



# STORIES OF EIGHT YOUNG LOCAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

LEADING THE WAY -  
AN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN UNDER 30



Stories of 8 Young Women Entrepreneurs  
Leading The Way - an Empowerment Program for Women Under 30

# LEADING *The* WAY

AN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM FOR  
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS UNDER 30

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## **Stories of 8 Young Women Entrepreneurs Booklet**

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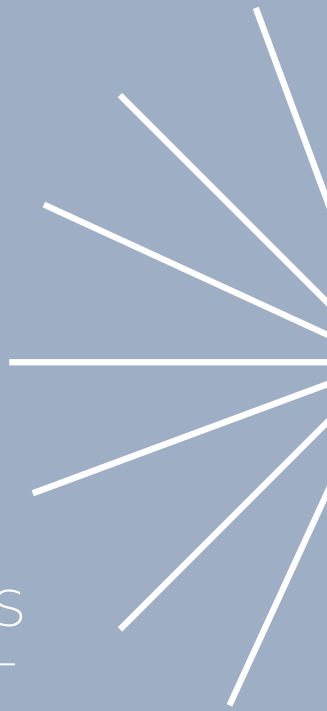
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# ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Leading The Way is a new program that aims to discuss topics that really matter to young entrepreneurs in 2021, provides a space for connecting with friends or meeting new ones to grow their businesses or ideas, and gives young leaders across PEI a chance to network and exchange ideas that will shape the future of PEI's business community.



## 10 MICROGRANTS AWARDED

Participants in the Leading The Way program had opportunity to apply for an exclusive \$2500.00 Micro-Grant, to help start or grow their business well in the future. The 10 successful recipients are:

- Melanie Roias, Bark & Bow Grooming
- Taylor Smiley
- Juliette Roberts, Roberts Academy of Dance
- Jessie Clark, Zenflex
- Candace MacDonald
- Oyeinemomoemi (Stephanie) Omonibo, Scents by Mo'Tari
- Alexa McQuaid
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## PROGRAM OUTPUTS

The program ran from October to December 2021 and saw participants meet bi-weekly in a mixture of virtual and in-person meetings to listen, learn and engage with a range of speakers on important topics identified as of particular interest for those under 30 focused on business and entrepreneurship.

- Networking and how to make lasting connections to grow your business
- Promoting mental health and self confidence as a young entrepreneur
- How to easily navigate funding opportunities, finances and legal information
- Diversity and inclusion in business
- Authentically marketing & branding your business for 2021 and beyond
- Doing business in a smaller location like PEI
- Women supporting women in business

During the program, participants had the opportunity to meet like-minded peers in a fun and relaxed environment, exchange knowledge, and build important relationships that will be instrumental to helping their businesses grow.

**In total, 37 women under 30 participated in this program,** where they gained an invaluable amount of knowledge, a wide network to engage with and the confidence to start or grow their business on PEI and beyond.



# BROOKE WAGNER

## SPACE TREATS

Inspiration can come from anywhere, as Brooke Wagner can attest. A middle-of-the-night Tik Tok session served up more than funny videos to the 22-year old. It gave her the idea to start a business that blows food up, quite literally.

Today, as the owner of Space Treats, Brooke is spreading joy to sweet teeth across Western PEI with her unique line of freeze-dried confectioneries. From puffed up Skittles to melt-in-your mouth Wonderbars, to shelf-stable ice cream sandwiches, and crunchy sour keys, Space Treats is putting a new spin on classic candies. You could even say it's an 'out-of-this-world' experience.

"We put the candy in a freeze dryer, which is a machine that freezes the candy to - 40 degrees and then the candy slowly heats back up, creating a vacuum...so with Skittles, they blow up and become crunchy instead of chewy. With gummy candy they expand and become crispy instead of chewy. You can freeze dry ice cream so it just becomes a crunchy not-cold ice cream. And whatever you freeze-dry, the flavour intensifies," explained Brooke.

While Space Treats is Brooke's first solo food venture, the Tyne Valley area resident has been working in the food and beverage industry since she was 11 years old. Starting out as a dishwasher at Backwoods Burger, a local eatery owned by her older sister, Brooke quickly made her way from washing pots and pans to cooking up burger platters in the busy kitchen. Over the years, Brooke has also helped out at her father's well-loved craft brewery, Moth Lane, in Ellerslie.

In the spring of 2021, Brooke found herself working fewer hours at Backwoods Burger due to the pandemic. Always one to stay busy, she used the freed-up time in her schedule to start experimenting with her new freeze dryer and start building her new business. While Tik-Tok gave her the inspiration to start Space Treats, there was still plenty of product development and experimentation to undertake before she could open for business.

"Figuring out how to use the machine was a lot of trial and error. Lots of stuff was thrown into the garbage! And then finding packaging that would keep the treats dry was also hard, and on top of that, there were things like branding and business registration to get done," said Brooke.

Hundreds of hours of experimentation and countless bags of Skittles later, and Brooke was ready to launch Space Treats in June 2021. And with that, the Wagner tradition of entrepreneurship was further solidified by the youngest family member. .

She began selling her freeze-dried treats at Backwoods Burger and Moth Lane Brewing and quickly discovered just how popular the trendy confectioneries were amongst Islanders and tourists alike. To keep up with demand and build her customer base, Brooke began selling at the Summerside Farmers' Market and taking custom orders. Demand continued to ramp up in the fall of 2021.

