



**THE  
MOSAIC  
INSTITUTE**

www.mosaicinstitute.ca

# THE MOSAIC DISPATCH

HARNESSING CANADA'S DIVERSITY FOR  
PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT ABROAD

## The "South Asian-Canadian Global Citizenship Project in Peel" Ends with a Celebration



Students from Mayfield Secondary School in Peel shared their artwork on May 19.

The Mosaic Institute's "South Asian Canadian Global Citizenship Project in Peel", which the Institute launched in February 2011 in partnership with the Peel District School Board, concluded with a celebration on May 19. The project brought together more than 200 young Canadians of South Asian descent from across the Peel Region, including those from Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh, to examine the privileges & responsibilities of being a Canadian citizen, and to engage in community service projects that revitalize Canada's legacy and commitment to peacebuilding both locally and globally.

The May 19 celebration opened with a riveting keynote delivered by the founding publisher of *Canadian Immigrant* magazine, Nick Noorani. Nick emphasized the importance of integrating into Canadian life to his young audience members, and encouraged them to resist ethnic enclaves, prepare themselves to become future Canadian leaders, and to share their perspectives about what it means to be an active Canadian and global citizen with their parents and older generations.

In the afternoon, dozens of program funders, teachers, school board administrators, trustees, community organizations and parents joined those gathered to watch students from eight area high schools give presentations about the insights they had gained from the Mosaic-Peel project. After opening remarks from the Mosaic Institute's Chairman, Vahan Kololian, and from the Peel District School Board's Director of Education, Tony Pontes, youth presented documentaries, public service announcements, guides for conflict resolution within the South Asian community, essays, art work and skits they had prepared that demonstrated the promises & possibilities of Canadian citizenship.

Youth also made explicit connections between Canadian citizenship and global citizenship, and incorporated information into their presentations about internationally-focused non-governmental organizations whose work they were supporting through community service projects designed to either raise funds, awareness or both. PLAN Canada, Human Rights Watch, the Water and Sanitation Rotarian Action Group (WASRAG), Amnesty International, Kahaniya and the India Village Poverty Relief Fund were among the organizations featured in students' presentations. We estimate that hundreds of people will ultimately benefit from the leadership they are demonstrating through their community service projects.

When the Mosaic Institute started this project in June 2010, we consulted with over 30 community organizations and leaders from across the GTA. Most of those consulted told us that imported conflicts often impeded the integration of South Asians into Canadian life, and many lamented that there were too few avenues to address these issues in productive ways. Now, however, thanks to the generous support of our funders at Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the RBC Foundation, and the partnership of the Peel District School Board, we have all had the privilege of witnessing young Canadians being transformed from skeptical teenagers into eloquent ambassadors for Canadian global citizenship. The future of Canada is in capable hands.

### Mosaic Institute: What We Do

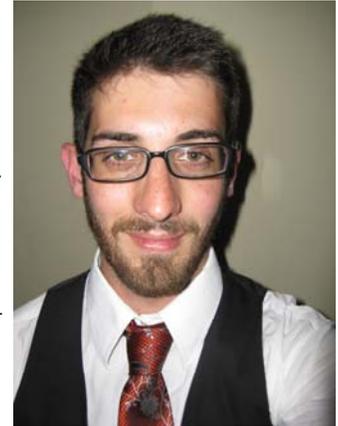
The Mosaic Institute is an action-oriented think tank that harnesses the connections, knowledge and resources of Canada's ethnocultural communities to advance Canadian solutions and promote peace and development in conflict-ridden or under-developed parts of the world.

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## **MIKE MORDEN, PROGRAM COORDINATOR OF THE MOSAIC INSTITUTE'S "UOFMOSAIC" INITIATIVE**

*Michael ("Mike") Morden first joined the Mosaic Institute as an intern in the summer of 2009. He returned to join the Institute's leadership team in September 2010 as the inaugural Program Coordinator of the "UofMosaic" initiative, which promotes peacebuilding on Canadian university campuses. The same week that he sat his final comprehensive exam towards his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Toronto, Mike Morden sat down to talk with the editors of *The Mosaic Dispatch* about his involvement with the Mosaic Institute, and how the Institute's work relates to his own interests and convictions:*



*Mike Morden, Program Coordinator of the "UofMosaic" initiative at the Mosaic Institute*

### **1. What led to your involvement with the Mosaic Institute?**

I was looking to become involved in the foreign policy-making community. Policy making doesn't just happen in government any more, and some of the most dynamic work is being done elsewhere. Mosaic was the perfect example of this.

