



Cross cultural play: Team Canada's Cassie Campbell closes in on Team China goaltender Hong Guo at the 2004 World Women's Ice Hockey Championship in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

on the rule of law, more gradually moving toward a democracy." Canada is especially a model of a multicultural, tolerant society, he says. "China would very much like to learn about Canada, as much as Canadians want to learn about China."

Indeed, links with Asia Pacific bring a wealth of "human capital," adds Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay, a professor of political science at Concordia University in Montreal. Her university has established China and India as priorities, encouraging academic exchanges, research collaboration and access to distance education with the two countries. Canada can especially benefit from dialogue with India, she says, in areas such as parliamentary democracy, collective versus individual rights, Aboriginal issues and the relationship between justice, law and politics.

The region is also the demographic heart of Islam and thus affords significant links to the Muslim world. The majority of the world's Muslims live in Asia—Indonesia is the largest Islamic country and Bangladesh the second largest—making Canadian ties with the region critical to better understand and engage in a dialogue with Muslim communities.

### Personal ties

Today one in three Canadians has family links in Asia. These Canadians are increasingly involved in foreign policy as citizens, business people, politicians, scholars and students to help Canada build bridges with the region. But that significant population also means that Asian issues resonate on the domestic political scene.

Tremblay, who comes from Kashmir in northwest India and married a francophone Canadian, says she "walks in

and out of the two cultures very easily." However, Tremblay says, many Asian immigrants can bring with them links to separatist movements and internal conflicts, as well as sensitivities about long-standing cultural and class norms that clash with the Canadian experience. Their children, meanwhile, will be much more able to promote positive links to their homelands.

"The next generation is going to be different," she says. "These kids who are growing up here, they're trilingual, they're going to be the future."

Responding to these trends is vital. The Speech from the Throne in British Columbia in February emphasized a role for the province as a gateway to Asia Pacific, a "golden opportunity" to forge new relationships in terms of trade, investment, visitors and cultures. It announced education measures such as the promotion in schools of Punjabi, Mandarin and other Asia Pacific languages.

### Future imperative

The importance of Asian languages—and the trade, cultural and other ties they bring—was driven home in a provocative way when *The Globe and Mail* filled the front page of a Saturday edition last fall with 20 Chinese characters in a type size usually reserved for war or moon landings accompanied by the English: "If you can't read these words, better start brushing up...." In the largest single undertaking in the newspaper's history, three dozen journalists put together a comprehensive portrait of contemporary China. Explained Edward Greenspon, Editor in Chief of the newspaper, "Make no mistake about it: China is rising."

Jiang says that although the benefits of greater connections with the region are significant, they will not come without work, sacrifice and some adjustments. He passed up a career opportunity, for example, so that his son could enter the Chinese-English bilingual program in Edmonton three years ago. He moved his family to a new neighbourhood within an easy distance of the school—and since then has endured the frustrations of a child learning a difficult new language.

"It's a lot of pain, a lot of me helping him, a lot of struggle," Jiang explains. "But for Hadrian, this is about a lot more than cultural identity. It will help him and others to have that language. It's a reality that we have to cope with." 🍁

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