



Laura Arngna'naaq

Lives in Toronto, Ontario

Aboriginal Heritage: Inuit

RBC Award Winner: 2011-2012

Education: Currently pursuing Master's Degree in Management and Professional Accounting, University of Toronto

As the first Aboriginal student enrolled in her program at the University of Toronto, Laura Arngna'naaq is proving that a person's desire for education can evolve over time.

Laura, who is half Inuit on her father's side, spent her early years in Nunavut, then Yellowknife. "Education has less value in the north – it's cultural," she observes. But with a mother who is a public school teacher and an ambitious older sister who is now a lawyer, passing up a post-secondary education was "not an option!" she recalls. What changed her mind?

"We moved to Kingston, Ontario when I was 12 and I have to admit I wasn't interested in education," recalls Laura. "Then I began to appreciate that Aboriginal peoples have amazing educational opportunities."

Laura completed her undergraduate degree in 2012 at Trent University and the RBC Award helped with her post-graduate aspirations. "Tuition is high for the Chartered Accountant program," she explains. "The Award has helped offset a lot of the general expenses."

Prior to her time at U of T, Laura was the Aboriginal Student Ambassador at Trent University where she worked with the Aboriginal recruiter for new and returning students. "University is a different experience for those coming from reserves, especially for continuing education students. I helped with their options and to understand what the experience would be like."

As someone who had little interest in university and is now enrolled in a challenging post-graduate program, Laura is in a position to offer practical advice that would benefit any student: "Find what you love doing and if you don't know, keep your options open. I'm glad I waited to decide."