



**Eric**  
**from**  
**Kitchener**  
**to**  
**Finland**

*“From Darkness to Dancing”*

Greetings once again from the north of Eastern Europe. It has been around 3 months since I last wrote a beaver tale and in that short period of time so much has happened. I went on two skiing trips with my host families, saw Santa Claus in the flesh and was thoroughly taken back by the sheer generosity that was shown to me this Christmas season.

Where to begin? When I left off I was fresh out of October and since then things got a whole lot darker outside. Not metaphorically I mean seasonally darker, In Finland during the peak of winter it is not uncommon for the sun to set at 2:00pm. Tired me out drastically the first time I had experienced it but after month your body adjusts and things return to normal.

One big thing that happened that month was that I met Santa Claus,. The real Santa Claus. In Finland Santa is treated as a national treasure and a celebrity meaning that at every major event in the country whether it be political or recreational Santa will be attending. I met Santa during my Rotary club’s trip to Lapland and got myself a wonderful picture with him and the rest of the Canucks.

Following my trip to Lapland was yet another trip to Lapland. This time however I was accompanying my host family on a skiing trip to Ruka the easternmost skiing resort in Finland. I of course being from a skiing background decided to not ski but snowboard instead. This was under the assumption that the hills would be smaller in Finland. Oh how I was wrong. The first day of skiing the winds were quite literally stunning, as in if you were to stand a top the highest point of the hill you would be immobilized. Although I quickly realized that some courage was needed and crept my way down the hill as pathetically as possible, latched to my snowboard. As the trip went on however I did improve and did eventually acquire a taste for the sport. I was quite distraught when we had to leave because I had just gotten the hang of it.

When Christmas came along I was taken back at the sheer generosity of the family I was staying with. Not only did they buy me gifts but they cooked me a wonderful meal and their extended families also treated me to gifts. It was a wonderful time that brought me to tears and allowed me to see Santa walk through my doors and hand out presents to all the good little girls and boys. Shortly after that there was a brief rest period where I was invited to stay at my friend's grandparents' house and experience the feeling of an ancient sauna from the 40's. On New years I spent the night with my friends and melted silver with a neighbouring family in order to predict my future.

School then returned into my life and things more or less became routine again. Although the only difference being that my mentor Montana was gone, alongside all the other students that arrived in January. That being what it is, things got slow for a while and I was lacking social interaction. Until February where the students of the second grade celebrate the graduation of the senior year student by dancing and eating absurd amounts of sugar. As I am typing this I am currently in possession a kilo of hard candy. In Fact the festivities have not yet ended; tomorrow, is our big "Prom" where we participate in a formal dance clad in our fanciest dresses and suits. I am quite excited for this as it is an all day event where we eat good food and present the dance we worked so hard on for parents and distant relatives alike.

*Eric*