



Volunteer Appreciation

LEGAL EDUCATION SOCIETY OF ALBERTA



Darren Reed

Jensen Shawa Solomon
Duiguid Hawkes LLP

FEATURE VOLUNTEER

Born and raised in Regina, Saskatchewan, Darren gained a BA (Advanced) in Anthropology in May 1995. An exchange semester at the University College of Ripon & York St. John in 1994 introduced Darren to travel outside of North America. Over three years, between juggling undergrad studies and law school, while living in the UK and travelling Europe, Darren immersed himself in various endeavours notably as a manager for a publicly traded pub company.

“I ran pubs in the south of England, but I’ve also done a lot of other work over the years. I’ve been a bingo caller, bartender, private investigator, process server and bailiff. I’ve cleaned grocery stores, unloaded semi-trucks, washed windows, worked at 7-11, managed the apartment building I lived in for law school and even been a substitute teacher’s assistant at a highschool.”

Darren’s motto? “No job is too menial if it provides a means to an end.”

What motivated you to choose law?

After my return from the UK, I was working for a car rental company, and I rented a car to a prominent Saskatoon defence lawyer, Bill Roe. Bill impressed me so much I took him out for lunch. After that lunch, I knew law was for me. I did reasonably well in law school, clerked for the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, and then started my legal career in Calgary with a national firm in 2005.

“Preparation can, almost always, balance out a lack of experience and replace nervousness with confidence.”

I joined my current firm, JSS Barristers in the early fall of 2006, and became a partner in 2012. The rest is history.

What advice would you pass on to a newly called lawyer?

Work as hard as you can and be a sponge. Take on as much responsibility as you’re comfortable with, and look at every assignment, file or case as an opportunity to learn, because time goes quickly and you cannot replace the experience you gain in the first 5 - 6 years of practise.

Preparation can, almost always, balance out a lack of experience and replace nervousness with confidence.

How you view things affects how you feel about them. If you’re truly not happy where you are, find a new place where you can be.

What motivates you to volunteer?

The opportunity to volunteer at a relatively junior level motivated me, as I presumed that if LESA was willing to trust me, it was worth doing. From that came the realization that I had something to give back to the new lawyers and articling students. That still motivates me. Now, it’s the constant exposure to new lawyers and articling students, other practitioners, all who share the desire to be better at what it is we do for a living, and the camaraderie that comes out of that. That, and the fact that people at LESA are fantastic to deal with. It’s always such a pleasure volunteering because you’re made to feel welcome and the gratitude is genuine.

What is your most memorable aspect of volunteering for LESA?

Even though my legal career has been comparatively short to many, I’ve spent 7 years of it volunteering with LESA. The most memorable aspects are the great people at LESA. People like Dawn Ofner and Jennifer Flynn are just so approachable and genuine; they are very easy to work with. Also, the fact that as my experience with LESA has grown, so have the opportunities. Over time I’ve been given opportunities to evaluate, teach, speak, and this year I organized, prepared and chaired the Civil Procedure for Legal Support Staff seminar.

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