Canada World View

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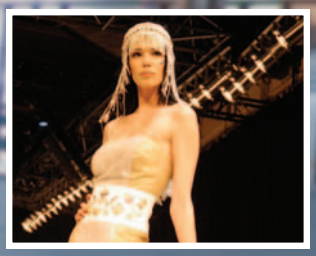
Aboriginal Planet

First Peoples go global



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About *Canada World View*

Canada World View provides an overview of Canada's perspective on foreign policy issues and highlights the Government of Canada's international initiatives and contributions. *Canada World View* is published quarterly in English and French by Foreign Affairs Canada.

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Our cover
Main: *The Beaver and the Mink*, a contemporary sculpture by British Columbia Aboriginal artist Susan Point. Donated by the Government of Canada, it stands in the entrance rotunda of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. *photo:* Walter Larrimore/NMAI
Top inset: Jordin Tootoo, pictured at the 2003 World Junior Championships, is the first Inuk athlete to be drafted into the National Hockey League. *photo:* Jeff Vinnick/www.HockeyCanada.ca
Middle inset: Angela De Montigny's designs draw upon her Six Nations heritage and sell briskly abroad. *photo:* Lenore C. Farrell
Bottom inset: Eric Pashe of the Dakota Tipi First Nation near Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, won a 2003 Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievement Award. *photo:* CP (Robert Dall)

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IN THIS ISSUE

photo: CP (Perry Mah)

Cassidy Formenti, age 5, takes a close look at Major Sumner, a dancer from the Coorong area of south Australia, performing in Edmonton last summer in a celebration of Aboriginal awareness in support of the United Way.

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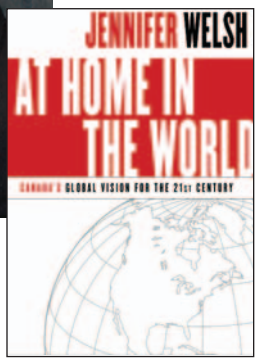
CANADA AS MODEL CITIZEN

photo: Robert Thompson/FAC

Jennifer Welsh is the author of *At Home in the World,* a new book that offers a vision of Canada's role on the global stage. Welsh, a former Cadieux Research Fellow in Foreign Affairs Canada's Policy Planning Bureau, holds master's and doctorate degrees in international relations from the University of Oxford and has written three books on international relations.



At Home in the World: Canada's Global Vision for the 21st Century by Jennifer Welsh (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2004)

In order for Canada to play a new part on the global stage in the 21st century, we need to shed some of the traditional myths that have dominated our international identity for the past half-century. We should conceive of Canada not in traditional terms, as a middle power, but as a citizen in the world of nation-states. In fact, I believe Canada has the potential to be a model citizen for the 21st century.

Both words—"model" and "citizen"—are crucial to my vision. First, the notion of a model suggests a different approach to effecting change. A crucial aspect of Canadian foreign policy today is simply *being what we are:* a particular, and highly successful, model of liberal democracy.

Our model privileges pluralism, as reflected in our federal structure, our official policy of bilingualism and our immigration and refugee policy. It prizes mixed government, by balancing legislative decision making with an activist court and a robust human rights culture. Our model makes risk a collective problem for society, by establishing a set of state-funded benefits that Canadians can draw upon in their time of need. It seeks a balance between providing greater security for citizens in a world of terrorism and other transnational threats, and respecting hard-won civil and political liberties. The Canadian model is also extremely civil, as seen in our crime levels, the vitality of our cities and the success of our artists. Most of all, our model of democracy is internationalist, in embracing free trade and multilateral cooperation, but is also confident in its ability to sustain a unique national identity. All of these aspects of the Canadian model are exceedingly attractive. And what is attractive creates a magnetic effect. It induces others to emulate what we do, to forge better and closer relationships with us.

But Canada can model in another sense. It can demonstrate how to establish the foundations of a strong society—much as a teacher or consultant might do. Rather than transplanting our model into other countries, our foreign policy can seek to help others help themselves. To contribute to regime building, rather than imposing regime change. In this task, Canada is ultimately a collaborator or partner, rather than an imperial occupier. To put it another way, we become a model rather than the model.

The idea of Canada as model citizen offers an alternative to our long-standing self-image as a middle power. In my view, this alternative is a welcome one. We no longer live in an international system where great powers are pitted against one another, and smaller powers like Canada work skilfully to find a path through the middle. Instead, we live in a world with a single hegemon that, on the one hand, requires fewer friends to get the job done, but on the other hand, is demanding stronger demonstrations of allegiance. These changes have made the tactics of middle-powermanship much more difficult to apply.

> ***"We should conceive of Canada not in traditional terms, as a middle power, but as a citizen in the world of nation-states. In fact, I believe Canada has the potential to be a model citizen for the 21st century."***

Middle power identity is also uninspiring for our younger generations. The formative experiences of young Canadians—particularly their exposure to global media

and the borderless World Wide Web—have made them inherently internationalist. Now they passionately believe that they will do great things in the world. To be a middle power is to settle for mediocrity.

Model citizenship is not a recipe for multiplying Canada's commitments and activities on the global stage. In order to realize my vision, Canada must think more strategically about its role internationally. And a strategy requires choice. Not being all things to all people. Not trying to steal a newspaper headline on every international issue. But choosing those areas where we want to make a contribution and where we are willing to apply our resources (human as well as financial) to make a difference. It entails encouraging countries to meet the UN's Millennium Goals on development and poverty reduction; acting as a watchdog for human rights, particularly in the context of the "war on terror"; and reforming the institutions of global governance.

However, the government's formal agenda is not enough. I'd like to encourage us to conceive of our country not just as Canada with a capital C—the corporate entity represented by the flag or government officials—but also as *Canadians*. Foreign policy is not something others do, "out there." Many of us, in our own way, are already contributing to it. Even if global citizenship continues to face significant limits, we as individuals can and should build upon the Canadian legacy for global engagement and take it one step further. While Canada is our home, the world is where we belong.

Hear a "netcast" of Jennifer Welsh's background and views on the model citizen concept and multilateral institutions on the Canadian International Policy Web site. The site, managed by the Strategic Policy Branch of Foreign Affairs Canada, provides information, views, and analysis of key issues that touch on Canada's role in the international community. It describes the foundations of Canada's international policy and provides insights into new policy thinking. Visit www.international.gc.ca/cip-pic.

A NEW MINISTER

Pierre Pettigrew says he is looking forward to an "enormously rewarding, yet challenging portfolio" as Canada's new Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"My overriding priority, a key one for the Government of Canada, is to develop an integrated international policy framework" through the mechanism of the International Policy Review that is to be tabled in Parliament later this fall, he says. "Now, more than ever, the world needs more of the qualities that Canada and Canadians possess in such abundance."

Mr. Pettigrew first joined the Cabinet in January 1996 as Minister for International Co-operation and Minister responsible for La Francophonie. From 1996 to 1999, he served as Minister of Human Resources Development and from 1999 to 2003 as Minister for International Trade. From December 2003 until his appointment to the Foreign Affairs post in July, he was Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages.

Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew

A former consultant to companies with dealings in international markets, Mr. Pettigrew served as Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister from 1981 to 1984 and as Director of the Political Committee to the NATO Assembly in Brussels from 1976 to 1978. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières and a Masters of Philosophy degree in International Relations from Balliol College, Oxford University, United Kingdom.

For more information about the ministers involved in Foreign Affairs Canada and International Trade Canada, visit www.international.gc.ca.

ABORIGINAL PLANET

photo: Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump

Woven into the fabric of Canada: Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump pays tribute to an irretrievable past and shares with visitors some deeply held Aboriginal values and traditions.

At the close of the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, Aboriginal people have made advances in Canada and abroad, but there is still much to do.

Poised on a cliff in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains overlooking Canada's windswept western plains, tourists can be forgiven for losing their sense of time and place. At Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in southern Alberta, they can imagine the sights and sounds of the distant past, when vast herds of buffalo wandered the Prairies, providing food and clothing to the Blackfoot people who hunted them each autumn by skillfully steering them over the precipice to be butchered below.

It's a scene that continued for 6,000 years but came to an abrupt end in the late 19th century when European settlers arrived, bringing new diseases, almost eliminating the buffalo and erasing forever a way of life.

Today, with Aboriginal people serving as guides, the ancient site testifies to a rich and complex culture that existed for thousands of years in harmony with the land and water. Paying tribute to an irretrievable past, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump shares with visitors from around the world deeply held Aboriginal values and traditions inextricably woven into the fabric of Canada. It also serves as a reminder that those who came to North America could not have survived without the aid of the Aboriginal people, who helped them conquer the challenges of climate and geography.

The site is also a poignant symbol of the shared history, complex relationships, values, goals and aspirations of the First Peoples in Canada and around the world and those who came after them.

Home and native land

Accounting for about 1.4 million of the country's 31 million people, there are three Indigenous groups in Canada: the Inuit who are predominantly resident in the North; about 630 First Nations, the largest group; and the Métis, people of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. Referred to collectively as Aboriginal people, each has its own unique heritage, culture, language, traditions and beliefs. Among First Nations alone, there are more than 50 languages. The name "Canada" itself is derived from a word in the language of the Huron Nation meaning "village" or "settlement."

Although constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights exists in Canada, Aboriginal people, like Indigenous cultures in other countries, have faced many hardships.

As the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People comes to an end in December, they can look back on 10 years of both progress and challenges.

Among the first major steps forward in Canada was the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), which made several recommendations, including the need for Aboriginal people to develop self-government. In response, the Government of Canada issued *Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, a blueprint for renewing the partnership with Aboriginal people, strengthening governance and supporting strong communities, people and economies.

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The repatriation of important cultural objects such as ancestral remains from public and private collections has

encouraged greater respect for First Nations concepts of property and the appropriate treatment of cultural heritage.

There have been advances in the settlement of Aboriginal land claims and in the establishment of self-government, as well as ground-breaking resource-sharing agreements. However, for many First Nations, progress in self-government and land claims has been frustratingly slow. And there continues to be a wide disparity between the quality of life of many Aboriginal people and that of other Canadians.

Aboriginal policy and programs in Canada continue to move forward to address these issues. Prime Minister Paul Martin and the Government of Canada have declared as a major priority the significant improvement in quality of life for Aboriginal people. A national roundtable on Aboriginal affairs in Canada in the spring represented an unprecedented opportunity for more than 40 members of the federal Cabinet, Senate and House of Commons to engage 70 Aboriginal leaders from across the country and forge a new relationship. Following the roundtable, the Prime Minister called for a series of steps, including the release of a summary report to serve as a blueprint for action, a series of follow-up roundtable sessions and the production of an Aboriginal report card to ensure quantifiable results.

photo: CP (Tom Hanson)

New relationship: Prime Minister Paul Martin takes part in an Aboriginal smudging ceremony before the start of the First Ministers Conference on Health in Ottawa.

The international agenda

In keeping with its long-standing support of the UN and its concerns about Aboriginal people, the Government of Canada has backed the goal for the Decade, "to strengthen international cooperation to solve the problems faced by Indigenous people" in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health.

Canada has led or supported a number of national and international projects and initiatives related to the Decade. In 2002, for example, representatives of about 20 Canadian Aboriginal organizations and non-governmental organizations took part in the inaugural meeting of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, one of the Decade's prime objectives. Canada is one of only two countries with two of its nationals, Wayne Lord and

photo: courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization

Shared history: Aboriginal teepees set up for a special exhibition at the Canadian Museum of Civilization across from Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

Wilton Littlechild, on the 16-member panel. The Forum's mandate is to provide expert advice to the UN related to economic and social development, culture, human rights, the environment, education and the health of Indigenous people.

Canada has especially played an active role in UN efforts to arrive at a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. With the support of Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC), Aboriginal organizations from Canada have been involved in the preparation of a draft document.

Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, an organization representing First Nation communities across Canada, says the UN Decade has helped heighten awareness of the challenges faced by the world's Indigenous people, although he wishes it had accomplished more.

"We are disappointed that the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has not yet been finalized," Fontaine says. "On the other hand, 10 years ago the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues did not even exist. So, even though much work remains to be done, we have made important progress."

Global collaboration

Canada's international efforts with regard to Indigenous people are far-reaching. For example, Canada has sent delegations to countries including Chile, Argentina and Brazil to share its experiences in areas such as policing and justice in Aboriginal communities. Jeffrey Marder, Deputy Director of the Aboriginal and Circumpolar Affairs Division for FAC, says traditional Native methods employed in Canada, like using healing circles as alternatives to incarceration, "are not only effective, they are inexpensive, and they might have application elsewhere."

Other international initiatives include an economic development exchange established by the Ministry of Maori Development in New Zealand and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to promote collaboration between the Maori and the Nisga'a Tribal Council in British Columbia.

Canada is currently working with the Peruvian government through the Pan American Health Organization to develop a solvent-abuse treatment program for Indigenous people modelled on one in Canada.

Canada and Mexico have worked together to develop opportunities for cooperative business relationships for Indigenous people, with numerous contacts and study tours between the two countries on development, education and other issues.

photo: CP (Colin Corneau)

Celebrating Aboriginal contributions: Marissa Tacan, a member of the Sioux Valley First Nation, dances on National Aboriginal Day this year in Brandon, Manitoba.

A model in the North

A number of Canadian efforts on Aboriginal issues have been recognized internationally. For example, the establishment five years ago of the Nunavut Territory, which has a population that is 85 percent Inuit and covers one fifth of Canada's land mass, is considered a major step in Aboriginal governance. The negotiations leading to its creation were recognized in the 2004 UN Human Development Report as a lesson in power-sharing.

"Historically, Inuit were in full control of all aspects of their life. But missionaries, then the RCMP, government officials, and the creation of permanent settlements brought about a loss of the traditional, nomadic way of life," says Stephen Hendrie, Communications Director for the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, which represents the 45,000 Inuit in Canada. "The creation of the Nunavut government was a remarkably peaceful process in changing the map of Canada, using democratic instruments to achieve a result pleasing to Inuit and to other Canadians as well."

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Given the importance of the North to Canada's identity and to the world as a whole, the Canadian government has set out a vision for this country in the circumpolar world, called the Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy. Its overarching goals are to enhance the security and prosperity of Canadians and to establish the region surrounding the Arctic Circle as a vibrant geopolitical entity.

Canada is working with other circumpolar countries to address common issues such as human security, economic

sustainability and the environment. Particular Canadian priorities are strengthening the Arctic Council, a forum that includes six Indigenous organizations and the eight Arctic states, and establishing a University of the Arctic.

A growing awareness

Aboriginal culture, languages and artistic expression play a central role in Canada's vibrant society—and in putting this country on the map in many areas of endeavour. Aboriginal artists who have garnered acclaim far afield include musicians Robbie Robertson and Susan Aglukark, conductor and composer John Kim Bell, painter Norval Morrisseau and sculptor Susan Point, whose carving *The Beaver and the Mink* has been donated by Canada to the Smithsonian Institution's new National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. *(see p. 20)*.

Among Aboriginal youth, no one can top Jordin Tootoo, the first Inuk athlete to be drafted into the National Hockey League. A member of the league's Nashville Predators, he is the biggest sports star ever to come out of the Canadian North.

A great deal of effort is going toward strengthening the cultures, languages and traditional ways of Aboriginal people with a view to fostering pride, identity and stronger communities. In 1999, for example, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network became the world's first nationally televised network to offer programming for, by and about Indigenous people. It is currently available to nine million Canadian households.

photo: CP (Mark Humphrey)

Star in the North: (left to right) Victor Tootoo and Tara Tootoo of Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, watch their cousin, Jordin Tootoo, warm up before a game with the NHL's Nashville Predators last season.

A great deal of effort is going toward strengthening the cultures, languages and traditional ways of Aboriginal peoples, with a view to fostering pride, identity and stronger communities.

Throughout the UN Decade, Canada has celebrated the International Day of the World's Indigenous People every year on August 9 and National Aboriginal Day on June 21, with themes and activities that promote greater international understanding of Indigenous issues and the contributions made by Aboriginal people to Canadian society. Each spring the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards recognize the career achievements of Aboriginal professionals in a gala show designed to build self-esteem among the Aboriginal community and provide role models for youth. There are also similar regional events, such as the Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievement Awards.

Looking forward

One route to improving economic sustainability is tourism, which is proving increasingly attractive as Aboriginal people look for new commercial and job-creation opportunities. There is especially potential for Aboriginal "cultural" tourism, through which Aboriginal people can share various aspects of their customs, traditions and arts as well as their relationship to the land.

"There is significant market demand for cultural tourism, and this can be translated into real business opportunities for Aboriginal people in Canada and Indigenous people around the world," says Barry Parker, the national tourism advisor for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and a member of the Okanagan First Nation.

photo: courtesy of INAC

"At the same time, it is a platform from which people can enhance, sustain, strengthen and protect their cultures," he says, as long as Aboriginal tourism is developed "with dignity and respect for cultures, communities and the environment."

Much is needed for tourism to fully emerge as a sustainable component of the Aboriginal economy. Aboriginal Tourism Canada, a national organization, is working with provincial counterparts, federal, provincial and territorial departments and the balance of the tourism industry, as well as Aboriginal groups, to develop a business plan to ensure growth for the benefit of future generations.

There is much to learn from Canada's Aboriginal history, by taking part in traditional activities, witnessing great art and learning the stories and legends that have been passed down through generations. Perhaps nowhere is this feeling of past and present, of hope and struggle, and of powerful connections with the land more intense than on the cliffs of Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump.

There, the winds seem to carry the haunting voices of a civilization that continues to call out today for understanding, support and recognition and speaks of the need to work—both at home and around the world—to fulfill the promise of a better future for those who came before.

Global Connections

Aboriginal people in Canada are increasingly using technology to connect with each other—and the world. There are myriad programs, resources, Web sites and other high-tech tools that provide information, educational resources and trade links for and about Aboriginal people in Canada and abroad.

First Nations students in small or remote communities can connect to a world of learning opportunities through First Nations SchoolNet (**www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal**), an Industry Canada program delivered to schools by First Nations organizations. Students can use the Internet to do research and develop computer skills, while schools with high-speed connections can offer additional learning tools such as video conferencing and on-line courses.

"Distance learning helps give people in these small, remote communities the same kind of chances that a person in the city might have," says Randy Johns, manager of the Keewatin Career Development Corporation, which provides the service to schools in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The Aboriginal Canada Portal (**www.aboriginal-autochtones.gc.ca**), a partnership between the Government of Canada and six national Aboriginal organizations, is a "single window" for on-line resources, contacts, programs and services such as culture, education and health. It includes Aboriginal associations, businesses, bands, community groups and news, as well as nine federal government departments with Aboriginal mandates, provincial governments and organizations, and Indigenous organizations all over the world.

"This is more than technology, it's bringing people together," says portal manager France Beauvais, adding that the Canadian site is being looked at as a model by other countries with Indigenous populations including Brazil, Chile and Mexico. "It would be good to have a global portal where all countries can link together, share ideas and best practices."

International news is especially the focus of Aboriginal Planet (**www.international.gc.ca/aboriginalplanet**), a monthly on-line publication offered by Foreign Affairs Canada that includes stories on Canadian Aboriginal activities around the world and international Aboriginal events in Canada.

For those in international business, the Virtual Aboriginal Trade Show or VATS (**www.vats.ca**) is a Web site designed to promote export-ready Aboriginal products and services across Canada and around the world. VATS showcases Aboriginal firms operating in arts and culture, agriculture and agri-food, environment and natural resources and other sectors. Aboriginal businesses in Canada can register on the site, which is offered in a number of languages for international audiences.

ABORIGINAL RENAISSANCE

Aboriginal artists in Canada are showing a renewed cultural confidence that is resonating around the world.

Aboriginal culture has long been known for carvings, prints and traditional garments depicting nature and Native folklore. But now, Aboriginal artists are more likely to be designing leather jackets, cutting CDs, acting in blockbuster productions or arranging avant-garde installation art.

Without losing touch with its history, Aboriginal culture has increasingly become contemporary, international and mainstream, says Gerald McMaster, an artist from the Siksika Nation in south-central Alberta and chief curator of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, which has just opened in Washington, D.C.

"Indians all across the Americas are achieving a sense of renaissance," McMaster says. "We are taking greater control of our own cultural history and greater authority to speak on our own behalf."

Angela De Montigny, a Six Nations fashion designer whose handbags, jackets, coats and other clothing draw upon her heritage and sell briskly abroad, agrees. "The time is right for a focused effort for Aboriginal people to get into the international market."

Indeed, with burgeoning interest in Aboriginal art, music, performance, sculpture and culture, there is a sense that a widening contingent of Aboriginal artists and performers in Canada can express themselves on the world stage.

"A lot of talent is starting to come out of Aboriginal communities all across the country," says actor-musician George Leach, a member of the Sta'atl'imx Nation of southern British Columbia, who released his first CD of blues music in 2000 and has just landed a leading role in Steven Spielberg's "Into the West" series of television movies for the TNT Network.

One field where Aboriginal people are finding success is the highly competitive and rarefied niche of high fashion design. Last spring, several Canadian Aboriginal designers, including De Montigny, D'Arcy Moses, Pam Baker and Tammy Beauvais, presented at Toronto Fashion Week, a major international show that brings designers from around the world to launch new collections.

Indigenous artists worldwide are taking a place on the cutting edge. An event called Planet IndigenUs at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre last August featured more than 300 performance, music and visual artists from Aboriginal and Indigenous cultures around the world, drawing more than 150,000 visitors over 10 days. "It was an opportunity to push some thinking about what Indigenous art, identity and culture are," says organizer Denise Bolduc.

Rebecca Belmore, an Aboriginal performance and installation artist in Vancouver, will represent Canada next year at the Venice Biennale, the pinnacle of the international contemporary arts scene.

"I'm working on an exhibit that will be strong and reflect Canadian art and Canadian society as they are in the world today," says Belmore, a member of the Anishinabekwe Nation from Northern Ontario, who is known for work that connects with audiences and provokes thought. One of her exhibits combines video, sound, performance and installation art in a powerful statement about the murders of women from the streets of Vancouver.

"I want to depict everyday life," she says, "to show our society in the present."

photo: Lenore C. Farrell

Haute fashion: Angela De Montigny's designs draw upon her First Nations heritage and sell briskly abroad.

photo: courtesy of Rebecca Belmore

Contemporary statement: Aboriginal performance and installation artist Rebecca Belmore's work White Thread.

Link to *Spirit Magazine*, Canada's Native arts, culture and current affairs publication, at www.spiritmag.ca.

TRADE WITH A TWIST

Aboriginal women are launching ventures—some in surprising fields—that are as successful beyond Canada's borders as they are at home.

When Ellen Melcosky set out nine years ago to sell preserved wild Pacific salmon, she began with her mother's traditional Esketemc First Nation recipe, then added her own touch. Living in the wine country of British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, she incorporated dry white wine into the brining formula. Steaming the marinated salmon and sealing it in foil pouches gave it a shelf life of up to five years, ideal for the export market.

Financing for her new company, Little Miss Chief, came from family and friends. "No financial institutions would consider a loan for a woman with no financial background," she recalls. CESO Aboriginal Services, a non-profit organization that aids Aboriginal start-ups, helped develop a business plan.

The combination of her unique product and aggressive marketing worked. Within a year, the company was selling salmon across Canada and in the U.S. and Spain, and today more than 15 percent of sales are exports.

In another twist on tradition, Dene Fur Clouds, a company in Fort Providence, Northwest Territories, combines practicality with style and Aboriginal motifs, making mitts, headbands, hats and other women's and men's clothing out of fur from the Arctic, woven into washable wool. The company attracted worldwide attention at Toronto Fashion Week last spring and is aiming at a high-end market: the après-ski crowd in Canada, the U.S. and Europe, "people who want practical and fashionable items that are traditional, not high-tech," explains President Judy Magrum. "There seems to be an appreciation of the Aboriginal culture and mindset behind our products."

Another Aboriginal woman doing well in fashion circles abroad is Pam Baker of North Vancouver, B.C. Her company, Touch of Culture Legends, exports 40 percent of its sportswear and ready-to-wear fashions, featuring northwest coast motifs and artwork that are unmistakably Aboriginal in inspiration.

Women Aboriginal entrepreneurs in Canada are also exporting products that go far beyond the traditional. SMS Plastics & Custom Molding of Crossfield, Alberta, makes plastic products that include water treatment systems for use in Third World countries, where they are "filling a real need for affordable, clean water," says company president Joanne Penner. Penner has taken exporting to a whole new level by establishing a manufacturing facility in Bangladesh.

In the high-tech world of video and film production, Aboriginal actors Jennifer Podemski and Laura Milliken launched Big Soul Productions in 1999 to produce film, video and television programs. Their *Moccasin Flats*, a dramatic television series starring Aboriginal actors and set in an Aboriginal ghetto in Regina, is in its second season.

photo: courtesy of Aboriginal Business Canada/Industry Canada

Joanne Penner of Crossfield, Alberta: Exporting products that go far beyond the traditional.

Podemski took the series to the Sundance and Cannes film festivals, where its gritty style and global outlook led to a sale to New Zealand and interest from other countries.

"*Moccasin Flats* is all about Aboriginal life, but suddenly we're finding it appeals to a much broader audience," she says—an important breakthrough for Aboriginal exports. "We, as Aboriginal people, can produce a marketable product without having to sell out."

See Journey to Success, a new guide for Aboriginal women thinking of going into business, at www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/ecd/js/journ_e.html.

Read the latest news on Aboriginal business in the November issue of *CanadExport*, International Trade Canada's biweekly investment and trade publication. See the issue and search the *CanadExport* archives at www.canadexport.gc.ca.

A UNIQUE POSITION, A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

photo: Robert Thompson/FAC

As an Aboriginal foreign service officer, Deborah Chatsis has had a deep impact at home and abroad.

In order to deliver the commencement address to the high school graduating class on the Ahtahkakoop Reserve in central Saskatchewan last year, Deborah Chatsis had to circle the globe.

Stops along the way included Nairobi, Beijing, Bogota, Miami, Geneva, New York and Ottawa, all places where Chatsis has worked with Canada's Foreign Service during the past 15 years.

Speaking at her niece's graduation, she says, was "somewhat unnerving," especially as the gathering was made up largely of family and friends. However, her message was delivered with steady passion: there is a world of opportunity out there.

Chatsis is testament to that fact. As a child growing up near the reserve in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, her global curiosity was sparked by exploring an old trunk of mementos her parents had collected while her father was stationed in Germany with the Canadian Armed Forces in the late 1950s. In university, she trained first as an engineer and then became a lawyer. Finally, looking for a way to work abroad, she entered the foreign service, moving quickly to overseas training in Nairobi and her first posting doing visa and consular work in Beijing in 1990.

China was fascinating for both the sense of connection she felt between the peoples of North America and Asia and the flood of consular and immigration issues her office faced in the post-Tiananmen Square period. "I enjoyed the culture and the travelling, meeting people and making friends. It was difficult to leave."

A subsequent year in Bogota, Colombia, managing the immigrant enforcement program for parts of South and Central America featured new challenges, including personal safety concerns for embassy staff and logistical problems with travel in the region that precipitated a move to Miami to do the job for another eight months.

In more recent positions in Ottawa and postings with Canada's missions to the UN in both Geneva and New York, much of Chatsis's work has been focused on international humanitarian and criminal law, disarmament, peace and security, and human rights, particularly in relation to Indigenous peoples, where she is uniquely positioned.

"There are concerns that are common to Indigenous peoples around the world; I can draw on my own experience to put those into context and to help shape Canadian positions," she says. "Indigenous rights are at a much more advanced level in Canada than they are in many other countries. Nevertheless, there's still much to be done and many ways to improve."

Chatsis played a central role in the drafting and negotiation of the Ottawa Convention banning landmines. In 1998 she received the Award of Excellence from the Treasury Board of Canada as well as the Canadian Foreign Service Officer Award presented by the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers for her work on it.

Chatsis is now settling into a new role as Deputy Director of the Human Rights, Humanitarian Affairs and International Women's Equality Division of Foreign Affairs Canada in Ottawa.

Her travel and assignments abroad have "made it a challenge to be so far away from family," she says. "When you join the Foreign Service, you're young, you don't really know the impact it will have." She in turn has had an impact, from opening the eyes of the young graduates of Ahtahkakoop Reserve to "playing a little part" to help advance Canada's role in the international dialogue on Indigenous issues.

Read about the distinguished foreign service career of James Bartleman in a new book called *On Six Continents* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004). Bartleman, a member of the Mnjikaning First Nation, served in the Canadian foreign service for more than 35 years, heading Canada's missions to the European Union, Australia, South Africa, the North Atlantic Council of NATO, Israel, Cyprus and Cuba. He is currently Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and has identified among his priorities the need to encourage Aboriginal young people.

TELLING OUR STORIES

Jim Compton, also known as Sageeway Gheeshick or Rising Day, is an award-winning journalist, director, producer and television host in Winnipeg. Compton, 47, an Ojibway from the Keeseekoose (Little Sky) First Nation in Saskatchewan, was a long-time reporter and producer for CBC television in Winnipeg, worked as a consultant to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and for five years was program director of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. He is currently a development officer for CHUM Television. He speaks to *Canada World View* about his efforts to maintain and preserve Aboriginal culture and language in Canada and internationally.

photo: courtesy of APTN

Journalist Jim Compton: a vision for Aboriginal people in Canada.

I have just returned from a trip to the Holy Land, as part of a tour that invited broadcasters and producers from Canada to have a first-hand look the media and film industry in Israel during the Jerusalem and Ramallah film festivals. Watching films and meeting producers and directors was the order of the day, but that did not stop our troupe from taking in the many sites of the most holy of holy places.

Just outside of Jerusalem is a long, winding valley that the River Jordan runs through. Our guide explained that this was the inspiration for the 23rd Psalm, "*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil*." At the end is the very plateau where Jesus wandered into the desert to seek the visions he preached throughout the countryside.

Standing there reminded me that we have, as Aboriginal people, just come out of the desert ourselves, and we too have a vision for our people in Canada. However, at the close of the UN's Decade of the World's Indigenous People, many of us are still lost in the desert. The average age for our people to live is 48. We have the highest rates of diabetes and heart attack in the country. Our children are dying at ten times the national average. Most of us live in abject poverty.

A ray of hope has emerged. It came from being recognized as a people in the repatriated Constitution and being added to the *Broadcasting Act*. Following the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the dream of an all-Aboriginal national network was realized, and in 1999 I became the first Aboriginal program director in the world. Our stories would be told. Our people would tell them. It is a glimmer of hope among the ruins of our communities, a reflection of who we are.

The dream of an all-Aboriginal national network was realized, and in 1999 I became the first Aboriginal program director in the world. Our stories would be told. Our people would tell them. It is a glimmer of hope among the ruins of our communities, a reflection of who we are.

Starting out in journalism writing stories for the university newspaper, I used to have a dream about an Aboriginal man reading the news, just like the CBC's Knowlton Nash. Well, we have an Aboriginal man reading the news today. We also have an Aboriginal woman. I didn't know that it would be in the context of an Aboriginal network, but there you go. The key is seeing ourselves mirrored back to us on one of the most powerful mediums in the world, which is television, telling our stories and dealing with our issues.

When I've travelled to Israel, to France, to Baghdad, to Las Vegas and the Sundance Film Festival, people are astounded that we have an Aboriginal network in Canada. By being the first, we have inspired others. I was in New Zealand this spring for the launch of the Maori Television Network. The Aborigines are trying hard to launch their own service in Australia and now there's talk of a Native network in the U.S. We are finding ways to work together, to showcase what's happening in different areas of the globe, although budgets are small. There's still a long way to go. I would like to see more drama being produced, and co-productions and collaboration around the world. With the help of the broadcasting community in Canada and the inspiration of how far we've come, this vision will become a reality.

VANISHING WORDS

In an age of globalization, the demise of Indigenous languages is raising alarms and fuelling preservation efforts.

photo: courtesy of INAC

Starting young: The challenge is to find a context in which language learning is successful.

Half of the languages spoken around the world could disappear by the middle of this century, linguists warn. And many in Canada are on the endangered list.

Preserving dozens of Aboriginal languages in this country has gained the urgency Indigenous peoples have felt from Australia and New Zealand to Taiwan.

"Someone could say you're not a people any more because you don't have a language," reflects Amos Key Jr., Director of the First Nations Language Department at the Woodland Cultural Centre near Brantford, Ontario. "I don't want to hear that in my lifetime."

Just 24 percent of people identified as Aboriginal in Canada can converse in their native language, according to the 2001 census. As three Aboriginal languages—Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut—represent the bulk of those speakers, many native tongues are today known only to a handful of elders.

Of the 60 to 70 historical Aboriginal languages in Canada, about 10 have already been lost, a dozen are considered on the verge of extinction and the same number are endangered.

Key, a member of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in southwestern Ontario, says that when he was in grade school, "it was forbidden to teach an Aboriginal language."

The scientific community has warned that such historical assimilation campaigns—combined with declining Indigenous populations, increased mobility, economic pressures, as well as exposure to television and other communications technologies—could lead to the loss of half of the world's 6,000 to 7,000 languages by 2050. With such a decline, they warn, will come the demise of local knowledge, mentalities, creativity and heritage, as well as specialized information such as unique survival skills and traditional medicines.

In 2002, the Canadian government committed $160 million over 10 years to the preservation of Aboriginal languages and culture. That step is vital, Aboriginal leaders believe.

"Canada needs to realize that this loss isn't only for us. It will be a loss for Canada as well," says Ron Ignace, head of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, which is to make policy recommendations to the federal Heritage Minister.

Chief until last year of the Skeetchestn First Nation, near Kamloops, British Columbia, Ignace notes that Canada's support for Indigenous languages will be examined internationally. His wife, Marianne Boelscher Ignace, an associate professor of anthropology and First Nations studies at Simon Fraser University, is also part of that global discussion.

"The plight of Indigenous languages…has become an international syndrome," she observes. For example, she says, the Maori language became an official language in New Zealand some 20 years ago through a grassroots movement of Maoris realizing their children weren't using it any more.

Part of the New Zealand approach has been the creation of "language nests" that teach the Maori tongue to very young children in child-care settings.

While the main Aboriginal organizations in Canada—the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami—have developed similar school immersion programs, there are many challenges. One is the diversity of Aboriginal languages. Another is that while elders may speak the mother tongue and youngsters can be taught to, their parents in the middle generation often do not know the language, creating a critical gap in usage. Significant rates of intermarriage with non-Aboriginal partners also complicate the task.

Oki Kwei Wâciye Tân'si Yowtz Klahowya Kii-te-daas a Tu ough qua no u ᑐᓐᖓᓱᒋᑦ

A number of preservation efforts are emerging. Salish language specialist Tom Hukari at the University of Victoria, for example, is acting director of a five-year project financed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to aid language revitalization among First Nations groups along the B.C. coast.

"Our challenge is to find a context in which language learning is going to be successful," says Hukari, whose program includes training young Aboriginal people to videotape elders in order to document their language.

Mary Jane Norris, Manager of Research at the Aboriginal Affairs Branch of Canadian Heritage, says that many factors influence how language is transmitted as a mother tongue. "It's community, it's education and it's the family. You can't do it in isolation."

Policy and legislation could play roles in preserving Indigenous languages, says Pamela Shaw, Manager of the Liaison Unit for the Aboriginal Affairs Branch of Canadian Heritage. Laws directed at preservation or recognition could increase government support for Aboriginal language programs and elevate the profile of Aboriginal tongues within Aboriginal communities, she says.

"It isn't just about the loss of a language," Shaw points out. "It's a capacity to transmit a belief system, to parent the next generation, to retain a culture."

To learn more about Indigenous language preservation, visit the Woodland Cultural Centre at www.woodland-centre.on.ca and the Canadian Heritage Aboriginal Affairs Branch at www.pch.gc.ca/progs/pa-app.

Preserving Northern Ways

Between the circumpolar home of Canada's Inuit and the cities of North America and Europe are distances greater than a geographer can measure.

Nowhere is that more apparent than in Aboriginal hunting practices in Canada's North, particularly sealing and whaling. Those practices have continued, at times despite considerable international pressure.

The reasons for tensions range from sober conservation concerns focused on such species as the bowhead whale to largely emotional reactions to commercial sealing activities. On one side are film celebrities and animal rights groups decrying the harvest of marine mammals. On the other is a people whose existence depends on—and whose culture is kept alive through—that harvest.

"We train and educate our children to survive on the land," says Ben Kovic, Director and Chairperson of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board in Iqaluit. "It's part of our teaching, it's part of our spiritual life."

Aboriginal subsistence is protected federally in this country, explains Brian Wong, Program Officer in Resource Management at the Fisheries and Oceans Canada in Ottawa. "Canada, particularly internationally, has adopted the position that we will recognize [Inuit] treaty rights and will act accordingly."

Those rights state that Aboriginal peoples may pursue hunting, trapping and fishing practices except when conservation, public safety or public health considerations are involved.

Canadian conservation groups have largely endorsed the traditional use of wildlife by Aboriginal people—at times even in contrast to their own international organizations.

"We have been working very closely with the [Inuit] communities, particularly in Nunavut," reports Susan Sang, a biologist and senior manager for Arctic conservation at World Wildlife Fund Canada in Toronto. "Aboriginal hunters have respect for wildlife. They are true conservationists. They use all parts of the seal. Nothing is wasted, nothing."

Aayu Peter in Iqaluit will attest to that. Peter grew up with seal hunting, her five children learned to hunt, and she now earns her living crafting garments from seal pelts while she studies law.

photo: courtesy of INAC

Prepared seal pelts: Surviving on the land is part of cultural and spiritual life.

"We out of necessity have to hunt, whether the rest of the world likes it or not," says Peter, who wants to work in the field of international law to give her community a larger voice. "It's a necessity for our culture. We have to be out there."

To learn more about Northern subsistence, visit the Web sites of Fisheries and Oceans Canada at www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami at www.itk.ca and the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board at www.nwmb.com.

TAKING ACTION ON NORTHERN CONTAMINANTS

Inuit fight toxic pollution in the Arctic on the global stage.

photo: courtesy of INAC

Arctic environment: High levels of toxic chemicals are finding their way into the northern food chain.

When Sheila Watt-Cloutier talks to international policy makers about the impact of toxic chemicals on the Inuit, she speaks from the heart. As a child growing up in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Kuujjuaq, a small Inuit village in northern Quebec, Watt-Cloutier led a traditional life, travelling by dogsled and canoe and eating "country foods" such as caribou, ptarmigan, fish, goose, seal and whale.

"The environment is still our supermarket," she says. "The land provides us with nutritious food, and the communal aspects of harvesting and eating help sustain our culture in the face of rapid change."

However, with the disturbing discovery in the past two decades that high levels of toxic chemicals coming from far outside of the Arctic are making their way into the northern food chain, Inuit who rely on traditional foods for sustenance are at risk. Researchers have found that three quarters of Inuit women far exceed guidelines for polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs) levels in their blood and have among the highest recorded PCB levels in breast milk in the world.

"Imagine our shock and concern as we discovered that the food that had nourished us for generations and kept us whole physically and spiritually was now poisoning us," says Watt-Cloutier, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, an international non-governmental organization representing some 150,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Russia.

Toxic chemicals such as DDT and PCBs belong to a group known as persistent organic pollutants (POPs). They remain intact for long periods and travel easily through the atmosphere, posing potentially serious risk to humans, wildlife and the environment. Some POPs increase the risk of cancer, damage to nervous systems and birth defects.

The Government of Canada in 1991 set up the Northern Contaminants Program to conduct research, help Inuit make informed choices about their food and advocate for international controls on POPs. Led by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), the program brought together Health Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Environment Canada, as well as the three territorial governments, university researchers and four Aboriginal organizations in a coalition called Canadian Arctic Indigenous Peoples Against POPs.

Global talks on the issue, sponsored by the United Nations Environment Programme, began in 1998 and concluded in 2001 with the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

David Stone, Director of Northern Science and Contaminants Research for INAC, says the convention targets 12 particularly toxic POPs for reduction and eventual elimination. "More importantly, it sets up a system for tackling additional chemicals," he says. "Ultimately, this points the way forward to a future free of dangerous POPs."

Watt-Cloutier, as then chair of Inuit Circumpolar Conference Canada, played a prominent role in the talks leading up to the Stockholm Convention. At one point, she presented a soapstone carving of an Inuk mother and child that "came to represent the conscience of the negotiations."

She says the global agreement, the first to single out Arctic and Indigenous peoples in its preamble, promises real policy impact at the international level. "It will eventually make our Arctic environment and eating our country food safe once again."

For more information, visit the Inuit Circumpolar Conference at www.inuitcircumpolar.com, the Northern Contaminants Program at www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ncp and the Web site of the Stockholm Convention at www.pops.int.

OPENING DOORS AND YOUNG MINDS

Aboriginal youth are connecting traditions and the modern world in job placements, gatherings and high-tech links around the globe.

photo: courtesy of Carmen Daniels

Making the link: Carmen Daniels works with children from the Injinoo Aboriginal Community at an outdoor festival in North Queensland, Australia.

Carmen Daniels is a world away from her Alberta Cree community, living and working with Native youth in Australia. But with only a few keystrokes, she connects young Aboriginal dancers in northern Australia for an on-line chat with a dance and drum group in her hometown of Edmonton.

Daniels is no stranger to travel and high-speed communications with foreign lands. At 30, she is one of a new generation of young Canadian Aboriginals who are going global—without forgetting their roots.

Melina Laboucan-Massimo of Alberta's Lubicon Lake First Nation last year spent six months in Brazil creating on-line links for Indigenous peoples across Latin America through TakingITGlobal, an international youth network that addresses global issues. Now 23, she's back in Canada developing Native content for the organization's Web site.

Stephanie Peter, a member of the Cowichan First Nation on Vancouver Island, passionate about preserving her own people's culture and eager to travel, spent six months on a job placement in the South Pacific that taught valuable life lessons.

Energetic and committed to social change, many of Canada's Native youth are seizing new opportunities to meet their counterparts in other countries and are making the most of new communications technologies to promote Indigenous identity and culture.

The Canadian government, in partnership with non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, is tapping into the aspirations of these youth with Web sites, global youth parliaments and international job placements and internships that target them.

"Technology is a means to present and preserve Indigenous culture, no matter where I work in the future," says Daniels.

Her belief in the Internet as a tool to inform and empower Native youth grew out of her experiences in 1999 as a coordinator of the Aboriginal Youth Network, a Web site that connects Native youth to each other and to social and health services across the country, with sponsors including the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Health Canada. A year later, sponsored by Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC), she travelled to Sydney, Australia as a delegate to Oxfam's first International Youth Parliament, which brought together 300 young people from around the world to work on issues from youth engagement to poverty and education. The experience inspired her to pursue a long-held dream to live and work in Australia. Over the past three years, she has developed Web sites that serve Aboriginal youth in remote northern communities there.

But Daniels maintains strong ties to home. Last year, she developed the cross-cultural dance project linking Australian Aboriginal dancers with her Cree grandmother's White Buffalo Dancers and Drummers Society in Edmonton.

With Daniels as intermediary, the young dancers have learned what they have in common: a rich tradition of oral story-telling and, sadly, a painful past of residential schools. "I was proud to facilitate this kind of cultural exchange and proud to be able to connect with my own culture back home," she says.

Laboucan-Massimo remembers when things clicked for her, as one of some 60 Aboriginal people at the second Oxfam Parliament earlier this year in Sydney. "We started calling each other brothers and sisters, even though we are from completely different countries," she recalls. "We had this intrinsic understanding of what it was like to be an Indigenous person."

Technology helps her maintain those person-to-person connections, with initiatives such as TakingITGlobal, a Web site sponsored in part by Corrections Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that is designed to teach Aboriginal youth how to tell their stories to the world.

In Canada, the federal government provides another powerful connection

photo: courtesy of Stephanie Peter

Stephanie Peter of Vancouver Island has learned valuable life lessons through global connections.

for Aboriginal youth to gain worldwide job experience. Each year, Foreign Affairs Canada's Young Professionals International (YPI) supports about 35 Aboriginal job placements arranged by environmental and community groups.

"Our participants bring Canada to the world and they bring the world back to Canada," says YPI Program Officer Brian Foreman, adding that the program offers "meaningful international career-related job experience" for many youth who would not otherwise have such opportunities. The placements for Native youth are especially door-openers to a wider world.

One of the participating groups in YPI is the Pacific Peoples Partnership, a social justice group in Victoria, B.C., that links Indigenous people in Canada and the South Pacific. The organization selected Stephanie Peter to spend six months on Rarotongo, the largest of the Cook Islands, working with local agencies to monitor water quality. While there, she also became a cultural ambassador, sharing her history and traditions with her hosts. Encouraged by local chiefs, she organized an oral history project to record and videotape the pre-Christian legends passed down by Cook Island elders. It was an experience that drove home the power of global connections for Aboriginal youth.

"My going away made my desire to help my community grow stronger," says Peter, who looks back fondly on her placement, which nurtured skills that will last a lifetime. "My dream of helping my community develop in a culturally and environmentally friendly manner was brought one step closer."

To learn more about the international programs and initiatives for Aboriginal youth mentioned in this story, see www.international.gc.ca/ypi-jpi; www.takingitglobal.org; www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org; www.iyp.oxfam.org; and www.ayn.ca.

IN BRIEF

Internet-savvy youth concerned with jobs

Finding a job is a top concern of Canadian youth, and they are likely to use the Internet to do it, a survey commissioned by Foreign Affairs Canada has found. The study showed that 32 percent of young people identify unemployment as their greatest concern for the future, followed by education (20 percent) and finances (10 percent). The poll's purpose was to understand what motivates young people and where they go for information about career and personal development opportunities such as international travel and job placements.

Of those surveyed, 93 percent say they have access to the Internet and 79 percent say they have used it to find career and job information. Other activities include communicating with friends, hobbies and entertainment and shopping. The telephone poll was done by Ipsos Reid among 1,200 Canadians aged 18 to 35 and has a margin of error of ±2.8 percent, 19 times out of 20.

Canadians on 9-11

A new book recounts the uniquely Canadian aspects of the collapse of the World Trade Centre.

Written as a tribute to the 26 Canadians who lost their lives on September 11, 2001, *Orange Alert* includes recollections, first-hand accounts, poems and drawings by political and business leaders, journalists, firefighters, emergency service workers, ministers, philosophers and children.

Ottawa author Debra Brown says she and her husband David Brown were inspired to write the book because they were "touched by heart-wrenching poems and reflections from elementary school children" about the tragedy.

"The common theme among the people we interviewed about September 11 is that it was a wake-up call to the real evil that we face, and that we must stand up to it," she says.

The book is available from Trafford Publishing for $19.95 and can be found at booksellers or at **www.orangealert.ca**.

COMIC RELIEF FOR AIDS PREVENTION

A series of announcements from Canada starring an unlikely trio delivers a serious message.

illustrations: courtesy of Firdaus Kharas

Making a point through humour: "The Three Amigos" help to destigmatize condom use.

Meet the new ambassadors for safer sex: three animated condoms named Shaft, Dick and Stretch. In the deadly serious battle to stop the spread of AIDS, a wildly funny series of public service announcements co-produced in Canada is scoring direct hits.

Since the South African Broadcasting Corporation began airing the series featuring the characters dubbed "The Three Amigos" on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2003, one non-governmental organization in that country reports that condom sales have spiked by 63 percent. Firdaus Kharas of Ottawa, who developed the series along with South African co-producer Brent Quinn, says the television broadcasts work because "they are non-threatening. We use humour to make a serious point."

In one 60-second spot, the three friends are playing soccer and find they "just can't score without a condom." In another, they are astronauts who cannot blast off without protection. "We are destigmatizing condoms," Kharas says. "We want the target group of 15- to 24-year-olds to think condoms are cool."

The series proved its worldwide appeal at the 15th International AIDS Conference last July in Bangkok, Thailand. Kharas, who attended the meetings with the support of Foreign Affairs Canada, says daily screenings of the comedic sketches were packed. "The whole world was laughing at them."

The productions have been endorsed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu as a "powerful communicating tool" and were introduced at the Canadian Film Festival in South Africa in March by Canadian High Commissioner Sandelle Scrimshaw. "This is a brilliant concept," Scrimshaw wrote the co-producers, "that may make a huge difference to the lives of people, not just in South Africa, but across the globe."

Kharas now wants to launch "The Three Amigos" in more countries, particularly India and in Eastern Europe, where rising AIDS infection rates are causing alarm. The goal is to get the series of 20 spots broadcast on national networks in 100 countries with $100 million in donated air time, reaching one billion people.

Such broadcasts are part of a larger public education campaign that includes local distribution of tapes of the announcements. In South Africa, the Canadian International Development Agency is contributing $100,000 to an HIV/AIDS prevention initiative in which tapes of the announcements in Zulu, Afrikaans, Sotho and English will be available at various locations, such as military barracks, prisons, health clinics and cinemas. They will also be shown on a cross-country network of plasma screens in minibus stops used by 1.5 million riders daily.

Versions in 40 more languages are being produced with support from OMNI Television, a multilingual television service based in Toronto. Rather than translate the sketches, the producers recruit young people who speak each language to voice new versions of the traditional scripts, laced with local humour.

The project has so far involved 80 people in three countries and a considerable sum of Kharas's own money, but he continues to be enthusiastic about the possibility of making condoms true "amigos" for life. "AIDS is a preventable disease," Kharas says. "I am absolutely convinced we could stop it in its tracks."

You can find sample announcements by "The Three Amigos" and further information at www.thethreeamigos.org.

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Museum Presence for Canada

The new National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. opened in September with unique contributions from Canada.

A sculpture by British Columbia Aboriginal artist Susan Point called *The Beaver and the Mink* has been donated by the Canadian government to be prominently displayed in the museum's entrance rotunda. A contemporary yet traditional piece depicting a Coast Salish legend about the origin of salmon in the rivers, the red cedar sculpture was chosen by a panel of Aboriginal art professionals from Canada.

Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew said the sculpture showcases Canada's Aboriginal culture and emphasizes the positive contributions it makes to the Americas. "Canada and the United States share many unique Aboriginal cultures," he said. "This gift will bear witness to those ties."

The new museum features a good deal of other Canadian involvement, from Métis architect Douglas Cardinal's original curvilinear design to the Aboriginal communities in Canada that have been included in exhibitions of native life, identity and views of the world. Dominating the landscape are a cardinal stone marking north from Acasta Lake in the Northwest Territories and 40 Grandfather Rocks selected from a quarry in Alma, Quebec.

The Canadian Embassy in Washington marked the opening of the museum with a cultural program rich in Aboriginal talent and creativity, including an exhibition of Aboriginal art from the Canada Council Art Bank, as well as storytelling, workshops, musical and dance performances and films. Nine Aboriginal journalists from across Canada travelled to Washington, with the support of Foreign Affairs Canada's Media Outreach Program, to observe and report on Canada's contribution to the new museum and the festivities surrounding its opening.

To learn more about the museum, visit www.nmai.si.edu. For details of the Canadian events surrounding the opening, see www.canadianembassy.org.

photo: John Steiner/Smithsonian Institution

Curvilinear design: The National Museum of the American Indian's undulating façade gives it the appearance of a stratified stone mass.

photo: courtesy of NAAA

Aboriginal artist Susan Point won a 2004 National Aboriginal Achievement Award for her work, which encompasses a wide range of materials and styles, from traditional to contemporary.

photo: Walter Larrimore/NMAI

The sculpture, donated by Canada, will be seen by some one million international visitors who pass through the rotunda each year.