### **2. Why do you think the work of the Mosaic Institute is important?**

It is so important for so many reasons to foster dialogue between communities in Canada that have traditionally been in conflict. It's essential work for the sake of strengthening Canada's social fabric. We also have a responsibility to use our privileged position here to host those difficult conversations that can't happen elsewhere.

### **3. What skills, knowledge and experience do you bring to Mosaic's leadership team?**

My doctoral research includes the comparative study of ethnic conflict, and the challenges of governing deeply divided societies. I draw much of my knowledge from experience with domestic challenges, including Indigenous politics in Canada, but I believe important parallels can be drawn between conflicts of varying grades across the world.

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

Canada played an essential role in developing the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. It's crucial that we continue to show leadership in enshrining those protocols in international institutions and norms. This means understanding the complex moral choices that R2P presents, which challenge us more than traditional peacekeeping.

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

Mosaic is in an ideal position to help because of its presence in diaspora communities with first-hand experience of war and privation. We can act as a bridge between those experiences and the government and broader Canadian public. This is a powerful way to both create and sustain pressure on policy-makers, but also provide them with expertise they need.

### **6. Where would you like to see the Mosaic Institute in five years?**

I would like Mosaic to be a central element of the Canadian foreign policy ecosystem, and an international leader on the issue of engaging diasporas in peacebuilding and development.

**\*A Conversation With...** is a recurring feature of the *The Mosaic Dispatch* to introduce members of the Mosaic Institute's staff and leadership team to *Dispatch* readers.

## WHOSE FOREIGN POLICY IS IT ANYWAY?

Throughout the recent federal election campaign, a popular topic of conversation in political circles was the increasing importance of ethno-cultural communities in determining the results of the May 2<sup>nd</sup> vote, and the attendant increase in attention paid to those communities by all political parties. In large urban and suburban areas, such as the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), such efforts were particularly noticeable.

The increased relevance of ethno-cultural communities in national politics actually helps to highlight a world of largely-untapped opportunity. Canada could gain a great deal by tapping more systematically into the potential that our ethno-cultural diversity offers us. Arguably, there has never been a better time to begin that process than now.

The Mosaic Institute is working to create awareness as to how the connections, the experience and the insights found within our ethno-cultural communities could and should be interwoven into the way in which Canada's foreign policy interests are identified, assessed and acted upon in order to maximize our global interests. As part of this process, the Mosaic Institute and the Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation are currently in the final stages of preparing a research paper that explores this topic in-depth. The paper - entitled **"Tapping Our Potential: Diaspora Communities and Canadian Foreign Policy"** - examines some of the ways in which other Western democracies involve diaspora communities in policy-making. It then compares the relative advantages of a roster of policy mechanisms that the Government of Canada might employ to increase both the quantity of policy inputs received from diaspora groups in Canada, and the quality of the resultant policy decisions. Finally, it offers the Government of Canada a series of recommendations for adopting some "best practices" from other jurisdictions, and creating some of its own.

The federal bureaucracy is already aware of the importance of this topic area. In 2010, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT) announced and created its "Global Citizens Initiative", the ambitions for which include improving the ways in which Canadians with personal, first-hand and expert knowledge about countries or regions outside of Canada would be able to enrich the content of Canada's foreign policies and programs. This paper will hopefully help to inform and support DFAIT's strategic thinking in that regard.

No one pretends that integrating more ethno-cultural voices into policy-making will be an easy process. Different diasporic communities may have different, or even opposing, views on particular issues, and any policy inputs received must be carefully measured against Canada's core values and interests. However, the Mosaic Institute is convinced that these challenges can – and must be overcome, if for no other reason than the fact that "public policy" should, at a very fundamental level, be representative of the Canadian public in all its diversity. Ultimately, the attempt to include Canada's ethno-cultural voices in policy making, particularly in regards to foreign policy, will be a test of how serious we are about transforming our diversity into full-bodied pluralism.



