

## Canada's Fourth Elizabeth Paterson International Student of the Year

### Media Release and Winning Letters 2008

Canada's 2008 International Student of the Year is Ms. Leytisha Jack, a University of Manitoba student from St. Vincent and the Grenadines



Ottawa, July 2, 2008

Competitors for the 2008 Elizabeth Paterson International Student of the Year Award depicted their academic, personal, and social experience in Canada in original ways.

Here is how Leytisha Jack, 2008 International Student of the Year, coped with the adaptation process:

“At first I was a bit skeptical about the experience. I guess I didn't know what to expect. But when I saw that the university was persistent on helping I used up every opportunity I had. I went to the free workshop on essay writings and my essay was no where near borderline grades. That was sweet! Also when I was stressed out from midterms and a bit homesick I took the wonderful opportunity to join a group session on dealing and coping with stress and school. That had give me tremendous insights on dealing with problems”.

Leytisha, along with 445 others, responded to CBIE's call for submissions. In addition to the recognition as International Student of the Year, she receives a \$500 prize.

The Award Program managed by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) invited international students to write a letter home telling family or friends their impression of study in Canada. College and university students originating from countries across the globe offered their insights.

Along with Leytisha Jack, two runners-up received honorable mentions and cash prizes:

**Ms. Xiaoyan Song (China) Saint Mary's University-\$300;**



**Ms. Viviane Rutabingwa (Uganda), University of Ontario Institute of Technology-\$200.**

The Award is named for Elizabeth (Liz) Paterson, who for 25 years served as Director of the International Student Centre at the University of Toronto, guiding and encouraging literally thousands of young people from diverse countries. Liz's influence on the nascent world of international education extended across Canada through her mentoring of newcomers to the profession of international educator, her research and reports, and her service on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Bureau for International Education.

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#### **WINNING LETTERS:**

##### **1) Leytisha Jack**

Hey Zhing

I'm finally here through the grace of God. I don't know how to start but I must say so far my experience here in Winnipeg has been terrific and varied on days of boredom and amazement, or somewhere in between all three.

It was brutally cold when I came here and Ma wanted to pack her bags immediately (unfortunately Air Canada couldn't find her suitcase at that time, which was hilarious, as she became more frustrated and rather confused)and head back home to sunny island St. Vincent. This was only the month of September! I remember Ma jokingly telling me not to get sick in the later months of the year because she's not going to endure this cold anymore. Well Ma was right in some ways; yes,my sinus flared up terribly in October. Luckily for her, she didn't have to come up here!

University of Manitoba is quite huge. Huge in long walk way distances from residence to classes, especially to the Wallace building. What's even amazing are the tunnels; they're winding and pretty warm and quite useful for the January wintry days! But quite frankly I think am rather stronger now; I avoid taking the tunnels since am always late for my classes whenever i take them, and there's just too much students

bustling here and there. But they're pretty cool. Unlike me, you will have to take them when you come visit me next year. You will be thankful to God for the tunnels.

My first class was quite a mind blowing experience. You might be thinking that the size was huge, but girl you won't believe it I was the only black person in that class. I remember looking around fervently to spot anyone but there was no one like me. I stood out and was easily picked on by a particular prof who was always asking me questions, even though i was sitting way in the back. Part of me was swollen with a bit of pride; this was amazing! I hurried home and called Ma and practically shouted to Ma about the experience. I got over myself after the first two weeks when the full course load took its bitter toll. Go ahead and laugh (I know you're laughing anyway).

Most of my classes so far are rather interactive; we are often encouraged to share our views on real life issues. I was a little concern at first about the variation of topics that will be taught in class. But discussions are talked about countries in the Caribbean and elsewhere and not only Canada. What's even more refreshing is the co-op opportunities. Do you remember when we used to talk about getting paid and getting academic grades for working instead of just going to school all the time? Well the co-op is just like that! In the summer you can work with a business relating to your field of study and get your grades and subsidies.

Outside the classroom there are numerous student groups to join. Many of such have a lot of voluntary work and also paid jobs to boost the look of your resume and of course the extra cash. In my first year I wanted to volunteer so badly, luckily the University of Manitoba Student Union or UMSU wanted people to collect funds to aid those with cystic fibrosis and I felt great accomplishing something to help someone. Zhing we went downtown and this was my first time ever to down town Winnipeg; a rather unique city I must say.

At first I was a bit skeptical about the experience. I guess I didn't know what to expect. But when I saw that the university was persistent on helping I used up every opportunity I had. I went to the free workshop on essay writings and my essay was no where near borderline grades. That was sweet! Also when I was stressed out from midterms and a bit homesick I took the wonderful opportunity to join a group session on dealing and coping with stress and school. That had give me tremendous insights on dealing with problems.

In a nutshell the schooling experience is great here. International students are looked out for and can soon fit in due to the amount of aid available at U of M. I think after accomplishing my degree I think I may feel very satisfied with my experience here. I know you are thinking about pursuing your degree and of course I'm gonna tell you to check out U of M. Seriously I will suggest such a place if you want a whole new experience on learning.

