



Stefan Mader, BBA



Swimmer



Accountant



Future CPA

**CS2AC Episode 7:
An Accountant and Future CPA Talks About His Journey from Trinidad to the
University of New Brunswick on a Swimming Scholarship**

The Caribbean Students to Atlantic Canada Podcast
caribbeanstudentstoatlanticcanada.com



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Lakeisha: This is the Caribbean Students Atlanta Canada podcast: Episode 7. You're listening to the Caribbean Students to Atlantic Canada podcast where we interview Caribbean students, past and present, that have been to college in either New Brunswick, PEI, Nova Scotia or Newfoundland , collectively known as Atlantic Canada. I'm your host Lakeisha and I find out everything Islanders need to know about schooling on Canada's East Coast.

Hi, and thanks for tuning in! We have a super informative and very detailed interview for you today. We are talking to Stefan Mader. Stefan, was born and raised in Trinidad and Tobago. He attended UNB where he was on a swim scholarship. He graduated with a degree in Accounting and is currently pursuing his CPA designation in New Brunswick. Stefan does a really great job of breaking down every aspect of his journey. So if you're interested in Accounting, possibly obtaining your CPA designation or want to know more about his swim scholarship, then stay tuned.

Let's start the show!

Hi, Stefan ! Welcome to the show.

Stefan Mader: Hi, thanks for having me.

Lakeisha: So, UNB... how did you land at UNB ?

Stefan Mader: It started when I was back in Trinidad. A buddy of mine had attended a few courses there when he had just finished high school. And I lived in the states for probably about like 9 months, I was just swimming and when I went back I didn't know which school to start ; if it would have been Roytec, if it would have been UTT or if would have been UWI. I was not initially accepted into UWI, but it came after the fact. But I still applied to the three schools, and because Roytec responded first that's what was really like the final decision for me. I found out that once I graduated I would have gotten a Canadian degree.

Lakeisha: Alright, so you signed up for the Roytec program, the partnership that UNB has with Roytec essentially.

Stefan Mader: Yip.

Lakeisha: And did you know that you wanted to do Accounting?

Stefan Mader : Oh yeah. When I was in secondary school, I knew from an early age that I did



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want to get into Business, and Accounting in particular. But I didn't know what area of Accounting. So, everything that I shot for was like, along the lines of the business program. It made that decision a little bit easier knowing that I would have had the option of pursuing a business degree, that I would have just ironed out this stuff probably like in my third or my fourth year. Just because like I know that a lot of the schools don't really cause I don't really need you to declare a major in your first or second year .

Lakeisha: Okay. So I'll get to your degree and and the specifics of that in the second but you had stated that you had swam in the States, you lived in the states for a little bit before you started your degree at RoyTech and I'm assuming you were swimming during that time ?

Stefan Mader: Oh, yeah. I umm. I went to the states just to get scouted really. Cuz before before I came out to Canada like I was an active member on the national team from since 2000 and ...I made it 2000, didn't make it 2001 but from 2002 straight up until when I left.

Lakeisha: For those who don't know, Stef is a championship swimmer. You can look him up, Stefan Mader. When you started looking at UNB, and that UNB , Roytec relationship, did you know that you were going to swim for them? Did they recruit you? How did that come about?

Stefan Mader: Well, that whole scout / recruiting process at the time ,when I went through it was kind of difficult, but it was not very intimidating. In the sense that, why it was difficult is because I just knew that there was a swim team. I did not have any contact information for the coach or anything like that. So what I had to do is, I emailed the athletic department because like there was a recreational services email there. The athletic services department forwarded me to my couch (well my couch at that time). And she and I just started like a conversation. I told her who I was, what I was looking to do, where I am and where I was and I gave her my times to see if I would have been a good fit at the school. Because I already knew academically what I wanted to do it it would have been if I would have gotten any money to swim you know.

Lakeisha: Okay, so you took matters into your own hands is what you're saying.

Stefan Mader : Yeah, just because at Roytec they put more of an emphasis on academics and no fault of them it's just a lot of the people who come there are purely academics. I was one of the few that actually did play sports while I was still going to school there.



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Lakeisha: Yeah. And so once you spoke to the coach at UNB and you gave her your times did they offer you any financial assistance ?