"I've got lots of sales, it's hard to keep up because I only have one freeze dryer," said Brooke.

Indeed, one of the most important ingredients in Space Treats is time. It takes between 15 and 30 hours to freeze dry each batch of candy, which limits how much she can produce at any given time.



Those time constraints came into play when Brooke received a massive order from StandardAero in nearby Slemon Park for 400 bags of Space Treats to add to their Christmas baskets. Not one to let an opportunity pass her by, Brooke put her freeze dryer to work day and night to successfully fulfill the order.

On the flip side, freeze-dried foods have a shelf life of up to 25 years, which provides Brooke with the opportunity to build her stock during quieter times of the year without worrying that anything will go bad.

Always experimenting with her freeze dryer, Brooke is continuously adding new products to her line of Space Treats. Her homemade cheesecakes in the crunchy, dry format have proven to be a hit, and she's constantly testing new flavour combinations and foods.

"When I go into stores now, I'm just like 'what can I freeze dry?' because you can freeze dry anything," said Brooke.

As she sets her sights on her second year of operation, Brook is planning to add a second freeze dryer to the business, which will effectively double her production capacity. She's also excited to build the Space Treats brand and bring her freeze-dried treats to retail outlets and farmers' markets across the Island, including Charlottetown and Summerside.



Still, the self-identified 'Up Wester' believes that starting her business in rural PEI worked to her advantage.

"It was nice starting off small, because I wanted to be sure I was doing everything right with the business, that I got the right packaging figured out. I think if I'd been in a bigger setting I would have felt rushed and had to buy another machine before I had even paid off my first one," explained Brooke.


In addition to her rural roots, Brooke is also grateful for the support and encouragement her boyfriend and family have given her from the outset of her entrepreneurial journey.


As she continues to grow Space Treats, Brooke is looking forward to wowing new customers with the freeze-dried experience - the 'first-timer' reactions are very rewarding. She also plans to seek out new ingredients and new creations; to boldly go where no freeze-dried treat company has gone before.

**Brooke's advice to aspiring entrepreneurs:** "Go for it. Don't let people talk you out of it. Don't be afraid to ask for help. There's lots of people that want to help. I thought there wouldn't be many people wanting to help me start a business, but it's crazy how many people want to help you."



**Contact Brooke Wagner**

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 [spacetreatsfreedriedfood](#)

# MELANIE ROIAS

## BARK & BOW GROOMING

For many beauticians, the global pandemic proved cataclysmic to their livelihoods. And that could have been Melanie Roias' full story too, but instead the 2020 lockdown gave the self-employed esthetician the time and space to discover her true calling. In a matter of mere months, she went from grooming people to grooming pooches and hasn't looked back since.

Today, the 29-year old dog lover owns and operates Bar & Bow Grooming, based in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The flourishing business has already attracted a large and loyal customer base and has a waiting list of over 100 four-legged clients.

"I wanted to have control and be the main advocate for the dogs. I didn't want anyone telling me how to take care of them. I have such a different way of operating than some places do, so I wanted to be the main voice," said Melanie, explaining why she was drawn to the idea of running her own dog grooming business rather than working for someone else.

Indeed, Bark & Bow Grooming operates in a cage-free, one-on-one environment, which is not the norm within the industry. Melanie also offers a spa-like experience that caters to discerning dog owners and pooches with a host of challenges, including dogs that have anxiety and dogs that aren't kennel-trained.

She's set the space up to be very home-like and her clients are allowed to roam free. She works on an appointment-only basis and books out extra time for each appointment to ensure she has lots of hands-on time with each furry client. Finally, she only takes on dog owners that are willing to commit to a regular grooming schedule, which is in the best interest of the dog and enables her to develop a stronger bond with each pooch.

It's a positioning strategy that's paid off in spades and is particularly impressive given that Melanie had no experience in the dog grooming industry until the pandemic turned her life upside down.

Pre-COVID, the trained esthetician was running a thriving business and had a solid base of clients coming to her for beauty services. When the pandemic shut down non-essential businesses, Melanie's livelihood was decimated. Like many self-employed Canadians, she found herself with buckets of free time and bills that need to be paid. She started collecting CERB and spent many hours in the early days of COVID walking her 3 dogs.



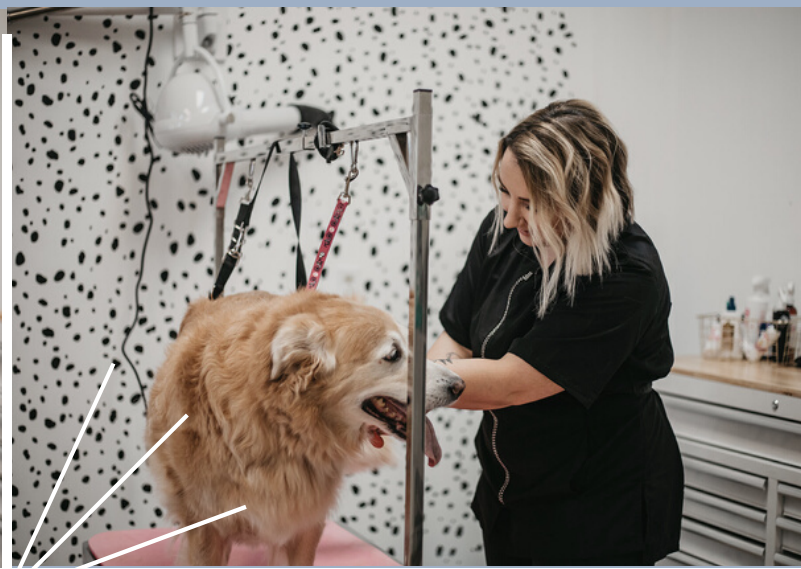
"I started to think about whether (being an esthetician) was what I really wanted to do. I've been the biggest animal lover since birth basically, and I just kept asking myself, 'why am I working with people when I could be working with animals?' Life's too short," said Melanie.

