



# ‘Lost Boy’ HEADING HOME

Simon Kuany (MIN1T1) is getting ready to go back to South Sudan. His country’s future largely depends on the responsible development of its natural resources.

**S**imon Kuany is all smiles these days, and it has nothing to do with the fact that mid-terms are wrapping up.

When he was only 12 years old, he wandered across the Sudanese countryside into Ethiopia and Kenya in a bid to flee a civil war that had lasted for nearly 50 years.

Along the way, he met up with other children who had escaped the hunger, disease, and malnutrition caused by the conflict.

When they and thousands of others of children began to arrive in a Kenyan refugee camp, the world called them Sudan’s “Lost Boys.”

Now in his fourth year in the Lassonde Mineral Engineering Program, Simon is counting down the days until he gets to go home. He’s not alone among his peers here in his excitement, but few probably understand the significance of his return trip.

Simon is returning to Panyagoor,

a small town in South Sudan, which is set to formally secede and declare independence from its Northern controllers on July 1, 2011.

A few weeks ago, Simon and other members of the Sudanese-Canadian community participated in an internationally-monitored referendum which could help secure peace in his homeland. They voted almost unanimously (99%) in favour of separation.

On a chilly day in February, Simon

sits outside the Bahen Centre on campus and stares wistfully to the East as he speaks of his past and his future.

"In the early 1990s I lived in the warzone," he recalls. "When northern troops attacked, there was nowhere we could run to... the war was everywhere."

Kuany was born in Panyagoor, Sudan, a small town near the eastern border with Ethiopia.

He struck out toward the border on foot, leaving behind friends, family and everything he knew in the world. Behind him, other children were being coerced or voluntarily taking up arms in the conflict.

Refugees were not welcome in Ethiopia, which was actively displacing foreigners at the time, so he and the other boys he had met along the way continued south to Kenya.

A quick map reference suggests he probably wandered over 400km, or the equivalent of a 12-year-old walking from Toronto to Detroit without a guide.

It was a five-month trek, and many of his compatriots died of disease along the way.

"It was hard," he says, now smiling. "But we just persevered."

A UN-operated refugee camp eventually welcomed them in northern Kenya. There, he had the opportunity to attend primary school through the help of the Lutheran World Federation.

Primary school was held under a tree in the camp. He eventually completed his schooling, having fulfilled the requirements of the

Kenyan primary system.

It was an oddly multicultural experience, Simon recalls, given the socio-ethnic conflicts that had plagued the region.

"There were so many of us," he remembers. "Rwandans, Ethiopians, Sudanese. We all learned together and came to know English in the camp."

Unable to afford to pay the fees that the mainstream Kenyan high school system required, a group of Jesuits stepped in and offered sponsorship. With the Jesuit's support, he finished his Kenyan secondary exams from a local boarding school.

**"It was hard... but we just persevered."**

At that point in his life, his options seemed limited. He couldn't go home. He couldn't afford school, and couldn't legally work in his foreign residence.

That's when World University Services of Canada (WUSC) arrived on the scene.

They could only handle about 25-30 students, which made for a competitive process. In the end, Simon was one of them, an opportunity that changed his life forever.

Simon came to the University of Toronto and found his way to the Lassonde Mineral Engineering program. "Sudan has so many resources," he says with a sense of pride. "We will need to find a way to develop this in our country."

And develop it he will. Through the Program, Simon is learning from some of the industry's leaders in mineral resource estimation, extraction, and business.

Through necessity, he has also gained first-hand experience in the minerals industry.

Since WUSC could only support him for the first year, Simon has been supporting his own education in Canada at work part-time throughout the year – as a Research Analyst with Boswell Capital Corporation.

A lot has happened in South Sudan in the few years since he left – and a lot has happened in his own life, too. Where once there seemed to be nowhere to go, his life is suddenly filled with almost limitless options.

Yet Simon knows what he must do.

"I am planning to return home to my village, Panyagor, to help them develop the new economy," he says. "At the present time, there is almost no development whatsoever." Indeed, the South is full of oil and other valuable minerals – but much of the infrastructure, including a major pipeline, was developed in the north of the country.

"This isn't simple rebuilding, it is creating," Simon insists. "There is nothing there at present – we are literally creating a new country day by day."

And so, on a chilly day in February, Simon sits outside the Bahen Centre on campus and smiles to the East as he speaks of his past and his future. ♣