



THE MOSAIC DISPATCH

SPRING 2009

MOSAIC INSTITUTE LAUNCHES BUILDING BRIDGES SPEAKERS' SERIES TO PROMOTE MIDDLE EAST PEACE

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On March 4, one hundred invited guests from Canada's Arab community and Jewish diaspora met at the University of Toronto's Munk Centre for the inaugural session of a speakers' series entitled *Building Bridges in Canada: New Perspectives on People and Peace*. The six-part series is being presented jointly by the Mosaic Institute and the Canadian Centre for Diversity to foster dialogue between the leaders of those ethnocultural and faith-based communities with a special relationship to the Middle East. The ultimate goal of the six-part series is to identify specific community-based or Canada-led strategies for advancing the prospects for a fair, sustained peace in the Middle East.

Canada has a legacy of promoting and enforcing peace, and is generally still recognized as an "honest broker" among both state and non-state actors. Yet Mosaic is convinced that

Canada can and should do more to live up to that legacy, and that the ethnocultural richness of Canada presents it with a unique pool of expert human capital from which to draw innovative ideas to help it achieve its foreign policy goals. The current speakers' series, with its focus on the people and the issues of the Middle East, represents an intentionally small though crucial attempt to build bridges between communities that share a tradition of tension with one another so that together they can identify constructive, Canadian solutions to advancing the cause of peace in that conflict-prone region.

The inaugural session on March 4 featured a panel of four Canadians who talked about their own stories of experiencing cultural duality: being simultaneously Canadian and a member of another identifiable community with a relationship to the Middle East, as defined by

either ethnicity or faith. Two of the panellists – Israeli-born filmmaker Amit Breuer and Toronto-bred and New York-based media expert Rachel Sklar – described their experiences as members of the Canadian Jewish diaspora. Two Arab-Canadian panellists – former federal Member of Parliament Omar Alghabra, a Muslim, and peace activist and lawyer Hind Kabawat, a Christian – talked of being immigrants to Canada and participating actively in the (continued page 2)

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Mosaic Institute: What We Do

The Mosaic Institute is a "think and do" tank that harnesses Canada's diversity by bringing together ethnic communities whose homelands are in conflict to seek new ideas that will enhance Canada's foreign policy and promote international peace and development.



March 4th speakers: Hind Kabawat, Rachel Sklar and Omar Alghabra
Not pictured: Amit Breuer and Noah Richler (moderator)

BUILDING BRIDGES SPEAKERS' SERIES (CONTINUED)

civic life of their adopted country. The panel was moderated by veteran radio and print journalist Noah Richler, who has written extensively about what it means to be Canadian.

Future sessions of the series – featuring such notable participants as Sir Ronald Cohen of the Portland Trust, Susan Ormiston and Evan Solomon of the CBC, and a panel of Middle East experts hosted by historian Margaret MacMillan – will take place on April 6, June 3, Septem-

ber 16 and November 4.

Those who attended the March 4 session are being encouraged to attend as many of these sessions as possible, so that they all share the same experiential journey. With the support of The Strategic Counsel, one of Canada's foremost research and polling organizations, the perceptions of attendees to the issues confronting the Middle East are being tracked over the course of the series.

Invoking Canada's history as

a peacemaker, Mosaic and the Canadian Centre for Diversity have chosen a quote by Lester B. Pearson to inspire their initiative. When he received his Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway in 1957 Pearson asked: "How can there be peace without people understanding each other, and how can this be if they don't know each other?" It is this question that Mosaic and the Canadian Centre for Diversity are continuing to ask through their *Building Bridges in Canada* speakers' series.

"How can there be peace without people understanding each other, and how can this be if they don't know each other?"

*Lester B. Pearson
Nobel Lecture
Oslo, Norway
December, 1957*

A VISIT WITH... RAHEEL RAZA, MEMBER OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL, MOSAIC INSTITUTE

How did you become involved with Mosaic?

I was invited by the founders of Mosaic to join when they first started because of my experience in building bridges between communities, which is the vision of Mosaic.

Why is Mosaic's work important?

The world is fraught with violence and hatred leading to death and destruction. The work of Mosaic is not just important, but imperative to world peace because dialogue brings understanding and Mosaic is about dialogue and discussion leading to conflict resolution. This can happen only in Canada.

What skills, knowledge and experience do you bring to Mosaic's Advisory Council?

I work both in the fields of inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue as a bridge builder. I've had experience in this field for 20 years and promote conflict resolution through writing, speaking and events.

What is the most pressing foreign policy challenges and opportunities facing Canada right now?

Canada's role in the international arena is vital. The world looks upon Canada as a role model for pluralism and diversity. As well, Canada has had a reputation for being a peace-maker and needs to promote that image internationally.

What role do you see for Mosaic in crafting appropriate responses to those challenges and opportunities?

Mosaic is ideally placed to be that peace broker and facilitate dialogue among communities that are in conflict. There are unusual challenges facing Canada globally - from the environment to ethics. There are very few countries of the world that carry a reputation as positive as that of Canada, and instead of resting on our laurels we must work hard to keep that image.

Where would you like to see Mosaic in five years?

In five years, I hope Mosaic will be a household word in organizations abroad and countries will call upon Mosaic to be the peace-maker and bridge builder for their communities that call Canada home.



Raheel Raza, Interfaith Advocate and Diversity Consultant
For more information on Raheel's work go to raheelraza.com

"A Visit With..." will be a recurring feature of the *Mosaic Dispatch* in which members and friends the Mosaic Institute discuss their perspectives on Mosaic's vision and work.