Stefan Mader: Yeah, so unfortunately the men's swim team got cut from The Varsity program the year before I got there. The girl's team was still Varsity and they were getting funding from external sources. So fortunately for me, she (the coach) didn't use up all of her budget. She just used the one from the school and then like took from external sources to give to me. So why I'm saying this is because when I was going through like my scouting process in high school a lot of the schools that I spoke to, a lot of people that I spoke to, said that they did not know about Canadian athletic scholarships. But so like that was shocking for me when I actually did speak to the coach, she told me yeah there is funding available, if you're good enough (hahaha).

Lakeisha : Oh yes. Definitely. So maybe we should reach out to someone at UNB and try to get some more information on athletic funding.

Stefan Mader: I saw that there was a lack of information just along that process and I don't know how many other soccer players, I knew of a few swimmers, who just did not want to foot the bill ... to come up for the two years. But like, I found out about that because like I went and investigated, it's not like they make it available. So yeah there definitely is room for some information. Yeah for some communication.

Lakeisha: Okay and so at what age did you start swimming? I'm curious.

Stefan Mader: I started when I was 6, I turned competitive when I was 9. I took a year off from when I was about 11 when I was doing Common Entrance and once I started back like, that was then I started back in 99', and never looked back since.

Lakeisha: And you started in Trinidad ?

Stefan Mader: Yeah.

Lakeisha: That's awesome. You were able to use it as a vehicle for your education

Stefan Mader: Swimming for me, definitely did shape a lot of the decisions that I made in life. In the sense that, after common entrance the school that I wanted to get into had the best swim team in Trinidad ... St. Mary's College. From...I want to say the age of 14 or 15 everything that I trained towards, I was training towards getting... like making myself the best candidate for a swimming scholarship. But swimming opened up a lot of doors for me. Swimming paid for



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my university education because I am happy to admit that I graduated from school debt free. It paid a major role in allowing that for me. Why I'm saying this is because the opportunity that opened up for me from swimming in Canada is like many out there in the sense that there are full scholarships as well as partial scholarships available. You just have to know where to ask, who to ask and what time to ask. Why I say what time to ask because like I realized that timing is of the utmost important.

Lakeisha : Right.

Stefan Mader: What I'm saying is that there is never a wrong answer always asks a question, "Can I get a scholarship?". And I would also recommend that you start the process from the time it is you know what you want to do and how it is, you have an idea of getting it, start the process. Because for me it was really like trial and error. No one from my family ever went to school in the states or North America. Like my dad was in England for a little bit . But no one ever really like guided me and said, okay go talk to this one and this is a question that you have to ask. But, I really don't know what I would have done if I if I wasn't a swimmer to be honest.

Lakeisha: No, I think that's great advice. So essentially you're saying make those connections as early as possible once you determine that this is the path you want to pursue. And, let me ask you, so after you arrived at UNB, what was it like being on the swim team ?

Stefan Mader: When I first got here not going to lie, like I was kind of scared, Cuz I had never been to Canada before. Literally the first time I came to Canada was in Montreal Airport and that was just in connection towards Fredericton. When I had just got here I was intimidated because I didn't know what to expect, but they were really really welcoming to me. I was the only international swimmer they had on the team. Like from the time ... the coach came and picked me up in the airport. They took me around downtown at least just to show me Fredericton . They took me ...like it was the coach that took me around campus to show me where the business building was.

Lakeisha : How rigorous was your practice schedule ? How was it being, like, a student-athlete?

Stefan Mader: It was kind of tough, just because as long as... well I swam, like I said for most of my life in and all throughout high school so as long as ...I didn't really find it that much different than what I was used to. In the sense, we swam three mornings



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during the week and Saturday morning. We had Wednesday night off but swam Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday nights. So that's already eight practices right there. Then we had gym to do as well. So the practices themselves they were tough and but as long as you're used to it it was not anything new. My earliest class was 8:30 so there were some mornings when I have to go straight from the pool to meal hall and then from meal hall to class. But then that class was just for an hour and a half so by 10 I was done, so I could go back home and nap. I really did like the fact that I didn't have like full days so that helped when practice got like a little bit tougher or I got a little bit beat up from from practice. So like it... I guess it was really the same in terms of what to expect, but obviously I didn't have like mom like prepping meals everyday like that for me you know. The discipline did pay off but it was not really anything different than what I was used to.

Lakeisha: Yeah. Yeah, I find it interesting that you say... that phrase that got to me, 'the discipline'. I'm sure that's another way that being an athlete for so long has benefited you.