As these thoughts percolated, she contemplated what a career change might look like. Her past experience working in pet stores, walking dogs, and working in a doggie daycare had given her insight into what she wanted to avoid—working in a stressful environment. And then one day, a tv show provided the inspiration she'd been searching for.

"They were doing a (business transformation) type thing for a groomer and I thought 'hmmm, this is a lot like my current job, except instead of making over people I'd be making over dogs, that looks fun'," Melanie explained.

While she was excited about the potential new career, she also knew things aren't always what they appear. She wanted to make sure she had a clear understanding of the dog grooming industry.

"For the next couple of weeks I was just diving into research to see what it was all about, see if I could even get training, and see if I would even like it. Because from the outside it looks all fun and cutesy, but I wanted to make sure I knew exactly what I was getting into," said Melanie.







The research served to convince her that dog grooming was a career path she wanted to pursue. She enrolled in a 6-month training program and began learning the ins and outs of the vocation, while the pandemic continued to wreak havoc on her esthetics business.

As a student just starting out and restricted to online learning, she was grateful for the mentorship of Tamara Currie, owner of Island Spaw & Kennels Inc. Tamara sought Melanie out through Instagram and took her under her wing, keen to provide the guidance and support she had missed out on when she had started out.

"She took me into her arms and kept in contact with me, answering any questions I had ... she welcomed me into her business quite a few days to watch her work and operate," explained Melanie.

By January 2021, she felt confident she'd honed her skills enough to start taking on paying clients in her home at student rates. Word spread quickly amongst Island dog owners and within a few weeks, Melanie realized she had the makings of a full-fledged business. Demand for Bark & Bow Grooming's services continued unabated, and in August of 2021 Melanie made the leap to opening Bark & Bow Grooming's commercial space.

"It just kind of happened. It grew so fast...I didn't plan on anything big, I was panicking, it was growing so fast and I was like 'what am I going to do?'" she explained. Melanie now enjoys a healthy work-life balance with a full roster of canine clients that she serves four days a week; but that wasn't the case in the early days.

"I had absolutely no money because of being shut down by the pandemic, and I was living off of CERB so I didn't even have money to sign up for my course. My partner had to basically support me the whole time and then when I registered my business in January, I wasn't eligible for any of the provincial funding opportunities because I basically claimed bankruptcy due to the pandemic."

With little funding available to get her new business off the ground, Melanie worked seven days a week for the first six months of 2021, dividing her time between grooming and esthetics clients. She was finally able to stop working in her esthetics business just before she opened her commercial grooming space.

Despite the challenges that she's had to overcome, Melanie is an ardent supporter of entrepreneurship. She values the freedom it affords her to set her own schedule, establish her own priorities, and apply her own high standards of canine care to her business model. In fact, Melanie is such a proponent of being your own boss that she convinced her father to leave his job and start his own business. She also encouraged a fellow groomer to leave her corporate grooming job and start her own company.

On the flip side, Melanie's also been the recipient of support and encouragement from another local groomer, Alyssa Fraser of The Spaw. Evidently, these animal-loving professionals are embracing a camaraderie-over-competition approach.

As she enters her second year of business, Melanie plans to continue educating herself about the dog grooming industry. She also wants to explore ways she can help dog owners learn how to take care of curly-haired dogs. And when it comes to her future clientele, Melanie is certain of one thing—she's sticking with the four-legged, furry ones that sometimes say thank-you by licking her face.

**Melanie's advice for aspiring entrepreneurs:** "Set boundaries, be patient and start slow. Don't just dive right in, take time to think about things, plan and take it one step at a time. Boundaries are huge, especially for service-based industries, because if you don't set boundaries for calls and messages and when you're going to work, you're going to burn yourself out in the first month."

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# BRITTANY BOOTHROYD

## WILD KITCHEN



Playing with your food is highly encouraged by Chef Brittany Boothroyd, the owner of Wild Kitchen. The 29 year-old PEI native is on a mission to help Islanders have fun in the kitchen while discovering the delicious world of plant-based cooking.

Since launching her business in November of 2020, Brittany has been sharing her passion for playful kitchen prep and plant-based meals with vegans, vegetarians, and omnivores alike. Her suite of services includes in-home cooking classes for individuals, friend groups, and families; brunch and dinner parties; meal prep Mondays; and grocery shopping guidance - all customizable to her clients' desires.

"It's been a whirlwind, but it's been really fun. I feel so sure that this is what I'm supposed to be doing, and I'm so excited to be sharing my passion for food with people," said Brittany, of her entrepreneurial journey so far.

And while all of the meals she prepares with her clients are plant-based, Brittany's mission goes beyond espousing the vegan and vegetarian labels. Ultimately, her mission is to bring fun back into cooking and get people caring about what they eat.

