



Fun and awareness: The World Partnership Walk gives participants a meaningful way to have a direct impact on the global situation.

A Canadian tradition: Making a world of difference

Their private school in an upscale neighbourhood on the west side of Vancouver is far from the hardship, despair and turmoil common to many parts of the world. But the 670 girls at Crofton House School are not taking their privileged lives for granted.

The students are learning about global poverty and working hard to make a difference to the lives of others much less fortunate through the World Partnership Walk, an annual event to raise awareness and funds for international development that will take place in 10 cities across Canada on Sunday, May 25.

Now in its 19th year, the World Partnership Walk reflects and reinforces a long tradition of Canadians making a difference in the world. And this year the Walk is striking a chord with Canadians young and old and from all walks of life as a way to have a direct impact on the global situation.

"There's a general caring in Canada and a will to do good and improve the world," says Crofton student Susie LeBlanc, who, along with Grade 11 classmates Faaiza Lalji and Ashley Framback is helping to organize a school campaign surrounding the Walk. "We realize that, since we are in a fortunate position, we should use that position to help others who are not so fortunate."

It's an instinct that appears to be widespread in Canada. A sweeping study published last month by Canadian Policy Research Networks found a strong sense among Canadians that they are part of the world, as well as a feeling of community that they are concerned about inequalities between rich and poor and believe that basic needs, such as a right to health care and shelter, should be provided.

"Canadians have a deeper sense of obligation toward other nations and feel more interdependence with them," reported Daniel Yankelovich, an adviser on the study.

Nazeer Aziz Ladhani, Chief Executive Officer of Aga Khan Foundation Canada, the non-profit, non-denominational development agency that organizes the World Partnership Walk through the efforts of hundreds of volunteers across the country, says the event is a way for Canadians to make a difference in developing countries.

"There is a tradition in Canada of caring about the world that resonates in the World Partnership Walk," Mr. Ladhani says. "The programs made possible by this event and its thousands of supporters, both individual and corporate, are helping poor people in critical regions of the globe."

The event — which includes a short walk of about five kilometres followed by entertainment and activities — is Canada's only public participation activity of its kind that helps to fight global poverty, and has raised more than \$20-million since 1985. The funds raised are matched by the federal government through the Canadian International Development Agency and go to support programs in Asia and Africa

People across the country will be taking a walk on May 25 to help raise awareness and funds in the fight against global poverty

that focus on health, education, rural development and the enhancement of community-based organizations, with an emphasis on women's equality and the environment.

Shamima Kassum, a Winnipeg medical student involved in the Walk both as a participant and volunteer, says that she especially realized the importance of the event when she travelled to Africa three years ago and saw "shocking" conditions that can only be alleviated through "long-term investment" and awareness raising.

"In spite of the technology available in the world today that has resulted in a global village, we are ignorant of various parts of this village," Ms. Kassum says. "Most of us do not possess enough independent wealth to change the world, and as a result, as individuals we tend to avoid those we cannot help. However, in concert with others — as cliché as it sounds — it is possible to make a difference."

Ms. Kassum says that recent world events "have helped people to understand how poverty 'there' is poverty 'here'" and made them look to effect change in meaningful way.

"The Walk is a single day in May filled with music, food, a lot of entertainment and a bit of exercise for everyone," she says. "Canadians just need to be aware of this event. Understanding how it works creates the desire to participate, and those who really appreciate what it is all about come back every year."

Janet Tidmarsh, a chartered accountant in Victoria, said she got involved in the Walk and helped form a team because of what was happening in the world. "A lot of us right now have suddenly and almost reluctantly been forced to become more aware of global issues," she says. "With Afghanistan and Iraq, it's in our face all of the time now; this is an opportunity for us to get on board and support causes globally."

Community spirit is also a good reason to get involved. "This is a social thing," she says. "It's such a great opportunity to have some fun as a group, build some spirit and at the same time do something that makes a difference."

Awareness-raising is a major part of Crofton House School's involvement in the Walk, says Faazila Lalji of Vancouver. Activities at the school include a special Walk assembly, a poster

competition and facts about global poverty read out on each morning's announcements. Fundraising events include a student talent night, a sneaker day where the students make a donation to wear casual shoes, a picnic and "mini-Walk" on May 16 that will include all students from Grades 1 through 12 and involvement in the Walk itself on May 25 by a large number of students. The funds raised at the school could exceed \$2,000, but the value of the student involvement has been much greater.

"The students have never had this kind of awareness of the world situation," says Zaitun Mahedi, a science teacher at the school. "The girls develop their social conscience and also experience the joy of giving."

Patricia Dawson, the head of school at Crofton House, says the students are "looking outward" through the Walk. "They're very fortunate to attend this school and live in such a wonderful city and country."

Ms. Lalji says that the Walk is especially effective because "everyone can participate, by simply walking —

When a couple of employees at one of Canada's big five banks got involved years ago in the annual World Partnership Walk to raise money for global poverty, little did they know that their efforts would grow to engage the bank and its staff across Canada.

Scotiabank in 1994 contributed \$1,000 to the cause; six years later, a donation-matching program for employee teams involved in community fundraising events had the bank contributing \$5,000 to the Walk. In last year's event, the funds raised by employees and matched by Scotiabank totalled more than \$70,000.

