

## PORTRAIT

### Karim Belmokhtar

Karim was born in Algeria. As a child, it was his responsibility to operate the diesel generator that provided the family with a few hours of electricity a day.

For Karim, statistics such as the 200,000 Canadians living off the grid or the 1 billion people worldwide deprived of electricity hit close to home.

However, little did he know that life, with all of its omens and coincidences, would one day lead him to work to ensure a clean, reliable energy supply for as many households as possible.



**Karim Belmokhtar**  
Project Manager, Research and Innovation at Nergica

**“Destiny? Chance? I don’t try to understand, because I know that I’m where I need to be.”**

Even in kindergarten, Karim was head of his class, and remained a top-performing student throughout his academic career. After earning his Bachelor’s degree – an invention of Napoléon, as he likes to point out – he is directed toward a core course in technology, whereas in reality he wanted to study medicine. For Karim, this was just the first of a number of frustrations, but as he puts it: “In my country, that’s how it goes! Surely it was a sign!”

After taking some time off for family-related reasons, Karim decides to move to France, determined to pursue his studies there. After completing his Master’s, he applies for a PhD, and despite the fact that he was pre-selected with honours, his application is rejected due to his age. Karim is over 25. Disappointment sets in once again: “I was frustrated and extremely disappointed!” he admits. So, when one of his friends suggests that he move to Montréal to work as an engineer, Karim eagerly agrees and prepares to immigrate.

#### **Finding his path**

However, Karim is unable to forget his father’s dream that one day he might complete a PhD. In fact, it was with this promise in mind that he decides to contact a professor from Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières whom he had found online. Karim is offered a project. That was all he needed; the sign was clear. Karim was going to do a PhD!

Upon arriving in Canada, Karim is literally engrossed in his research project, which pertains to transportation applications for advanced motor control using a multi-level inverter. In fact, it was this research project that would serve as a spark and pave the way to the renewables sector. Ever since, Karim has been totally absorbed and fascinated by renewable energy and power supply for communities.

### **“Gaspé Peninsula? Never heard of it!”**

When Nergica contacted Karim for an interview, he couldn't even remember having ever applied to the company. He sorted through all his emails... nothing! A sign? Perhaps. All the same, he showed up one Friday afternoon – December 13, 2013 to be exact – and in the middle of a snowstorm no less!

He was intrigued by the challenge and impressed by the general manager's candour, not to mention the organization's researchers in whose work he had already taken an interest. What did he have to lose?

### **“For me, Gaspé was like a 2<sup>nd</sup> migration.”**

Karim had long been convinced that all the stars were aligned for Nergica become a major player in the energy transition, at least in Canada, and today he is proud to play a part in the process. “Canada believed in me and opened its doors to me. Now it's my turn to give a little something back.”

In conclusion, Karim thrives on new challenges and, with all the projects currently on his desk, he is content, much to the delight of his colleagues and the organization. Amongst other projects, Karim currently manages Opten, a bold research projects that brings together partners from diverse backgrounds for the intelligent integration of renewables in microgrids.

“I am proud to see that I can rally colleagues and partners around common projects, even if deep down, I'm really rather shy,” admits Karim.

Today, Karim is pleased, and rightly so. He successfully realized his father's dream and humbly considers that he did what he had to do... and that life did the rest.

**Absorbed? For Karim, being absorbed means working 14 or 15 hours a day, completing a PhD in 3 years instead of 5, and working around the clock while raising a family.**

