

# Enfants d'ici ou d'ailleurs

Quebec students promote human security for the world's children

Three years ago, a group of students from the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) developed a project with the aim of encouraging cultural development among elementary schoolchildren in Quebec and other regions of La Francophonie. They called their project *Enfants d'ici ou d'ailleurs*, or EIA (Children from here or elsewhere).

Under EIA, each year nine university students visit an elementary school in Quebec or abroad. They donate books and other materials to a school in a developing country, they help schoolchildren discover another culture—and in doing so they participate in developing Canada's human security agenda.

## In the field

So far, EIA participants have visited Tunisia and Benin, and in May they are going to Senegal. Eventually, *Enfants d'ici ou d'ailleurs* hopes to arrange visits to all the 47 countries of La Francophonie. All groups include students from UQAM's political science, education and communications departments. This year the project expanded to include students from the Université de Montréal.

EIA's co-president is Catherine Émond, and Karim Laz is co-director. They say, "By helping schoolchildren look at their own culture and compare it with a different one, we hope to create a new openness and prevent the emergence of racial and cultural prejudices. We believe that if schoolchildren learn tolerance, openness and an interest in other cultures, these qualities will last a lifetime."

Participants have visited classrooms in Quebec and abroad, produced two short videos on the culture of Quebec and a foreign country, and drafted two booklets. Political science students also write an essay on the human security dimensions of the project for the Government of Canada.

## Human security

The focus on human security stems from EIA's mandate, which is to encourage the cultural development of children in La Francophonie and to provide assistance to poorly equipped elementary schools in developing countries. EIA believes that its actions promote human development and hence human security.



Catherine Émond talks with Mr. Axworthy at UQAM, January 27.

*Enfants d'ici ou d'ailleurs* has received financial support from the Canadian government, including a \$50 000 grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The grant was presented by Foreign Affairs Minister Axworthy when he met with the group at UQAM on January 27.

At the presentation Mr. Axworthy said, "I am very impressed by what you do and by your commitment toward human security. By creating links between Canadian and foreign schoolchildren, you contribute to a better society for all. You have an extraordinary potential for making a difference for Canada in our attempts to bring about a safer world." ●—

photos: *Enfants d'ici ou d'ailleurs*, UQAM



EIA students with Mr. Axworthy at UQAM, January 27

Attention all schools, colleges and universities in Canada: **Canada World View** invites you to tell us about your projects related to human security and foreign policy. We believe in the importance of human security education in the classrooms of the country. We will select the most interesting projects and devote a page to your achievements. Contact us by writing to: Managing Editor, **Canada World View**, Communications Services Division (BCS), Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2.