

Falling in love with Canada

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Globalink student Aarya came to Canada for research and found herself at home



Spending her days culturing brain cells in the laboratory was what Aarya Vaikakkara Chithran of the Vellore Institute of Technology in India expected to be doing when she was accepted into the Mitacs Globalink program— what she didn't expect was how much she would come to love Canada both inside and out of the lab.

Aarya— a third-year biotechnology student— was hoping to be able to hone her laboratory skills and knowledge of life sciences research before completing the final year of her degree. Though she had applied to a highly competitive life sciences research term in New York and was accepted to the prestigious Indian Academy of Sciences research program, Aarya chose to accept an internship with the Mitacs Globalink program because of the chance to take part in cancer research at the University of British Columbia under Dr. Christian Naus in the Department of Cell and Physiological Sciences.

“The projects that were offered to me through Mitacs Globalink were interesting and challenging, and Mitacs helped us to make our arrangements so that it has been an enjoyable and comfortable stay here.” Aarya says. Under Dr. Naus’ friendly and knowledgeable guidance, she has been growing neural cells in the laboratory in order to test for their effect on brain tumor growths in mice. The findings of the study may contribute to more effective treatments of human brain cancers.

Along with the rest of her new Globalink friends, Aarya attended professional development workshops hosted by Mitacs Step, including a project management seminar which she says was interactive and enriching. She was also able to achieve one of her “bucket list” goals of seeing snow in Canada when the students hiked Grouse Mountain and has also discovered a love for sushi at one of the many Japanese restaurants in Vancouver.

The students have also attended networking events with industry, including The Data Effect conference, where they rubbed elbows with executives from IBM, Amgen Inc. and other prominent members of the medical research field and government. Aarya now intends to complete her Masters or PhD in Biotechnology in Canada and will consider relocating permanently for her career.

Together, experiences like these which are offered through the Mitacs Globalink program have contributed to Aarya’s new-found love for Canada. “My friends and I go out around Vancouver with a smile on our faces... sometimes we don’t want to go back home to India!”