

Two of the most prominent groups are the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The Commonwealth Foundation, established at the 1965 CHOGM, and supported financially by Commonwealth governments, promotes the role of NGOs as full partners in the delivery of Commonwealth programs and in the promotion of Commonwealth values. The Foundation also encourages and supports these professional and other associations with bursaries and grants.

The Commonwealth Games

In 1930, representing 11 countries, 400 athletes travelled to Hamilton, Ontario, to compete in what were then called the British Empire Games. Since then, the Games have been held every four years, evolving into a spectacular international gathering which includes the Commonwealth Arts and Cultural Festival, first introduced at the 1978 Games in Edmonton, Alberta.

Victoria, British Columbia, was host of the XV Commonwealth Games, held August 18-28, 1994. The Victoria Games marked the participation of athletes with disabilities for the first time in a major international sporting event. It was also the first time since Cardiff in 1958 that South Africa had participated in the Commonwealth Games.

The Queen's Role

When India chose to remain in the Commonwealth in 1949, members agreed that the British monarch should be "the symbol of the free association of [Commonwealth] member nations and as such Head of the Commonwealth," regardless of whether a member country retained the British monarch as its head of state.

Queen Elizabeth II is the Queen of Canada, monarch of 16 other "realms" among the 52 Commonwealth member countries, and Head of the Commonwealth for all. She is present at all summits, but does not attend meetings. She customarily pays an official visit to the host country in advance of the opening of the CHOGM and, after government leaders arrive, she entertains them at dinner and receives them individually. The Queen takes a close interest in Commonwealth affairs and has travelled widely within the Commonwealth.