

BIBBY'S BLOG

Research,
Reflections, &

Rants



Musings of a Multi-Focused Mind

BIBBY BLOG - "Whatever Happened to Mosaic Madness?" Mar 01, 2008

I have had the privilege of spending the last ten days or so in Japan. I am writing this from Tokyo just before returning to Canada later today.

The trip was at the invitation of the Japanese Association for Canadian Studies. I was invited to give three lectures at three different universities here - Reitaku University and Meiji University in Tokyo, and Hokkai-Gakuen University in Sapporo. The latter is a school with which the University of Lethbridge has had an exchange student partnership since the mid-1980s.

What has made the trip particularly timely and intriguing for me is that my hosts were interested in having me reflect on *Mosaic Madness* - a book I had written in 1990 at the height of Canada's obsession with unity and constitutional issues. The book had been translated into Japanese a few years later by Professor Norio Ota of York University who felt its analysis and prognoses were potentially of considerable relevance to Japan. As readers undoubtedly know, Japan has tended to be a highly homogenous country that has not been particularly receptive to immigration. Today with its population shrinking, some observers feel that immigration may be an increasing necessity, raising the question as to how the host population and newcomers can live out life together.

My presentations involved my revisiting the "mosaic madness" of the 1990 period. I was intrigued to realize that much of the madness that characterized Canada then and was anticipated to continue and perhaps become even worse has largely dissipated. In 2008 we find Canada characterized by a remarkable calm. My data and that of others such as Michael Adams document what most of us know experientially - that Canada today seems quite sane, complete with highly positive interpersonal life, an extremely positive economic environment, and highly content individuals. In the title of my first presentation, one might well ask, "Whatever Happened to Mosaic Madness?"

I suggested to my audiences here that official multiculturalism largely failed to instill in Canadians the idea that multiculturalism, through promoting interaction and mutual reflections on our diverse cultures, had the potential to produce "a richer life for us all," as Pierre Trudeau envisioned in unveiling the multicultural policy in 1971. Nonetheless, as I have written in *The Boomer Factor*, "Immigrant parents and 'host' parents may not have spoken to each other and shared cultures to the extent that Trudeau envisioned back in 1971. But the good news is that many of their children talked - in playgrounds, in schools, in the workplace, in print, in social situations, as friends, lovers, and marriage partners. Official multiculturalism may have failed, but unofficial multiculturalism has triumphed [33].

Was the thesis of *Mosaic Madness* wrong? Did we not have to find a better balance between excessive individualism and excessive relativism? Of course we had to find those kinds of critical balances. But it seems that, despite our official efforts and our consternation, the balances are being found and that "richer life for us all" is increasingly being experienced. Why? Primarily because Canadians - led by children, no less - have discovered one another, and collectively are being enriched by the tapping of their diversity.

