

## FEATURE

# From B(rasil) to C(anada): Thais takes in Cramahe

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It's a long way from Piracicaba, Brazil to Cramahe Township in more ways than one. That's what Rotary exchange student, Thais Bdine is finding.

A perfect emissary for the Rotary program, the 17-year-old Brazilian sparkles as she tells her story, engaging all around her with her charm and typical striking dark features.

Thais left her home town in the south east of Brazil late in August, leaving behind her mother, Winnifred, her father, Hamid, younger brothers Hamid and Gabriel and a host of friends.

She is now living with the Ed Van Egmond family on their farm west of Dundonald, and will stay there until January when she moves to Brighton.

### FINE TUNING A SECOND LANGUAGE

She came to Canada to improve her fluency in English, but her decision hasn't been without cost.

On the other side of the equator, Brazil's seasons are opposite to Canada's. Thais was in her final year of high school and would have completed her secondary education this month. Part of that graduation celebration includes a huge beach party. Her class planned to go for 10 days. Every high school graduate who can afford it heads to Porto Seguro to celebrate the completion of this stage in their education.

It wasn't only the final year and its festivities that made leaving difficult. Thais says it was difficult to say good bye to her friends and family.

While in Canada she will take credits for this school year at ENSS in Brighton. They will be credited to her home school for graduation there.

Rotary clubs from Canada, New Zealand and Australia were contacted when she was considering the program. The Canadian contacts worked out, so she's here.

She's already learned our climate is



Brazilian exchange student Thais Bdine, left and above, has flipped seasons for her North American student exchange visit. Left, it's nearly summertime south of the equator. Above Brazilian skiing is on offer during canadian summer.

PHOTOS SUBMITTED

more extreme than that at home. She started the fall on the ENSS cross country team, achieving excellent finishes before colder weather put an end to her running.

The winter temperature in Brazil averages 10-15 degrees Celsius. In the summer it's up to 25-35.

### VISITING A LAND OF FREEDOM

Thais has noted numerous differences between Canada and Brazil.

Now in grade 12 at ENSS, she has found our system unlike hers.

To begin, she marvels all children in this country can obtain a quality education - at no cost. At home, everyone who can afford it pays for private schooling, the rest get public education. All of Thais's education has been at private schools.

School at home starts at 7 a.m. and ends

at 12:40 p.m. At high school, all courses are mandatory and the same subjects are taken every year for the three years. Each day, different courses are taken in a weekly rotation.

In the semestered Ontario system, there are choices and she learns much more in a much shorter time.

### CHRISTMAS AT THE BEACH

Christmas is stuck right in the middle of a two-month summer break in Brazil.

Thais' family spends the holiday at the beach. They open their gifts Christmas Eve. On the 25th, she and her 40 cousins have a huge lunch on the beach.

Thais says the roles of men and women are becoming less defined now in Brazil. But it is common to have maids. These women are paid poorly, but they see

positions as upward mobility.

While the availability of free quality education was surprising to the teen, public safety, the friendliness of Canadians, and the wealth in this country has left her amazed.

And she loves her host family.

On the night of her interview, there was ongoing banter amongst a handful of young people in their late teens and early twenties - all in the family kitchen with the TV going and grandma bustling around in the background. It's Thais get over her initial homesickness.

Thais was taken aback in her first week to find that in Canada we can walk the streets in safety. That doesn't happen at home where kidnappings and robberies are commonplace.

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