



Sundre resident Davina Choi, shown on White Coat Day, is enrolled in medical school in Grande Prairie. She received her education degree, but eventually pivoted into the healthcare field, a move influenced by attending an RhPAP Let's Go Rural! High School event several years ago.

— Photo supplied by Davina Choi

A Sundre resident is on her way to becoming a rural physician several years after a spur-of-the-moment decision to attend a medical career awareness event as a high school student.

Davina Choi's guidance counsellor nudged her to participate in an [RhPAP's Let's Go Rural! High School Event](#) in 2018, despite the fact the student wasn't considering a medical career.

Back then, Choi was set to become a teacher. Regardless, she thought it might be fun to participate in the experience arranged by local attraction and retention committee representatives and area health professionals to introduce students to medical professions in her community.

"I loved suturing, I loved the airway management, I loved talking to staff back then. It really helped me appreciate the medical programs and the medical services we had in Sundre," recalls Choi of her participation in Let's Go Rural!

Now in her first year of medical school, the one-day experience proved influential for her and many others.

"I also know that a lot of my friends and classmates went into medical fields like nursing or emergency medical services because of the event," she says.

Choi is now enrolled in medical school in Grande Prairie with the Northern Alberta Medical Program (NAMP), hosted by Northwestern Polytechnic and offered through the University of Alberta. NAMP offers medical students an opportunity to complete their education in the northwestern city and communities across northern Alberta.

She didn't pursue a medical path right away, though.

Choi completed her education degree after high school but remained interested in

medicine. She volunteered at the Greenwood Family Physician clinic in her community and recalled the special care her grandfather received from physicians during his later years in Korea.

She wasn't accepted her first try, but Sundre physicians including her own physician, Dr. Jonathan Somerville, encouraged her to persevere and apply again. After teaching elementary and junior high in Sundre for a year, Choi was finally accepted.

"What truly motivated me to pursue medicine was seeing the impact rural physicians in Sundre have on their patients and communities," says Choi, noting she still remains passionate about teaching even with the career switch.

"These experiences showed me that I want to become a physician who builds meaningful, long-lasting relationships, and provides compassionate care to those in need."



A heavy snowfall led to a slower day in the Sundre emergency department recently while medical student Davina Choi was shadowing Dr. Adam Penkul through RhPAP's Rural Mentorship Program. It gave Dr. Penkul (shown) and fellow resident physician, Dr. Sonia Rawat, the opportunity to discuss fractures with Choi and show her the steps involved in casting. Not only did she learn about casting, but Choi was also able to experience what it's like having one applied.

— Photo supplied by Davina Choi

Looking back on the Let's Go Rural! event from her teaching perspective, "I think students remember it more when it's a hands-on experience than when it's a presentation."

That real world experience continued recently when Choi connected with another Sundre physician, Dr. Adam Penkul, through RhPAP's [Rural Mentorship Program](#).

"He taught me a lot about various conditions I need to be aware of in an (emergency room) ER and ... understand the reasoning behind various treatments," she says.

Choi has learned not to stand in the back corner, out of the medical team's way.

"A lot of preceptors say, "No, get in here; I want you to learn. Observe, ask questions.'

"I'm really grateful for their willingness to teach as I'm excited to learn more."