

### **Wendan Li's Article – GRFAW Alumnus**

I held my breath as I stared down into the two black tubes. There was nothing but a disk of white light. At first I panicked, but then as I fiddled with the dials, blurry black spots begin to come into view. After a few moments, I finally succeeded in focusing onto the image I wanted to see. I breathed a sigh of relieve and delight as I examined the little cluster of striped, wormlike rods – my chromosomes.

I grinned and sat back from the microscope I was using, a highly advanced instrument that I probably wouldn't have had the chance to see, not to mention use, for years to come, had I not applied to Be a Gene Researcher for a Week during Spring Break. At the Medical Genetics Center at the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Sherbrooke in Quebec, under the guidance of Dr. Regen Drouin, I had the rare opportunity to take a first hand look at the inner workings of genetic research and its various applications. What's more is that I actually got to do hands-on experiments in the lab – with my own DNA. Under the guidance and supervision of my host scientists, I had the chance to extract and purify my DNA, set up cultures of my lymphocytes, make slides of my chromosomes, and even create my own karyotype. I learned so much about genetic research and had an amazing time doing hands-on work with technology that I've never even seen before.

As someone who has wanted to be a scientist ever since childhood, participating in the Gene Researcher for a Week program was a dream come true for me. It showed me what it is like to work in the forefront of genetic research and solidified my goal of becoming a researcher in the biology area. So if you are interested in genetics or just biology in general, and would like to experience a potential career while still in high school, this program just may be what you are looking for. My participation in Gene Researcher for a Week was a truly tremendous and eye-opening experience and, trust me, definitely worth missing Spring Break for.

For more information on Gene Researcher for a Week or to apply:  
<http://www.genecure.ca>.

**-Wendan Li, Gene Researcher Alumnus**