

United Nations Association in Canada

A Sense of Belonging Project



Parliament Hill hosts SB National Conference Roundtable

By Saad Khan

On February 29, 2008, UNA-Canada and the *A Sense of Belonging* team held a roundtable on Parliament Hill with many of our Regional Coordinators from across Canada as well as Senator Vivienne Poy, representatives from a variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies, and concerned citizens from the broader public. We were also pleased to have Shane Roberts of the National Capital Region Branch of the UNA-Canada, and Jeff Mackey, UNA-Canada representative from Yellowknife and SB regional coordinator in attendance.



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Participants at National Conference Roundtable February 29, 2008 (photo courtesy of Amy Brathwaite)

This constructive dialogue that took place was based on many of the themes and findings the project discovered and dealt with over the past two years.

Some of the main challenges and focus areas explored during the session were:

- The role of the media in image making with regards to minority groups
- Interactions between Aboriginal and ethnocultural communities
- Issues involving employment and foreign credential recognition
- Collaboration between community groups and NGOs
- Participation of minorities in civic activities
- Accommodation for religious groups

We also heard from two guest speakers, **Dr. Randall Hansen**, the Canada Research Chair in Immigration and Governance at the University of Toronto and **Dr. Howard Duncan**, the CEO for the Metropolis Project, an international network for comparative research and public policy development on migration, diversity and immigrant integration in cities in Canada and around the world. Both brought their own thoughts on the subject of "the offer of Canadian identity" to use the words of Dr. Duncan.

Given that immigration and the changing demographics of Canadian society, as Dr. Hansen explained, is possibly one of the most central issues of our time, the roundtable was a perfect way of showing the public the range of the project and to offer participants a forum to think about one of the most challenging questions for all citizens: "what does it mean to be Canadian?"

Ultimately the vigorous and dynamic roundtable conversation reaffirmed the reasons for and goals behind the SB project, as it opened communication channels and openly discussed Canadian identity.



Vanya Berrouet, Saad Khan, Mara Brotman, Howard Duncan & Kathryn White leading the National Conference Roundtable - February 29, 2008 (photo courtesy of Amy Brathwaite)





Thank you & Bonne Chance

The national project and regional coordinating staff have undergone various changes throughout the life of this initiative. Each member, past and present has contributed in their own unique way as well as taken away significant experiences and new understanding of the Canadian experience.

We would like to take this opportunity to say a huge **THANK YOU** to all of our current Regional Coordinators:

Yellowknife, NT Ana Carolina Perdomo Jeff Mackey	Saskatoon, SK Maya Medjesi	Montreal, QC Christina Raneburger Ruham Sayed Omar
Kamloops, BC Kevin Cole Kim Rathwell-Austin	Winnipeg, MB Elena Anciro Leanne Sinclair	Moncton, NB Angelique Reddy
Calgary, AB Falice Chin	Kingston, ON Julia Lebedeva Lorraine Payette	St. John's, NL C.W. Cho

Here are what some SB staff will remember most about their time with the project...



Mara Brotman
Project Officer
2007-2008

"What I'll take away from this project is that creating *A Sense of Belonging* is all about people. It was so powerful throughout the project

to be able to hear people's stories about how they live and what it's like to be a minority, a newcomer, or someone working in community collaboration. I think the stakeholders, government officials, and Regional Coordinators all came away with a sense that there are so many ways that our nine communities are unique but similar – they face similar challenges and have great levels of commitment to the place they call home.

For me personally it was wonderful to get the perspective from outside the major urban centres. I really loved being a part of *A Sense of Belonging* and that is because of the fascinating and hard-working people we met in every place."

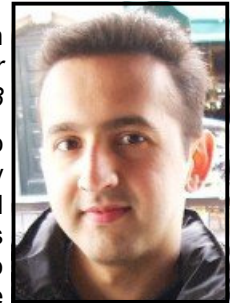


Sarah Hoyles
Communications Officer
2007-2008

"I am encouraged by what I saw and heard from the SB communities across Canada. People on the ground, members of the communities, namely the RCs, identified gaps and take initiative to come up with creative

solutions. It just shows that there are champions of diversity and inclusiveness almost everywhere and solutions can arise with a little effort and imagination."

Saad Khan
Project Officer
2007-2008



"My fondest memories relating to the project have to do with going on our regional visits and seeing the country in circumstances that otherwise would not be presented to me. I never imagined that I would be able to go as far as places like Yellowknife or Kamloops. It was also refreshing to see the diversity that exists beyond the typical cities we usually think of when we imagine a

'pluralistic Canada'."



Vanya Berrouet
Former Project Manager
2006-2007

"Ce qui m'a le plus frappée et encouragée durant la mise en oeuvre de ce projet est la force de ce grand faisceau d'énergies existant dans les différentes régions du Canada en vue de rendre effectif et concret le dialogue entre les diverses

communautés socio-culturelles. L'action de figures charismatiques émergeant desdites communautés constitue un puissant levier pour créer un contexte favorable au dialogue et à la coopération. La puissance de l'art (théâtre, musique, poésie) comme outil de communication et de communion au niveau des jeunes m'a aussi émerveillée.

