

SPOTLIGHT

Meet LSN Member *Denford Madekufamba*

By Carolyn Curtis

It's summertime and a balmy 12 degrees Celsius. There's no question Denford Madekufamba is a long way from home.

Legal counsel for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, the Zimbabwe born lawyer began his profession as a crown prosecutor in his home country before going into private practice and becoming "a Jack of all trades."

"I used to do labour law, employment law, family law, criminal law," Madekufamba explains. "We don't specialize [in Zimbabwe] because the economy is not that different, so there are not as many lawyers so as to allow specialization."

In the early 90s, his wife received sponsorship to study in Canada and left for Guelph to do an undergraduate degree. In 1994, when she had given birth to their first child, Madekufamba visited Ontario, developing an interest in Canadian law. In 1995, after finishing her degree, his wife rejoined him in Zimbabwe where, after five years in private practice, he took a job as chief administrator for a municipal organization, known in Canada as a corporate secretary.

During this time, the Zimbabwe government started forcefully taking land without compensation. It made practicing law a dangerous profession, particularly to anyone who stood up for the rights of those trying to resist. There were times Madekufamba felt his own wellbeing and that of his family's was threatened.

"From that moment, going until now, it has lead to a lack of respect for property rights and... for the rule of law," he says. "If you were perceived to be not supporting the government, you could be taken.

"If you represented anyone who was arrested for political crimes, then you were targeted... I represented these people. There were instances where thugs were being sent by the government... There was no distinction between the ruling party and the State... It's still going on."

In 2004, when his wife got another scholarship to pursue a masters' degree, Madekufamba decided to move with her to Canada. He joined her in 2005, finding work outside of the legal profession to support his family. In 2012, he started the certification process through the Law Society of Upper Canada to practice in Canada.

"For Canada equivalency, I needed to show competence and write exams in 12 subjects in Canadian law," he explains. "There are two choices. You can go to law school... or do self-study. So I did self-study."

After Madekufamba was successfully awarded a certificate of qualification to practice law in Canada, he had two choices – to go through the process of articling or to enter the LSUC's law practice program. He chose the later, a process that took 8 months to complete. Throughout this time, he worked as a tractor trailer driver to pay the bills.

"It was very demanding," Madekufamba recalls.

Through his studies, he learned a whole new terminology and processes.

"It's an opportunity to learn more about a society," says Madekufamba.

"For example, in Canada, in family law, custody [is about] the parent who makes the major decisions. In Zimbabwe legal context, custody is who is going to stay with that child, who is going to live with the child."

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After his training, Madekufamba worked briefly for a legal clinic in St. Thomas, Ontario, working primarily with an indigenous population. He then got an offer to come up North as legal council for QEC.

"I'm the only lawyer, so [I'm responsible for] the usual in-house duties, but more particularly with respect to procurement law, construction law," he says. "Our rates have to be approved, regulated. It's part of my responsibilities to make sure that the regulatory framework is complied with."

Despite the cold climate, Madekufamba enjoys his work in Iqaluit, but it's not without its difficulties.

"My family is in Calgary, so that is another challenge," he explains. "I don't see them as often as I would like to."