

ASIA IN FOCUS

Reflected in the Canadian response to the tsunami and reinforced by recent visits to the region by Prime Minister Paul Martin and a high-level trade mission, Canada is fully committed to engaging in Asia Pacific.

Wenran Jiang is leading an ideal Asian-Canadian existence. Born in Harbin, a large industrial city in northeastern China, Jiang immigrated to Canada when, as a doctoral student in Ottawa in the mid-1980s, he met and married a Canadian. He moved to Edmonton to find the city twinned with Harbin, its Chinatown featuring a Harbin Road (a counterpart to Edmonton Road, the main airport thoroughfare in Harbin) and graced with a ceremonial gate constructed by the people of Harbin as a gift to their sister city. Jiang's nine-year-old son, Hadrian, attends a primary school where he is taught in English and Mandarin in one of the most extensive public foreign-language programs on the continent. Son Tristan, five, will start there in the fall. The family home is what Jiang calls an "East meets West compromise": Chinese antiques and carved panels mix with contemporary furniture, all arranged according to *feng shui*, the mystical Chinese art promoting energy and balance.

"In Canada, I couldn't be closer to home," quips Jiang, 48, an associate professor of political science at the University of Alberta. He perpetuates this East-West balance as a specialist on East Asia focusing on foreign policy, human rights and development studies. He moves easily between his new home and Asia, an observer, advocate and instrument of closer ties with the region. He is especially an expert on Canada's relations with China in the energy sector, the subject of recent conferences he's organized between the two countries.

Jiang is an example of the expanding personal, economic, political, cultural and developmental links between Canada and Asia Pacific. Reflected in the outpouring of sympathy and generosity following the devastating Boxing Day tsunami and reinforced by recent visits to Asia by Prime Minister Paul Martin and a high-level trade mission, Canada is fully committed to engaging in the region.

"Asia is no longer foreign; in many respects, we are an integral part of it, and it is part of us," says David Mulroney, Assistant Deputy Minister of Bilateral Relations

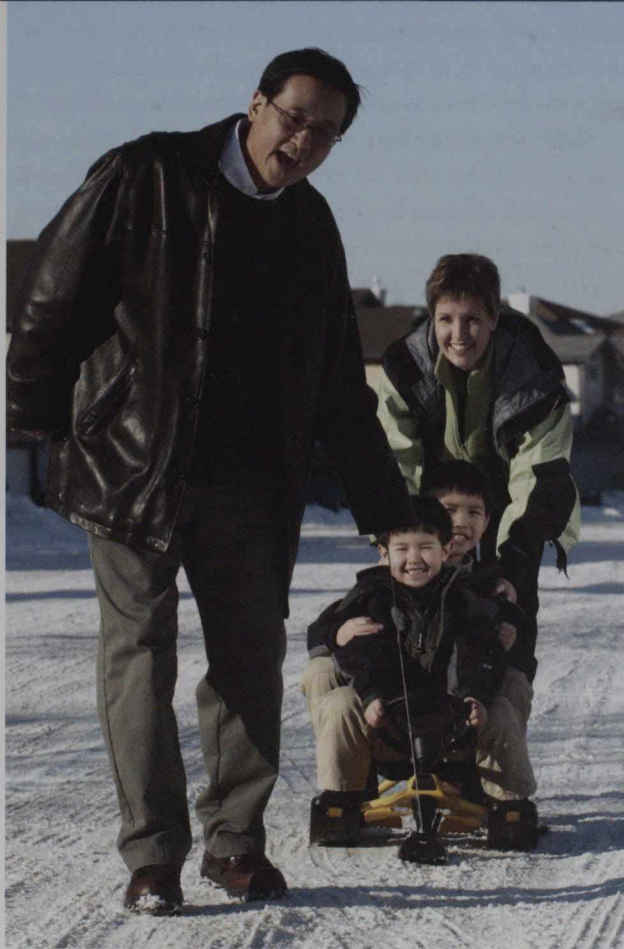


photo: CF (Sean Connor)

East-West balance: University of Alberta professor Wenran Jiang and his wife Tanya Casperson with their sons Hadrian, 9, and Tristan, 5.

at Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC). "This is a region where economic interests intersect with security and personal interests to strategically affect Canadian interests... Engaging with Asia Pacific is not optional; it is key to our prosperity and security, especially in a globalized world."

A strategic involvement

Canada has long-standing and long-range relations with the vast and diverse Asia Pacific, which stretches from Afghanistan to Tahiti and from Mongolia to New Zealand. Historical ties were based on both immigration, with the early Chinese, Japanese and South Asians who came to build the Canadian Pacific Railway, and trade, beginning with a booming export to China of wild ginseng by Jesuit missionaries in Quebec in the early 1700s. Links with Asia Pacific have grown, with the region accounting, for example, for half of all new immigrants to Canada in the last decade.

Today Canada is focused on the century's emerging powers, China and India, as well as on deepening relations