

I believe that out of these extra curricular activities debating has been the most worthwhile and meaningful. The reasons for this are threefold. When I first started, I had a lack of confidence and a fear of public speaking. For the first 2 minutes of every speech I would stutter incoherently, and it goes without saying I was less than a mediocre debater. I was really quite bad. I had joined initially because I felt it was important not to fear public speaking. By forcing myself to persevere, I overcame this seemingly terrible fear.

What happened in fact was soon after I started, I became good at debating and I started winning tournaments. I was chosen for example as the sole Bilingual debater from my province (Manitoba), to go to the Canadian National Debating Seminar. I received 8th place overall in the Bilingual Debate category, and 2nd place overall in the After Dinner Style Public Speaking category. I also attended the McGill University North American Championships where my partner and I finished 14th out of over 200 teams. Subsequently, and again representing Manitoba, I attended the Western Canada Debating Tournament, where I finished 5th overall and 2nd in Cross-Examination. In Province of Manitoba, I was also a "regular" at the "Concours D'Arts Oratoire" (the Provincial French Public Speaking championships). I won the tournament in 1999, and in 2000 I finished 2nd. I was not able to participate in 2001.

By participating in debating, I gained a lot more confidence. In fact, the more tournaments I went to, the more confidence I got, and it goes without saying, the more I enjoyed it.

This leads me to the second reason why debating has been so meaningful to me. I have always enjoyed preparing for the debate tournament. I found reading the articles necessary to formulate my arguments and doing a very thorough research review of the subject both very interesting and compelling. I would prepare both sides of the debate (so I could anticipate whatever arguments the opposing team might have, and already have a counterargument prepared) and I would present my side as persuasively as I could to win over the judges. I really liked this part of debating. The preparation of a case and its presentation is very appealing to me, and as a result of my debating experiences, I have decided I want to become a lawyer. I am not sure what kind of law I want to practice but I am sure some type of litigation will be its focal point. I am "debating" between criminal law and commercial litigation. The final and most important reason why debating has become so meaningful to me, is how it has affected my "world view", and my understanding and awareness of my responsibilities as an adult. Prior to starting debating, I didn't watch the news or read current events articles that often. Debating opened my eyes to the problems of the world. It showed me that there are people my age living their day-to-day lives in the middle of a war. It taught me that millions of children my age die of hunger every day. It taught me that people are being imprisoned because of their political views. Debating taught me this and instilled in me a sense of social responsibility. It was debating that motivated me to attend the Canadian Commonwealth Forum in 2000, (again as a delegate of Manitoba) to discuss the epidemic of AIDS and what we can do to help. I will also be attending the United Nations Forum in 2002. It was debating that secured my motivation to enter law, and I am also thinking that once I

have by “base” as a lawyer, I will probably want to ultimately enter politics because I want to do something to change and improve the world.

Debating has taught me that there are always two sides to a story. No matter how “right” one may feel, there is always someone who holds an opposing viewpoint. It is important to understand both sides of the story to make an accurate judgment. I once participated in a death penalty debate. Prior to the debate, I was very much opposed to capital punishment. I was, however, assigned the pro-death penalty side and I had to prepare arguments that defended the merits of the death penalty. Even though I still hold my initial views against capital punishment, I now understand that there is some rationale for the practice. I learned about the families that grieve because of loved ones that were killed or raped, and who want justice and a sense of finality and closure. I now better understand their point of view, and can more easily sympathize with their cause. Debating has helped me to realize that the world is full of opinions, and that every story has at least two (or more) sides, and it is important not to pre-judge issues.

From what started out to be nothing more than an extracurricular activity with the goal of overcoming one of my fears, debating has become a major part in my life, and I feel it is the most meaningful of my extracurricular activities.

I have had a number of academic awards since Grade 9. At St. Paul’s High School, in both Grades 9 and 10, I had an academic average above 90%, and I was on the gold honor-roll list for both years. Each year on average, about 10 students per 150-student class qualify for this honor roll. In Grade 11, I received the Director's Silver Medal which is given for the second highest academic average at my school. I had a cumulative 95.8% average. In Grades 9, 10 and 11, I also received the AP French Award for each year. This means that I have received the highest AP French mark in the grade. In Grade 9, I also took the AP French Exam for first year university credit, and I received the maximum grade of a 5. In Grade 12, I am also currently enrolled in 3 Advanced Placement Courses including Advanced Math and Calculus, Physics and French.

