

## Coming full-circle to Canada

November 2012

*For Barbara Paes, coming to Canada was both an end and a beginning for her academic journey*



After having come to Canada for a summer English language camp in 2010, Barbara Paes of Universidade de Brasília was always looking for opportunities to return to Canada. So when her friend told her about the Mitacs Globalink program one week before the application deadline, she hurried to apply before it was too late. Now studying at the University of British Columbia's Brain Research Centre, Barbara has fallen in love with Canada all over again.

The research which she completed with Dr. Kurt Haas investigated how the development of brain neurons in tadpoles is affected by seizure episodes, a study which has implications for human children who suffer from epilepsy. Epilepsy is a condition which causes the brain to temporarily surge in electrical activity, often leading to convulsions or uncontrolled shaking in the most violent of cases.

Barbara is passionate about all fields of her biology degree, having taken classes and previously done research on biotechnology, molecular biology and epigenetics. It's because of this passion for "everything biology" that while she hasn't decided exactly what she wants to study, she does know that she wants to come back to Canada to work, to study, or to live, and her Mitacs Globalink internship has simply confirmed this desire.

With her new friends from Globalink, Barbara has rubbed elbows with industry leaders at the Vancouver Board of Trade, attended workshops on project management —"It was so helpful for us to learn to be aware of our skills and to use them!" she says,— and watched sunsets on the beach. They laugh that the sun sets at 9:30pm, much later than they are used to in their home countries of Brazil and India. By far though, the most memorable moment for Barbara was when she and her friends saw a pod of killer whales from their ferry on the way to Victoria.

She relates an anecdote about a childhood trip with her father to explain the significance:

"Killer whales are pretty much the whole reason I'm in biology... when I went to Disney World as a child, I asked my dad how I could become an orca trainer and he said to study biology. So to see those whales on the ferry... it was like a completion to my journey in my degree. And I knew I was meant to be here in Canada through Mitacs Globalink."