

## Danita's First Japanese New Year Celebration!

明けましておめでとうございます！ Happy Year of the Rabbit!

My New Year's festivities started earlier in December, when I was invited to participate in a calligraphy lesson! I was able to try out traditional Japanese calligraphy styles and decorate my own New Year's greeting cards. We used a coarse brush on a net to create a lightly coloured card, and also used a woodblock stamp with gold paint. Throughout the entire time I was very nervous and was afraid to make a mistake, but I had a lot of fun!

I was very lucky this winter vacation because my mother and sister came to visit me in Japan! We decided to spend our New Years in Tokyo, but because of the holidays, many shops and restaurants were closed. Nevertheless, we tried our best to experience Japanese New Year traditions like eating soba and participating in Hatsumode. On New Year's Day, we started by visiting Asakusa. We walked through Kaminarimon Gate and were greeted by colourful decorations and an ocean of people. Luckily the line to pray at Sensoji was not too long, and I even got a goshuin handwritten in my goshuinchou! Around the temple area, there were many food vendors. My sister loved eating taiyaki, and my mother really enjoyed amazake – she drank 3 cups! Later in the afternoon, we went to visit Meiji Jingu, the most popular shrine to visit for Hatsumode. After waiting for an hour, we arrived at the shrine and prayed together. Finally, we went to draw our omikuji (mine was not so lucky this time) and got some omamori for good luck!

My family returned back to Canada soon after the New Year, but when I returned home, I was happy to find a little frog charm that some friends had left in my mail! This New Year's was definitely one of the most special ones I've experienced!

I wish you all a happy and healthy year ahead! 本年もよろしくお願いたします!

