



THE MOSAIC DISPATCH

HARNESSING CANADA'S DIVERSITY FOR
PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT ABROAD

MOSAIC HELPS YOUNG CANADIANS CONFRONT THE CHALLENGES TO BUILDING PEACE IN SRI LANKA

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In early 2009, the attention of Canadians living in major metropolitan centres, and particularly those in Toronto, was drawn to scenes of their fellow Canadians – most of them of Tamil origin – protesting the ongoing civil war between the Sinhala-led government of Sri Lanka and that country's Tamil and Muslim minority communities. It was hard not to notice: demonstrators interfered with downtown traffic, paraded loudly in front of public buildings, and even undertook a massive, infamous “sit in” on the Gardiner Expressway.

Meanwhile, animosities grew between Canadian Tamils – who, although they are a minority population in Sri Lanka, are estimated to number well in excess of 200,000 in Toronto alone – and ethnic Sinhalese, whose numbers are around 50,000 here though in Sri Lanka their broader ethnic community constitutes the majority of the population. Stories of inter-community violence – including the alleged fire-bombing by Tamil-Canadians of a Sinhalese restaurant and a Buddhist temple frequented by Sinhala worshippers – were frequent. As the civil war came to its bloody end in May 2009 with the defeat of the LTTE, differences between the two communities seemed more entrenched than ever.

In the midst of this discord, the Mosaic Institute has been encouraged by the bravery, passion and vision of a small cohort of young leaders from the Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim communities in Canada. In early autumn 2009, two from this group – one Tamil, one Sinhalese – approached the Insti-

tute to seek its assistance, having heard about the Institute's work to bridge differences between other communities of Canadians affiliated with opposing sides of entrenched conflicts overseas. These two university students asked the Institute for its assistance in bringing together moderate, peace-seeking peers from their respective communities in the hopes of finding some common ground as Canadians, and identifying shared interests with respect to charting a peaceful future for Sri Lanka and its people.

Out of that initial approach has emerged ambitious plans for a

Canadian Young People's Peace Dialogue on Sri Lanka, which will launch its public phase starting in September 2010. Large-group, invitation-only sessions will be presented in partnership with the Trudeau Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Toronto's Munk School for Global Affairs. These will be interspersed with small-group sessions facilitated by professional mediators and focused on identifying specific policy recommendations for the Canadian government and specific, joint peace-building commitments for the

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The Canadian Young People's Peace Dialogue on Sri Lanka Planning Committee, together with Greg Giokas, Director of South Asian Relations (DFAIT), and John Monahan, Executive Director of The Mosaic Institute.

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participating community members themselves.

The Planning Committee for this dialogue is a group of young people from their late-teens to mid-twenties that have been meeting since October 2009 to discuss and debate their shared values and policy interests with respect to Sri Lanka and Canada's contribution to encouraging a meaningful peace and a thriving democracy there. This group—the members of which represent the full spectrum of the Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada—are all bound together by a common Statement of Values which they drafted together over the course of several sessions.

In early May, the committee welcomed Greg Giokas, Director of South Asian Relations for Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, who flew in from Ottawa to discuss the current state of Canada's relations with Sri Lanka, and its official hopes for the future of the island nation. Mr. Giokas stressed that, in today's inter-connected world, the kind of dialogues in which these young diaspora members are engaging are essential in helping to ensure that a just and lasting peace eventually emerges in Sri Lanka, and that strengthened democratic institutions—including a free press, a robust adherence to the rule of law, and government transparency, among others — emerge

from the rubble of the civil war. He also noted that such grass-roots dialogues can be an important part of a larger effort to help Canadians appreciate their collective interests with respect to the rebuilding of a healthy democracy in Sri Lanka. As Mr. Giokas said, even "talking about talking is important, (and) productive dialogue is essential to conflict resolution."

The **Canadian Young People's Peace Dialogue on Sri Lanka** is part of the Mosaic Institute's larger **South Asian-Canadian Global Citizenship Project**, which was recently awarded two years' of funding by Multiculturalism Canada and the RBC Foundation. Watch for more information about this exciting project in future editions of the *Dispatch*.

"talking about talking is important...productive dialogue is essential to conflict resolution"

Greg Giokas

*Director, South Asian Relations
Canadian Department of Foreign
Affairs and International Trade*

A VISIT WITH... MARGARET O. MACMILLAN, MEMBER OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE MOSAIC INSTITUTE

Margaret MacMillan is one of Canada's, if not the world's, most accomplished historians, as well as a successful university administrator and a best-selling author. Currently, she is Warden of St. Antony's College at the University of Oxford. She was previously the provost of Trinity College at the University of Toronto and a professor of history at Ryerson University.

