

# People & Culture



**Celebrating 20 Years of Women in Leadership | Real Stories**

**Proud Sponsor of Lead5050**

**“Women are  
the greatest  
untapped  
source of talent  
in the world.”**

- Jonathan Kolber  
ILAC Founder/Co-President

## **ENLIGHTENED EMPLOYER AWARD 2017**

**“I believe, we should not judge the success of a country by its GDP per capita, but rather by the role of women in its society.”**

We decided to enter the nominations, to support this amazing concept of empowering women leadership. Lead5050 needs as much support as possible to demonstrate to women that they can be confident in their own abilities to be leaders. Regardless if we win or not, I believe we all win through strong support of this initiative.

**ILAC has a long history of supporting women in leadership roles, “not because it is hard, but because it is easy.”** When you give women a chance to lead, they work tirelessly, ambitiously and with loyalty.

ILAC began as a partnership among 4 men, and over 20 years of growth we have seen ILAC’s transformation from leadership of a small group of men, to one that is dominated by women leaders across the organization. Today, more than 75% of our management team at all levels of the company are women. With increased women leadership, ILAC as a company, has had incredible growth, has become more human, caring about our social responsibility, our human resources policies and balanced in its vision. ILAC’s values today, are Canadian values of gender equality, peace and human dignity.



**JONATHAN KOLBER**  
ILAC Founder/Co-President

The ILAC Foundation also supports women leadership through scholarship and education. **This year we have offered to support 10 Syrian women scholars**, who are displaced from the war, have had their education interrupted and are living in refugee camps in other countries. We selected them for their academic success, and financial hardship. We believe giving them a new life is a gift. In addition, we offered scholarships to outstanding women leaders in Ukraine. And we are just getting started. **Women in leadership will change the world and we want to be part of it.**

Lead5050 has given us inspiration, to make this a corporate value. As of August, we started a monthly women’s leadership discussion group, under the direction of our New Vice President of Operations, Christine Wach, a talented woman leader, who holds the top position in our company. The first meeting was attended with optimism among the countless ambitious young women in our company.

On the following pages are a list of beautiful and heartfelt stories of our female employees, from all corners of the earth, many of whom have been working at ILAC for as long as 10 to 20 years, since we started. These stories touched me. If you read them you will get inspired by their stories.

We wish the Lead5050 initiative great success.



**ILAN COHEN**  
ILAC Founder/Co-President

## MENTOR OF THE YEAR

Mentoring talented people is one of my favorite parts of my job as founder and CEO of ILAC. Motivating young people, giving them ownership of projects has been key to growing a beautiful team of people, men and women at ILAC. I believe giving people opportunities to grow is the greatest gift one can give someone. It comes back to you with great rewards, of loyalty, friendship and appreciation.

At ILAC, I am blessed with the chance to mentor students and employees every day. When I see them succeed, I feel I have helped them achieve goals, sometimes goals they never thought they could achieve.

As a father of two daughters, I try my best to be the best mentor possible. To mentor my daughters, to give them confidence and to make them believe that anything is possible is one of the greatest joys in life. Having girls, has opened my eyes to become involved in charitable work to support women leadership.

**Our ILAC Foundation is based on women leadership.** I have had the chance to support Syrian refugees who are displaced by the terrible war with full scholarships. They were students of medicine, environmental engineering, teaching, dental school and other professions. They will become leaders.

We have given them a new life, one that they could only dream of. We brought them to Canada as students, working with the Canadian Immigration department to get them student visas and ultimately return to their professional studies after completing English at ILAC.

On the following pages, you will find true stories that I believe are worth reading.

I support Lead5050 in all these mentoring efforts. Having the chance to be a mentor to even one person is a gift.



JONATHAN KOLBER  
ILAC Founder/Co-President



# Allison Kemper

At ILAC since 1997

**Night School Program Director - Present**

1997 - Teacher & First Director of Studies

I came to ILAC in 1997. Having just completed my Bachelor and Master's Degrees in Education, specializing in ESL and Multicultural Education, ILAC was the perfect backdrop for my professional growth and development. From teaching opportunities to a leading role as ILAC's first Director of Studies, Jon and Ilan recognized my potential, supported my efforts and challenged me to exceed even beyond my own aspirations. Jon and Ilan encouraged and empowered me to see myself as a leader and valued my contributions to both the culture and vision for ILAC.

After leaving ILAC for a few years to raise my young children, Jon and Ilan offered me the opportunity to build and develop the ILAC Night School. The Night School would serve individuals in Toronto who needed to improve their English in order to improve their opportunities in Canada. At that point, Jon and Ilan both stepped back and entrusted me with every aspect of this new business venture. I would be responsible for Sales, Marketing, Operations, Human Resources, in addition to all Academic department functions. Jon took on the role of mentor and like any great teacher, he gave me the space and support to succeed and the encouragement to overcome any obstacles along the way. Jon and Ilan believed in me, challenged me, and helped me to realize the full breadth of my potential.

ILAC is a school that celebrates diversity and promotes equality of opportunity. **The number of women in key leadership roles at ILAC is a testament to Jon and Ilan's recognition of the valuable contribution of women in the workplace.** I am honored to be among the many strong and capable women at ILAC and grateful to Jon and Ilan for their confidence and unwavering support.