Stefan Mader: Yeah. Definitely. I'm not going to lie, it takes some kind of motivation when it's just you there and you have to wake up at quarter to 6 or half past 5 to walk in the cold weather. Because it was really tough for me. Waking up in the morning was never a problem, it was waking up and having to get dressed to go outside to face -15, - 20 at half past 5 in the morning it's not the ideal start to the day but it was worth it. It was definitely worth it.

Lakeisha: And what was your specialty stroke ? Am I asking that right? Yeah.

Stefan Mader: So I was sprint, freestyle and butterfly.
When you get to university you have to specialize. Because you're there for a purpose. You're there to better the team and the team wants to put their best swimmers forward so I had to specialize in sprint, freestyle and butterfly. So I just swam 1500, 200 free and 50, 200 fly.

Lakeisha: Okay, so I want to switch it up a little bit and talk about your degree actually. So you have a ...currently have a Bachelors of Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting. So let me ask you, did you do any at that time... did they have any like Co-op options for you to partake in ?

Stefan Mader: At the time, yes, but they were far and few in between. Every time that I went they had just hired. So I am not quite sure how often companies have co-op students or anything like that. But, that being said it was only after I graduated, and I'll say this for anyone wanting to get into the field of accounting, the easiest



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way or the best thing that you can do for yourself to ensure that you have the best chance of getting into your field of study soon as you graduate is through co-op. At least that's how it was in the past. And I'm saying that because everyone that I talked to who is either still in school or just about to start, like I always recommend that they investigate if there is any co-op opportunities and to take it. It really does not matter what but co-op does go a long way and it also allows you to earn some money.

Lakeisha: I completely agree with you. Co-op definitely has so many benefits and I think especially for international students coming where you know less people .It definitely has its benefits .

Stefan Mader: Yeah, networking definitely does play a role and again the company that I work for right now, we have had probably about like four people who are working with us right now that came through as co-op students. And every year we have students coming in so there is a benefit to it and I mean I really can't stress the importance.

Lakeisha: 100% ! So yeah, so you mentioned your job. You are currently a tax analyst, is that correct ?

Stefan Mader: Yeah, I will be once I've graduated my CPA . But right now, I'm just a tax specialist. For a construction group up here. They do everything from designing, like there's an engineering side and our companies are mainly focused in steel, like construction...the actual construction process and precast and ready-mix concrete. So all in all it's about 19 companies that I do the taxes for.

Lakeisha: Oh wow. And so what are your, you said taxes, so what is your I guess your portfolio entail ? Like, what are your duties?

Stefan Mader: My main duties and responsibilities will be to prepare, file and pay all tax bills that any of the companies incur. We will have monthly sales tax that needs to be prepared and filed. We also operate down in the States, so I also have to do monthly stuff for the States as well, which would include not just monthly preparation of sales and use tax but also quarterly filings for some states as well as payroll. I do the U.S. payroll for two of the companies that operate in three states in the U.S. annually. I will... it's really just me and my boss, we will prepare the corporate tax returns have them checked and approved by our external auditor and then get them approved and signed by our company president. So and then just like on the calendar year, we really have a little bit more due with regards to payroll, like just filing taxes for our employees preparation of T2 (like that kind of stuff). Ordinarily, like I can see when I'll be



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busy throughout my year just because I know what is a monthly filing, what is quarterly, what is annual.

So, ordinarily like I'll have every month at least sales tax as well as payroll taxes to prepare. Quarterly, it goes up to. And if we have to file for any permits, like I'm in charge of filing permits and getting permits approved and then it's just like once a year we really have to do like a preparation of some returns.

Lakeisha : Let me ask you, in the Bahamas we don't have an intricate taxation system. We don't have an intricate tax system, I don't know what it's like in Trinidad but was there any difficulty in you, I guess, getting accustomed to such as a tiered or intricate tax system here in Canada ? Was there any huge adjustment?

Stefan Mader: Yes and no. In the sense that, yeah I would agree with you there, I really didn't know that how much about taxes before I left Trinidad because it's not that intricate as it is up here. What I would say is, to get into the taxes side of it, no that was not really too difficult to start to follow along because it was all new for me. What I would say I did have difficulty with is just like terminology in Accounting in general. In the sense that, there are some things that were classified or just called something different in Trinidad. Other than that, they teach you everything that you really need to know up here. Yes, so there's no need to be intimidated when you think, okay I want to pursue tax. Yah no, not even.

