

IPAC Student Biography – Nicole Beauvais

Hi, my name is Nicole Beauvais. I am a female medical student of Ojibway ancestry and I am currently in my second year of medical study. I grew up in both White River and Timmins ON. I am a member of Long Lake #58 First Nation and I also have family in Pic River First Nation.

I have previously completed a four year undergraduate degree at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, ON. I graduated with an HBSc degree with a major in Psychology. I am now attending the newest medical school in Canada, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, also located in Thunder Bay, ON. I applied to medical school during my final year of my undergraduate degree. The application is a long, time-consuming process that was, at times, difficult to manage and manoeuvre.

There have been some challenges along my journey through medical school. One major thread throughout the mandate at my school is Aboriginal health. There are a lot of stereotypes that still exist. This is also a challenging aspect of attending this institution. There are these attitudes about Aboriginal people and that somehow being an Aboriginal medical student sets you apart. It is hard to maintain that you are those people that everyone talks about and it is difficult to not get sensitive or defensive when people say things.

One of the greatest challenges I have met throughout school was facing all the stereotypes that still exist in peoples minds. For example, many students make generalized comments that hit close to home i.e. involve people in my family, or about my life experience. Through this though, I have learned that I can maybe help people open up their minds a bit more to see beyond things and to realize that people and the situations they are living in are not so black and white.

Throughout medical school, I have learned a lot about myself. I have learned that I won't compromise who I am and where I have come from to be like everybody else. I think Creator has led me down this path and it has truly been a path of self-awareness and self-growth.

One of the biggest surprises about medical school has been all the opportunities and the doors that open before you. There are so many resources to access if you only show an interest. My academic career in medicine has brought me all over the world! For example, there are many conferences and educational opportunities available and people are often willing to share their knowledge.

Another surprise was all the additional steps that come along with becoming a doctor. For example, I entered school not aware of things like the CaRMS match, the LMCCs, electives, etc. I didn't realize just how much of a life commitment this truly is and how it really becomes your lifestyle. This isn't really a problem when it is your passion, but I do think it is important to share this knowledge with people who show an interest in medicine as a career.

There is one main reason why I chose to come to medical school and that is for the people. For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to help people. I thought that if Creator gave the gift of knowledge and learning to me, then maybe I should use those gifts to the benefit of others. There are a lot of people in the world who

people forget, push away, and many who get lost in the shuffle of life – these are the people who I strive to work with and be a part of their life. Being a doctor is a special gift – it allows you into people lives in a way that many people won't ever experience.

My advice to other First Nations, Inuit or Métis students is that you can do anything you put your mind to – you just have to try and work at it. Another big thing is to reach out for support and information. There is a lot of information available, but sometimes it's not right out in the open. Also, there are students who have gone before you and can help answer questions and also to be supportive in the journey. One other important thing is to be yourself and to always be honest. This journey is sometimes a tiring and exhaustive trek, there are many obstacles, and you often feel like a fish out of water. However, it is also important for students to know that they are never alone.