# Su Choi

At ILAC since 2003

**Director of Teacher Recruitment and Training - Present**

2015 - Assistant Director Training

2003 - Teacher

2002 - Student Ambassador

2001 - Receptionist

1999 - Student

Jonathan Kolber has been a great friend and mentor for 17 years. I was a student at ILAC first and with his guidance, I was able to work as a receptionist, an ESL teacher, a Teacher Trainer and have become a Director of Teacher Recruitment and Training. I am a mother of 2 children and it wasn't always easy to balance work and personal life, especially when my children were little. It got more difficult when I had to raise my children as a single mother after the divorce. Jon has never failed to understand the challenges mothers go through and offered a flexible schedule, and even financial support. Also, during this difficult time, he mentored me into the leadership with endless encouragement. Once I expressed my regrets on not being able to commit full time at work he said, **"You should never be sorry for taking care of your family. It's a very important job."**

**If anybody should be recognized as a man who supports females at work with a huge heart, I can't think of a better person than Jon.** Without Jon, I wouldn't be where I am now."



# Hannah Dang

At ILAC since 2011

**Director of Sales - Vietnam - Present**

2011 - Student Ambassador

If there is one professional achievement of which I am most proud, that would be my career in International Education. I would never have been able to do it without Jonathan Kolber and Ilan Cohen, the founders of ILAC.

I came to Canada as an International Student from Vietnam at the age of 14, in early 2000. I went on to study at High School and University in Canada. I graduated with hope and courage, eager for a new life ahead of me. It was at that time that I was introduced to Jonathan at ILAC.

Jonathan and Ilan respect women in a way that is not common in my own culture. They put their trust in me and gave me the opportunity of a lifetime to promote ILAC, while also promoting Canadian Education around the world. **I was given both the freedom and opportunity to shine and contribute to the company's success. ILAC is a special place where ideas come to life, where your voice is heard and your work is acknowledged.**

I love my job simply because I believe in ILAC. We make a difference by making dreams come true for international students. We proudly travel the world to promote Canada, the land of opportunity, and we recruit thousands of students each year to begin their adventure.

I am now married and have a young baby but it does not stop me from fulfilling my professional destiny. ILAC is extremely open and flexible, and I am enjoying being a full-time mom with a full-time position as a director. Jonathan and Ilan have helped me to achieve a perfect work-life balance. As a woman and mother, this is an incredible opportunity that makes me feel very proud. People have asked me if I ever think of leaving ILAC, but ILAC is home and where my heart is!

I once told Jonathan that I felt lucky to have met him and Ilan. Jonathan humbly replied that I would have been successful no matter where I worked.



# Marina Serozini

At ILAC since 2004

## Social Events Manager - Present

2014 - Agent Support Brazil

2013 - Social Events Coordinator

2005 - Online Sales

2004 - Receptionist

I believe that people can choose to empower themselves, and if they don't, they are somehow giving their power away to someone else, whether they are a man or a woman. Women however, have been conditioned to neither recognize nor accept their own power. In companies like ILAC, this ideology doesn't exist, because both female and male are equal in their experience and men and women discover their wonderful abilities equally.

I feel extremely empowered at ILAC because I work with amazing people and service amazing students who are fulfilling their dreams through the experience.

**It is a place for both men and women to help one another become better versions of themselves.**

At ILAC, I feel appreciated for my strength, for my ideas, for all of my contributions to the success of this wonderful place. And in return, I truly appreciate being in a place where others are just as strong, where others are just as powerful, where others are just as full of ideas or more - men and women alike.

By the way, I started at ILAC in 2004, age 20, as a receptionist.

After that, I left ILAC to work in the fashion industry, but returned to ILAC and have worked as the European Ambassador, Brazilian Ambassador, Social Events coordinator, College Coop Business Development Manager, and now Social Events Director.



# Dorothee Lamy

At ILAC since 2012

## Director of Sales - Western Europe - Present

2012 - Marketing Manager, Western Europe

**I will always remember meeting with Jon at a café in Paris 6 years ago.**

That changed both my professional and personal life. Jon gave me his trust right away, offering me the opportunity to open a market in Europe for ILAC. That day, he told me: "You will do your very best, we trust you, we believe in you and you will do amazing." I started working remotely from Europe and immediately felt incredibly connected to his amazing team.

I had always been attracted to ILAC, from the time that I started in the education industry. **I admired their female marketing team as role models, especially Magda Link.** Jon, Ilan, and ILAC had empowered them and I could clearly see how happy, balanced and respected they felt. To me, they were the most glowing women in our industry.

Every step I took in the company confirmed my initial instincts. Working closely with Jon makes you feel stronger. He is an inspiration and your best mentor. He gives you the freedom and the space you need to grow, as well as the guidance you need to succeed.

Later, when I became a mother, I realized once again how much he cared about our personal fulfillment too, giving me all of his support, ensuring that I put the well-being of my child before anything else, when I was expecting. Jon went even further to give me the confidence to believe that being both a mother and a working, traveling and successful woman was possible, which he helps me prove every day.



# Tatiana Porvatkina

At ILAC since 2006

**Head of Marketing Department - Present**

2015 - Senior Marketing Director (CIS and Eastern Europe)

2011 - Regional Sales Manager

2008 - Student Advisor

The first day I spoke to Jon about working for ILAC, he gave me an opportunity to assist with Sales in Russia. I was 24 years old. I was surprised to see how much he believed in me. Jon gave me the confidence to believe in my own intelligence, skills, as well as my ideas. He told me not to be afraid of failure.

The only other person who ever gave me that much confidence was my own father. Jon and Ilan's confidence in me enabled me to succeed beyond my own expectations. Starting as a junior recruiter, I have had many promotions at ILAC - most recently Director of CIS Sales and Director of Marketing. Jon has always encouraged me to pursue many new ideas of my own. Meeting Jon in 2006 was a life changing moment.

**ILAC is an environment where women of all backgrounds have opportunities, respect, are valued and trusted, just as men are.**

I know that Jon personally believes women are one of the greatest untapped resources on the planet. ILAC embodies a very unique culture that I have not seen anywhere else.