I mentioned that I was doing my CPA. Why I'm saying that is because when I had first came up even when I had graduated, 2 years after I graduated, you cannot start the CPA program unless you were hired by a C... ,well at the time it was just CA like a chartered accountant, unless you were hired by a chartered accountant training firm. But now, they have done over the syllabus and merged the designations so it It actually allows students to start the schooling without being hired by a training firm. So it really does at least get your feet wet. So like you can even start teach yourself tax laws, and how to operate and think as an accountant even before you have secured the role. I guess to answer the question, it was kind of intimidating but everything you really need to be successful will be made available to you.

Lakeisha: And so yeah, so let's talk about your pursuit of that designation CPA (Chartered Professional Accountant). How has that trek been and could you, kind of walk us through the steps; Like after you finish graduation and I guess what it would be like when you're when you're done

Stefan Mader: Yeah sure. I would start by saying that the process changed. Obtaining the



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designation has changed since I graduated till now. Going back to my point earlier about the co-op students or the co-op roles, those were the students that were first hired by the training firms and only after you were hired by the training firms , then you could have started the CPA like the actual schooling.

Stefan Mader: But now they merged the designations of CA, CMA and CGA to just have the CPA designation. Now it is a lot easier for you to start educating yourself or start the education process than before. So now as compared to before, where you first had to be hired by a training firm and then start the process or start the school, no you can start the process either yourself or getting hired by a CA training ...by a CPA training company. And then I think it is as long as you pass everything like the the results and everything are valid for up to two or three years after if it takes you that long to get hired by a CPA firm.

But, how it is right now, I mentioned earlier, like, I graduated with honors and it's of utmost importance for anyone wanting to do Accounting that try to get a degree with honors. Because a lot of the courses that I did in university gave me exemptions before I started the CPA program. In saying that, because there are some prerequisite courses that you need to accomplish and the only way you can pass those CPA...those prerequisite courses without having to do any additional work is if you do them in the honors program. From the choice of ...the subjects that you have available through the honors program all of the prerequisite courses are under the the choices for the honors. So regardless if you graduated with honors you should always look at what the prerequisites are at the time for the CPA program. So anyway, so that allowed me to just like get straight into the program.

What that entails is there are two core modules. The first core module focuses more on Financial Accounting, while the second one focus more on Managerial Accounting. A lot of the prerequisite work, so like work that you would have done on in your degree, is covered in those first two months modules. As long as you graduated university you can pass those two modules. I would say though that your case writing skills have to change because they want to see you start talking or writing as a professional accountant would.

So like they really do to train you to follow a train of thought that all Accountants should follow. And then from there, once you finish the first two modules, the core I and core II, you have four electives that you have to choose two from (or a minimum of two from). Those electives cover the subject areas of Taxation, Finance Performance Management.... Taxation, Finance, Performance Management and Audit and Assurance. So I did Performance Management and Taxation because I wanted to become an in-house tax accountant.



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So because I'm working for a construction company, I could look at the past performance or market trends and then be able to analyze and then give my advice on how that would affect performance and then the taxation side... I mean everyone is going to need to do taxes, so like I did it cuz I like taxes, but I also saw that there a universal benefit to it.

Lakeisha: So there are these two huge tests and then you have to do these two electives, and then once you're done, and you pass everything you will be awarded your designation ?

Stefan Mader: Yeah. Well after each module , so you have four modules in all: the core 1, core 2 and then your two electives after each module, you're going to have an exam. The exam is 4 hours made up of both multiple choice, true or false and case writing questions. After each module you have an exam. Once you pass your 4 modules you will be eligible to do ...they call it Capstone 1, which is really like a board report to give you a case. This case like I think analyzes a company over 3 years and it's really a group project that you and other accountants have to come together and present . Whatever is requested, whatever the case entails, you have to present that to mock board of directors. The board of directors is a panel from CPA Atlantic School. They're going to be assessing what you... what you did, as well as asking you questions on that. Once that is done and you successfully pass that, then you have one final exam and that's in September. I have just finished writing my last module exam.

Lakeisha: Congratulations.

Stefan Mader: Yeah, thanks. Those results are coming out on Friday. And then from there, it'll be on to the board report and then the final in September. So ,it's a little bit of a journey . I'm not going to lie, there were times that I questioned what it is I was doing. Because, I'll say it right now, it is not easy... it's not difficult but it's not easy and it's not easy because it's extremely time-consuming if it is you don't have a tutor.

