

- I grew up in Midland, Ontario. This is a small town in the Southern Georgian Bay area, with a population of 16,000. I attended both elementary and secondary school here. This area has a rich history and a large Aboriginal population. This population includes Georgian Bay Island First Nation Reserve and a large Metis population due mainly to the French influence in the area.
- After high school in Midland, Ontario, I completed an undergraduate biology degree at the University of Ottawa. Because I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do with my life, I enrolled in the co-operative education program right away. The co-op program in biology at U of O doesn't start until the summer after second year, and from then on you alternate 4-month work sessions with school sessions.

The co-op program was amazing! I went to a different placement for all 4 work sessions and worked in a variety of fields. I did outdoor education near Huntsville, Ontario at an outdoor education school that teaches grade 6 students about the wilderness, sports, ecology and orientation. I worked for the indoor air quality department of Public Works and did air testing in government office buildings around Ottawa. I worked for Health Canada reviewing cosmetic ingredients and their safety to consumers, and for my fourth placement I worked for the Canadian Coast Guard in Newfoundland doing inshore search and rescue! I really enjoyed all of my placements, and the biggest thing I learned is that I wanted a career that would let me work on a team, be around different people all day and not have to work at a desk behind a computer! Medicine seemed like a career that would allow me to do these things.
- To get admitted into medical school, I had to make sure I had the required courses. This meant that I had to start early in high school by taking science and math courses that would allow me to take science and math in university. Then once in university I had to make sure that I had the required credits in each science subject in order to apply at all the 6 Ontario medical schools.

I also needed to be a good candidate for medical school; this meant that I needed to show community involvement, volunteer work and an interest in medicine. I was very involved in sports and volunteering, but most of my extracurricular activities were not "medically" related. I thought that this would limit me in my application strength, but I just stuck to things that made me happy and that I felt helped other people. This always included sport things like sport equipment drives, volunteering at road running races and coaching kids teams. In the end I think it is more important to "enhance your resume" with things that you like and enjoy, rather than doing things you think will "look good" or "help you get in."
- My biggest challenge in medical school is trying not to lose my true self. It is difficult to get away from all the medical school stuff and just be yourself! For example, it is very easy to not hang out with your older friends because your school schedule makes it difficult to do this, so instead you hang out with your

new medical school friends that you see every day. This is fine, except it makes it hard to escape med-school based discussions. I struggle to make sure I still see my family and friends from other areas of my life. I also try to do the activities that take my mind off of the hard work at school, like going for a jog, going to the gym or just taking a night off to watch a movie!

- The biggest surprise of medical school has been how great my colleagues are. The people in my class are wonderful people who are completely dedicated to helping people and becoming professional physicians. At U of O, there isn't a scary competitive feeling all the time which is something that I was scared of. Of course medicine is a competitive field, but my classmates seem to be very sincere in friendships and encouragement while still striving to achieve their own personal goals.
- Things I have learned along the way that I wish I had known earlier all involve schedules. I wish I realized that for 4 years I wouldn't really know my schedule from week to week. For example, our 1st and 2nd year curriculum is taught in 6-week blocks, and you don't get your class schedule until the week before the block. In third year, you do 6-week clinical rotations and you are often "on-call" during evenings and weekends. You really don't know your on-call schedule for each rotation until the first day of that rotation! This is just the way things work, but you need to learn to work around it, and be comfortable with not being able to make many committed plans in advance!
- I decided to go to medical school because I find the science aspect of medicine challenging, I find the people aspect rewarding, I feel like I can give back to my community if I become a great physician and it is a pretty awesome job with respect to picking your own location, hours and field to work in.
- My tips for any Aboriginal student considering medical school is to talk to a physician in their town or one that they know. Ask them to explain how a day in their life unfolds. I had a few physician-mentors in my hometown that were crucial in my decision to try and get into medical school. The next step would be to "keep your doors open". Make sure you take all the courses that you need to take to be able to apply at a bunch of different medical schools. This can be confusing, but it can easily be done by visiting all the med school web-sites and making a checklist of each criteria needed. This way there won't be any surprises when it comes time to apply. My final tip would be to just be yourself! Everyone is unique in their own way, and medical schools want a diverse class that has many interests and backgrounds. If you get an interview, answer the questions from your heart and not what you think the interviewers want to hear! Good luck, stay strong and try to enjoy the experience even though it can be very stressful!!