

## Meet ESS grad Sheena Parris



Sheena Parris graduated from Dalhousie in 2015 with a Combined Honours degree in Environment, Sustainability and Society (ESS) and International Development Studies with a Certificate in Environmental Impact Assessment.

Since graduating, she has been through a whirlwind of contract positions: “Honestly, it’s the job market at the moment, and it’s unfortunate, but it can also present lots of opportunities.” In 2016, she took on an 8-month contract with the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) in the Civic Events Department where she was in charge of administration for the Professional Art Grant Program.

Although the role was not what she went to school for, Sheena was able to use her experience of developing stakeholder relationships and working on special projects to leverage herself for future roles.

Soon after her contract ended, she was hired as the Atlantic Chapter Coordinator for the Sierra Club Canada Foundation in December of 2016 for 6 months. She found more professional development opportunities in this challenging role and was able to build on experience working within and leading initiatives for non-government organizations (NGOs). At the same time, Sheena also decided to work Front of House at Neptune Theatre in downtown Halifax.

“It was always touch and go. That’s the nature of the beast with contract work. It’s always good to have a backup or something else in the pipes.”

Sheena currently works with the Government of Nova Scotia in the Department of Energy as a Clean Energy Policy Analyst. In June 2017, she was hired along with 3 other recent grads with non-technical, non-engineering backgrounds. At the time, there was a push within the Department to hire people with diverse and interdisciplinary backgrounds.

“There was myself, a SRES (School for Resource and Environmental Studies) graduate, a Marine Biology graduate and an MBA (Master of Business Administration) graduate,” says Sheena.

“We’re also the crew of millennials in the office, and so we have fun with it. It’s great having young, fresh energy in the office and all of us try to bring something different to the projects.”

In her role, she works primarily on solar policy and energy efficiency programs, with a focus on low-income, community-driven First Nations initiatives.

On advice to first year ESS students, Sheena is a big believer in being open to new experiences.

“Go out there and get outside your comfort zone. Not an engineer? Go to the engineering showcase anyways. Go to seminars and lectures in other departments and even at different universities. Halifax has so many universities and colleges that are always hosting events. Get out there and try to make connections beyond your field of study!”