



Scotiabank finds perfect match through Hire Immigrants Ottawa

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EMC News - When Alberta Lawson left Ghana to study in Canada the last thing she expected was to fall in love with this country.

In 1997 Lawson received a scholarship from CIDA to get her Masters in the financial field from Carleton University. When her studies finished, Lawson applied for permanent residency, but was denied and moved back to her family in West Africa.

"I missed the snow and I wanted to go back," Lawson said with a laugh.

While in Ghana, Lawson said she reflected on how Canada is helping Ghana with development projects and how "generous the Canadian government and people are."

"I fell in love with this country," said Lawson.

Finally in the fall of 2003, Lawson's application was accepted and she, along with her three children, moved to Canada.

"I spent three years taking care of my kids and helping them deal with the cultural shock and the climate," said Lawson. "They said 'we don't want to live in this deep freeze. They were teens when we moved here and have issues to deal with, not only finding themselves, but moving to a new country. They are very happy now."

During that time Lawson was also searching for a job, but that proved to be a difficult task, even for a highly educated woman with years of banking experience.

"I wanted to get back in the banking industry, it's where I belong," Lawson said, noting that she had worked at the central bank in Ghana. "I was looking at how to get back in this business. I went to all the banks' websites and Scotiabank really appealed to me because of its values. Scotiabank's values reflect my values. They have integrity and you want to be with people who are happy. They have respect of background, respect of colour."



Kanata Scotiabank manager David Johnstone welcomed Alberta Lawson, an immigrant from Ghana, to the Terry Fox branch. Lawson spoke at the Hire Immigrants Ottawa conference two weeks ago about her experience finding work in Canada.

Lawson decided to attend a job fair for Hire Immigrants Ottawa. While there, to her surprise, she met Emma Creese, manager of staffing and recruitment for Scotiabank.

"I knew what I wanted and went straight to the finance sector of the fair and was very excited when I saw Scotiabank there," said Lawson.

Lawson said after speaking with Creese, she was sold.

"Emma was interested in me, as a person, but also she sold Scotiabank to me," Lawson noted.

Creese contact Lawson the following week and set up interviews for her at the Centrum branch of Scotiabank. She has been working there since August.

Lawson lives in Centrepoinette with her family and commutes to Kanata every day where she works as a senior personal banking officer at the Centrum branch.

"We believe in inclusion and representing the community in which we work," said David Johnstone, Kanata Community Manager for Scotiabank. "We appreciate diverse backgrounds. Alberta brings talent and life experience to Scotiabank and relates to the experiences of our clients."

Lawson was invited to speak at the Hire Immigrants Ottawa summit in March to tell her story of moving to Canada and finding employment.

Hire Immigrants Ottawa is the first project of the Internationally Trained Workers Partnership. It is a new, local initiative that brings together employers, immigrant agencies and stakeholders to create employment opportunities for skilled immigrants in Ottawa.

Statistics Canada recently released a study about the influx of new Canadians. Scotiabank feels that it is ahead of the pack as an institute with welcoming new Canadians to the team.

"It's not only the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do," said Carrie Cole, public relations for Scotiabank. "There is a cultural diversity in our communities and we want to serve our clients and embrace their needs. Alberta is our shining star and embraces all these elements with a personality that stands out."

To learn more about Hire Immigrants Ottawa visit www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca.