



Canadian  
Commission  
for UNESCO

# ACTION FOR THE FUTURE

2021 - 2026 Strategic plan

# INTRODUCTION

The dramatic social upheavals of 2020 provided an extraordinary backdrop for the development of this strategic plan, which covers the years 2021 to 2026. The challenges our societies face—and the opportunities before us—have seldom been clearer.

To create this plan, our Secretariat consulted executive committee members, network leaders and key partners during the summer of 2020. Their discussions reflected what we had heard and observed before: top concerns still include racism, Indigenous Peoples' rights, disinformation, and the ongoing climate crisis. Stakeholders also called for more opportunities for youth to participate meaningfully in decision-making and for solutions to address gender equity. These are just a few of the rich and thoughtful perspectives shared with us.

It's extraordinary that despite these concerns, a current of hope ran through the consultations—hope that our multilateral system can make a difference. Multilateral bodies like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are sometimes criticized for being politicized or bureaucratic, but those of us who work closely with such institutions know—as the founders of the United Nations system did—that working together is the only way to ensure peace and sustainable development. There are no alternatives. Our commitment to partnership reflects this clearly: we are constantly seeking ways to bring governments, civil society actors and individuals together around ideas and initiatives.

At the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO), we are unrepentant idealists who clearly see the need for transformative change. Accordingly, this strategic plan underlines our ongoing dedication to partnership and to achieving the goals and values of UNESCO and the UN system. Our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is unwavering, as is our commitment to solidarity with Indigenous, racialized, and marginalized peoples.

**We embark on this strategic plan with enthusiasm, energy and—most importantly—optimism. We invite and encourage our networks, partners, and stakeholders to join us.**

# HISTORY AND MANDATE

Created on November 16, 1945, after the Second World War, UNESCO is one of 15 United Nations specialized agencies. Canada is one of the 20 founding members. Its initial vision is as relevant today as it was then: that peace must be founded in the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind. UNESCO keeps this goal top of mind as it continues to nurture cooperation around the world and across sectors.

To achieve UNESCO's ideals and objectives, its member states must cooperate on the widest possible scale within and among themselves. To that end, states have established national commissions to link their governments and civil society entities so they can collaborate on educational, scientific, cultural and communication matters. This framework is one of UNESCO's unique strengths.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO was established in 1957 by an Order in Council (Privy Council 1957-831 and Order in Council P.C. 2006-601) in conformity with UNESCO's constitution. We operate independently under the authority of the Canada Council for the Arts, a Crown corporation. Our autonomy and apolitical status allow us to act as an "honest broker" among governments, civil society, and individuals.

United Nations (UN)

SPECIALIZED  
AGENCIES

**UNESCO**  
United Nations  
Educational,  
Scientific, Cultural  
Organization

THE UN SYSTEM

**CCUNESCO**

The Canadian  
Commission for  
UNESCO coordinates  
UNESCO's activities in  
Canada





# THE CANADIAN COMMISSION

Our activities are guided by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the [UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy](#), and the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). We serve as a bridge between Canadians and UNESCO's vital work and oversee UNESCO activities in Canada.

## OUR KEY ROLES ARE:

- |  |   |                   |
|--|---|-------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Giving Canadian civil society a voice on national and international stages</li></ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Recommending new designations to UNESCO</li></ul>                             | ] INTERNATIONALLY |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Upholding UNESCO values and priorities in Canada</li></ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Catalyzing reflection and action on issues linked to our priorities</li></ul> |                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Advising governments in Canada on matters that relate to UNESCO's mandate</li></ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Supporting the implementation of UNESCO's various programmes</li></ul>        | ] IN CANADA       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Making recommendations to the federal government on UNESCO programmes and priorities</li></ul> |   |                   |

- **We also foster the vitality and relevance of UNESCO networks in Canada (introduced below). These networks give UNESCO a tangible presence across the country.**

## UNESCO'S NETWORKS

### **The Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities**

With nearly 100 members, the coalition brings together municipalities that want to commit publicly to fighting racism and eliminating all forms of discrimination. Participating municipalities undertake initiatives and share information with a view to building open and inclusive societies.

### **Canadian Network of Biosphere Regions**

Canada's 19 UNESCO Biosphere Regions create vibrant, healthy, sustainable communities. In these UNESCO designated sites, communities promote the harmonious coexistence of people and nature. The sites span 235,000 square kilometres and include the traditional territories of some 50 Indigenous communities. They aim to:

- conserve biodiversity and foster the sustainable use of natural resources,
- mitigate climate and environmental changes and their impacts,
- facilitate sustainable development research and education, and
- build thriving societies, economies, and human settlements.



## UNESCO Schools Network in Canada

The global UNESCO Schools Network experiments with innovative teaching and learning approaches to address global challenges.

Active across Canada, the network includes more than 100 schools. Through local, national, and international initiatives, teachers and students explore the following action areas:

- UNESCO’s mission and mandate and the Sustainable Development Goals
- Global Citizenship Education
- Education for Sustainable Development and Climate Action
- Indigenous Education and Reconciliation

## The UNEVOC Network

The UNEVOC Network supports institutions that are working to improve technical and vocational education and training (TVET) around the world.