Now, with a groundswell of support for global issues among the Canadian public, Scotiabank has taken another large step, adding to its involvement by becoming a World Partnership Walk corporate sponsor and mounting teams in cities across the country for the event on Sunday, May 25.

Companies reflecting a growing interest and awareness of the world situation among their staff, customers and clients are bringing teams to the World Partnership Walk in greater numbers



Team spirit: Staff at Scotiabank and other companies across Canada are walking the Walk, while corporations are partners in the event.

something that everyone can do — and by raising money easily."

She and her friends are attracted by the on-line registration and sponsorship system at www.worldpartnershipwalk.com, which allows them to e-mail friends and family near and far to get involved in the Walk by joining the school team or sponsor them on-line by credit card.

"With e-mail it's fast, easily accessible, all youth are hooked up on-line and it's a method of communication that's very prominent in our world today," she says.

Fellow student Ashley Framback says that when Team Crofton completes the Walk on May 25 it will be an important milestone for the school — and a satisfying personal moment for her as well. "I feel like I'm making a very small difference that is contributing to a bigger change in the world," she says. "It feels good."

than ever this year as Awareness Partners of the national event. And they are backing up their new commitment to global corporate social responsibility by joining the more than 800 Corporate Sponsors of the Walk and the long-term international development programs that it makes possible.

"Canadians want to help, they look very much beyond their borders; that's the nature of our country," says Warren Jestin, Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist, Public and Corporate Affairs at Scotiabank. "We've become much more aware of the hardships and the challenges in the world — that comes home daily... We've become increasingly integrated into the global fabric."

He says the movement to have Scotiabank involved in the World Partnership Walk has been very much a grassroots initiative from the bank's employees. "It's not so much the head

Companies are taking steps to support the World Partnership Walk through the involvement of their employees

office putting money where we think the money should be spent; we want to get the message out from our staff right across the country and our clients and customers across the country," Mr. Jestin says. "It has to start at the individual level, because that's the way it grows."

Scotiabank's escalating participation in the World Partnership Walk is mirrored in companies large and small across Canada supporting the development work of Aga Khan Foundation Canada through the event.

A recent report titled "Governance, Values and Competitiveness" by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives recommended that enterprises consider "leading-edge initiatives," including "corporate citizenship globally" in addition to traditional corporate citizenship in Canada.

"We . . . suggest that participation in broader collective initiatives may serve both an individual company's reputation and to enhance public trust in the free enterprise system as a whole," the report said.

Stephanie MacGregor, Marketing Specialist at Cognos Inc. in Ottawa, says her company is involved in the World Partnership Walk because "not only do we want to provide our employees with fun family events, we want to give them an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of other people" around the world.

"To be a global leader we have to support initiatives that will have a far-reaching benefit," she says. "I'm happy to say that we have a hand in helping to be the solution to global poverty."

For many companies, involvement in the Walk is expanding their philanthropy and corporate team programs beyond the usual community and health causes supported in the past. While for those corporations with an international presence, it's a way to give something back to the world community.

"The Walk is a tremendous way to generate some money for some very worthwhile projects overseas," says Hank B. Swartout, Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer of Precision Drilling Corp., an international oil and gas drilling company in Calgary.

Mr. Swartout says the company has operations in 40 countries and contrib-

utes directly to social development programs in a couple of areas where it works, but involvement in the World Partnership Walk is a way to invest in "a universal way."

HSBC Bank Canada's involvement in the World Partnership Walk has grown over time. This year, employees in 55 HSBC offices in seven cities have formed Walk teams. Several branches are displaying and distributing Walk materials.

"At HSBC Bank Canada, we have a strong sense of corporate social responsibility that affects everything we do," says Bill Crawford, the bank's Senior Vice-President, B.C. Region. "We are dedicated to being a responsible, caring organization and we support many worthwhile community groups across Canada. Sharing our success is a deeply ingrained part of the HSBC tradition around the world, so we are happy that our employees are raising funds to help alleviate global poverty."

Gowling Lafleur Henderson, a large national law firm, has set up teams in each of the Walk cities, says partner Robin Walker, adding that organizations like Gowlings in the past have especially been involved in "more community-based and more insular" philanthropy programs.

"People are looking outward and it has changed and will continue to change," he says. "People have a greater awareness today than ever before of how we have to help other countries and people in need."

The Walk is especially "a good investment" for donors, he says, because all of the administrative costs are borne by Aga Khan Foundation Canada.

"All of the money raised goes right to the source, and the Canadian government matches it . . . It's amazing just how far the money goes."

Stephanie MacGregor of Cognos is the captain of her company team, Cognos Cares, as well as a Walk volunteer in Ottawa encouraging other teams to join up.

"The World Partnership Walk is going to be a key event for us this year because of the family focus, the entertainment value and, simply, because it looks like it's going to be a lot of fun."

Mr. Jestin of Scotiabank says involvement in events such as the Walk by teams pulls employees together and makes the events "much more of a success" as well.

"It's the dollars flowing in at the corporate level and the sweat equity our employees put in."

Scotiabank has sweetened the pot for those teams raising funds for the Walk by contributing a special prize, the Scotiabank Corporate Team Challenge Trophy, to the corporate team in each city with five or more members registered on-line that raises the highest sponsorship average.

"Corporate challenges are very important," Mr. Jestin says. "Fundraising is what motivates people to come out; giving makes you feel good at the end of the day."