



THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
ORGANISATION

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WELCOME LETTER

Shriya Moitra – Chairperson

Greetings Delegates!

I am Shriya, an 18-year-old senior at the Bishop's Junior College in Pune, India. It is an honour to be serving as Chairperson for UNESCO in this edition of Birla MUN. I have been an active debater within the MUN circuit ever since the pandemic began and it exposed me to the exciting world of debates and opinions. My hobbies also include hitting the gym, sweating it out at the basketball court and acting. I further plan on pursuing a degree in law and move towards judgeship. I believe that MUN conferences are a great way to develop leadership and public speaking skills, two very essential skill sets to have in any professional work environment today. I would sincerely request all the delegates to be well researched and well prepared. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to reach me, I'll be happy to answer them. I can't wait for the conference to commence! All the best delegates!

Aditya Hingorani - Vice Chairperson

Greetings Delegates!

I am Aditya, a 16-year-old at Amity International School, Delhi. It is a privilege to be serving as Vice Chairperson for UNESCO at Birla MUN. I have been a part of the MUN circuit for 2 years now and have had the pleasure of witnessing many diverse conferences with ardent debaters. Other than being part of such events, my hobbies include writing, playing tennis and volunteering. I aspire to either become an architect or a psychologist as both the professions spark my interest. Furthermore, MUN conferences have instilled in me the values of oratory skills, researching and diplomacy and I strive for making them values that the delegates in this committee stand for. I encourage the delegates to be well researched, confident and diplomatic to make this committee fruitful and progressive.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It aims to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture. UNESCO's programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

Political and economic arrangements of governments are not enough to secure the lasting and sincere support of the peoples. Peace must be founded upon dialogue and mutual understanding. Peace must be built upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity.

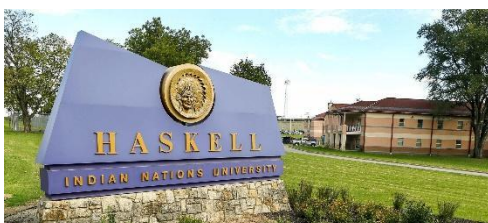
In this spirit, UNESCO develops educational tools to help people live as global citizens free of hate and intolerance. UNESCO works so that each child and citizen has access to quality education. By promoting cultural heritage and the equal dignity of all cultures, UNESCO strengthens bonds among nations. UNESCO fosters scientific programmes and policies as platforms for development and cooperation. UNESCO stands up for freedom of expression, as a fundamental right and a key condition for democracy and development. Serving as a laboratory of ideas, UNESCO helps countries adopt international standards and manages programmes that foster the free flow of ideas and knowledge sharing.

UNESCO's founding vision was born in response to a world war that was marked by racist and anti-Semitic violence. Seventy years on and many liberation struggles later, UNESCO's mandate is as relevant as ever. Cultural diversity is under attack and new forms of intolerance, rejection of scientific facts and threats to freedom of expression challenge peace and human rights. In response, UNESCO's duty remains to reaffirm the humanist missions of education, science and culture.

HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

Ever since the year 1994, on August 9 we celebrate the United Nations Day of the world's Indigenous people which enables us to stand up for the rights of 370 million Indigenous people from over 90 countries. Formal education can be seen as the death of language and has a key role in suppressing Indigenous people's distinctive identities. Formal education tends to be absolute and hierarchical. The implementation of state-sponsored national languages such as English and French via literacy programs has prevented indigenous people from using ancestral modes of socialising and expressing themselves. As a direct outcome we encounter examples like the Ifugao of Northern Luzon, Philippines who are taught about Shakespeare yet are not mindful about the own rich history in Hudhud and the Alim. Education is becoming a commodity.

The complex history of Haskell Indian Nations University in the United States of America illustrates the contradictions of the past regarding indigenous education around the world, ranging from ethnocidal collection to freedom-oriented ideologies of native independence and self-determination. In long-standing treaties, the U.S. government gained millions of acres of land belonging to native American people promising education and healthcare in return. On the contrary, the government used Haskell and other boarding schools to instruct young Indians in the "civilized and entitled ways of national society". As a result, Native American children were taken away from their families and sent to boarding schools where they were not permitted to speak their mother tongues. School staff cut off children's hair, discarded traditional garments, and declined to let students practice traditional forms of spirituality. Boarding schools embraced military regimentation as the preferred pedagogical model, and as an essential tool of ethnocide. In 1992, Haskell changed its policy. Today students get to learn from renowned indigenous changemakers and prepare for midterm examinations by appealing to their spirituality. Haskell today incorporates American Indian and Native Alaskan culture into its curricula.