Professor MacMillan's many books include the New York Times-bestselling *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*, which won the Duff Cooper Prize, the Samuel Johnson Prize for non-fiction, the Hessel-Tiltman Prize for History, the Silver Medal for the Council on Foreign Relations' Arthur Ross Book Award and the Governor-General's prize for non-fiction in 2003, and *Nixon in China: The Week that Changed the World*, which was nominated for the prestigious Gelber Prize in 2007.

Professor MacMillan serves on the board of the Atlantic Council of Canada, and is a member of Massey College. In 2006, she was made an Officer of the Order of Canada. She joined the Mosaic Institute's Advisory

What led to your involvement with the Mosaic Institute?

A very persuasive and persistent man called (Mosaic Chairman) Vahan Kololian. I agreed with his idea of using the mosaic of peoples we have in Canada to remind us of what we have in common and not where we are different.

Why do you think the work of the Mosaic Institute is important?

Too often diasporas have played a destructive role in fanning the flames of ethnic, religious, or communal conflict back in their countries of origin. I liked the idea of using diaspora communities in Canada to build bridges and find ways of overcoming old suspicions and hatreds.

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

I am an historian and teacher and so I suppose I bring knowledge of both successful and unsuccessful examples of different peoples living together.

What do you consider the most pressing foreign policy challenges and opportunities facing Canada right now?

Restoring Canada's role in the world as an honest broker and a fixer; defining our core interests and making sure we have the resources to promote them.

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

NGOs such as the Mosaic Institute can often do things that governments have trouble in doing, such as working on peace building at the grass roots level.

Where would you like to see the Mosaic Institute in five years?

Doing much the same but with more secure funding which would enable it to plan for the future.

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



Margaret O. MacMillan, O.C.
Warden of St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, and Member of the Advisory Council of the Mosaic Institute.

DIASPORA DIGEST: MOSAIC CHAIRMAN URGES ARMENIANS AND TURKS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS

April 24 is the date each year that Armenians around the world hold "Genocide Remembrance Day", a day to mark the anniversary of the date in 1915 on which the mass arrests, deportations, and killings of Armenians by the Ottomans began. Those killings would go on to become widely recognized – except by those who steadfastly refuse to do so – as the first genocide of the modern era.

2010 marks the 95th anniversary of the tragic and still-disputed set of events that continue to divide Armenians from Turks, and that continue to contribute to the uncertainty, instability and economic deprivation of that corner of the Caucasus. This year, on Saturday, April 24, Mosaic's Chairman Vahan Khololian was invited to be interviewed by Nil Koksak of the **CBC News Network** about the current status of the relationship between Turks and Armenians

both here in Canada, and in their home region. Vahan was joined in the segment by Demir Delen, former President of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations.

Throughout the segment, Khololian stressed the importance of encouraging dialogue and openness between Armenians and Turks, both in Canada and abroad. Invoking Lester Pearson's rhetorical question, "How can there be peace without people understanding each another, and how can this be unless they know each other?", he emphasized the importance of breaking down the "silos" that too often separate even the youngest members of ethnocultural communities in Canada whose homelands are still in conflict. Rather than "(allowing) historical issues to be a dividing point," he stressed the value of coming together as Canadians to jointly

urge the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border, without conditions, as a first step towards normalizing relations between the traditional adversaries. As he pointed out, "many countries have disputes but...still have diplomatic relations," and urged that same path for Armenia and Turkey.

Since its founding, the Mosaic Institute has been engaged with the dispute between Armenia and Turkey. It hosted dialogue sessions in 2008 for members of both communities, diplomats from both countries, and officials from the Government of Canada. Participants found the sessions to be constructive, and even the governments in Ankara and Yerevan appeared to take note. The protocols they adopted in October 2009 – now put on hold by the two countries' parliaments – advocated the same basic approach: normalize diplomatic relations, open the

DIASPORA DIGEST

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

border to the free flow of goods, services and people, and, over time, work towards a shared understanding of the tragic past shared by all Armenians and Turks.

With the protocols now stalled, the Mosaic Institute is exploring new ways in which Canadians with an interest in the region might be able to help break the impasse.

MOSAIC WELCOMES 2010 SUMMER INTERNS

Since 2009, the Mosaic Institute has benefited enormously from the hard work and commitment of a steady stream of student interns who have sought to marry their theoretical knowledge of conflict resolution with the practical experience of working in a small-but-ambitious "peacebuilding" organization.