Anyways bye and have a great day.

From your cousin  
Leytisha

## **2) Xiaoyan Song**

Dear Ann,

It is been quite a long time. How are you? I have always wanted to write to you but kept been trapped in my busy schedule.

Guess Beijing should be quite warm now, but here still have heavy rains or snow from time to time. I remember the first day I came to Halifax last September. After been stuck at Toronto airport for 24 hours when transferring plane, I was drenched by a downpour when finally arrived at midnight. Then took the bus and drag my three big suit cases all the way to Saint Mays, to my residence. When I finally sit on my bed and watching the water drops down from my coat, I began to think: □well, here begins my new life here&

Ha ha the beginning doesnt sound funny, isnt it? But some how I found myself adjust quickly to the life here

thanks to a lot of peoples help. My roommates, classmates as well as some other international students I met offered me a lot of information about life here, studies, places to shop etc. I have made some very good friends, some from Germany and some others come from Beijing, too. We formed an English learning group and gathered together every Saturday. Normally we will read the newspaper separately and then discuss some topics on it. It is a very good way to practice oral English as well as enrich vocabularies. We also explore the city together and went to many places of interest like Peggys cove, Point Pleasant Park, etc.

My study here is fairly busy. Besides classes, there are a lot of readings to do, papers to write and presentations to prepare. But it is still a lot of fun actually. I enjoy having classes, since my classmates all come from different background and countries, they would offer various kind of views that widened my eyesight. And the teaching method is quite different from when I was doing my undergrad in Beijing. Students are encouraged to participate even to lead the discussions. We sit around the table instead of all facing front and the professors, who are all quite friendly and erudite, just sit among us, lead a little and offer opinions to the issues under discuss. The atmosphere is quite encouraging and casual. It makes me feel that I am not merely a student but a participator, a contributor, too. Plus, my ability to research and study independently also improved a lot. It is in hurry, but also a lot of fun. And this kind of international experience which hardly to gain in China is really useful either for future career or just for personal insight.

The time surely flies. Two semesters have passed. But it has been very fruitful so far and I gained more A than B for the score, a lot of new experiences as well as some good friends.

How is your life going so far at Beijing University? Must also be lots of fun. Hope everything goes well and look forward to hear from you.

Yours,

Maggie

### **3) Viviane Rutabingwa**

Dear Mum

Spring began today! I woke up to a sun filled room with birds chirping. A perfect Canadian mixed with African morning! The sun reminded me of home, but the chilly weather kept my mind here! I have been thinking seriously about next year, I graduate. I am excited to graduate but still nervous of my next step. Canada has taught me a lot, Not only because it has been my first experience of living away from home but also because of comfort Canada has given me. The main thing I love and would miss is the mixing pot and integration of all the different cultures, I have met Africans here that I never even knew existed! There is no room for me to be home sick! Every time I miss your cooking I go down to Toronto to one of the African restaurants and have something like what you would make. Although it could never be as good as your Mummy!

I am very thankful to you and dad to giving me this opportunity to study in Canada, because I know it is expensive for me to be here, I try as much as I can to take advantage of all the things that I am able to do here that I would not be able to do at home. There are so many extracurricular activities in my university, such as clubs, sports, mentoring, One thing I am really proud of is being an executive member of a student run organisation called SHARE (Students for Humanitarianism & Action through Respect & Education) We do such important and fun things! We raised money for Gulu children by walking across Oshawa last year! How cool is that! We made so much money too. This year we have organised two huge events on raising awareness and togetherness on the different religions and cultures. It's amazing what tolerance and unity exists in Canada!

Did I tell you I went skiing last month? At last I learnt how to ski! Oh what an experience mum! If you ever come visit me we must go! Not only is there skiing here but snowboarding, snow-blading, monoskiing and tobogganing! It amazing! Although painfull! After snowboarding I couldn't walk straight for a WEEK!

Winter is over at last! It's been a long cold one, but the Canadians claim that this winter wasn't even cold! Can you believe that? I found it so so so cold! It was fun though, lots of snow ball fights! You could never imagine mum, it snows up till my thighs sometimes, and you have to scuffle your way to class! Oh well spring is here and the snow is melting, it's getting warmer. The best thing is the birds are back! I missed the birds! You know what a bird lover I have always been. So now I wake up to their chirping again! Yay!

I begin my final exams soon, so I will be in the library in school and what's really cool is that every city has a library too in case our school library gets packed I just take the bus to the Oshawa library (5 minutes away) and study from there. You know how I must have silence when studying!

I hope to come home this summer as usual. Although, I would like to experience a Canadian summer, I hear they are so much fun. So I may come home half way through the summer. Hope everyone is doing great!

Don't worry about me mum, I'm not getting home sick- Canada has too much to offer! I will be going to Wasega beach with a bunch of friends after exams, and after that I will get a summer job (you know we can now work here! Yay!) So I will be keeping busy. Love you a lot! Pass my love to everyone!

Love Viv