



THE **VOICE** OF  
THE **CRIMINAL**  
**DEFENCE BAR**

### MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

#### INTRO :

**Member Name :** Sherry “Nimkiikwe” Abotossaway

**Year of Call :** 2019

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#### QUESTIONS :

**1- How did you get into criminal law?**

I observed too many Aboriginal people, racialized and marginalized people in the Criminal Justice system and I wanted to assist them.

**2- What type of cases do you enjoy defending the most and why?**

I don't really have cases that I enjoy defending more than other cases. I like being able to defend people and that is my impetus for doing Criminal Law.

**3- How did the practice of criminal law change you?**

The practice of criminal law has changed me in that I have become quite jaded. I don't automatically believe what I hear from anyone anymore. I question everything. I use to take everything at face value and now I question everything, I try to uncover the (or maybe a) truth, by looking deeper at issues, rather than accepting what someone says.

**4- If there is one thing only you would like to see change in criminal law, what would it be?**

One thing I would change is the overcharging of defendants. I believe that clients in this jurisdiction are definitely overcharged in regard to breaches. I also don't like red zones, as they disproportionately impact Indigenous people and I'd love to see this change.

**5- What advice would you give to your younger self when you first started practising criminal law?**

To take care of your mental health.

## **6- How do you deal with bad work days?**

I go for a drive, by myself and play my favourite music. I also take care of my mental health and see a counsellor regularly. I think that's important for everyone, to at least have one person that you can talk to.

## **7- Any embarrassing court story you're willing to share?**

Well, one time, I also was walking out of the courthouse one day, and I tripped out the front doors and I don't know how, but my work bag fell back into the courthouse, and I fell outside the courthouse, right in front of one of the courthouse officers. She said I still looked cool, lol.

## **8- Who is your role model/inspiration in criminal law?**

My co-worker Amy Grann. She is a well-rounded lawyer. As well as Kevin Matthews, my other co-worker, who has a passion for social justice. If I could be half the lawyer, they are, then I would be amazing!

## **9- What's your favourite song?**

Just like Fire, by P!nk. I had a difficult upbringing, I was in and out of foster care, my dad went to residential school, my grandparents went to residential school, I was a 60's Scoop child, I eventually ended up homeless, couch surfing, sleeping under apartment stairways etc., and so when I feel down, or have a bad day, I listen to this song, because it reminds me that I came from a tough place, but I am now a strong Indigenous Kwe, who is lawyering and helping others!!!

**10- How do you maintain work life balance and how do you deal with the stress of the job?**

Well, I do work around the clock it feels like, as a new lawyer. However, I find that taking days off helps. Just to not think and to relax. It is also time that I spend with my kids. I deal with the stress of the job, by going for rides and listening to music.

**11- What is your biggest legal inspiration?**

I hope to make changes to the legal system. In some capacity to try and make things better for Racialized and Marginalized people, who are victimized by the judicial system.

**12- What do you do outside of the law?**

I hike, hang out with my kids, I like to travel, I hang out with friends, I also bead, as I find this relaxing, and it keeps me out of trouble.

**13- What would your defence bar colleagues be surprised to learn about you?**

That I am a ambivert.