Our first interns, as described in **Issue 4 of the Mosaic Dispatch**, were Mike Morden, still an active volunteer with Mosaic, and Maya Fernandez. That very positive experience last summer led Mosaic to enter into a cooperative relationship with the Trudeau Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Toronto in September 2009. During the 2009-2010 school year, as outlined in **Issue 5 of**

the Dispatch, Mosaic welcomed a half-dozen interns to participate in a variety of Mosaic projects; a number remain committed Mosaic volunteers. Jennifer Boyczuk, a 2009-2010 intern and volunteer with Mosaic's South Asian-Canadian Global Citizenship Project, believes that, "(working with Mosaic) is really an opportunity to see that we all have a role to play in fostering peace around the world by working here in Canada." Jothi Shanmugam, a former intern serving on the Planning Committee for Mosaic's peace dialogue on Sri Lanka, considers her Mosaic experience an opportunity to gain "hands-on, real world experience that compliments the learning that takes place in lecture halls."

This summer the Mosaic Institute welcomes two new interns, Rebecca Cox and Selin Keyis.

Rebecca is a fourth year Political Science specialist from the Trudeau Center for Peace and Conflict Studies. Her interest in the Middle East conflict led her to design and implement an arts-based development initiative for children and youth in the West Bank. She has also served on the executive of the Peace and Conflict Society at U of T.

Selin, originally from Turkey, is majoring in Social-Cultural Anthropology and Political Science at the UofT. She is one of the coordinators of Peace by Peace – a joint initiative between UofT and York. Selin has also worked as a translator with refugees.

The rich contributions of stu-

dents such as Rebecca and Selin this summer will allow Mosaic to work on a number of important initiatives, including a national consultation for the Sudanese diaspora in Canada, and preparations for the public phase of its Sri Lankan peace dialogue. At the same time, Rebecca and Selin will gather skills and experiences that will help to prepare them for their future careers as "peace practitioners".

Internship opportunities with the Mosaic Institute: The Mosaic Institute welcomes expressions of interest from university students and recent grads seeking possible internship opportunities. Please write to: info@mosaicinstitute.ca.

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Please send any comments or suggestions to "info@mosaicinstitute.ca".

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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 A B R O A D

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Having the Courage to Speak

Over nine months in 2009, the Mosaic Institute presented a speakers' series and inter-community dialogue for Arab and Jewish Canadians, in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Diversity. The series, entitled "*Building Bridges in Canada: New Perspectives on People and Peace*", reminded us that there is an important role for civil society to play in seeking peaceful solutions between countries in conflict.

Showing great courage, many of our speakers, some of them former senior government officials from the region, told us that "this work is too important to leave to just the politicians." We were also reminded that a significant majority of both Israelis and Palestinians support the "Two State Solution" and recognize the compromises that must be made in order to achieve it.

Unfortunately, the relevant political establishments are unable to adopt such compromises for reasons related to internal politics. Because of this, several of the panellists' felt that pressure to achieve peace must be maintained both by those within the region and by the region's diaspora communities in countries like Canada. They felt that Canada

should also encourage the governments of the region to move beyond their ideologies and respond responsibly to the voices of their own people and those in the international community who want a just and sustainable end to the Middle East conflict.

Working with The Strategic Counsel, the Mosaic Institute measured changes in the degree of trust between Arab and Jewish series participants over the course of the series. We were pleased to learn that the degree of trust between them did show a marked increase. We were also pleased to learn that a number of smaller, inter-community dialogue groups had grown out of our initiative, and that they continue to meet.

We believe that it is essential for Canadians with knowledge and passion concerning regional conflicts to come together as Canadians, bound by common national values, and engage in difficult discussions about those conflicts. Canadians, given our penchant for being "nice", often prefer to live in polite silence rather than to engage in respectful dialogue. However, such dialogue can be essential to identifying common values and strategies for advancing the cause of peace.

At the Mosaic Institute, we constantly ask ourselves, are we being heard, and are we making a difference? So far, the encouragement we receive from various corners tells us that we are. Our Board and our Advisory Council have been particularly supportive of our work, and we thank them all for their ongoing commitment. We are deeply appreciative of the generous financial support of our growing list of donors, and for the continued support of the RBC Foundation in particular.

We remain committed to encouraging Canadians of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds to come together around shared Canadian values to identify constructive strategies for ending conflicts in their countries of origin. Rather than allowing old enmities to persist in Canada, the Mosaic Institute believes that Canadians can show the rest of the world that diversity can point the way towards a more peaceful world.

Vahan Kololian
Chairman,
The Mosaic Institute