In Canada, members focus on skilled-labour shortages, especially in science and technology trades. Canadian centres are recognized leaders in greening TVET and contribute to access to quality education and training for all. Colleges and Institutes Canada coordinates the pan-Canadian UNEVOC Centre.

## Youth Advisory Group

The Youth Advisory Group is a model of youth engagement at the heart of CCUNESCO's activities. Its members represent Canada's regions and diversity. They actively participate in our initiatives and help to:

- identify the issues and concerns of youth in their communities and nationally,
- develop projects for youth, and
- make recommendations based on their viewpoints and experience.

## UNESCO Chairs in Canada

The Canadian UNESCO Chairs Network, with 27 chairs in 19 institutions, builds connections among schools, civil society, local communities, researchers and policy-makers. It is an established incubator for excellence and innovation. Representing academic work in all UNESCO sectors, its projects focus on:

- building capacity through knowledge exchange,
- promoting North-South and South-South<sup>1</sup> cooperation and capacity-building,
- identifying solutions to critical issues, and
- establishing new teaching programs.

<sup>1</sup> Referring to Northern and Southern hemispheres.

## **UNESCO Creative Cities Network**

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network includes cities around the world that place creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their sustainable development plans. Cities are organized into seven categories: crafts and folk arts, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts and music. Four Canadian cities currently hold this prestigious designation:

- Montréal, Creative City of Design since 2006
- Quebec City, Creative City of Literature since 2017
- Toronto, Creative City of Media Arts since 2017
- London, Creative City of Music since 2021

## **Canadian Network of UNESCO Global Geoparks**

UNESCO Global Geoparks foster the exchange of ideas and encourage quality tourism infrastructure, educational programs and conservation measures to showcase areas of exceptional geological significance. Together with their communities, the five geoparks in Canada:

- encourage sustainable tourism,
- enhance awareness and understanding in youth and visitors about the area's geological heritage and history,
- protect the geopark's unique environment, and
- promote earth sciences research.



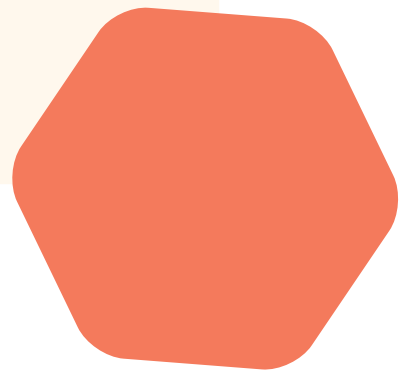


## NORMATIVE INSTRUMENTS

This term describes UNESCO's various international conventions, declarations, and recommendations. These instruments play a unique and important role in promoting UNESCO's priorities, and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO supports their implementation.

Key instruments in Canada include the:

- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)
- Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)
- Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers (2017)



# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We closely follow strategies developed by UNESCO and advance relevant initiatives in our sectors and networks.

**In the coming years, we intend to collaborate more frequently across sectors and networks** to advance UNESCO's priorities, encourage the cross-pollination of ideas, and foster innovative and impactful initiatives.

These objectives advance our commitment to Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNESCO's medium-term strategy indicates that while the 17 SDGs are indivisible and interdependent, UNESCO will place emphasis on those where it has a strategic contribution to make, and in fields where its unique comparative advantages are recognized. In Canada, this includes SDGs 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 13 (action to combat climate change), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).



SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) has a particular importance for us, given that partnership is at the heart of our Commission's way of working. To that end, we will continue helping our networks to engage with different partners and each other to advance these objectives.

# Education, culture, freedom of expression and anti-racism advance **AN INCLUSIVE, JUST, AND PEACEFUL SOCIETY**



## EXAMPLES OF NETWORKS AND INSTRUMENTS

- UNESCO Schools Network
- Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities
- UNEVOC

## EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES

International Decade for  
People of African Descent

World Press  
Freedom Day

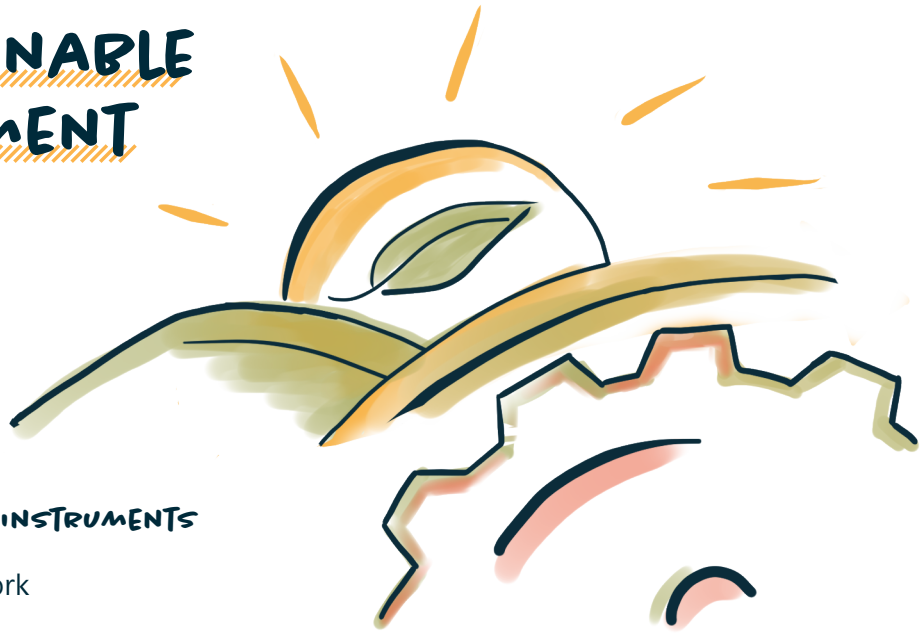
International Day for  
the Elimination of Racial  
Discrimination

