

Building Bridges Not Walls

In this issue of *Our World*, we explore the vitality of our employees through the kaleidoscope of diversity. Hailing from the four corners of the globe and remote regions of Canada, DFAIT employees form a tapestry of rich experiences, skills and knowledge that makes our organization an outstanding example of Canada's diversity advantage.



photo: Charles Enman/DFAIT

Denis Kingsley, DFAIT's Champion of Multiculturalism

DFAIT, as a foreign affairs ministry, must represent the contemporary face of Canada to the world. Canada is arguably the most diverse nation in the world, with more citizens of foreign birth than any other country except Australia. There are more than 200 ethnicities in the Canadian mosaic, and our Aboriginal peoples alone speak more than 50 languages. Immigrants to Canada come from virtually every nation on the face of the earth. There is no field of human endeavour, whether in the arts, sciences or humanities, in which Canadians have not made a major contribution. And the same can be said of our versatile and talented employees.

While there are many angles from which to examine diversity, there is only one common thread in Canadian society—inclusion. Our national experience and our history have taught the value of bringing everyone under the big tent. In this issue, employees demonstrate how this inclusion enriches and strengthens our organization.

As the new champion for multiculturalism, I read this issue with intense interest. As a French-Canadian whose forebears have been in Canada for many generations, my heart warmed to the stories of employees who have become new citizens, such as Zoufia Chougaiyova, who left strife-torn Central Asia for a new life in Canada. Lynn Hartery, from the shores of Newfoundland, and Laura Dalby, from 100 Mile House in the B.C. interior, reminded me of the rich regional differences brought together here at DFAIT. The article entitled "Aboriginal Advantage" is a welcome reminder of how far we have come in ensuring that our first Canadians are not only part of our department, but are among the present and future leaders of this organization. And if any of you have doubts about the artistic skills of your colleagues, I invite you to read the "Enchanted by the Muses" article, which flags just some of this talent.

I have often pondered the distinction between *multiculturalism* and *diversity*. Cultural differences are certainly aspects of diversity—but diversity also embraces the wide spectrum of talents, origins, life experiences, educational backgrounds and perspectives, among other attributes that make everyone unique.

In my career, I have never sought to bring together only people whose views mirror my own. Instead, I have found that consensus reached by diverse groups has always been of greater value.

Mere lip service will not afford us the advantages of diversity. If we allow any group to be marginalized, or think in terms of "mainstream" and "fringe," we will fail. We must always build bridges rather than walls.

Here at DFAIT, I'm proud of how well-attuned we are to the value of diversity and its importance in enhancing the crucial work we do.

Denis Kingsley,
Assistant Deputy Minister, International Platform Branch

Dept. of Foreign Affairs
Min. des Affaires étrangères

JUL 16 2011

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WELCOMING OUR NEW MINISTER OF STATE

DFAIT is pleased to welcome Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs). Minister of State Ablonczy joins ministers Cannon and Van Loan and a committed team working to enhance the relationship with our neighbours to make the Americas a more prosperous, secure and democratic part of the world. Minister of State Ablonczy is also leading on the important consular work that is being done on behalf of Canadians outside our country.

Minister of State Ablonczy holds degrees in education and law from the University of Calgary. She served as Minister of State (Seniors) prior to her appointment at DFAIT. For more information, read Minister of State Ablonczy's biography on DFAIT's intranet and Internet.

