

Biography for David Charland

My name is David, and I am a first year medical student at the University of Western Ontario. I grew up just north of Toronto, in Thornhill. I am both Métis and Jewish, an interesting combination indeed. However, this mixed cultural background allows me to feel apart of multiple communities, which is truly a gift.

As a first year medical student, many people ask me how I managed to get accepted with so many qualified applicants. Here is what I did, and why I think it worked for me.

Throughout my entire life, I have shown dedication to things that I enjoy, I know this sounds simple, but is crucial. It just so happens that I enjoy things related to medicine and health, that is probably the part that helped the most. Throughout high school and my undergraduate career, I worked as a lifeguard in the summer and a ski instructor in the winter. Mostly because I love skiing, and loved working at an outdoor pool all summer. I also volunteered at physiotherapy clinics, mostly because I toyed with the idea of becoming a physiotherapist (as a back-up of course). By the summer following third year, I had cumulated a good variety of volunteer and work experiences that I feel represent who I am and what I enjoy.

I think my biggest challenge to getting into medical school was trying to portrait myself as the “perfect applicant”. It was not until I had talked to students in medical school that I realized that this was an impossible goal to achieve, mostly because there is no “perfect applicant”. I was then able to put forth an application that was truly reflective of my own goals, experiences, likes and dislikes.

After receiving an email from the Schulich School of Medicine, at University of Western Ontario on May 15 2006, I knew that I had succeeded in my greatest challenge thus far. In my limited experience in medical school, I have had an opportunity to figure what I enjoy and don't enjoy, as well as some of the biggest surprises I have had. First, volunteering, doesn't stop when you are in medical school, it somehow manages to increase. With a collection of 139 students, all of which have volunteered in the past, I felt even more inclined to continue to help in the community. My second biggest shock was the diversity of the student body. Everybody is unique in someway, and we are all open about our special qualities. I have also been pleasantly surprised to find that it is possible to live through medical school, with a life other than medical school.

Here are some general tips for all students, but especially aboriginal applicants. The first one is that being aboriginal is a gift, and a strong positive quality. If you embrace your uniqueness then that can only work in your favor. The second is do what you love and you will succeed. This can apply to all aspects of preparation in my mind. If you love music, then do your undergrad in music, teach music, play music, as long as you can convince yourself and the application committee that you would rather be a doctor than musician. The same can be said for any other interests, for myself it was sports. My third and final tip is to talk to people who have been there before. I have found that talking to doctors, and medical students greatly strengthened my desire to be a doctor.