

CANADA, THE HEART OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

The Government of Canada quickly made La Francophonie an integral part of its foreign policy. La Francophonie is indeed the natural international extension of the French fact in Canada. The federal government has taken care to involve provinces with a substantial Francophone majority or minority, for the benefit of all Canadians.

DEFINITION AND HISTORY

La Francophonie is the community of peoples who speak French or use it to varying degrees. It may also be regarded as an institutional complex, consisting of both governmental and private organizations and associations involved in pursuing dialogue and co-operation, which maintains the French language as the preferred means of communication.

Recognizing the importance of the French fact in this country, as well as its international dimension, the Government of Canada has associated itself with La Francophonie since the very beginning, participating actively in the creation and development of its numerous institutions. Canada was, thus, 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 and effective role from the outset. Furthermore, Jean-Marc Léger, a Canadian from Quebec, was designated as ACCT's first Secretary-General.

INSTITUTIONS

Over the years, the community of French-speaking countries has established various mechanisms and structures for discussion and consultation. Canada has played an active and ongoing role in all instances. ACCT remains the central component of La Francophonie. Its objectives are to promote mutual co-operation in education, culture, science and technology, to help bring people closer together through the French language. It seeks to create a new solidarity between North and South and to encourage the formation of enlightened opinions about the various French-speaking cultures. Its current Secretary-General is also a Canadian from Quebec, Jean-Louis Roy.

Founded in the 1960s, two permanent Ministers' Conferences consider education, and youth and sports, as avenues to contribute to the socio-economic development of member countries. Francophone Games, accompanied by major cultural events, are now held every four years. The second Games are scheduled for 1993 in France.