"The goal is to connect with the process and to get curious. If I can get people laughing, tasting, smelling, and asking questions from start to finish—make the cooking process more immersive and enjoyable—then that makes the final meal much more satisfying and they leave feeling more confident in the kitchen."

Brittany's own journey to becoming a plant-based chef and eater didn't begin until four years after she graduated from the Culinary Institute of Canada. As a student, she loved working with meat. At restaurants in the Caribbean and Western Canada, she started off walking the well-worn path of many chef graduates, and further developed her skills with meat and fish.

It wasn't until her return to PEI in 2016 that her passion for plant-based meals was stoked. Through her newly adopted hot yoga practice, Brittany became more in tune with her body and began transitioning to a plant-based, nutrient-rich diet.

A visit to Costco sealed the deal, when she happened upon a cookbook titled *Oh She Glows* by Canadian vegan blogger, Angela Liddon. Liddon's flavour-rich, easy-to-make recipes opened Brittany's eyes to the idea that her favourite kind of dishes, comfort meals, didn't have to be meat-based. Imagine Sweet Potato Enchiladas, 15-Minute Creamy Avocado Pasta, Lentil-Walnut Loaf—Brittany was hooked!

Over the next four years, she immersed herself in the world of plant-based cooking. She and fellow plant-based advocate, Hilary Wood, launched Veg PEI and organized PEI's first vegan-based restaurant event, Veg It Up!. She also honed her vegan chef skills at restaurants in Charlottetown, including, My Plum, My Duck, and Nimrods', and restaurants halfway around the world in Melbourne, Australia.

In late 2020, Brittany decided to wade into the world of entrepreneurship. She launched Wild Kitchen and began offering her private chef services, primarily through word of mouth. At the same time, she continued to work at Nimrods'. The summer of 2021 saw her stepping up to the plate at Nimrods' Stratford location where she was first promoted to Sous Chef, then took on the morning lead in the kitchen.

"At the end of the summer, they [Nimrods'] were so supportive. They talked me up and encouraged me, and that, I feel, was the final thing that I needed to have the confidence to do this [business]. After that summer and how challenging it was, coming out the other side of it with their encouragement, I was like 'I am actually qualified to do this and I'm going to do it.'"

So with that boost of confidence, Brittany left her post at Nimrods' in September 2021 and went all in on Wild Kitchen. Since then, her calendar has been booking up as word has spread like wildfire.

She has co-hosted several dinner parties in clients' homes, prepped meals for the week with busy families, and led keen Islanders in cooking lessons—all centred around plant-based dishes. She also offers Pay-What-You-Can Wednesdays, with the goal of making her classes accessible to more Islanders.

"I want students that are in a residence with a tiny kitchen to be able to prepare a healthy meal in that kitchen, and I don't want them to think they can't access my classes because they're too expensive," said Brittany, explaining the idea behind her Wednesday classes.

As she looks to the future, Brittany is setting her sights on both short-term goals and her ambitious longer-term plans. In the coming year, she will continue growing her business and expand to offer virtual classes so people beyond PEI can also access the courses.

She's conjuring up other ways to share her love of plant-based cooking too, including conscious living retreats, catering gigs, and maybe even a local TV show. The long-term goal is to have a team of chefs teaching virtually, and to make it more mainstream and normal for people to take a virtual cooking class.

Behind all of her plans for Wild Kitchen, Brittany is keeping her ultimate purpose front and centre—helping people cook and eat more consciously so they can enjoy better health while making food choices that are good for the planet.



"I feel like it's important to share mindfulness around food. It's connecting with your ingredients, knowing where they're coming from, getting to know your local providers[...]then it's integrating the shopping to the chopping to the eating and using all your senses to really connect with everything you're doing. [...] It makes it more immersive and you connect more with the food in front of you. And I feel like that's how we're going to fix our food system."

**Brittany's advice for aspiring entrepreneurs:** "I feel like if anybody has an idea of a way to make any part of our planet better and they're excited about it, they should believe in themselves enough to do it and pursue it. There are so many resources too, so many more resources than I ever realized here on PEI."

#### Contact Brittany Boothroyd

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# JACQUELINE PETERS

## URBAN DAISY



Jacqueline Peter's aha moment happened just like it does in the movies. Halfway around the world from her home in Prince Edward Island (PEI), climbing a mountain in New Zealand, she had an epiphany. She was going to blaze a trail in her profession by becoming a natural make-up artist (MUA).

Inspired by the conscious living trends that she'd encountered earlier in her travels throughout Asia, the seasoned MUA didn't waste any time before diving deep into her newfound obsession with clean make-up. While still travelling the globe, she consumed all the research she could find about the toxic secrets of mainstream beauty products. She was shocked by what she unearthed.

"Unfortunately most people don't make the transition (to clean make-up) until after they get sick, so those were a lot of the stories I was reading," said Jacqueline. "So I wanted to really help change that mindset. Like, why are we waiting until we get sick (from these products)? You know, it's all about shifting the mindset to be more positive, forward-thinking."

In fact, Jacqueline was so eager to share what she was learning that she started an Instagram account in 2017 while still traveling abroad. From this platform, she began educating followers back in the Maritimes on the toxins in beauty products, how they can affect the body, and the lack of regulations around ingredients

Upon returning from her travels, she set her sights on launching her natural make-up business and on January 2nd, 2019, Urban Daisy opened its doors. With twelve years of experience working in the beauty world, and a Masters in make-up artistry, Jacqueline was no stranger to the industry. Still, she knew she was taking a gamble by going exclusively into the natural beauty niche.

