

REPORT
Visit in Japan
via
2009 WiSET Exchange Program
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As a representative of the Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Program (WiSET) I was invited to share my research experience and learn about the various perspectives of research in science and technology in Japan in October 17-24, 2009. It was an exciting, well-organized trip, during which I was given the opportunity to visit and interact with various audiences and to discuss the current status of women's research in the field of science and engineering. I visited the University of Tokyo, the RIKEN institute, and Hokkaido University. I have given research presentations in the last two institutions. I have met with the Canadian embassy in Tokyo and discussed potential interactions of Canada and Japan in the area of nanotechnology.

I visited Ochanomizu University where I had an opportunity to discuss the involvement of female scientists in academic research.

I had a privilege to meet with the president and vice president of the Science Council of Japan, where we discussed the present role of women in the field of research and technological development and funding of fundamental research.

I gave a one-hour lecture to about 100 teenaged girls at Ochanomizu University Senior High School. The topic of my lecture was "Bioinspired research and its role in science and engineering." At the end of my presentation, I had answered questions and discussed the involvement of women in science in the different stages of their careers.

I was also given the opportunity to visit the National Woman's Education Center (NVEC) where I presented a lecture on the status of women in science in Canada. At the end of my presentation, we had a discussion on the differences and similarities of academic research conducted by women in the two countries.

Upon my return in Canada, I have received very positive response from the high school students and junior female researchers that I met in Japan. In particular, some of the female high school students indicated that they were impressed with my lecture and would like to take science courses and eventually, to pursue an academic career.

Suggestions for Future WiSET Visitors:

1. I suggest that the visit is extended to at least, 1.5 weeks, instead of 5 working days, in order to allow for networking, mentoring, exchange of ideas and discussion of collaborative projects. My schedule was not only very stressful but it also did not allow for constructive scientific discussions at RIKEN institute and Hokkaido University.
2. More should be done in support of collaborative scientific work between Canada and Japan. I discussed this issue at both the Science Council of Japan and in the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo. This work can be directed to collaborations between female scientists working in similar or complementary fields.

3. Since Canadian Female scientists coming to Japan via WiSET program generally give lectures at Ochanomizu University Senior High School, it would be beneficial to use this visits to build connections between Canadian female students and their counterparts in Japan. Furthermore, it would be useful if, in preparation for the visit, Canadian visitors receive information about science education in Canadian high schools and universities.

4. In every place that I visited, I received small gifts. It could be very nice to know about that in advance and to be able to reciprocate.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Anna Buczek and Amelia Zaglul from the Royal Society of Canada who helped me with arrangements for my trip. Kentaro Suzuki from the Science Council of Japan was extremely helpful in organizing my schedule in Japan and accompanying me in Tokyo. My principal Japanese hosts in Tokyo, Professor Kimiko Murofushi and her assistant Tomiko Mori of Ochanomizu University were particularly helpful in making my visit in the University pleasant and interesting.

Sanae Yonemichi, Mark Scullion, and David Devine, and the Canadian Embassy staff were helpful in advising on local culture and resources, in providing a welcome package, and accompanying me in the SCJ.

I particularly enjoyed my visit in Hakkaido University. I was impressed with Professor Gong's research and with how she runs the group. She is doing first-class research and is one of the leading scientists in the world in the area of Polymers and Materials. I wish I could spend more time in her laboratory.

Professor Osada at RIKEN Institute was most generous in sharing with me his vision of the future of science in Japan and in the North America. It could be useful to spend more time in this institute.

Professor Misako Kato from Ochanomizu University was a great companion for my trip to the National Women's Education Centre. where Ms. Michiko Kande (President) and her staff were gracious hostesses. This centre has an excellent library and museum.

My visit and talk at Ochanomizu high school was a wonderful experience. My visit was great success, everything was very well organized, including the interpretation and the audio-visual services.

I especially want to thank the Royal Society of Canada and the Science Council of Japan for making this trip possible and successful.

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