



▲ The logo of an organization in Cambodia that assists children damaged by landmines.

action. Youth are critical to achieving success in the campaign, observes Andrew Shore, Coordinator of the Mine Action Team for FAC. “Young people are committed to pressing forward with the fight to rid the world of landmines... Nowhere was this more apparent than during the Nairobi Summit, where youth played a large role and had a considerable voice.”

But does the work of young Canadians really make a difference? Just ask Mahboobullah Iltaf, a youth worker with the Afghan Campaign to Ban Land Mines, who came to Canada for Canadian Landmine Awareness Week in February.

“Having Canadian youth on board for this cause means stronger international commitment toward our goal for a mine-free world,” says the 20-year-old Afghani, who has several friends who are landmine survivors. “Youth are the future of any movement that has energy and talent.”

Sierra Noble, 15, an up-and-coming fiddler in Winnipeg who has been involved in the anti-landmine movement since the age of 10, plays at benefit concerts and regularly visits classrooms to take the message to youth. Last year, she was one of three Canadian youth who attended a children’s conference on landmines in Japan.

“It’s up to us to take a stand, gain power in this messed-up world and fix the mistakes,” says Noble. 🍁

For more information on Canada’s Guide to the Global Ban on Landmines, visit www.mines.gc.ca. For the Youth Mine Action Ambassador Program, see www.dangermines.ca. To learn about Mines Action Canada, visit www.minesactioncanada.org.

DASHAN BUILDS BRIDGES TO CHINA

A billion people know his face and voice, although precious few of them in Toronto, where Mark Rowswell lives.

The popularity of this blue-eyed Canadian entertainer in China—he is ubiquitous under the stage name of Dashan, or Big Mountain—is unparalleled. Speaking flawless Mandarin and sometimes employing a colloquial dialect, Rowswell is a top performer of *xiangsheng*, a traditional form of comic dialogue or “cross-talk” in which he trained while studying Chinese literature at Beijing University in 1988.

That’s been just a starting point for Rowswell, 39, who is one of China’s most recognizable foreigners—the first ever to win an Outstanding Youth of Beijing award. Videos and CD-ROMs of *Dashan’s Adventures* and *Communicate in Chinese* are sold across the country alongside “Uncle Dashan” children’s books. He entertains at high-end government functions and serves as host for corporate events. The best-known Canadian in China since Dr. Norman Bethune, Rowswell has achieved near-cult status and acts as a cultural bridge of unique value.

Being “Dashan from Canada” has not only benefited Rowswell personally, but also helped further his country’s reputation in China.

“Canada’s relationship with China is perceived as non-problematic,” he remarks in an interview while on tour in China. “This has been conducive to my development as a performer and public figure.”

He says that being Canadian “has meant that there have been few political roadblocks to my work as a



photo: courtesy of Dashan Inc.

Canadian Mark Rowswell as Dashan

performer in China,” adding, “The reputation of Canadians in general as a tolerant, friendly and modest people has also been conducive to my acceptance by the Chinese people.”

He jokingly cites a Western journalist in Beijing who wrote that, “of all foreign nationalities, Canadians have the best reputation in China, mainly because of the asinine performances of Dashan.”

However, Rowswell knows that Canada’s standing in China is based on more substantive matters. “We have a history of friendly contributions to China’s development,” he notes, “from Dr. Norman Bethune, to wheat sales against the wishes of the U.S. at the height of the Cold War, to being one of the first Western nations to recognize the People’s Republic.”

And, of course, to Uncle Dashan’s adventures. 🍁

See more of one of the most recognized personalities on the planet at www.dashan.com.