights on personal growth. The company culture is something he loves about d3h, and looking ahead, it's his goal to open doors for other young professionals, as many were opened for him.

"Moving forward in my career, I have strong aspirations to make sure d3h Hotels is the best employer that we can be," he says. "In the past few years, we have been recognized on a provincial and national level as a top tourism employer. My hope is that I can continue to lead the way and make a difference in the lives of those we employ."

Now in its twentieth year, expanding d3h's presence throughout the rest of the country is something Tiefenbach is looking forward to. He spends his time at the Saskatoon-based head office, but makes a point of working hands-on in the actual properties, which he says is important in "reigniting that fire" that's inside of him.

Tiefenbach, who was awarded the Saskatchewan Tourism Ambassador Award and the Tourism HR Canada Distinguished HR Service Award, also served on the Tourism Yorkton Board of Directors. Currently, he's on the Board of Directors for the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship Trade Certification Commission representing agriculture, tourism and service sectors.

Tiefenbach says that as a "Prairie" company, the company model of d3h is based on the hard work ethic of Prairie hospitality.

POST-SECONDARY:
Guest Services Representative,
Journey person Status
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Guest Services, Days Inn
Medicine Hat-d3h Hotels Inc.
CURRENT JOB:
Chief Human Resources Officer,
d3h Hotels Inc.



"That's something we've really been leaning towards: What are the roots of us as an organization, and even the ownership group," he says. "There are four of us that are partners of the company, and the one thing where we all come together is that we all grew up in Saskatchewan, we're all Prairie people, and one thing that is known about Prairie people is the work ethic that they have and we're always working hard to do what has to be done in order to get the job done." ■

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Ilana Valo, TWIL Travel • BY CANDICE WALSH

Only two years after striking out on her own to establish TWIL Travel, Ilana Valo has a team of more than 20 travel advisors and continues to grow her contemporary, boutique travel agency – one that she says is more appealing to her generation of travel advisors.

“One thing I felt was lacking is that there are all these independent agents out there working from home, and they’re just so disconnected from their agencies and their networks,” Valo says. “And although we have a number of agents who can work from home or from the office, my goal really is to create an environment that fosters collaboration and teamwork. Even the home-based agents feel like they’re still part of a community.”

But this is only one piece of what sets this young trailblazer apart from the pack – “Ilana’s entrepreneurial spirit, attention to detail and ‘get it done’ attitude has definitely contributed to this success story,” reads the nomination that landed her a spot on *Canadian Traveller’s* “Top 40 Under 40” list.

Valo’s niche in luxury comes naturally, having begun her career with The Travel Network, where she worked as director of business development for nearly four years before being promoted to a vice-president role, which she mastered over the following five. From there, she ventured out on her own and though luxury was the primary focus for TWIL in the beginning, the Toronto-based company grew so quickly that she and her colleagues now service every aspect of the travel market. Some agents specialize in weddings and celebrations, while others do corporate bookings.

“But we’re really good at luxury,” she emphasizes. “That’s where our contacts are, that’s where our knowledge base lies, and that’s where we can really flex our muscles and demonstrate why we’re good at what we do.”

It’s true; when you’re planning a trip with TWIL, they’ll dig deep to figure out exactly what kind of experience you’re looking for.

“We spend a good chunk of time on the phone with our clients, getting to know them,” Valo explains. “We ask them questions – everything about the last three trips they went on, what did they like about it, what didn’t they like about it. We ask about favourite drinks,

food, activities, hobbies, colours.” This in-depth process allows her and her advisors to put together proposals tailored specifically to each client’s unique tastes and styles.

“We’re not taking orders; we’re advising our clients on where to go,” Valo says, noting that relationships with clients and suppliers alike are part and parcel to TWIL’s success. And while she herself by in large focuses on suppliers, processes and systems in place for the business, she also has a small portfolio of clients for whom she plans travel.

But whether they work with her or her team, TWIL clients are evidently quite happy; Valo estimates that about 98 per cent of her customer base is by referral. “We don’t do any advertising, we don’t go out and solicit, and we’ve grown quite a bit over the past two years,” she says. “We’ve doubled our business each year and it’s all been purely through word of mouth.”

And there’s no shortage of recognition for Valo, either. Her most memorable award was the first time she was nominated for Virtuoso’s Most Admired Advisor in Canada, which she was first nominated for in 2016 and again in 2018. Aside from that, she: was invited to participate as a member of the Virtuoso Next Gen Committee within the first 18 months of being in the industry; sat on the Virtuoso Pre-Opening Advisory Boards for for St. Regis Bahia Beach, St. Regis Bal Harbour, Baccarat NYC and Park Hyatt St. Kitts; and is a Four Seasons Preferred Partner Top Producer (among top 10 in North America).

