

## **THE ROUNDTABLE ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES' PARTICIPATION IN CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This roundtable was an initial step towards reflecting upon, and attempting to enhance, recent efforts by the Government of Canada to include the voices and sensibilities of Canadian Aboriginal peoples in the formulation and implementation of Canadian foreign policy. This collaborative roundtable brought together a small group of experts – academics and practitioners – who have laboured, some for many years, to enrich the orientation and substance of Canadian foreign policy, especially regarding issues affecting Indigenous Peoples in this country and around the world. This session was a unique opportunity for these individuals to discuss and evaluate their experiences in the development of Canada's foreign policy and related international initiatives.

With the support of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, the session was held on Friday and Saturday, May 18-19, 2001, in the relaxed setting of the Native Law Centre of Canada. The Centre is located on the eastern bank of the South Saskatchewan River at the University of Saskatchewan. As part of the initial introductions, the architect and Chair of the session, Professor Sakej Youngblood Henderson, Director of the Native Law Centre of Canada, explained the basic themes of this meeting. The roundtable was the result of informal discussions over the last decade among Aboriginal participants in policy-making in Canadian foreign affairs. He offered the insight that this introductory session might identify issues relating to co-ordinating and enhancing Aboriginal peoples' participation in the formulation and implementation of Canadian foreign policy. This session should propose a number of policy recommendations for the consideration of officials within the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade as well as other government departments and units. Finally, if feasible, he would connect this session to a future dialogue with relevant officials from