

# St. Andrews is calling

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Markia Schenkels of Shortts Lake, who is currently studying at the Lester B. Pearson **United** World College in Victoria B.C., will be leaving for Scotland in September to begin studies in medicine at the University of St. Andrews, where teaching began in 1410. - Contributed

## Former South Colchester Academy student to pursue medicine at historic Scotland university

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VICTORIA, B.C. - Her exuberance comes across, even over the telephone from the other side of the country.

"I am pretty busy, that's for sure," Marika Schenkels says, from within the Marine Science Lab at the Lester B. Pearson **United** World College in Victoria, B.C.

"And it's definitely hard to study at a place like Pearson where there's scuba diving and kayaking and oceans and field trips," she laughs. "But, somehow, I manage to fit it all in. Sometimes my sleep might suffer a little bit for it but it all works out in the end."

Indeed.

So much so that Schenkels, 18, of Shortts Lake has been awarded a full, four-year scholarship valued at \$200,000 through the McEuen Foundation, with plans to study medicine at the prestigious University of St. Andrews in Scotland following her upcoming graduation from Pearson.

And that is just the latest in a long line of accomplishments the 18-year-old has achieved so far.

In 2017, while attending South Colchester Academy in Brookfield, Schenkels was one of 40 Canadians chosen to receive a scholarship, valued at \$33,000 per year, to attend Pearson, where she is completing her high school credits.

"I was originally looking forward to kind of coming back east for university but then, when the McCuen (scholarship) and St. Andrews happened, I went a little too far east and ended up in Scotland," she says. "It's quite the opportunity ... I will start my medical school there and then hopefully finish it off and do my residency in Canada."

Schenkels has not entirely settled on what areas of medicine to specialize in, although obstetrics or reproductive health are current topics of interest.

"But that could totally change during the next long years when I'm in school," she chuckles. "I'd like to not work in the hospital forever. Like I mentioned, I think reproductive health is something I could really excel at, so whether that's working with NGOs (non-governmental organizations) or Doctors without Borders, that kind of thing, to support reproductive rights and maternal health is something I think I'd like to do."

Schenkels had to write an acceptance exam and undergo an interview for admittance into St. Andrews before she could even apply for the McEuen Scholarship. Then she had to fly to Ottawa, three days before the start of year-end exams, for a separate scholarship interview.

"I kind of told myself that none of them were going to work out along the way. So, I was surprised at every step of the way when things kept working out and they worked out right until the end, which I really never expected at all," she says. "It was quite the surprise to come out here too because I also didn't totally expect that would happen. So, it's been a series of really awesome accomplishments for sure."

In addition to her studies at Pearson, Schenkels has become an advanced, certified scuba diver and is a scuba diving leader there. She is involved in various marine surveys, teaches and participates in choreograph and is involved in gumboot dancing, a form of South African culture.

"It's just such an incredible experience to study with other young leaders and people that are really driven about social issues and sustainability," she says, earnestly. "As much as I loved my time at SCA, this was a challenge that I had to try to go for and I think it has made me a better person and shown me a little bit more of who I want to be in the future."

Following her daytime studies at Pearson, Schenkels said there are often after-dinner, student-led discussions on global issues, race, gender and sexuality or other random conversations.

"I think it's just such an adventure. We have 200 kids here, which is very small, of course, but we represent 85 different countries. So, not knowing what discussion you are going to get into that day or what kind of snacks you're going to be eating that you can't really pronounce, or just these things and experiences that you don't get to have unless you are at a school like this."

She encourages other young students to follow her lead by applying to one of the 17 **United World College (UWC)** programs around the world.

"Everyone should apply to UWC because it's been such a stepping stone in my life that this opportunity would not have happened without it," she says. "It's really formative."

Schenkels's mother Luanne said her daughter has always been "bright and motivated" but she credits her education at SCA with giving her the grounding that is helping her advance in life.

"It gave her a strong foundation prior to leaving and helped with her success both academically and from a community involvement perspective. She learned the ropes there and continued to use them when she was out west," she said. "She's sort of carrying, slightly, the torch of being involved and hopefully continues that with her career choice."

### **'A' for achievement**

- at age 12, Marika Schenkels was one of 36 girls from across North America – six from Canada – selected to participate in a four-day tween summit with the teenage-based magazine Discovery Girls.
- while attending South Colchester Academy (SCA) in Brookfield, beginning in Grade 8, she was involved in the school's volleyball program as both a player and a coach; has competed provincially and nationally with her volleyball team.
- was involved with SCA's media team and also began a women's rights group at the school.
- won a bronze medal at the Canada Wide Science Fair in Montreal along with a gold medal in video production, which qualified her and her partner to compete at the Skills Canada National Competition in Winnipeg.
- was president of the Shu-Mil 4-H club and represented her province at the 2017 4-H National Citizenship Congress
- youth member on her local community health board.
- sat on the Because I Am a Girl speaker's bureau.
- worked part time as a lifeguard and swimming instructor.