

of ethnic or religious intolerance, the Commonwealth's example is out of sight and out of mind.

Schools preach these virtues to their students but my three kids in the public school system in Winnipeg have never uttered the word "Commonwealth" in my presence. Other than noting that quaint pink on a world map, there is precious little known about how valuable a forum the Commonwealth has become, especially for smaller states whose voice carries weight in an important world body. Is there an ongoing discussion between Commonwealth officials and educators about how those values can be communicated to students, through work projects, study tours student exchanges and pen pal partnerships? If such programs exist, my kids have never mentioned them. If officials have no time, why aren't we using contacts and friends to do the work as volunteers?

All in all, we are far too reluctant to boast about the Commonwealth's guiding principles and impressive successes. That reluctance is a failure on the part of the organized Commonwealth and the informal network of well wishers who take too much for granted.

The Commonwealth will rarely be discussed at the dinner table and we know that it is only during a crisis when interest will be sustained. We also know that the Commonwealth has power, the power of ideas that can motivate, inform and inspire. We need to hear more about why those underlying values are crucial for international cooperation. Our power will wane with silence.