*Prime Minister Harper speaking in Brampton, ON, during Campaign 2011.*

## MOSAIC AT WORK

### "UOFMOSAIC.CA" GOES LIVE

This spring, the next phase of the UofMosaic initiative was realized. We were proud to officially launch [www.UofMosaic.ca](http://www.UofMosaic.ca), an innovative, online "Information Commons" focused on Canadian and global peacebuilding. The site was built by a leading Toronto web firm, Trioro Inc., and features a range of functionalities and full integration with social media.

The UofMosaic Information Commons is an online hub for young people that have an interest in peacebuilding, as well as practitioners, academics, and others involved in the field. It boasts the 'Peacebuilding Toolbox' – a collection of conflict resolution resources compiled from international field-leading organizations. The toolbox will provide young people with the practical, applied information they need to start building bridges in their communities, with UofMosaic student chapters or independently. There is also information about education, internships, and other opportunities to launch careers in peacebuilding.

The website hosts a blog, which features discussion of current events, geopolitics, and global and local conflict resolution projects that are currently underway. We hope the blog will be a jumping off point for online dialogue on important issues. It also houses a multimedia library, with videos from past Mosaic dialogue programs as well as a range of inspirational and educational videos not produced by Mosaic but with conflict resolution content. These include lectures, documentaries, podcasts, and historical radio and television clips. We are also in the process of developing a short documentary series titled "Profiles in Peacebuilding", which will look at the business of bridge building through the eyes of a diverse group of Canadian peacebuilding leaders.

UofMosaic.ca, beyond simply being the web presence of the UofMosaic initiative, is an exciting new piece of the Mosaic Institute's programming agenda. It is a platform for us to connect with passionate young people, foster on- and offline participation, reach a broader public – in short, to act as a 21<sup>st</sup> century peacebuilding think tank.

## Encouraging Young Canadians to Embrace Their Full Potential as “Global Citizens”

As a Canadian of Armenian heritage and born in Egypt, I watched with great interest as the residents of Cairo took to Tahrir Square earlier this year to agitate for a change of leadership in their country. President Mubarak's ultimate resignation surprised many who thought that he and his long-feared security forces would swiftly and surely snuff out the civil unrest that was spreading across Egypt. However, they clearly underestimated the power that ordinary men and women, working in cooperation to pursue extraordinary possibilities, can achieve. The same was obviously true in Tunisia, and, as I write this, “people's movements” are still struggling to achieve historic changes in Libya, in Syria, in Yemen and in other countries across the Arab world.

It is because the Mosaic Institute believes in the power of ordinary Canadians to effect powerful and positive change in the world that we relentlessly pursue our mission of “Harnessing Canada's diversity for peace and development abroad.” The richness of Canada's mosaic is a largely-untapped reservoir of networks, expertise, and insights that we believe can help Canada to reclaim its historic role as one of the world's great peacemaker nations. While there are certain functions that only state actors can fulfill, there are also many spheres of influence where the most effective work is performed by non-state actors and individuals.

The Mosaic Institute believes that every individual in Canada has the potential – whether tapped or untapped – to enrich Canada's contribution to the world through deliberate acts of constructive global citizenship within their own spheres of influence. We also believe in helping young Canadians, in particular, to identify and nurture that potential within themselves when they are still young. That way, by the time they reach adulthood, they will not need any prompting to demonstrate either individual or collective leadership: it will be, for them, a natural state of being.

It is for that reason that we were pleased to undertake our “South Asian - Canadian Global Citizenship Project in Peel” in partnership with the Peel District School Board from February to May of this year. That program has worked with high school students to encourage them to consider what it means to be Canadians of South Asian heritage who are also active and committed “global citizens”.

In our parlance, “global citizenship” includes demonstrating Canada's commitment to such fundamental values as equality rights, the rule of law and freedom of expression in our personal and collective interactions with countries and communities around the globe. At the Mosaic Institute, we encourage this by engaging diaspora communities in Canada who are particularly well-placed to help promote these values back to their countries of origin or their ancestral homelands.

It has been said that “the world needs more Canada.” With the work of our team, our institutional and community partners and our generous funders, we are equipping young Canadians to help respond to that need wherever it is most acute.

Thank you and goodnight  
to all who will share it



Vahan Kololian



Vahan Kololian  
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