# Fernanda Trincado Neder

At ILAC since 2015

**Global Events Manager - Present**

2016 - Marketing and Events Coordinator

2016 - Product Specialist

2015 - Sales Support - Brazil

I am so grateful to be part of a company like ILAC.

I came to Canada as an international student with a work visa. My first job in Canada was working as a barista and store manager for a popular coffee chain. I later joined the ILAC International College program in search of more opportunities.

I met Jonathan Kolber and Ilan Cohen, and inquired about positions at ILAC, because ILAC seemed like a place where I could grow. A few months after our meeting, I was hired, first to be in a sales support role, then as a product specialist, and now, I am currently working as a Senior Specialist in the Marketing Department.

I would like to first say that, as a boss, Jon has been an amazing mentor and listens to all of my ideas and encourages innovation and change. This is extremely inspiring.

**After two years at ILAC, I am working in the Marketing Department, building a new brand for the company, and more specifically, I am creating agent training events globally. I am fully responsible for planning and organizing large scale events for agents from all over the world and making a real difference in the International Education industry.**

As a woman, I feel that my voice and my ideas are heard and valued much more at ILAC than any other companies in which I have worked. I also feel that my efforts and hard work are always recognized.

I am very ambitious and I truly believe that, at ILAC, I will be able to become a leader in the industry, achieve my career goals and realize my biggest dreams. The environment at ILAC encourages and empowers women, as they are provided with every opportunity to grow and achieve.





# Diana Mockute

At ILAC since 2012

**Public - Private Bus. Dev Manager - Present**

2014 - ILAC Administration Manager & Senior Placement Specialist Business Development Canadian Edge  
2012 - ILAC Pathway Director

ILAC supported my career initiatives and professional development when I started to work as the Director for The University Pathway Department. ILAC's education reimbursement program contributed to paying for the cost of my Master's program. Furthermore, Jon and Ilan helped me during my second pregnancy by extending my one-year maternity leave. This allowed me to complete my graduate degree and spend more time with my newborn child. Ilan and Jon always encouraged women to take their full maternity leave as they value this experience.

They give their staff full confidence that their jobs are secure upon return. I admire Jon's commitment to encouraging working women to have a healthy work-life balance. **I feel proud to work in the company where gender equality is highly regarded and where working mothers are still challenged to be leaders and genuinely supported in their careers.**



# Gabriela Garcia

At ILAC since 2015

**Social Media and Marketing Specialist - Present**

2015 - Social Media and Communications Intern

My experience at ILAC has truly been a blessing to me. Working at ILAC has allowed me to expand my technical skills while also developing confidence and strong leadership skills.

Since my first day at ILAC, Jonathan and Ilan have shown an incredible amount of trust and support that I do not believe is common in most companies. I really appreciate the fact that here at ILAC, we are all equal and able to work together with great purpose. Our ideas and aspirations are heard. Through all of the opportunities that have been given to me at ILAC, I have been able to grow personally and professionally.

**Being a young professional who started a career at an early stage, many companies have underestimated my skills and talents. At ILAC, I have been given the chance to demonstrate my potential and creativity every day.** Like all ILAC employees, I am given great opportunities and responsibilities and I am encouraged to become a leader and dream BIG.





# Olga Kuznetsova

At ILAC since 2009

## **Director of People & Culture (HR) - Present**

2013 - HR Director, Vancouver

2011 - HR Manager, Vancouver

2010 - Homestay Coordinator

I remember coming to Canada back in 2009, and how nervous I was about going to the job interview with ILAC. Like most newcomers, who have endured the long and challenging path to immigration, the opportunity for Canadian workplace experience would be essential to any success. I came to Canada with education and skills, tremendous motivation to work and the desire to assimilate into the Canadian working culture, but I was clear that any kind of success would only be achieved if someone was willing to take a chance and offer me a position. It would take a special person, a hiring manager with vision, to recognize and believe that one's lack of Canadian workplace experience would not be a barrier that you couldn't overcome.

ILAC is a company that takes risks on people that they believe in. Jon and Ilan welcomed me into the company as a Homestay Coordinator. After only one year, Jon showed even greater support and confidence in me when I proposed the development of a Human Resources department.

**Launching the HR department at ILAC enabled me to fulfill my dream of transferring my HR knowledge that I had brought from my home country into a newly created position at ILAC, and becoming an HR professional in Canada. I cannot be thankful enough for that opportunity.**

When dreams come true, it creates an inspirational moment and feeling of achievement that lasts forever. I have all of this with ILAC - continuing support and mentorship, the feeling of empowerment, trust in my ideas and input, and the certainty of being valued as an individual and contributor. As I embrace my new path ahead, as the Director of People, Culture & Employee Experience at ILAC, and witness the career growth and success of so many other women at ILAC, I value even more the trust, dignity and equal respect that ILAC offers to women as leaders. It is woven into ILAC's unique culture and definitely one of the reasons why people see ILAC not only as a place where they work, but the place where they belong, their ILAC family.



# Shawna Cole

At ILAC since 2009

## **Curriculum Director - Present**

2015 - Academic Coordinator

2014 - University Pathway Coordinator

2011 - University Pathway Teacher and TESOL Instructor

2010 - Homestay Coordinator

2009 - ESL Teacher

Right from my interview back in 2009, ILAC has helped me to fulfill my dreams. As a teacher, I was encouraged to actively participate in professional development by leading workshops for my peers. ILAC also made it possible for me to receive specialized training in curriculum development and adult education, which sparked my interest in joining the academic team. Because of ILAC's belief in me, I am able to mentor those around me with confidence and push others to be the best versions of themselves as ILAC has done for me.

