

WELCOME REMARKS FROM THE MINISTER
OF CANADIAN HERITAGE,
THE HONOURABLE STEVEN GUILBEAULT

HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA

Distinguished guests,
Dear friends,

It is a pleasure to be with you to celebrate Canada and hear your stories of hope.

I am speaking to you from Montreal, on the traditional territory of the Mohawk First Nation, and I am honoured to join such an inspiring group.

Thank you to the Association of Canadian Studies and all its partners for bringing us together. So often, it's sharing our life experiences that puts us on the road to healing and to more meaningful relationships.

This week is a week of celebration in Canada. What better time to recognize and salute everything that we as a society owe to Indigenous peoples, Francophones, and Canadians of all origins?

This year in particular, we remember how Manitoba joined Confederation 150 years ago through the efforts of the Métis Nation.

We've come a long way in all that history. Far enough to start to realize how far we still have to go to make this country truly inclusive.

Indeed, the last few weeks have reminded us that in Canada we can do better.

Whether we are talking about racism against Aboriginal people, Blacks, or Asian Canadians...
Whether we are talking about discrimination against women or the LGBTQ2 community...
Whether we are talking about obstacles to the self-actualization of young people or minority groups...

All this has no place in our society. And yet, we still see it. It is even a daily reality for millions of people in Canada.

That's why our government is working hard to build a more inclusive Canada for everyone: a country where everyone has equal rights and equal opportunities to succeed.

In recent months, I've been working closely with my fellow ministers, Bardish Chagger and Mélanie Joly, to roll out a range of programs and initiatives.

Our Anti-Racism Strategy has us working together with our government and non-government partners, Indigenous peoples, and community groups to figure out what needs to be done and work towards those goals.

We're also striving to better support Black Canadians, and to establish the conditions for the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages.

Young people are an integral part of it all. Our Youth Policy aims to get young people involved in setting the course for the future and shaping the decisions that affect them.

Which reminds me, I'd like to salute the young people who are going to be tackling issues relating to Indigenous languages and the environment with us today.[1]

Our government's commitment to LGBTQ2 communities can also be seen in a number of actions, such as making conversion therapy illegal, protecting people's rights, and supporting Pride celebrations.

Finally, our long-standing support for official language minority communities remains unwavering.

Across the country, these communities can find in our Government a faithful ally who is deeply convinced of the essential, unique and remarkable role they play in the development of our society.

Our efforts are manifold, but they serve one cause: the cause of an increasingly inclusive, safe, open and welcoming Canada.

Today, we have a golden opportunity to open up to others and listen to their stories, their poems, their music and, above all, their words of hope. Let's make the most of it!

Have a good conference!

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1 One of the conference panels is entitled "Building the Canada of Tomorrow: Youth Making a Difference Today." The panelists are listed in the bilingual program.