DIASPORA DIGEST: MOSAIC INSTITUTE LISTENS AND LEARNS FROM CANADA'S SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA

The terror attacks in Mumbai in late 2008, and the growing international recognition that Pakistan-based groups were behind the attacks, have diminished the immediate prospects for a comprehensive peace between South Asia's two nuclear-armed neighbours. Yet given Canada's longstanding bilateral relationships with the major countries of South Asia, as well as its Commonwealth ties to much of the region and its increasingly large South Asian population, the Mosaic Institute sees both great potential and great importance in working with Canada's Indian and Pakistani communities to identify timely strategies for deploying Canada's diplomatic capital more strategically across South Asia.

Canadians of South Asian origin constitute one of the

fastest growing ethnocultural groups in the country. Both the challenge and the opportunity for Canada is knowing how to harness the talents and resources of Canada's growing South Asian community in order to enhance Canada's contribution to the stabilization and growth of that region.

In January, a key report, entitled, *Building Bridges: A Case Study of the Role of the Indian Canada*, was published by the Centre for the Study of Democracy at Queen's University. The report, authored by former Indian Ambassador to Canada and now Canadian citizen, Kant Bhargava, recommends that Canada adopt a more proactive policy toward the South Asian diaspora. Thomas Axworthy, the Centre's Chair, noted that in developing foreign policy "Canada's diversity may be

our greatest asset."

This same conviction inspires and guides the work of the Mosaic Institute. In December 2008 Mosaic met with senior members of Canada's South Asian community, seeking their advice on how the Institute might assist in harnessing the capacity of South Asian diasporas to contribute to Canada's various foreign policy imperatives in that region. Mosaic is now exploring avenues for working with Canada's various South Asian diasporas to identify prospects for helping to transform intraregional rivalries into a coherent, pan-regional strategy for Canada.

As part of an ongoing effort, supported by the wise counsel of its community partners and its diverse Advisory Council the Mosaic Institute believes it is up to the challenge.

DIASPORA DIGEST

The Mosaic Institute works to bring together Canadian diaspora communities whose countries of origin have conflict. Each edition of The Mosaic Dispatch will focus on one of the dialogues in which the Mosaic Institute has been active.

MULTICULTURALISM MINISTER VISITS MOSAIC

In February, the Mosaic Institute welcomed federal Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and Multiculturalism, the Honourable Jason Kenney, to its offices. After assuming his current Cabinet portfolio in October 2008, he asked to meet with Mosaic during his next trip to Toronto.

Prior to his visit, the Minister's department issued its annual report on the operation of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, entitled *Promot-*

ing Integration. This was a theme of Minister Kenney's meeting with Mosaic. The Minister was particularly interested in the Institute's work to facilitate dialogues between Canadian diaspora communities whose countries or regions of origin remain in conflict, such as its 2009 *Building Bridges* speakers' series (see page one).

The Minister challenged Mosaic to consider how such initiatives might reach larger numbers than the small

groups of community leaders Mosaic typically includes in its events. One way Mosaic plans to do this is through the establishment of a student-run chapter on the campus of a major Canadian university in fall 2009. If successful, Mosaic hopes to replicate this model on campuses across the country.

At Minister Kenney's encouragement, Mosaic will continue to explore avenues for collaboration with this pivotal government department.



The Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and Multiculturalism, met with Mosaic representatives on February 7, 2009 in Toronto.

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**H A R N E S S I N G C A N A D A ' S D I V E R S I T Y
F O R P E A C E A N D D E V E L O P M E N T**

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As the volunteer Chair of the Mosaic Institute, I often wonder whether our efforts to promote peace and development are actually having a positive impact on our country and the world beyond our borders. Coming from a business background, I am constantly concerned about deliverables, and how to measure success. But how to quantify the value of the work that Mosaic does? That is an ongoing challenge and, to be honest, at times a real frustration for someone used to the certainty of quantitative measures.

The best reassurance I can offer myself and supporters of the Mosaic Institute is that we are headed in the right direction. There are many signs this is the case:

Firstly, the Mosaic Institute is increasingly being sought out

by government decision-makers to provide input in areas that relate directly to our mandate of harnessing the ethnocultural richness of Canada to promote peace and international development. We have found a number of federal departments to be increasingly responsive to Mosaic's unique mandate, and they have demonstrated a particular interest in obtaining our views and advice regarding ways in which Canada's diaspora communities can have a positive influence on Canada's relationship to the rest of the globe.

Secondly, we take it as a sign of Mosaic's progress that the number of initiatives in which we are involved continues to grow. This is a year of exciting opportunities for us. For instance:

- We have launched our

Speakers' Series focused on the Middle East, in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Diversity (see page one);

- We are developing a scholarship fund to make it possible for young women from developing countries to attend school in Canada; and
- We have a research project under development that will examine the prospective role of the Iranian diaspora, including Iranian Jews, in accelerating a rapprochement between Iran and the West.

Thirdly, the number of approaches we receive from prospective volunteers continues to grow. These include a wide array of students, business people, bureaucrats, and others. Such



Vahan Kololian
Chairman
Mosaic Institute

volunteers are pivotal to the ongoing work of the Mosaic Institute, and we can't thank them enough.

These are just a few examples of the droplets of inspiration that keep us going. While they do not take the place of the objective, measurable outcomes which we continue to seek, they do confirm to us that the work we are doing is both timely and constructive.

Respectfully,

Vahan Kololian