**I've been given so many opportunities and feel that Jon and Ilan see talent in people that we do not even see in ourselves.** They truly are dream makers.



# Angela Johnston

At ILAC since 2007

**Program Director (ILAC International College) - Present**

2015 - Director of Studies

2014 - TESOL Program Manager (ILAC International College)

2013 - Assistant Director of Studies

2010 - TESOL Instructor

2007 - ESL Teacher

I began working at ILAC as an ESL teacher ten years ago. From day one, ILAC has been a workplace filled with professional development and growth opportunities, especially for women. Moving from the classroom to administration was the first big step I was encouraged to take as Assistant Director of Studies. From this role came other opportunities – first as TESOL Program Manager and Program Director at ILAC International College, then as Director of Studies at ILAC. I was also encouraged to further my education while working and ILAC supported me while I gained confidence and developed skills as a manager and as a leader. **I now manage a staff of more than 100 people thanks to ILAC's investment in me.** I consider myself lucky to work in such an open-minded company where women can truly reach their full potential.



# Fabiana Schneider

At ILAC since 2005

**Brazil Marketing Manager - Present**

2014 - Social Events Director - Toronto

2013 - Teen Program Director

2011 - Marketing Director Brazil

2009 - General Manager Assistant - Vancouver

2007 - Homestay Director - Vancouver

2005 - Brazilian Ambassador - Toronto

2004 - Brazilian Ambassador Intern - Toronto

In 2005, I decided to come to Canada to pursue my dreams and learn a new language. Through a friend, I connected to ILAC and chose the school as my ticket to success.

As a young woman, I left everything behind and embarked upon this amazing adventure. After 3 months studying at ILAC, I asked for an opportunity to improve my English, working as an Intern.

I always say that the day I met Jon and Ilan was one of the most important days of my life. My parents gave me a stable foundation for my life and taught me invaluable lessons, especially as a woman, but **ILAC turned me into a fearless and passionate professional.** I had the opportunity to work with amazing women and men, in many departments, various positions, in both cities, which was a life changing experience.

Every single staff member, women and men alike, feel heard and understood in our company. We are respected and treated equally and we are very grateful for the interest that Jon and Ilan show in our success and development.

I'm so appreciative for the way Jon and Ilan have taken me under their wing, for their generosity in teaching me everything I needed to learn and for their vote of confidence.

ILAC gave me a family away from home and gave me an opportunity to become a proud Canadian.

Jon and Ilan, I always appreciate your ability to see how our talent can make a difference in this world. Thank you for making me a believer!



# Melissa Guarino

At ILAC since 2013

**Director of Studies - Present**

2015 - Assistant Director of Studies

2013 - ESL Teacher

I have been blessed to work in the education field, where I have always been given fair opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. So, to me, it often came as a surprise that other women didn't have it as good as me; that other women actually struggled with lower pay and fewer leadership opportunities than men.

As a new Canadian, **ILAC has expanded my faith in equality and fairness even further.** I was hired as an ESL teacher at ILAC 15 days after landing in Canada. I was promoted to Director of Studies 3 years after that. To me, being empowered as a woman is to be treated exactly like everyone else. And ILAC has continuously shown me that everyone is worthy of a chance.



# Paula Fajardo

At ILAC since 2009

**Director of Client Services - Present**

2015 - Human Resources Manager

2014 - Teenager Program Director

2012 - Marketing Director

2011 - AR Manager for Latin Market

2009 - Latin and Spanish Student Ambassador

I joined ILAC in 2009 and have had the chance to be part of an organization that transforms itself each day through innovation and a strong focus on providing the highest standards of services to its students and employees.

**ILAC's two founders have shown a strong commitment to build a company based upon the values of employee integrity, inclusion, diversity and work-life balance.**

ILAC is a great place to work, whereby staff are provided with the chance to find the role in which they can succeed. Throughout my 9 years at the company, ILAC's leadership team have given me the chance to build my career and gain a deep knowledge about the company and the industry by holding diverse roles in marketing, operations, finance and customer service. This amazing experience has given me the tools to hold leadership roles and to build great teams where the opportunities for growth remain the fundamental pillars of the organizational culture.

Thanks to the support of Jon and Ilan, I have found the roles where I feel I am the "right fit" and I can contribute. Both Jon and Ilan have built a place to work where my opinions are valued, where I am encouraged to make strategic decisions and to help both our employees and students to have a great experience during their time at ILAC, while maintaining a balance with my personal life and enjoying my family.

I feel proud to work at such a great organization!!





# Kristina Melichacova

At ILAC since 2013

**Marketing Manager (ILAC International College) - Present**

2015 - Sales Manager Central Europe

2014 - Student Ambassador

2013 - Receptionist

Canada is a land of opportunities and certainly, this is where my story starts, however, this is not where it ends.

After finishing my university degree in Slovakia, I decided to pursue my happiness and deepen my love for languages by going to Canada.

**From day one, ILAC has become my path and changed my life.** For almost 5 years, I have had the opportunity to be involved in many departments of the school, from reception, to an ambassador position, looking after European students and agents, to Sales and Marketing for Eastern Europe, to my current position, taking care of students at ILAC International College. My personal life also couldn't be any better as I have found a wonderful husband, acquired my permanent residency and I can proudly say that I have embraced all of the wonderful opportunities that have been presented to me.

All of this has been a lesson in my life and only two words could express what I truly feel from the bottom of my heart: THANK YOU to Jon and Ilan, who have always trusted me, who have had faith in me, who have always been here for me with my personal and professional development. Jon is a leader who demonstrates the meaning of true devotion, as he has built a perfect team and is surrounded by people who admire him, look up to him and who he can always count on.