"My first day open, no one came and I was like 'Oh my gosh, what am I doing? Is this even a good idea?'. I started with two brands. It really just started getting out there. Education was the big thing. I started Toxic Tuesdays and I would say that really drew people in."

During her Toxic Tuesdays, Jacqueline would pick a common beauty product - the type sold at drugstores or make-up giant, Sephora - and do a deep dive on the ingredients label. She would explain how each ingredient could impact the body and the realities of toxin bioaccumulation, given that the average woman uses twenty to thirty body and beauty products daily.

Immediately, Jacqueline witnessed women having that same eye-opening 'aha' moment she had experienced when she'd started researching the toxins in make-up and skincare. From there, demand for the clean beauty products at her Urban Daisy shop and her natural make-up artist services grew and then grew some more.

Today, the 29 year-old Island native carries more than 20 brands in her ever-expanding retail shop located on Charlottetown's Victoria Row and through her e-commerce site. She remains the only natural make-up artist in the Maritimes and demand for her services has never been greater.





"I find I'm seeked out more than ever before. A lot of our brides are coming here from away, they're coming from the West Coast so they're very familiar with green beauty," said Jacqueline.

In the three short years since she started Urban Daisy, Jacqueline's been happy to see awareness around natural beauty and conscious living become more mainstream. The growth of the niche has enabled her to expand her retail offerings and helped drive more demand. There is, however, a flip side to the growing popularity of 'green' beauty.

"Natural beauty is extremely greenwashed now. You really need to read your labels," explained Jacqueline.

She continues to channel her passion for educating consumers on clean beauty through her social media platforms. She also offers more in-depth consultations at her Charlottetown location. Her customers will bring in their current make-up arsenal and Jacqueline will go through each product, explaining how it's toxic and suggesting clean alternatives from her shop.

For Jacqueline, the journey that began at the top of a mountain halfway around the world has been life-changing. While the focus of her business has been on green beauty, she's developed a true passion for conscious living in all its forms. She sees the interconnectedness of the environment, social justice, fair trade, and well-being, and believes education is the key to unlocking consumer demand for products and services that embody these ethos and values.

To this end, Jacqueline has collaborated with like-minded female entrepreneurs including Trisha Viaene of Riverview Country Market and Celine LeDuc, a Charlottetown-based Naturopathic Doctor, to showcase how easy and enjoyable it is to live consciously.

"We're so lucky with this little community we have here. I feel like even Halifax they wouldn't have that, their scene is so different. Whereas here, they'll just lift you up and cheer you on, which is so great. It's so collaborative, it's amazing," said Jacqueline.

She also gives credit to the many folks that have supported her business journey along the way, including her business-savvy father, fellow make-up artist, Savannah Belsher-MacLean, her supportive husband, and her mentor/teacher from La Salle College in Montreal.

As she turns her attention to the future, Jacqueline's excited to continue growing her natural beauty business, by focusing solely on the education platform and her freelance work.

#### Jacqueline's advice for aspiring entrepreneurs:

"Don't give up. Focus on yourself and don't compare yourselves to others, especially if it's something unique, that's the biggest sign-up for failure, really."

#### Contact Jacqueline Peters

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# REEQUAL SMITH OSHUN DANCE STUDIOS



Opening a dance studio in the midst of a global pandemic would be a big leap of faith for even the most seasoned entrepreneur. For professional dancer and first-time entrepreneur, Reequal Smith, it was a leap she felt compelled to take. In April of 2020, she opened Oshun Dance Studios in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island (PEI) and immediately began searching for opportunities to do what she loved most – dance.

“Even though things didn’t look promising, you know things were shut down when I started Oshun, I told myself I was going to dance this year, I wasn’t going to let the pandemic stop me,” said Reequal.

A few months later, in September of 2020, Reequal would make good on her promise to herself, performing her first professional show at the bog in Charlottetown’s Rochford Square. Billed as a one-night-only performance, *Calypso Secrets* was created and performed by Reequal and assistant choreographer Élan Mackey. Reequal was joined on the stage by three fellow dancers and backed up by three talented musicians.

Since then, Reequal has continued bringing her high-energy and creative expression to PEI’s performing arts scene as the owner of the Island’s most well-known Black-owned studio. In the spring of 2021 she was also 1 of 13 Canadian artists selected from over 400 applicants to participate in an international collaboration with artists from the United States.

“The community has been very open and very receptive and that is something I am really appreciative of,” said Reequal of her experiences to date as a Bahamian artist bringing her unique style and cultural roots to Prince Edward Island.

Originally from The Bahamas, Reequal initially came to PEI to study at Holland College’s School of Performing Arts (SOPA). Upon graduating from the program in 2019, she decided to stay on the Island and pursue career opportunities in her chosen discipline of dance.

“I know Charlottetown and Canada is very theatre-based, and I did all of that in school, but dance is what I really love to do,” said Reequal, who has been dancing since the age of 4 and already boasted a lengthy CV of dance performances at hotels, festivals, and private events in The Bahamas before attending SOPA.

As luck would have it, shortly after graduating, Reequal was introduced to Mark Carr-Rollitt, the manager of PEI’s DiverseCity Festival, and soon had her first PEI festival performance under her belt.