This story of Haskell, although regarding just one university, is indicative of societies discriminatory towards indigenous people in terms of education and culture both. By diving into Canada's treatment of Indigenous people, their goals have wavered. One such shift came in 1910 as the government was concerned about the high cost of educating indigenous youth and the failure of the education system to turn them into contributing members of society, it shifted its policy from integration to segregation. The curriculum, already far less intricate than that of provincial schools, was broken down to an even lower level and any new infrastructure built were to be basic day schools which could offer education to Indigenous youth at a far lower cost to the government ones. In the 1940s, suffering the effects of the first world war, the great depression, and even the second world war, schools were severely under-resourced.

The revised Indian Act of 1951 included provisions for the federal government to strike tuition agreements with provincial and territorial authorities for Aboriginal students to be educated in provincial schools followed by an upward trajectory. A similar marginalisation and segregation with attempts to Integration can also be seen in countries like Australia and Philippines.

Before the rise of nation states in Europe, Ancient dynasties rarely ever tried to impose their language on the territories it captured. In the diverse Hellenic Empire indigenous personnel were preserved whenever possible, and as an outcome the language used at the local level remained largely undisturbed. But with the rise of well-defined nation states and empires, language soon was promoted to be uniform to instil a sense of belonging. In the Scottish Highlands, the English prevented the indigenous Scottish people from conversing in Gaelic and in France schools were required to spread a version of French which was alien to half of French society back then in the 19th Century. Language is one of the most relatable and common practices of human society hence to send a message of togetherness and one future, a uniform language was promoted.



CURRENT ISSUES

Indigenous peoples' languages comprise at least 4000 languages of the world's language plurality. Still 50% of the world's 6700 languages are severely endangered and are prone to be lost in the upcoming 1 to 4 generations, with at least 1 language disappearing every two weeks, with the overwhelming majority of them being indigenous. Languages peter out all the time but the pace at which this is happening is seriously alarming. For Example out of 60 indigenous languages spoken in Canada, an underwhelming 5 have more than 10,000 speakers with experts approximating that only 3 are not severely in danger of dying out.



Even in education the global situation of indigenous people is concerning. The National Indian Education Association reported that 22 % of native people 25 and above have not graduated high school. The United Nations estimates that only 40% of all school-age Inuit children in Canada are attending school full time.

Time and Course play a significant role in alienating indigenous people in mainstream society education. Farming and herding cattle for instance are bound to be seasonal due to variation in environmental situations which can prevent students from attending academic sessions in favour of fishing and the like. Merging this lifestyle with mainstream education is now problematic because of the priority in time of the herders. The lack of role models in education is affecting the children's desire and capability to first enrol and then finish their education as their parents might have been denied the access to education. This coupled by the fact that only 1 in 100 teachers are indigenous in Australia, with similar figures in other countries, children are not encouraged to be a valuable member of the society

hence end up being facilitators and in low-income jobs in adulthood. If we hope schools reflect the society, the kids they teach or the community they teach in then there is a long way to go

There is a strong relationship between attendance and achievement as the academic loss for non-attendance is greater for more disadvantaged students. Research shows that children who miss more than half a day of school a week (less than 90% attendance) suffer a significant academic penalty related to literacy outcomes, in particular the weak acquisition of phonological awareness skills and early literacy skills such as letter recognition and word identification processing, being associated with irregular attendance.

Lack of parental insistence that children attend school, limited teaching facilities, bullying and teasing contributed to this. A study in Australia estimated that overcrowded housing resulted in 35 fewer days at school per year while coming from a non-English speaking household resulted in 11 fewer days. Five-year-old



indigenous children are approximately 2.5 times more prone to being developmentally vulnerable in the language and cognitive field compared to non-indigenous children.

