

Diversity of Professions

Just as members of the department come from many corners of the world and from many cultural traditions, they also have great diversity in terms of the work they did before joining DFAIT. Of the many stories to tell, here are a few.

As a nuclear submarine officer in the Royal Navy, Michael Washer never had the slightest expectation of moving to Canada and working for Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. However, that experience turned out to be the perfect qualification for what he's doing now: supervising the defuelling and dismantlement of nuclear submarines in Russia.

As a deputy director in the Global Partnership Program, Washer has been doing this work for seven years. "It's a perfect circle," he says. "Years ago, I chased Soviet submarines through the oceans, and now I help dismantle them and remove the dangers they might pose if they were left to deteriorate. And I must say, the Russians are pleased to know of my professional background."

Washer goes to Russia six to eight times a year to oversee Russian shipyards dismantling dilapidated Soviet-era nuclear submarines. The 18th one to be dismantled will soon be finished under Canadian funding.

Hard work? Not for Washer. "I'm one of those blokes who would almost pay to do the work I do."

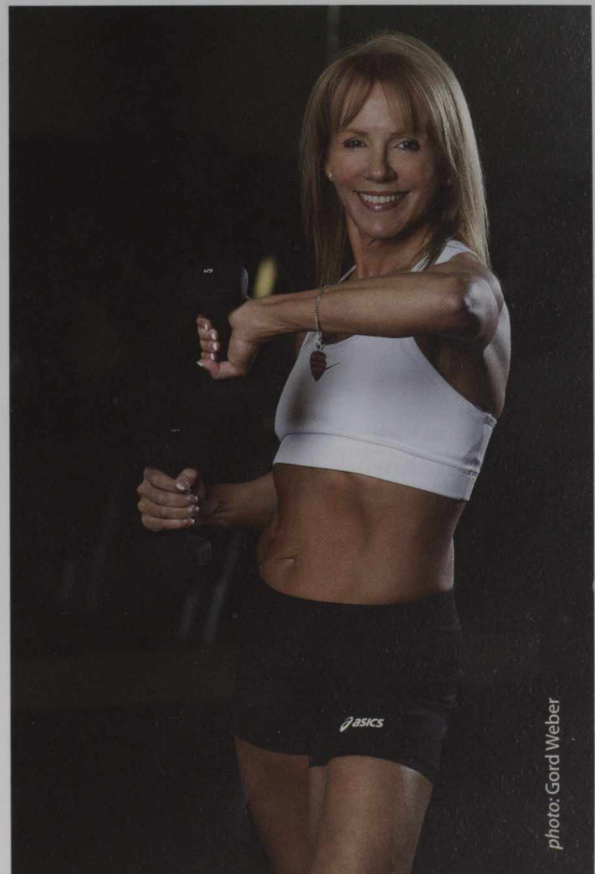
Though Geoff White, a political counsellor in Canada's High Commission to South Africa, has worked for DFAIT for 20 years, his previous job was to report on the department for newspaper readers. As a Calgary Herald reporter, White covered foreign affairs and defence during the Mulroney era. After five years on Parliament Hill, White was hungry for new challenges. In 1990, he accepted a job as a communications officer in the department. In 1999, he joined the trade policy branch, and in 2009, he arrived in Pretoria on his first foreign posting.

White has enjoyed his DFAIT career but has never lost his itch to write. "When the time comes to retire, I'd like to turn to some free and creative writing or perhaps pursue my interest in musical theatre—but time will tell."

For years, senior trade officer Sherry Nowlan has worked on her own time as a personal trainer, specializing in rehabilitation, military and emergency response readiness training and many other activities. Her interest in fitness goes back to the years of rehabilitation she required after a serious car accident in 1985, which left doctors saying she would never walk normally again, ending her aspirations to become an equestrian in the Olympics and a police officer. Carefully supervised exercise brought her back, she says. But Nowlan insists that fitness is not just for the injured, it's for everyone. "Change the way you move and you'll change the way you feel and are. Fitness is key to the quality of your experience and your life."

Nowlan says DFAIT employees, with their frequent long hours, could achieve exceptional benefits from being fit. "If you're putting in 50 or 60 hours a week, as I know I often do, you need the kind of stamina that fit people have."

Few employees, it's safe to say, have had as many jobs as Bernard Leury, an Ottawa native who has worked in food services, a call centre, and even driving



Senior trade officer Sherry Nowlan is an after-hours personal trainer.

photo: Gord Weber

school buses. But he spent 25 years of his career in information technology, where he made his way from programming and systems deployment up to project management, which occupied his last decade in the industry.

Leury was easing into semi-retirement when the department hired him last July and put him in a rotational pool for eventual placement at missions abroad. Meanwhile, he's been working as an administrative assistant in the Treaty Law Division.

"My wife and I will be pleased to go anywhere. This 'retirement' could be the most exciting period of our lives."