Why I'm saying that is because, a lot of a lot of people try to shy away from going and working like public accounting firms. But I would actually admit that if it is you want to become a professional accountant all accounting firms offer training for their CPA candidates, and that in itself is a resource I cannot stress the importance of. Because I'm doing it on my own right now and I just really have like my boss there, who's done it 10 years ago helping me out with the work. But if it is you actually have someone teaching you the program (if that makes sense) like actually teaching you the CPA work, how they want to see it the accounting firms bring in people to do that, so like it really does make a difference.



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Lakeisha: But like you said it's a hard road, but it's worth it. So what would you tell, maybe, someone from your background, from Trinidad, who just finished their accounting and they're like, " Boy, I don't know if I want to go through the headache of getting the CPA designation !" What would you tell them ?

Stefan Mader: I would say that, it's not like a Doctorate or something that takes extremely long or anything like that. If it is you've already finished your degree I will... I would say just take the additional step and become a professional accountant. The reason is unlike an engineer, now I can say this because I work at a construction company, but an engineer would make a lot more money like right off the bat coming out to school whereas an accountant , would not make that much. But from the time it is you become a professional accountant it really does... like if you want to talk finances, you make more money over the life of your career, than an engineer would. Over the life of your career you'll always be getting like increases in pay.

Lakeisha: No, I think that is that's great advice and you probably answered so many questions for a future accountants out there.

Stefan Mader: I'm glad too ...cuz I'm not going to lie, like I didn't really have anyone, at least like, telling me what to do. I had a few people along the way just point me in the right direction. But you know what, straight up I'll say like a lot of the things that I learned was on trial and error. There is never a question that you should not ask even the person laughs at you and they find it foolish, you at least get your question answered. In getting your question answered, you know where to go from there.

Lakisha: That's exactly why, you know, we do this show because, you know there a lot of us that come from a smaller region and the blueprint isn't readily available for us all the time. And it's nice to be able to have someone from a similar background, who you can look at and say you know, this is what they did and this work for them or maybe this didn't work. And our future Islanders can adjust their course... so it's it's kind of why why we do this show

Stefan Mader: Good good. Yeah, because like I said, this in of itself. I really do hope that it ... breaks a lot of the barriers or the misconception that a lot of people had.

Lakeisha: Well Stef, we can't let you go without talking about snow. How have you been managing snow and do you have any advice for our fellow Islanders who be coming to experience snow for the first time for such a long time ?



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Stefan Mader: Yeah, I definitely can. So when my mom lived in the states for a little bit as well, so like the first time I saw snow was actually in New York. But, seeing snow and experiencing winter in New York does not... it fails in comparison to the winter I experienced when I first came to Canada. It does get extremely cold. But it gets extremely cold compared to what we are used to. I'm still here after eight and a half years. I'm saying this because I've gotten used to living with the cold. And as long as you really dress properly, I got a good pair of boots, gloves hat, jacket, eyewear, like thermals (like Nike and Under Armour have thermal underwear). That's like a long sleeve pants and a long sleeve shirt. I use that and I kid you not from the time it is you put that on, you walk outside like you really don't feel the cold that much. As long as you dress warm you won't have a problem. The problem that I still have is when I want it to be done it's not done.

Lakeisha: (Laughs) That's all of us thought, Stef.

Stefan Mader: I guess, but like I said... I been here eight and a half years and each year, for the last eight years Keisha, I ready for winter to be done by February. You know, when the snow don't look pretty anymore.

Lakeisha: Yes and it just don't go away. That's awesome! Well, thank you so much Stef for taking the time to talk to us.

Stefan Mader: Yeah, I really I really do appreciate that you thought of me and asked me to give my side of the story. And if there's anything else I can do to help out in the future please let me know

You definitely... I'm sure helped some future accountant or some young person just some young person from the Caribbean who is trying to decide what to do with their future. We thank you for that.

Stefan Mader: Appreciate it

Lakeisha: Thanks so much for tuning in today guys. If you want to find out more about this interview, you need to head over to caribbeanstudentstoatlanticcanada.com. We have everything mentioned in this interview, along with additional resources. So you need to check it out.

Also, if you have a question that you'd like us to answer. That you'd like us to answer I'd love to hear from you!

So please, head over to our Facebook page Caribbean Students to Atlantic Canada Podcast and drop us a question!

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Lakeisha: So, until next time guys! Chat soon.(The Pineapple Song by Clinton Outten aka "Good Size")

That was The Pineapple Song by Bahamian artist, Clinton Outten better known as "Good Size"