**Thanks to Jon and Ilan, I understand the meaning of real PASSION and how to dream big!!!!**



# Alena Khabibullina

At ILAC since 2013

**Director of Sales, CIS Countries - Present**

2016 - Marketing and Events Consultant

2014 - Marketing Manager, Social Media

2014 - Direct Sales Specialist

2013 - Student for GBC

**Enough is enough,** I said to myself and decided to step out of my comfort zone and pursue post-graduate studies in Canada.

During all of those emotional twists, right before my big move to a new country, I met Jon and Tatiana (Porvatkina) at ALPHE in St. Petersburg. At the time, I was working as an agent myself. After a short conversation with Jon, I was no longer afraid to go to Canada. It didn't sound like something unthinkable and unreachable anymore.

I feel that Jon mentors me every day, whether I ask for support or not. He coaches us all naturally without even knowing it.

I'm a good listener and the first to implement great ideas and strong, new initiatives. Jon is a great mentor who believes in "girl power" and always encourages his predominantly female staff to pursue what they truly enjoy. He gives us the opportunity to test the waters in different departments within the company, helping us to realize our true passions as he believes that great achievements come with full commitment and dedication.

I don't believe that I would have been able to achieve this measure of success if I had stayed in Russia. And most of it is thanks to Jon, Ilan and ILAC.

When I consider all of my career goals and those that have been achieved in less than 5 years of living in Canada, I am very proud of myself.

The list is long: Canadian higher education, Staff Reporter at ILAC International College, ILAC Coop in Social Events Coordinator, ILAC Direct Sales, ILAC Social Media Manager, ILAC Marketing Manager, a great husband and beautiful daughter, Permanent Residency, and now, Director of Sales and Recruitment for CIS Market at ILAC.

Sometimes I think that I should stop by Jon's office more often to say thank you. I will use this opportunity to thank him publicly for all that he has done for me, for his out of the box thinking and for his great mentorship skills. Women are much stronger than many may think but Jon knows well just how strong women can be.



# Sumiyo Hama

At ILAC since 2009

**Sales Director – Japan – Present**

2015 – Receptionist

I came to Canada without any friends or family. I was looking for something I could be passionate about, somewhere in which I would feel that I belong. ILAC had everything I could ever ask for. I started fresh and could also use the experience and skills that I brought from back home into this new environment.

Jon hired me for reception, at first. But shortly after that, he gave me an opportunity as Sales Director for Japan. It was 8 years ago when I was offered that position and Jon told me it was because he believed I had talent. That was the start of my career in Canada. **It wasn't easy to build up my life from scratch, but I achieved everything I strived to achieve, with both Jon and Ilan's support.**

Four years ago, when I had my daughter, I thought I would have to give up my career. I wasn't sure if I could keep up my job and be a mother at the same time. But now, I'm here doing both and I am enjoying it! I could never have become who I am without working for ILAC. I am so thankful to Jon and Ilan for believing in me and also grateful for this amazing environment in which mothers can work comfortably.



# Isabella Vivares

At ILAC since 2017

**Global Marketing Distribution Manager – Present**

2013 – Graphic Designer

2012 – Receptionist

**What if one opportunity could change your life forever? It could...**

This opportunity came to me in 2011 when I first started working at ILAC as a receptionist. I soon realized ILAC was a perfect workplace for personal and professional growth, as it helped me to develop my skills. ILAC unlocked my potential by engaging and empowering equality and opportunity for everyone, especially women.

Today, 6 years later, working in ILAC's Marketing Department, I can proudly say that Jon and Ilan support ambitious women, take pleasure in mentoring them and give them access to sponsorship and leadership positions. Jon's trust has been a key element for my personal and professional growth. A more equal, welcoming corporate world is beneficial for everyone, and Jon and Ilan are working to make it happen.

I moved back to Colombia in 2013 and had dinner with Jon during his business trip, in the spring of 2017 in Medellin, where he inspired me to return and recruited me back to ILAC Canada. He has offered me many new roles and responsibilities and I realize that I have an amazing chance to grow and build a career for my future.



# Carol Park

At ILAC since 2003

**Director of Sales - Korea - Present**

2005 - Marketing Support Korea

2003 - Korean Counselor

I never expected that I would be working at ILAC for such a long time. **I came to Canada as an immigrant 18 years ago. I never anticipated that I would be one of the best sales team members and that I would continue this for so long.**

I had worked in different companies and industries in South Korea before I came to Canada. In Korea, we have a very different culture and work environment for women. It isn't easy to go to work as a mother if you do not have a nanny or caretaker to watch your children and take care of your home. I believed it would be the same for women working for Canadian companies and there wouldn't be many opportunities for women to achieve a balanced life. With this knowledge, I did not consider that I could stay with any company for long or find satisfaction with any job.

I was wrong. I met Jon and Ilan 20 years ago. I started working with them as their first agent. In 2003, Ilan suggested that I work at ILAC in marketing for Korea. I accepted this offer. There was a huge difference in the workplace from companies I had worked with in the past. I felt free, respected, innovative, responsible and confident at ILAC. Also, ILAC's family-oriented culture gave me the chance to excel in the work place and also enjoy being a mother, with full support. Jon's continuously encouraging words such as "I trust you," "I like your opinion," and "how's your family" made a huge difference in my life.

I felt confident and felt that I could accomplish anything. **I am still here at ILAC, after 15 years, with happiness and satisfaction.**

I appreciate having the chance to work at ILAC and I am equally grateful to have learned so many valuable lessons from two great leaders.



