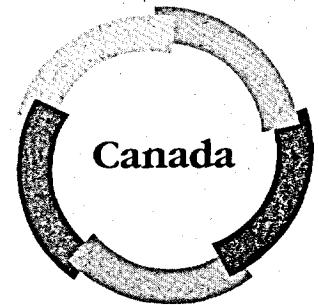

Historical Background



La Francophonie is the community of peoples who speak French or use it to some extent. It can be considered to be an aggregate of institutions, organizations and associations, both governmental and private, that are involved in the pursuit of dialogue and co-operation using the French language as their foremost instrument of communication.

Canada's Involvement

Recognizing the importance of the French fact at home and internationally, the Canadian government has been actively involved from the outset in the creation and development of the many institutions of la Francophonie. Canada was one of the founding members of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation (ACCT) in Niamey, Niger, in 1970, and has played an influential, effective role in it ever since. In fact, Jean-Marc Léger, a Quebec journalist, was named the first Secretary-General of the ACCT.

La Francophonie has rapidly become an integral part of Canadian foreign policy. It is, in fact, a natural extension internationally of the French fact in Canada. The federal government has constantly sought to involve those provinces with a Francophone majority or a substantial Francophone minority in la Francophonie, for the benefit of all Canadians.

The Institutions

Over the years, the community of Francophone countries has acquired various mechanisms and structures of exchange and co-operation, amidst which Canada has consistently maintained an active presence. The ACCT continues to be the keystone of la Francophonie. Its objectives are to promote mutual co-operation in education, culture, science and technology, in the interest of forming closer ties through the use of the French language. It aims at creating a new North-South solidarity and encouraging the formation of enlightened opinion on the various Francophone cultures. Its current Secretary-General is Jean-Louis Roy, a Canadian from Quebec.

During the 1960s, two permanent ministerial conferences were created for the purpose of contributing to the socio-economic development of the member countries by way of sports and education. The Francophone Games, accompanied by cultural events, are held about every four years, with the second edition scheduled to take place in France in 1994.

A good number of para-governmental and private professional and educational organizations with the use of French as their common bond, receive federal government support in the form of annual subsidies, contributions toward meetings and staff loans.