

Who Am I and Why Should You Care?

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Back in 2021, when I decided to study in Canada, my first thought was, “I’m finally going to be living that study-abroad life!”

You know, the one we see in the movies - snowy campuses, cozy coffee shops, and a super aesthetic international student experience (basically Hogwarts).

Did I pause to think, “How will I survive without my family?”

Nope.

“How cold will the winter be?”

Absolutely not.

“Will I fit in?”

That question only hit me when I was knee-deep in packing chaos, surrounded by clothes, trying to fit my entire life into a 23 kg suitcase, while my mom and sister debated whether the airport officer would *really* notice the extra +2 kg overweight.

(PS. he didn’t.)

That was me, Krishma Chhagani, an 18-year-old from western India (aka the *complete opposite* of Canada) who had just graduated high school and was about to step into a life-changing adventure.

Fast forward to today, I’m 22, in my final semester after 4.5 years of navigating the highs and lows of undergrad life.

Oh, and I should mention I was part of the *COVID batch*.

Yep, my first year was online, back in India. And before you ask, no, I’m not one of those mysterious “ghost students” people assume we were.

I’m as normal as one can be (for someone who willingly moved from tropical weather to the land of ice and windchill warnings).

But let me tell you, being an international student comes with *experiences* (some hilarious, some borderline traumatic).

Like the time my hair *literally* froze into a popsicle during a snowstorm (yes, that can happen).

Or the time I survived three days in Montreal eating only potato wedges because vegetarian options were *not a thing*.

Or when I walked 2.5 km to save \$3.50 on the TTC because *budgeting*.

Oh, and let's not forget sleeping on the hard floor for a night because my mattress delivery was *mysteriously delayed*. (Would not recommend.)

But this is exactly why you should care!

Because I've been through it all.

This blog series is my way of giving you the ultimate guide to surviving (and thriving) as an international student in Canada.

Now, before you think I'm just some random girl with weird stories, let me add a little credibility to my name.

During my time at Seneca, I've worked part-time, volunteered, and supported *almost* every department on campus. From Student Services and the Seneca Student Federation to Applied Research, Seneca HELIX, and even the Seneca Evolutions Spa (yes, S P A.), I've experienced it all.

And then there's Enactus Seneca - my *absolute* favourite student organization (shameless plug). I'm currently the president, and if you've ever been on a student panel, a campus tour, or any event where I had even the slightest opportunity, I *definitely* mentioned it.

Outside campus, I volunteer with Re-defined, have interned with Loblaw Companies Limited, and even appeared on a podcast to talk about securing scholarships at Seneca.

(Yes, and I also do guest speeches in classrooms now - kind of a big deal.)

The point is that I've *tried* to make the most of my time as an international student, and I want *you* to be able to do the same.

I want to help you avoid the struggles I faced, give you the tips I wish I had known earlier, and make sure your college journey is a little smoother (and a lot more fun).

That's where *Krishma's Survival Guide* comes in.

A bi-weekly blog series of *eight* posts running until April 19th (the end of Winter 2025).

Each post will tackle a significant challenge, including culture shock, surviving winter, budgeting, career, work-life balance, and, of course, how to make the *most* of college life.

This isn't just another "advice" blog.

It's *real experiences, real tips, and real stories*, with resources to help you along the way.

Expect laughter, maybe some tears (mostly from laughing too hard), and by the end of this series, I want you to feel like you're *ready* to take on international student life like a pro!

The end.

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*"Why Does Everyone Keep Saying Sorry?"* Coming next Saturday, February 8th!

PS. What are some things you were most excited (or nervous) about before moving abroad? Let's have a conversation in the comments section!

tags : international-students, ISS, krishma's-survival-guide