

# Finding the



*Julie Self*

**J**ulie Self considers herself one of the lucky people who've been able to tap into their values, talents and interests and wind up with a fulfilling job.

The Nova Scotia native, now living in Edmonton, is a surface water policy specialist with Alberta's Ministry of Environment. She leads the advancement of a wetland management policy that ultimately seeks to ensure conservation of that province's wetlands.

"Wetlands play a vital role in the ecosystem," with regard to water quality, wildlife habitat, ground water recharge and recreation and educational opportunities, says Self, 34.

The work includes research and analysis as well as working with leading stakeholders to plan policy implementation and participate in the approval and implementation process.

"My experience with the Alberta government has afforded me the rare opportunity to be intimately involved in the evolution of this significant water policy from inception to implementation."

# Right Path

*By Cathy Von Kintzel*

A graduate of Saint Mary's International Development Studies program (2010), Self received the Gold Medal (Morrison Medal) at convocation for exceptional thesis fieldwork design and empirical research at the graduate level. Her thesis and coursework focused on water management issues in southern Africa. She lived in Zambia from 2007 to 2008, working with a non-governmental organization for six months and spending five months conducting qualitative research in low-income communities.

"My research provided invaluable first-hand exposure to the challenges of water scarcity, and I was humbled by the generosity of communities willing to spend time to help me understand their lives, their culture and the daily challenges they face in accessing water."

Self always sought a career that aligned with her values and interests, but her path wasn't straight. She initially enrolled in a hospitality management program to follow her interest in places and people, then switched to a general business degree to develop and use her analytical and problem-solving skills.

"I became increasingly conscious of the disparities that exist in our world," she says. "I found that neither path seemed to satisfy my desire to contribute to the well-being of others in society."

Enrolment in an undergraduate course on globalization, food security and freshwater scarcity in 2004 fundamentally changed the way she viewed the world and her role in it.

Since then, she's sought opportunities to learn about and contribute to the management of various effects of what she describes as an impending or ongoing fresh water shortage.

"It's my goal to play a leadership role in the development and implementation of water management policy and programs

in water scarce areas of Canada and sub-Saharan Africa," she says. Her ambition is to also contribute to Canadian and international freshwater policies.

Self recently returned from Australia, where she was part of a six-member Rotary Foundation Group Study Exchange. The intent was to provide young leaders in their fields, ages 25 to 40, with an opportunity to gain experience and develop networks in their respective vocations.

"My goals were to really look at water policy development in a water-scarce environment and (at) the experiences of people impacted by that policy and by water scarcity in general," she says. "The Murray-Darling river basin is just emerging from a 10-year drought and is quite well-known for its water problems. It was an extraordinary opportunity.

"It's important to develop practical policies that take into consideration environmental, industrial, community and individual needs," Self says.

"You have to consider all of the pieces of the puzzle. If a farmer uses water for irrigation, you can't just cut it off to meet a water conservation objective. You have to look at the issue holistically."

Self grew up in West Pennant, a fishing village about 40 minutes from downtown Halifax, and she still calls Nova Scotia home.

Wherever she is, she strives to keep her surroundings positive by decorating with things that make her smile or laugh. Her surroundings also reflect her love of international travel.

In her spare time, Self enjoys biking, gardening, cooking, being outdoors and volunteering, with a particular interest in alleviating poverty or the effects of poverty in Canada and abroad. □