From there, she was introduced to Tamara Steele, musician and Executive Director of PEI’s Black Cultural Society, and Megan Stewart, a theatre artist and the artistic director/co-founder of the River Clyde Pageant. Opportunities began to roll in as Reequal was welcomed into the fold of the Island’s arts community. She performed in the River Clyde Pageant and had hopes of auditioning for The Charlottetown Festival. And then the pandemic hit.

"I told Mark I really wanted to dance and he was like, 'why don't you do your own thing, start your own business.' And I was like, 'you're absolutely right'," said Reequal, recounting how she finally took the leap of faith to launch her dance studio shortly after the pandemic began.

Reequal credits Carr-Rollitt, Steele, Stewart, and Grace Kimpinski with giving her the support and encouragement to start her business and pursue her dreams.

"I had thought about it before, but I think what stopped me is that creating your own business is not easy and it's very scary stepping into something where you don't know what the possibilities or outcome could be. You don't know if people are going to accept your style and appreciate your kind of art. I can surely say having a good mentor or set of good people supporting you actually pushes you to take that leap of faith."

Since opening Oshun Dance Studios at the beginning of the pandemic, Reequal has established herself in PEI's arts community and introduced audiences to a style of dance with rich roots in her Bahamian culture. She believes that being a Woman of Colour in her journey as an artist has required hard work and consistency. She's also been able to paving pathways by bringing something new to the PEI arts scene, where she has been warmly accepted by the community for her talents, intelligence, and positive attitude.

"I am very fortunate to have never experienced (discrimination) here and am hopeful that in the years that come, people can continue to evolve to be more accepting of others and embrace more cultural inclusivity, because we all have something good to offer."





Reequal also holds close to her heart the belief that we all have an inner 'Oshun', the African goddess of dance that her studio is named after. To her, Oshun represents the beauty, sensuality and power of love that every woman has within her, which she expresses through dance.

As she looks to the near future, Reequal is excited to begin offering dance classes for kids and adults in early 2022 and, of course, to continue dancing on stages across PEI and beyond.



**Reequal's advice to aspiring entrepreneurs:** "Don't doubt yourself. I think we always doubt ourselves before anything but if we believe in our vision and our dreams, anything is possible. I secondly feel that having a strong support system can help you tremendously. Don't be afraid to ask questions, don't be afraid to network with people, don't be afraid to be a part of the community on a small or large scale, because most of the time you need people that can support you. Always be around those community members that can elevate you and give you the wisdom and knowledge they have. And, finally, just go for it. Follow your gut."

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# KAITLYN REHER

## SIMPLY FOR LIFE CHARLOTTETOWN

Before she'd even graduated from high school, Kaitlyn Reher knew two things for certain. First, she wanted a career where she could help people. Second, she wanted to be her own boss. Eleven years later, Kaitlyn is living her dream as the franchisee owner of Simply For Life (SFL) in Charlottetown.

Since taking over the business in 2018, Kaitlyn and her staff have empowered hundreds of clients to reach their optimal health through simple, sustainable changes to their lifestyle and nutrition. In three short years, she has also doubled the number of staff at SFL Charlottetown, moved to a much larger space, and launched a retail shop stocked with many natural food products that were previously hard to find on PEI.

"Nutrition is one of those fields that's underlooked a bit in healthcare. It (nutrition) is all about preventative medicine," said Kaitlyn. "I went into that field because of the diversity of opportunities to work for someone else or work for yourself, while also helping people in an area where there's definitely a need."

Originally from New Mills, New Brunswick, Kaitlyn first made the move to PEI in 2010 to pursue her Bachelor's of Science in Foods & Nutrition at UPEI. She ended up loving the Island so much that she decided to stay after graduation. In 2016 she began working at Simply for Life (SFL) which was owned by Amy MacPherson at the time.

After getting settled into her new job at SFL, Kaitlyn let her boss know that should she ever decide to sell the business, Kaitlyn would be interested in purchasing it. Fast forward a year, and Amy was ready to pass the SFL baton on to Kaitlyn while she pursued other entrepreneurial opportunities.



Unlike many franchises that require their franchisee to follow very rigid rules, the Maritime-based SFL franchise gave Kaitlyn full control over how she ran her Charlottetown store. This was the perfect scenario for the entrepreneurial 25-year old, who was ready to bring her vision for the business into reality.

"Growing up with parents that run their own business, I was pretty aware of what it was going to be like (running my own business). Like, it's going to be a lot of work, that's definitely not something I was afraid of. There are definitely challenges that you come across that you would never expect, but again I knew it would be a lot of effort, but it would be worth it in the end."

Indeed, one of the biggest milestones of Kaitlyn's entrepreneurial journey so far also marked one of the biggest challenges she's had to face.





In 2019, Kaitlyn decided to move into a bigger space that aligned with her vision for the business and its growth, particularly with respect to her natural food store. Fortunately, she was able to remain at the Shops of St. Avards on Mount Edward Rd., so the move was easy for customers and staff. Still, the expansion represented a substantial business risk, as she sought to grow the retail stream of her business.

“Literally, we expanded and had our grand re-opening of our new space in February 2020 and then in March the pandemic hit. That was very scary, doubling my square footage, doubling my rent costs and then closing our doors right after that was definitely a big challenge, which I’m sure many business owners can relate to,” said Kaitlyn.

