



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

August 9th - International Day of Indigenous Peoples

Ottawa, August 05, 2010. The United Nations General Assembly has declared August 9 the ***International Day of Indigenous Peoples***. This Day, which is celebrated each year around the world, raises awareness of indigenous peoples' cultures in all their diversity. It also is an opportunity to consider the present-day challenges these peoples face.

It is estimated that there are 370 million indigenous people living in more than 70 countries in all regions of the world. There are at least 5,000 distinct groups of indigenous peoples worldwide, adding to the planet's cultural diversity.

Indigenous languages make up more than 4,000 of the approximately 6,700 languages that exist today. Most of these indigenous languages are considered endangered and at serious risk of being replaced by dominant languages by the end of the 21st century.

In Canada, according to Statistics Canada's 2006 Census data, the number of people identifying themselves as Aboriginal, that is to say as First Nations, Métis or Inuit, was 1,172,790. According to this agency's forecasts, the number will reach 1.4 million by 2017.

As well, according to the 2006 Census, more than 60 indigenous languages are spoken by members of the First Nations in Canada. These can be grouped as part of the Algonquin, Athapaskan, Sioux, Salish, Tsimshian, Wakashan and Iroquois language families, as along with the Haida, Kutenai and Tlingit language families.

The year 2010, has been declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations as the International Year of Biodiversity and the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. In this spirit, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO invites everybody to join together to both act and reflect, on this important international Day. It also reaffirms the importance of traditional knowledge, cultures and lifestyles, with regard to sustainable development and the management of the environment.

To read the message of Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples, go to:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001888/188820e.pdf>

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO operates under the aegis of the Canada Council for the Arts. Its role is to act as a forum for governments and civil society, and to mobilize the participation of Canadian organizations and committed individuals in UNESCO's mandated areas: education, natural and social sciences, culture and communication and information. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is the only member of the United Nations System to have National Commissions performing this role in each of its Member States.

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