



# BEAUFORT WEST

## LEGAL ADVICE & DEVELOPMENT OFFICE (BWLADO)

Beaufort West is the largest town in the arid Great Karoo region of the Western Cape. It is a major truck stop hub on the N1 between Johannesburg and Cape Town. Known as the capital of the Karoo, it forms part of the Beaufort West Local Municipality, with 34 085 inhabitants, with over 90% Coloured Afrikaans speakers as recorded by Stats SA's population census in 2011.<sup>1</sup>

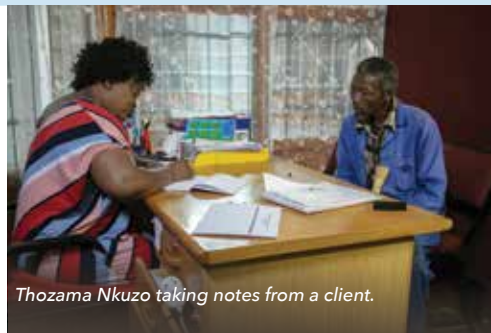
In December 1994, the former black township Kwa-Mandlenkosi was amalgamated into the Beaufort West Municipality. In December 2000, the rural towns of Merweville and Nelspoort were also incorporated as part of the Beaufort West Municipality. The main economic activities are transport and communication (25.3%), wholesale and retail trade (16.8%), general government services (14.4%), manufacturing (10.9%), agriculture (7.7%).<sup>2</sup>

Beaufort West Legal Advice and Development Office (BWLADO) is largely focussed on paralegal advice with a particular focus on worker rights. The LDA has a good relationship with the Department of Labour and the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) which stands them in great stead when dealing with unfair labour practices.

1. Frith, A. (2012). Census 2011: Main Place: Beaufort West. Retrieved October 3, 2019, from <https://census2011.adrianfrith.com/place/183005>
2. Beaufort West Local Municipality. (2018). Contents. In IDP Review 2018-2019.



Coordinator Eugene Mapotolo talking to a client in the BWLADO Advice Office.



Thozama Nkuzo taking notes from a client.



Clients in the waiting room at BWLADO.

## FAST FACTS

**NAME:** Beaufort West Legal Advice & Development Office (BWLADO)

**LED BY:** Eugene Mapotolo

**MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY THE COMMUNITY:** unemployment, domestic abuse, alcohol and drug abuse

**MAIN ACTIVITIES:** Legal advice office; skills development for youth; helping to provide employment opportunities

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# MY LIFE PURPOSE IS TO SERVE MY COMMUNITY



Thozama Nkuzo and Eugene Mapotolo (coordinator) meeting with a client.



Beaufort West Legal Advice & Development Office.



Ncumisa Mbalo, Eugene Mapotolo and Thozama Nkuzo.

## THOZAMA NKUZO REFLECTS ON HOW A CHANCE ENCOUNTER WITH A MENTALLY ILL ELDERLY WOMAN SHE FOUND WANDERING ON THE STREETS OF BEAUFORT WEST IGNITED HER DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE.

I was born in King William's Town, Eastern Cape and I grew up on the dusty streets of Zwelitsha. As a little girl, I moved with my family to Cape Town. Eventually we ended up in Beaufort West because of my father's pastoral work. After I completed matric, I joined an organisation called 'Gender Base Care' (GBC) as an administrator. That was my first job. GBC assisted abused women by providing a shelter facility and assisting them to navigate the criminal justice system. I found the work at GBC very satisfying. It helped me find my purpose in life and ignited in me a passion for social justice activism.

During the summer of 2010, I was captivated by an elderly woman who was wandering around the streets of Beaufort West. She was wearing several layers of clothing. Every time I saw her or passed her my heart bled. I became emotional when I saw her eating scraps from a dustbin. I never saw her talking even if someone gave her something to eat. My colleague and I decided to help her even though we had no idea whether she was dangerous or not. We went to the police station to seek some help and they agreed to help us. Although it was not easy, we managed to take her to our shelter. We washed her and her clothes. She told us that she was from Limpopo and she had two sons and a daughter who is a nurse.

We took photographs of her and posted them at the local police station and various shops in town. We also went to the announcers at the local radio station who helped us send out a missing person alert. All of this effort bore fruit. After three to four weeks the elderly lady's children heard our broadcast and came to Beaufort West to identify if she was their mother. It was a very emotional moment because they thought they would never see their mother again. They told us that their mother became mentally ill during a very short space of time. Soon after her illness, she disappeared, and they



THOZAMA NKUZO



never saw her again for over two years. It really moved me to see how happy they were to be reunited with their mother again. This story confirmed to me once again that my purpose in life is to serve my community.

When a position came up at the Advice Office, I took it with open arms. I started as an administrator at BWLADO and now I am a fieldworker. My work as a fieldworker at the Advice Office provides me with a platform to live out my purpose helping people such as the time when we helped a family who was evicted by a farm owner after their father passed away. The family was grieving the loss of their father and their home as they were stranded without a place to stay. We took the matter up with the farm owner and he agreed to compensate the family so that they could buy a house. It is stories like this, where I can see we are making a difference to people's lives, that make me happy to go to work every morning at the Advice Office.



**GROWING JUSTICE: BWLADO team members Thozama Nkuzo (left), Eugene Mapotolo (second left) and Ncumisa Mbalo (far right) meet with SCAT Programme Officer Colleen Alexander-Julies (second right).**