In short order, Kaitlyn moved both her retail shop and nutrition services online. This enabled her to keep the business running and provide valuable support to SFL clients during a time when maintaining healthy habits was especially challenging due to the upheaval of day-to-day life and routines.

Almost two years later and SFL continues to provide Islanders with access to one-on-one nutrition counselling, both in-person and virtually.

“We definitely focus a lot on changing food habits and living healthier lifestyles, but we do see clients for digestive issues or anything based with nutrition. But most of the time, people come here looking to make some changes in their life and want support... [our counselling] really is individualized to the person. Some people need meal plans, some people need recipe ideas, it really varies a lot.”



The natural food store, which re-opened in May of 2020 and continues to offer online ordering, has also grown substantially and now represents a significant share of the business revenues.

Kaitlyn’s excited to offer an ever-increasing array of healthy food products for every type of dietary need, from vegan snacks to keto-friendly meals, dairy alternatives, and much more. She’s also partnered with local food producers to showcase PEI-made products, including low-fat, low-sodium sausages made exclusively for SFL by Island Tailored Meats, locally-roasted coffee from High Tide Coffee Co. and locally made meals by Fuel Your Body.

Looking to the future, Kaitlyn plans to continue growing the retail side of her business with the goal of becoming the ‘Whole Foods of PEI’, offering fresh food alongside the shop’s grocery items. She also wants to provide more for the community, create more jobs in the nutrition selector, and ensure she’s offering a great work culture. Finally, she’s excited to continue helping existing and new clients live healthier, happier lives and experience food freedom through SFL’s nutrition counselling services.

**Kaitlyn’s advice for aspiring entrepreneurs:** “Don’t wait, don’t let your own insecurities stop you from doing things. Just go for it, but also surround yourself with people who are going to support you.”

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# MAKAYLA BERNARD

## QUILLING WITH MAKAYKA



All she needed was a business idea. For Makayla, inspiration came easily. She had taken a quill workshop at the cultural centre on Lennox Island as part of the Canada 150 celebrations and loved it. A traditional handicraft of the Mi'kmaq people, quill work involves embellishing clothing, accessories, and birch bark containers with porcupine quills.

In addition to learning the ropes of running her business, Makayla also had to create the jewelry pieces from scratch. Unlike many business owners, sourcing raw materials isn't simply a matter of placing an order with a wholesale supplier. Instead, Makayla has to collect porcupine quills during her visits to New Brunswick and birch bark from the woods around her home in PEI. After that, she cleans and soaks the bark and quills, comes up with design ideas, and then creates each piece by hand.

Makayla's hard work and creativity paid off in spades right out of the gate, with customers eager to purchase her thoughtfully-designed quill earrings and other accessories.

A plastic goose and the tempting invitation to become a millionaire. That's all the motivation Makayla Bernard needed to dip her toes in the world of entrepreneurship at the age of 9. With money on her mind, she decided to start a business that would celebrate her cultural roots and showcase her passion for fashion. And so, Quilling with Makayla was born.

Today, the 13-year old Mi'kmaq entrepreneur remains committed to her craft and her goal of making millions. When she's not in school, Makayla's busy creating earrings, medallions, and other pieces of art from birch bark and porcupine quills. She then sells her one-of-a-kind pieces at indigenous markets across the island, pow wows, and through her Facebook page. Customers can also find her jewelry products at The Crow's Nest in Charlottetown and the Lennox Island Mi'kmaq Cultural Centre.

While she has yet to join the millionaire's club, Makayla has celebrated many successes since starting her business four years ago. Importantly, the plastic goose she discovered at a shop in Moncton is now happily hanging out in her bedroom.

"Mom didn't really want to pay \$80 for a plastic goose so I had to come up with a way to pay for it myself," said Makayla.

A flyer advertising the opportunity for youth aged 9 to 16 to start earning their first million through the Young Millionaires Program caught Makayla's attention. She realized entrepreneurship was the ticket to making money on an on-going basis. Money that she could use to buy plastic geese, hoodies, and whatever else her heart desired.





Since that first summer of business, Makayla’s entrepreneurial journey has been marked by many non-monetary successes as well. She’s been recognized with the Young Entrepreneur’s Award for Excellence from the Young Millionaires Program three times. She’s also been featured in PEI Living magazine and in a commercial for L’nuey PEI.

Over the past four years, her entrepreneurial spirit and artistic abilities have afforded Makayla several unique opportunities. At the age of 10 she presented to a group of 16-year olds participating in a female empowerment group through Mi’kmaq Confederacy of PEI. In 2021, she led her first quilling workshop, and most recently she’s been commissioned by L’nuey to create a custom piece of quill artwork.

Makayla has also embraced the opportunity to give back to the community through her business. Each of the past two Christmases, she’s raised money to support The Christmas Purse Campaign. In 2021, she was able to fill 7 purses for women in need.


With four years of entrepreneurial experience under her belt, Makayla has no plans to stop creating and selling her quill artwork any time soon.

“I need more money,” she explained succinctly.

She’s excited to reach her goal of becoming a millionaire and is grateful for the support she’s received from numerous organizations and individuals along the way. These include the organizations and businesses mentioned above, as well as Chief Darlene Bernard of Lennox Island First Nation, and last, but certainly not least, her mom, Sharon Collicutt.

**Makayla’s advice for aspiring entrepreneurs:** “Got for it. Find yourself some mentors and supports and have fun.”

**Contact Makayla Bernard**

 [Quilling-with-Makayla](#)



# REBECCA KOZAK

## CHERRY ON TOP CREAMERY

All Rebecca Kozak wanted was to ride around on a colourful bicycle, selling gourmet ice cream. But sometimes, when all you want is a kiddie cone, life serves you up a triple scoop waffle cone with homemade sprinkles on top.

That's exactly what happened to the 29-year old chef from Ontario, who is now entering her fourth year as the owner/operator of Cherry on Top Creamery in Souris, Prince Edward Island. Since opening in the dead of winter in 2019, the ice cream business has enjoyed incredible popularity, along with some challenges.

Through it all, Rebecca has stayed true to her passion for creating gourmet ice cream from scratch, celebrating local ingredients, and serving up scoops of happiness. But if you'd told her when she began her culinary journey at Niagara College in 2010, that she would one day be an ice cream queen, she probably wouldn't have believed you.

"I really liked baking, but as a hobby, so when I went to culinary school I was really adamant that I didn't want to do pastry. I wanted to be in the kitchen, I wanted to be cooking," explained Rebecca.

With that ambition propelling her through a challenging first co-op work term in Lake Louise, Rebecca successfully completed her culinary arts program. Over the next 5 years, she worked in restaurants across Australia and in Western Canada, including Banff's renowned 5-diamond fine dining restaurant, Eden. That's where she finally fell in love with commercial pastry production.

When a job posting for Chef Michael Smith's restaurant at the Inn of Bay Fortune showed up on her Facebook feed, Rebecca decided it was time to leave the west behind for PEI.

At the end of her first season at the Inn, a series of what she considers cosmic interventions waylaid Rebecca's plans to leave PEI. Her path crossed with that of her now-fiance. Within a few months, she decided to call PEI home. The next summer, ice cream inspiration hit.

"I was working at Richard's Seafood and one day as I was driving to work I thought, 'I bet I could make some great ice cream,'" said Rebecca.

The niggling thought churned itself into reality quicker than Rebecca had planned. That December, she started experimenting with her newly purchased ice cream maker. After her boyfriend's sister posted a rave review of Rebecca's handmade creations on Facebook, messages started pouring. By Christmas, she'd sold more than 75 pints to local Souris residents. She'd also fast-tracked her market research and determined there was a definite demand for gourmet ice cream in Eastern PEI.

In January 2019, Rebecca began selling her handmade ice cream from a mini-freezer and Cherry on Top Creamery was born. During the summer of 2019, she moved to Artisans on Main in Souris and in early 2020, she decided to move her shop to East Point Lighthouse. And then the pandemic hit.

Buoyed by her growth in the midst of a pandemic, Rebecca decided to go all in with a second Cherry on Top location in 2021. With the expansion came growing pains as she dealt with numerous challenges, including dairy processing regulations that required her to make her ice cream on-site for each location. A broken ice cream machine and supply chain issues found Rebecca hefting her one machine back-and-forth to each location.





Despite the many challenges 2021 brought, Rebecca is looking forward to 2022.

“Getting back to the creative side of things and why I liked doing it in the first place has been really important to me and given me a chance to regroup,”

An ode to Taylor Swift’s Red album. A nod to the beloved Friends sitcom. An homage to The East Pointers. Rebecca finds flavour inspiration in some of her favourite tv shows and musicians, and serving up cones at her year-round location on Main Street in Souris.

And she remains as committed as ever to celebrating local ingredients and making everything from scratch. From the peanut butter cups to the apple pie chunks, brownies, and even the sprinkles – everything is crafted by Rebecca.

“Anything with chunks has a lot of chunks, I’ve learned that you have to put too many,” she explained.

She’s also adamant about exclusively using PEI dairy.

“ADL dairy is superior, PEI dairy is just so much better which I think is why people on PEI love ice cream... as someone who has lived in many other places and eaten ice cream and drank milk, it’s just so much better here.”

Rebecca’s passion for local isn’t limited to ingredients, she’s also been bowled over by the support she’s received from the Souris business community and Islanders in general. From fellow entrepreneurs in the area, to Empower PEI, CBDC, and her fiancé, Rebecca has found many cheerleaders and advice-givers in her adopted home province.

“I love Souris and I think it’s really underrated. I think that we as people that live in rural parts of PEI really need to do our best to bring people here and to make it known. PEI itself is underrated.”





With that mission in mind, Rebecca’s dream is to grow the Cherry on Top Creamery brand across PEI and Atlantic Canada, with her Souris shop remaining the flagship location.

When it comes down to it, Rebecca’s in the business of smiles and happiness, and that’s what keeps her going.

“When you make someone something and they take a bite of it and they just look so happy... To give a Freakshake to a kid and it’s giant and amazing and they’re so excited, it’s just the best feeling in the world.”

**Rebecca’s advice for aspiring entrepreneurs:** “Test it out for a while... don’t dump your entire savings into it right away. See if it’s something you want to do first, something you want to move towards. And it’s ok if you want to stop. Every side hustle doesn’t have to become a business and every business doesn’t have to start as a side hustle, but just giving yourself the opportunity to see if you’re truly passionate about it is really valuable. Also, ask for help. PEI is an amazing community where you have so many opportunities to ask for help.”

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