# Ela Kaca

At ILAC since 2014

**Assistant Director of Studies - Present**

2015 - University Pathway Teacher

2014 - ESL Teacher

I started working at ILAC as a teacher three years ago and recently, I was promoted to become the Assistant Director of Studies in the Toronto Campus.

**Even though I was pregnant at the time of my interview, the thought of my pregnancy standing in the way of obtaining this position never even crossed my mind.**

I believe that this feeling of security is hard to achieve in most workplaces. The reason why I was not worried is because there are many women leaders in ILAC who work in different departments, some of whom are personal friends of mine and some of whom have been in similar situations. I am very grateful to be working with people who celebrate diversity and take it upon themselves to create an age, gender and culturally varying workplace where the feeling of 'not belonging' or 'being different' is completely absent. I'm looking forward to staying at ILAC for many more years to come!





# Ana Karina Montilla

At ILAC since 2011

**Director of Homestay - Present**

2013 - Homestay Coordinator

2011 - Accounting Assistant

There are some moments that define your life. For me, coming to Canada and studying at ILAC not only allowed me to learn English, but it gave me an opportunity that changed my life forever. I had the chance to meet amazing human beings like Jon and Ilan who believe and support gender equality.

**They saw something bigger than my years of experience in the financial industry. They saw my potential to become a leader in the company.**

They offered me a job as an Accounting Assistant, but shortly after, thanks to their close and warm approach, they trusted me with the key role of managing the Homestay Department in Toronto. Today, after 5 years in the company, over 20,000 students placed and witnessing continuous growth, I have nothing but love and gratefulness for ILAC, which is far more than a place to work. ILAC is my home, my family and my future.

At ILAC, under Jon and Ilan's open and welcoming leadership style, I have been able to have a voice and I have always been treated with dignity, respect and encouragement. At ILAC, I am the leader that I always aspired to be.



# Marine Gas

At ILAC since 2017

**Social Media and Communications Intern - Present**

2016 - ILAC International College Student

2015 - ILAC Student

Positive energy, family spirit, and a great atmosphere are the qualities I feel at ILAC. I never imagined I'd be part of such a great workplace in another country. But here I am. I'm so happy here. I owe this to Jon and Ilan and their amazing team. After going to ILAC to improve my English, I chose to enroll in the Service Excellence for Business Program at ILAC International College. During the practicum part of the program, I was fortunate to have been provided an internship in the marketing department back at ILAC. I feel they believe in me and I trust them to give me great work experience. I always put my heart into my work and feel they recognize my passion and commitment.

**Not only do they respect my gender, but they appreciate my nationality. I've never felt so respected for being a French woman.**

If I needed to summarize my current internship at ILAC in two words it would be *respect and trust*. Thank you for making me feel like part of this company's success story!



# Veronika Bidlova

At ILAC since 2015

## Marketing Specialist - Present

2015 - Office Administrator

2014 - ILAC International College Student

When I entered ILAC in 2014 as a student, I didn't know that the experience would change my life forever. Thanks to ILAC, I became confident enough to make a career change in my mid-twenties and permanently relocate to Canada. I fulfilled my dream to pursue marketing studies and become a marketing professional.

ILAC is truly a place where hard work and dedication gets noticed. Opportunities are given regardless of what seniority level, age or gender you are. It is an environment where you are continuously supported and motivated to develop your professional and leadership skills.

I am grateful to Jon and ILAC from the bottom of my heart. They believe in my skill set and give me the opportunity to become a part of the company. Jon has been a mentor and friend from my first day at ILAC. He has guided me down the right path. I'd like to say to Jon: Thank you for the words of encouragement, guidance and for all that you have taught me in my career.

**It has been an honour to learn and work with successful entrepreneurs like Jon and Ilan.** They have never forgotten the human values and on-going efforts of giving back to the community by supporting education, scholarships and women's leadership.



# Elif Sillaste

At ILAC since 2005

## Sales Director - Turkey - Present

2011 - Sales Director - Turkey

2010 - Sales and Marketing Manager - Turkey

2010 - Teacher

2006 - Activity Coordinator

2005 - Activity Staff

I was one of the very first student's at ILAC when I met Jon and Ilan 20 years ago. They were very friendly to their employees and very respectful. I felt that ILAC was like a family. I chose to work at ILAC to be part of that family. **ILAC is a life changing school. It definitely changed my life! I am so lucky to have been working here for over 15 years.** As a woman and a mother of two children, I think it is the best place I have ever worked.

It is very important for me to work in a secure, peaceful, friendly, supportive, trustworthy, and encouraging environment. This is all found at ILAC. Jon and Ilan, you've not only been my boss; sometimes, you have been my best friends. You've been there for me through the good times and the bad. Sometimes you've been brothers who always care for me.

I am one of the lucky ones to be working at ILAC with Jon and Ilan's strength and great support.



# Hande Coskun

At ILAC since 2009

**Director, Pathway Department - Present**

2011 - Pathway Coordinator, Turkey, Middle-East & Europe

2010 - Marketing Manager, Turkey

2009 - Marketing Coordinator, Turkey and Middle-East

I love ILAC! Anyone around me knows that ILAC is a huge part of my life. Yes, this is not my job, this is my life. I have been with the ILAC family since 2009. In 8 years, I have worked in four different positions, most recently the Director of the Pathway department.

I remember how nervous I was on my first business trip with Jon to **ICEF** in Dubai. Later when he corrected me to an agent “you work with me, not for me,” made me feel very confident about where I stand (and still do today). Jon has been a true inspiration to everyone in the company, if not to the whole industry. He listens and understands. He cares about every single person working with him. **ILAC women of all backgrounds are strong and empowered because we are heard; appreciated for our abilities; and given exceptional autonomy at our work.**

Jon and Ilan encourage ILAC women to first: be themselves; then to be visionary leaders. As an immigrant woman, their trust, encouragement and ceaseless guidance has helped me make Canada my home. I feel lucky.