Le chemin est long mais nous disposons de tous les ingrédients pour l'avènement au Canada d'une société plus inclusive où il pourrait faire

And the winner is...



'About Face' Photo Contest winning entry by Fahad Chowdhury

The photo was selected as the winning submission for UNA-Canada's photo contest **About Face**. The contest sought photographic responses from across Canada to answer the question 'What is Canadian?'

The winning photographer is Fahad Chowdhury based in St. John's, NL where he is studying Biochemistry at Memorial University. He is a native from the Bangladesh but has been residing in Canada since Fall 2005. Within the past

three years, he says he has "both adapted to the culture of the country and has become profoundly appreciative of it".

Before a recent trip back to Bangladesh during the Christmas break in 2006, his family and friends asked him to bring a token of his Canadian experience back to his homeland. He decided a camera was just what he needed and his journey into photography began. Fahad continues to pursue photography and has had some of his

A Sense of Belonging Wraps up

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe that it has been two years and *A Sense of Belonging* Project is concluding shortly. Let me be the first to say what a pleasure it has been for UNA-Canada to be involved in such exciting work and valuable partnerships with organizations across the country in our exploration of Canadian diversity and identity.

It must be said that this project would not have been possible, effective or relevant without our Regional Coordinators on the ground in each of our nine communities. These individuals provided informed insight and innovative programming to engage their respective communities. Along with our thanks, we wish the RCs the best and sincerely hope that they and their communities will continue this important work, along side as well as outside of UNA-Canada initiatives.

I can confidently say that the *A Sense of Belonging* national team have met and surpassed the goals we set for ourselves back in 2005. The goals were to support participation and opportunities for minority groups and promote fulsome and equal participation in Canadian society. Of course, with every goal reached new challenges arise. New challenges we can look forward to grappling with in the months and years to come with the hope of strengthening the Canadian model of understanding, tolerance and integration.



UNA-Canada is privileged to have been entrusted with such an important initiative through funding from Canadian Heritage. We would like to thank all involved in this project for engaging with us in and with your various communities. It has been a humbling, demanding and inspiring project with many rewards and lessons learned.

Kathryn White, Executive Director

What's Next...

The project team is hard at work on the final resource document "About Face" which will be a recipe book for community action. The Regional Coordinators from our nine communities are contributing to the effort through their expertise and lived experience.

It will include:

- actual success stories from SB community initiatives
- step-by-step instruction of how to create your own events
- materials list
- budget outlines

The resource will be published and made available in late Spring 2008.

Putting Diversity on the Dance floor

The National Conference's i.d. Cultural Event a huge success

On the Saturday night of the national conference, diversity was taken from the conference room and put it on the dance floor. The cultural event i.d. brought together various groups of dancers, singers and performers to explore and celebrate what it means to be Canadian.



Upasana East Indian Dancer

Headlining the event at Ottawa's Mercury Lounge was **Nomadic Massive**, a Montreal band. Also on the bill, were slam poets from **Capital Poetry Collective**, the **Upasana East-Indian Dancers**, Throatsingers Becky and Charlotte from the **Inuit Cultural Performers**, and two dancers from the **Svitanok Ukrainian Dance Society**. Finishing up the night was **DJ Trevor Walker** spinning world music beats until closing time. Although we could not capture the complete scope of Canadian identity that night, it provided a dynamic atmosphere for the sharing of cultures, opinions and dance moves.



Nathanael from Capital Poetry Collective

It was truly an exercise in Canadian culture, as the general public, various civil groups affiliated with UNA-Canada and our Regional Coordinators came together to celebrate the success of the project. The venue was filled to capacity and the emcee, SB's Sarah Hoyles, summed the event up well in her closing remarks saying "we aren't just here to celebrate diversity in Canada, we are experiencing it right now in this room. Simply by you being here you are a part of Canadian diversity."



Svitanok Ukrainian Dancers



Montreal's Nomadic Massive

But the most rewarding part of the evening was knowing that partnerships and communication lines were established or at least widened. As the night wound down, plans for collaborations between the Throat Singers and other musicians were in the works, the slam poets could be heard just outside the venue jamming freestyle with some band members of Nomadic Massive, and one of the Winnipeg Regional Coordinators LeeAnne Sinclair commented how she would love to duplicate such an event in her city, all creating a sense of belonging.



The **United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada)** is a national charitable organization established in 1946. As a think and do organization, UNA-Canada supports a network of 20 volunteer branches and local contacts, with a National office in Ottawa and a Western professional office in Vancouver. Our mandate is to engage Canadians in the work of the UN and the critical global issues that affect us all through innovative projects, policy research, and on-going communications with Canadians.



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