Valo describes herself as “enterprising” because she uses creativity, drive and passion to move past any roadblocks and challenges she comes up against. “Being a boutique agency and as someone who wants to stay small but mighty, you need to be enterprising,” she says, “especially when so many agencies and companies are just focussing on growth and getting bigger and buying up other agencies.”



POST-SECONDARY:

Richard Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario

FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:

Director of Business Development, The Travel Network Corp.

CURRENT JOB:

Owner, TWIL Travel

That’s all to say that for Valo, it’s not necessarily a numbers game.

“I really want TWIL to continue to be a very well-respected boutique travel agency known for having incredibly well-educated, passionate travel advisors who really focus on client service, and to operate in the utmost professional way,” Valo says. “That’s what I want TWIL to be. I’m not looking to be the biggest, but I am looking to be the best.” ■

Gwendolyn Wang, Air Canada • BY OLIVIA LITTLE

If you take a look at Gwendolyn Wang's CV, you might conclude that knowledge is power for this young professional, whether obtained in formal or informal capacities.

After completing her Bachelor of Commerce from the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, she went on to earn her CPA. It was working in this field that she learned perhaps one of life's most valuable lessons.

"It was in my younger years as a chartered accountant, did I realize that our life is empty when we do things only to prove ourselves," she says. "I noticed that the financial industry is often harsh and people are often very aggressive, were working for shareholder revenue all the time and I thought it might not be the best environment for me."

In deciding to change paths, she took a year off to volunteer and see the world.

"When I was doing that, one of my best friends, who's a flight attendant with Air Canada said, 'Why don't you come and fly with Air Canada and that way you can see the world and meet and serve different people,'" Wang recalls.

Soon thereafter, she began her career with the airline jetsetting around the world, and now, years later, continues her way forward in the capacity of manager, market Initiatives. Throughout her tenure, she's been tasked with supporting senior leadership to achieve international expansion and maximum team effectiveness while building communities and creating unique customer experiences.

"What I'm even more grateful for is the opportunity to work with top-notch colleagues from around the world, and collaborate on innovative products and programs," she says. One example is the Explorer program Lufthansa and partner airlines hosted for top talent in 2017. Together with 11 colleagues from seven countries, Wang and her team contributed to the design of global communication concepts of the Mercedes-Benz VVIP Cabin (valued at \$50 million).

Around the same time, she obtained the Stanford-IATA Aviation Management Professional designation, and completed the UC Berkley Leading Innovation Change program.

"My team and I are using this knowledge to improve our industry and help others," she says. "We also spend a lot of time mentoring young people; for example, mentoring the UC Berkley Voyager Consulting group, to redefine an in-market MICE (Meetings Incentives, Convention, and Events) product."

The team she speaks of has grown from 12 to 35 people and the number of projects they work on has also significantly grown as the Canadian airline continues to expand globally. Working on new route expansions to U.S. destinations, the group is occupied with making it easier than ever for Americans to connect to the world through a Canadian gateway; they call this type of travel "AC Transit."

Wang says the most rewarding part of her role is seeing projects take off, knowing that they will make a difference at the end of the day. And it goes without saying that within a constantly evolving industry, change is inevitable – and Wang is ready for it. "Being able to manage change and gear it towards the greater good is what we aim to do every day," she says. "If we can work together to make a change that's impactful and meaningful, I think that's really what marks us as somebody who's contributing to society."

Wang doesn't just talk a big talk; she puts her words into action. Outside of work, she remains involved in the community, with the same goal of connecting the world in mind. One project that she's currently dedicate to is called The Social Impact Multiplier, a co-working philanthropy community focused on creating a communal working space for change-makers.

"We hope to bring together people who are working to make constant changes in the world and then create a coworking space for them," Wang says. "Also on the side, it provides free consulting services to other small organizations."

Any amount of money made from this group will be reinvested into other social causes. Although still in the early stages, she sees the project as another way she can create a difference.

Bringing this back to her life with Air Canada, Wang sees what she does as much bigger than any one airline.



POST-SECONDARY:
MBA, Strategic Management,
York University
FIRST JOB IN TOURISM:
Flight Attendant, Air Canada
CURRENT JOB:
Manager, Market Initiatives,
Air Canada

"I believe that our travel and aviation industry plays a unique role in the world," she muses. "It not only connects people with different purposes to travel, it connects places and events around the world."

As such, she and her colleagues are currently working on a comprehensive communications tool to better assist Air Canada customers to make decisions when travelling, "especially in adverse situations." They have also begun to plan numerous voluntourism initiatives, with the hope to launch a matching program that leverage travelling young professionals to help third-world communities.

"I want to improve myself and empower people around me," she says. "There's a lot of work we can do to empower those around us and to build a culture where we inspire people to make good decisions and care for people." ■

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