

IPAC BIOGRAPHY

Where you are from

- Originally from the Yukon Territory, moved to British Columbia when I was 8 and grew up on Vancouver Island.

Work/ education experience prior to medical school

- Completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Anthropology at the University of Victoria, at which time, I participated in an Indigenous Internship Program with the Pacific Peoples Partnership and spent 6 months working for an organization in the South Pacific Country of Vanuatu. I worked for the next 5 years and returned to school at UBC to complete a few more classes in Anthropology. My last few years of working in Vancouver I worked with the Greater Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Strategy working with other organizations in the Greater Vancouver area that worked on projects addressing the issues of Homelessness, Health and Youth in the Greater Vancouver Urban Aboriginal population. I moved back to the Yukon and worked for one year with the Council of Yukon First Nations and then moved back to my First Nation community to work with the Chief and Council as the Executive Assistant.

Steps you took to get admitted to medical school

- I began to look into the pre-requisite courses I would need to complete in order to satisfy the admissions requirements and planned to complete the courses and the pre-requisites in the next two years. In the meantime I handed in an application to the two universities that I did qualify for with an Arts degree and no science background. Luckily I got accepted at one of those schools and did not have to complete two extra years of sciences, which I was prepared to do as I did not expect to be accepted at either school.

Biggest challenges in medical school (pre- or post-admission) and how you have dealt with them

- Returning to school after 5 years was a big challenge, especially moving from a remote community to a city again. Working in an environment where your knowledge and participation is gauged on how much you verbally speak up is challenging. This is something that I constantly work on and for the most part the other students are understanding. The other challenge is finding the confidence in yourself to know that your contributions are important. This was challenged by the return to school after such a long time, learning how to study effectively again. In addition, coming from a non-science background is challenging to catch up to the same level as the other students and at the same time realize the value of your own contributions.

Biggest surprises (good or bad) about medical school

- The fact that as soon as you start your first day of medicine people seem to think that you know way more than you actually do and in turn they in trust you with responsibility beyond the scope of what you may be comfortable with. You have to be clear along the way of your limitations.

Why you decided to go to medical school

- I worked in several other jobs and considered other professions before applying to medicine before I realized that medicine has the ideal balance between working with people and the ability to affect policy and change. I was always interested in health and healing and never wanted to make money off of working in those areas, until after working for several years in other jobs I realized that doing something I love doing for my job would be ideal. I also see a huge gap in health services for Aboriginal people and strongly believe that the more Aboriginal people we train in health professions the more opportunity we have of addressing those gaps.

Tips or any other messages for First Nations, Inuit or Métis people considering medical education

- My one encouragement would be to not doubt your ability to pursue Medicine as your career. My experience growing up as an Aboriginal youth, I was never encouraged to pursue careers like Medicine or Law, my perception was that these were fields that were out of my reach. Being in medicine and having the people around me appreciate what I bring to patients that we work with and my colleagues encourages me in recognizing the valuable contribution that I can make to this field.

I also found that the key to being a successful applicant is being genuine, relaxed and committed. Don't say what you think they want to hear – speak from your heart, your integrity will shine through during the interview.