The word “Significance” can sometimes be vague. In my view, the word significance defines, and can be judged by the amount of the help a deed or action has provided to an individual in their time of need. This statement can be interpreted in many ways. One example of “significance” is volunteer work. Even though ongoing volunteer work is an important part of my life, and some people might consider it to be my most significant contribution, I don’t believe that volunteering has been my most significant moment, or my most significant achievement in helping others. Correct or incorrect, my premise has always been that the degree of significance is directly proportional to the level of help provided. While my day-to-day volunteer work is certainly important and significant, it

has not been on a “macroscopic” scale. This explains the selection I made for my most significant moment.

Two summers ago, I had received my NLS badge (lifeguard code word for National Lifeguard Service). I had just been recruited by the Oasis Beach as an assistant lifeguard. I was a “rookie” who naively believed that accidents, (aside from bloody knees etc.) were only a myth, and wouldn’t happen if people were careful. In addition, although I was certified as a lifeguard, I was still fearful of having to go into the water to save a drowning swimmer. This is because drowning swimmers, pumped with adrenaline can be very dangerous. A couple of years ago, a 200 pound RCMP officer was drowned by a 6 year old girl who he was trying to save. One improper maneuver when rescuing a drowning swimmer can be very dangerous.

One day while I was on duty, I saw two young girls swim into the deep area and they became “DNS” (this abbreviation means “distressed non swimmers” and is the lifeguard code for a drowning swimmer). The lifeguard across the beach also saw the incident and we both entered the water at the same time. We got to the girls, and separated them. He helped one of the girls back to shore and I got the other one to safety with my torpedo can. Had the girls been in the water another 30 – 45 seconds they would have become unconscious, and in another 2 minutes and they would have been dead. They had both swallowed a lot of water, and needed to be transported to the hospital and we had to arrange this. This incident really changed my life and my entire world view.

I believe that this event had an important effect on both the two girls, their families and also myself. The girls survived with only minor injuries, however, their lives were saved. From the shore as I was doing the rescue, I could hear the girl’s parents and family frantically screaming. It would have been devastating to the families had the girl’s “drowned before their eyes” and they might well have felt guilty that they hadn’t watched them more closely, and that it had been their fault. I believe that in its significance to others, this rescue was an important event, and the act of saving a life was something that was “macroscopic”.

The effect this event had on me was immense. I realized how precious life really was. I was no longer immature enough to believe that accidents never happened. Life is short and fragile, and this event made me realize that I needed and wanted to make the most of it. I realized that I had to change a lot of things, both the little things and the big things. I realized that I had to be nicer to the people around me. I realized that I had to make the most of every moment. I had been given the gift of a strong swimming ability and I had to use it. I had overcome my fear of entering the water with a DNS swimmer, and had gone and helped them.

This event also made me realize that we all have gifts and talents. To be successful, one has to use them to their full potential. These gifts should not be geared to enrich oneself or to accumulate possessions, but rather to help other people. In religion class, I was a little skeptical after I had been told that God had a distinct plan for all of us. Now, however, I believe this. I believe that God gave us all gifts and talents, and that we must use them to help others and improve the human race. This important event with the drowning girls really changed my worldview. It solidified what I wanted to do with my life and confirmed my desire to enter politics. I want to make the world a better place in a real and meaningful (“macroscopic”) way, and I want to help all those that are in need of my assistance. The word “Significance” can sometimes be vague. In my view, the

word significance defines, and can be judged by the amount of the help a deed or action has provided to an individual in their time of need. This statement can be interpreted in many ways. One example of “significance” is volunteer work. Even though ongoing volunteer work is an important part of my life, and some people might consider it to be my most significant contribution, I don’t believe that volunteering has been my most significant moment, or my most significant achievement in helping others. Correct or incorrect, my premise has always been that the degree of significance is directly proportional to the level of help provided. While my day-to-day volunteer work is certainly important and significant, it has not been on a “macroscopic” scale. This explains the selection I made for my most significant moment.

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