# Cassie Savoie

At ILAC since 2015

**ILAC International College Academic Manager - Present**

2017 - ILAC International College Instructor

2015 - ILAC Instructor

My time with ILAC and the ILAC International College has been one of the most rewarding and challenging experiences of my professional career. Working here has made me a better colleague, teacher and leader. **I have learned a tremendous amount from all the amazing people working around me and firmly believe that having such a supportive team has driven me to lead more effectively and efficiently.** I feel very fortunate that ILAC has given me this opportunity. I am eager and motivated to inspire others in the same way that I have been inspired.





# Carolina Almeida

At ILAC since 2014

**Compliance Specialist - Present**

2014 - Homestay Coordinator

2013 - ILAC Student

Among the many great initiatives offered at ILAC, my favourite initiative is their dedication to the empowerment of women.

As a former student, I started my career at ILAC as a homestay coordinator for the Brazilian market and eventually became the company's Compliance Specialist. My scope of work involves leading and monitoring the compliance obligations and responsibilities with different levels of government. Joining our leadership team not only enhanced my professional experience, but also enabled me to develop skills and obtain knowledge in an environment where sexism has no place. **I would like to say that both Ilan and Jon are feminists at heart.**



# Christine Wach

At ILAC since 2017

**VP of Operations (Game Changer) - Present**

I recently made the leap from a Director role in public sector post-secondary education to ILAC, as VP Operations for Toronto and ILAC International College. One of the key driving forces in this decision was ILAC's dynamic, innovative culture and as an outsider I was impressed to see so many successful women in leadership roles. Jon and Ilan have built a culture for ambitious women and men to pursue their dreams.

**Both my family's support and Jon and Ilan's trust and vision convinced me to take this risk, to leave the safety of the public sector and challenge myself to grow my career in international education in a way that would not have been possible without ILAC's inspiring culture.**



# Bogumila (Bogie) Lapinski Anaya

## Marketing and Communications Strategist, guard.me International Insurance - Present

- ILAC Consultant - 2011 - 2013
- **International Partnerships & Projects Consultant** Independent/Global Leadership Initiatives Inc.
- Founder & Country Manager - **ICEF Canada**
- Manager, International Marketing & Recruitment **Sheridan College**

The first time I met Jonathan Kolber was at a reception at the Canadian Embassy in Moscow. I was a new international recruiter at Sheridan College and Jon was the famous director of ILAC, credited with opening the Russian student market (among others) for Canada. Within moments of meeting, Jon told me I was bright and took me under his wing, introducing me to all the key players in the room and giving me advice for working with agents.

That's the way Jon is. He is an influencer and connector, with an uncanny ability to see strengths in people that others usually miss. This is equally so with women and men - Jon doesn't discriminate when it comes to encouraging and building talent.

**He is the only employer that I have ever met that actively seeks out young people from diverse backgrounds and experiences and then takes the time to individually empower them.**

That is what great leadership is all about - bringing out the best in people by helping them develop and grow into leaders in their own right. My proudest moment knowing Jon was when he decided to join the efforts of the Daughters for Life Foundation to promote peace through the education of girls. Since 2012, ILAC has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the foundation and this past year welcomed several Syrian female scholars displaced by the conflict. Jon doesn't just talk about empowering women, he actually does it. He creates leadership positions for women in his organization and is always the first to offer flexible solutions to accommodate children and family obligations. He contributes to organizations that support women, mentors the women who work for him (and even those who don't) and seeks out advice from female leaders in the field. Today he is father of two young girls, which has only strengthened his resolve to build a world where women can thrive.



# Ana Maria Mejia

## Immigration Consultant, CDN Edge Founder - Present

- Legal Assistant to David Orman
- Legal Assistant to David Rosenblatt
- ILAC Receptionist 2002
- ILAC Student 1998

I started off my journey in Canada in 1998, as an international student with a Law Degree from Colombia. I enrolled at the International Language Academy of Canada (ILAC), a relatively new school for international students and at that time, I had no idea where that path would lead me.

**It was frightening at first, as it is for anyone embarking on a new adventure in an unfamiliar environment.**

I decided to enroll at ILAC to study English as a Second Language and that's where I first met Jonathan Kolber, who had just started a new company with his partner, Ilan Cohen. From the beginning, I was amazed by Jon's talent and commitment to his students. He was just starting out with this business and as stressful as it might have been, he still took the time to mentor his students to become even better than what they knew they could be.

Jonathan has been a great support for my career endeavors. He has always made me aware of my potential and has encouraged me to undertake challenges such as pursuing higher education and opening my own business in Canada. He has been the backbone to my success as he has always encouraged me to aim higher, even though it may have seemed impossible at the time.

Through his guidance, I was able to attain a Master's Degree in Canada, and most recently, I have opened my own practice as an Immigration Consultant. Throughout the whole process of pursuing higher education and starting a business from the ground up, Jonathan has been my inspiration, my mentor and has coached me to try harder and go further. I feel privileged to consult him, when it comes to making big and small decisions of being an entrepreneur. Through my work, he has grown to trust and support me, as well as recommend me to potential clients. This belief and faith, in and of itself, encourages me to be a better professional each and every day.

I admire and strive to emulate his perseverance, dedication, and open-minded equality that empowers everyone around him.



## CHARITABLE ENDEAVOUR OF THE YEAR 2017

# The ILAC Foundation

The ILAC Foundation was established in 2009 by Jonathan Kolber and Ilan Cohen, ILAC's Founders and Co-Presidents, to support women in leadership and scholarships through education as a path to world peace. Our mission is to support women leaders through education.