## CORRESPONDING UNESCO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Ensure quality equitable and inclusive education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, in order, inter alia, to reduce inequalities and promote learning and creative societies, particularly in the digital era.

Build inclusive, just, and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting heritage.

Science, technology, education  
and culture contribute  
**To SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**



**EXAMPLES OF NETWORKS AND INSTRUMENTS**

- UNESCO Chairs Network
- UNESCO Creative Cities Network

**EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES**

Open Science and  
decolonizing knowledge

UN Decade of Ocean Science  
for Sustainable Development

Culture and  
Sustainable  
Development Goals

**CORRESPONDING UNESCO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

Foster a technological environment in the service of humankind through the development and dissemination knowledge and skills and the development of ethical standards.

Governments and civil society safeguard  
**NATURAL, CULTURAL AND  
DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE**  
for future generations

**EXAMPLES OF NETWORKS AND INSTRUMENTS**

- UNESCO designated sites
- Canada Memory of the World Register
- Normative instruments in culture<sup>2</sup>



**EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES**

International Decade for  
Indigenous Languages

**CORRESPONDING UNESCO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

Work towards sustainable societies and protecting the environment through the promotion of science, technology, innovation and natural heritage.

<sup>2</sup> Notably the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).

# CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES

Our 2014-2021 strategic plan outlined three priorities to inform the Commission's activities. The feedback we received in our 2020 consultations made it clear that we need to continue building on these priorities – and by adding a commitment to fight racism – and the relationships we have developed. These priorities will intersect with our strategic objectives.

## Implementing the UN Declaration on the **RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES** TO SUPPORT TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

The relationships of trust that we have established with Indigenous Peoples compel us to go further to ensure Reconciliation addresses deep and systemic issues and fosters new ways of living together. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action serve as a guide. However, our Commission's affiliation with the UN system means we also have a duty to help Canadian governments and civil society (including our own networks) adopt the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>3</sup> Among other actions, we will:

- advance and promote the International Decade for Indigenous Languages,
- support efforts to decolonize knowledge and uphold Indigenous knowledge systems, and
- advise UNESCO on implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in its activities.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission asserted that “The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.”

## Promoting **GENDER EQUITY AND JUSTICE**

While gender equity has long been a priority for both UNESCO and our Commission, much remains to be done. Notably, we need to strongly embed intersectionality<sup>4</sup> in our work on gender equity, and ensure that we support people with diverse gender identities. Among other actions, we will:

- continue to advance gender equity, especially in science,
- support the rights and inclusion of 2SLGBTQ<sup>5</sup> people, and
- take on initiatives that consider how race and gender intersect, including sexual and gender diversity.

## Mainstreaming **YOUTH LEADERSHIP**

As a society, we need to move beyond simply inviting youth to participate in discussions. Youth have a vested interest in our shared future, and we need multi-generational shared leadership and shared decision-making. We will continue to advocate for youth participation in key forums and committees and use our position to advance youth priorities. Among other actions, we will:

- model how to mainstream youth leadership through our Youth Advisory Group,
- support youth leadership to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and
- include the perspectives of youth from various socio-economic backgrounds and with different levels of education in our work.

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<sup>4</sup> “Intersectionality” refers to the way in which various identities may intersect for a person or group. For example, someone might simultaneously identify themselves as a woman, a member of a racialized group, and an adherent to a minority religion.

<sup>5</sup> This acronym stands for Two-spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer. The Commission will ensure that the acronym used is kept up to date.

## FIGHTING RACISM

The Commission has long been involved in the fight against racism, and the importance of this struggle has been reinforced in the year leading up to the creating of this plan. Among other actions, we will:

- strengthen and grow the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities, an important movement that mobilizes cities to take action against racism,
- continue our work to raise the profile of the International Decade for People of African Descent and its objectives, and
- mainstream the voices of racialized people in our networks and partnerships.

As we embark on this plan, we will need to monitor progress towards strategic objectives and cross-cutting priorities. Our world changes rapidly, and the Commission will need to understand its impact and adapt as needed. Details about our performance measurement and evaluation plans will be set out in an accompanying operational plan.

**We are convinced that this strategic plan**, with its close alignment to UNESCO objectives and SDGs, builds upon the important work we have done over the past five years, and continues and strengthens our relationships.





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Commission**  
for UNESCO

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