Our foundation focuses in supporting women with a strong academic ability, a background of socio-economic hardship, the proven ability to overcome difficulty and the dream to make a difference.

We believe that women are the greatest untapped source of talent in the world. To us it is clear that the greater the role of women in society, the better society becomes. With access to education, they can become leaders and change their lives. Society should not be judged based on their GDP per capita, but rather on the role of strong women leading communities to growth and success.

The foundation has donated over \$500,000 since its creation in scholarships to deserving female scholars from around the world.

**“There is no greater gift than the gift of education. In Canada, many of us are blessed with the opportunity to pursue higher education. To give this opportunity to someone living in hardship has a huge positive impact on the world, more than you can imagine.”**

- Jonathan Kolber

# ILAC Scholarships

## Syrian Women Displaced by War

In 2017, we were proud to award **10** scholarships to displaced Syrian women to come to Canada on student visas. The scholarships cover the tuition fees of full-time studies at ILAC and 12 months of accommodation. We have also recently awarded **3** scholarships to Ukrainian women for outstanding achievements.

Being the first private business in Canada to offer full scholarships to displaced Syrian women, the foundation's efforts began to get noticed. We started to see the impact it had on the lives of our students, scholarship graduates and staff. Shortly after the media, politicians and partner institutions began to show appreciation. We felt this was an opportunity to expand our reach and get great involvement in our sector.

Now, there are many other public institutions beginning to provide their own initiatives. We see a chance to be a leader in this effort.

**At a time when other countries are closing their borders, ILAC has vowed to continue to support diversity and respect as a pathway to peace.**

We are proud to share success stories of young female students coming to Canada and blossoming into educated women committed to being leaders for their communities and globally.

**Cont...**



# Alaa Alakel

ILAC Scholarship Recipient 2017 - Syrian Refugee

I am honored and delighted to talk about the person who gave me a new life by all standards. No words can express my gratitude for Mr. Jonathan Kolber, for all he has given and done for me. Maybe I should talk a bit about myself to highlight the difference between my life in the past and mine today, after Mr. Jonathan's help.

**My name is Alaa, I'm 23 years old from Syria. I was studying medicine in the University of Aleppo when the Syrian revolution began.** Every day I would shed tears for every child that lost his or her life. With every passing day, I lost a friend or colleague. In my third year of university, twenty-eight young students in my year were arrested; three of them never came back. I couldn't imagine what they experienced. I thought that the bombings, deaths and displacement were the worst thing that had happened, until I got arrested. Inside the prison, I saw and experienced things no one could imagine. After two long months, I was released. I couldn't stay in Aleppo to complete my studies because it meant risking getting arrested again. I returned to my hometown of Kafar Nobel with broken dreams. The memories of my experience inspired me to do humanitarian work and help other victims of the war.

Now that you know about my past, you can understand how much my life has changed because of Mr. Jonathan. **When everyone told me that studying medicine in Canada would be too difficult, Mr. Jonathan told me I could do it.** I will never forget when he said to me "you can do anything once you believe in your ability to do so."

I was sad and lonely living without my family for the first time in a strange country with everything so new and different. I couldn't sleep during the first month because I was always having nightmares. I woke up terrified every time a plane flew by. Mr. Jonathan stood by me to overcome my fears. He told me I wasn't alone and that he would be there for me no matter what. He helped me improve my English and gave me a home. **He transformed my life from hell to paradise.** Maybe I will never be able to thank him enough, but now I have a new dream: to be just like him. I want to be able to help people who want to start over again. Today, I can say that I am here, and I am strong.

Thank you, Mr. Jonathan. I am eternally grateful to you.



# Raneem Kanaan

ILAC Scholarship Recipient 2017 - Syrian Refugee

Once upon a time I was in the UAE feeling so disappointed with my education situation. After I graduated from high school in 2015, there were no good universities in Syria because of the lack of facilities; and it was too expensive to study in the UAE. So continuing my secondary school was something that seemed impossible to me.

Since I was 12 years old, I have had the dream to study abroad, in countries like the USA or Canada because both of these countries have good universities with higher education systems. Also, the living standards in Canada are amongst the highest in the world. Canada has high academic standards and rigorous quality controls. That means that I'll be earning a high-quality education diploma that will open doors for my future and benefit my career in the long run.

However, this dream was just a dream! I totally believed that this would never happen to me because of my Syrian passport and Syrians are suffering to get any visa for any country.

**By granting me a scholarship to study in Canada, Jonathan is the person that changed my life from nothing to everything.** He brought me happiness again and made my family feel proud of me because I am studying in a country that is a dream for millions of students in the world.

Jonathan has changed my life entirely from the moment I left Turkey until this day. He has helped me with many things like improving my English and studying in the best language school in Canada. Because of him I now live in Canada; in a peaceful, multicultural environment with people who are friendly and interested in learning about new cultures. This is what I was looking for from the beginning. Jonathan opened the door of his school to me but what he doesn't know is that when he gave me a chance to study English and live here on full scholarship, he made me realize how life can be so hard if you don't have someone to support you.

I'll never forget what Jon has done for me because of him I know how to communicate with others and also I live in Toronto, Canada, the most beautiful city in the world.





## Talia Kolber

*Jon's daughter since 2011*

## Alexa Kolber

*Jon's daughter since 2008*



I nominate my daddy to be a mentor for girls to become leaders because he always tells my sister and me **that we can change the world because we are women.**

Also he wants to give charity to women's education because he says all girls should go to school.







**Women In  
Leadership**

---

**Real Stories**

Proud Sponsor  
of Lead5050