Many minorities and indigenous communities live in remote areas. These often suffer from extreme conditions of poverty greater than the national averages and have lesser facilities or services. Worn or non-existent roads might make the journey risky, especially during monsoon seasons. This may disadvantage indigenous girls in conservative households whose parents are unwilling for them to travel long distances without companionship. Indigenous girls are frequently enrolled in school later than their male peers, or miss large amounts of schooling and so have to repeat classes. Poverty causes this. They are as a result be several years older than their classmates which has an impact on their self esteem by reaching puberty by grade 3-5 differentiating them from the group. Lack of adequate sanitation facilities further compounds this problem.

SOME PAST ACTIONS BY THE UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES

- In 2018, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) developed, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, Member States, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and a range of different stakeholders, an action plan for the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages.
- The international community has adopted important international instruments and other policy documents emphasizing the protection of linguistic diversity. In particular, the global attention to language-related issues has been renewed by the United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution 71/178 on the “Rights of Indigenous Peoples” proclaiming 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages.
- The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples have further advanced the normative content of language rights in its articles 13, 14 and 16.
- There are good examples, where special attention is paid to the protection and revitalization of the languages and cultures of indigenous peoples, and also the protection and inheritance of endangered languages, minority languages, non-official languages and dialects.



- A number of international expert meetings on indigenous languages in recent years have served as an inspiration in this field. These special international gatherings have brought together people across disciplines, policy-makers, academics and practitioners. The Action Plan for organizing the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages prepared by UNESCO is another important contribution made in this area .

CASE STUDY

It must be noted that an indigenous person is one who belongs to a particular population through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its kind (acquisition by the group). This maintains for these communities the sovereign right and authority to decide who belongs to them, without external interference.



Literacy rates and Education

Globally, there are still 781 million indigenous people who lack basic literacy skills, and 58 million children out-of-school at the primary level and 63 million out-of-school children at the secondary level. Illiteracy remains a persistent problem among these individuals. Approximately 200 million children of primary school age aren't able to acquire basic literacy skills. This indicates that a huge portion of the indigenous population do not have the skills needed to function in today's environments such as the ability to follow instructions and other forms of limited abilities to obtain and understand essential information. Literacy is the first condition for integration, communication and dialogue into new connected societies. Educational activities on indigenous peoples' human rights that target the broader population can help counter ignorance and empower the community to address difficult challenges from an informed perspective. Hence it is imperative

now more than ever, especially during a pandemic to adopt ways in association with international collaboration to improve literacy rates among these people.

Lack of respect and resources cause critical education gaps among the indigenous populations . Quite often, education systems disregard indigenous peoples' diverse cultures. There are an acute number of teachers who speak their languages and their schools often lack the most basic materials. Materials of education that provide for accurate and fair information on indigenous peoples and their ways of life are not found very often. In spite of the large number of international instruments that proclaim universal rights to education, indigenous populations do not get to live by these rights, and a vast education gap between these populations and the rest of the population remains extremely critical, worldwide.

Indigenous children face numerous obstacles to education. They arrive at school hungry, ill and tired; repeatedly bullied, and the use of corporal punishment is still very widespread. Cultural and ethnic discrimination at schools are major hurdles to equal access to education, which thereby cause poor performance and alarming dropout rates. Indigenous school going girls, in particular, experience difficult problems related to schoolbased violence, gender discrimination, unfriendly school environments and sometimes sexual abuse, all of which contribute to high dropout rates.



When indigenous children are introduced only to the national discourse at the expense of their native discourse, they are in an eminent danger of losing part of their identity, their connection with their parents and predecessors and, ultimately, of being caught in a no man's land whereby they lose a vital aspect of their identity while only partially becoming a part of the dominant national society.

If the birth of a child goes unregistered, that child is unable to enjoy his or her rights and to benefit from the protection accorded by the state in which he or she had been born. Furthermore, the unregistered child may even go neglected when his or her rights are injured. Ahead in life, the child won't even be able to exercise voting rights. These children are also at risk of falling prey to heinous crimes such as child trafficking and are often easy victims for those who exploit their vulnerability, recruiting them as beggars on the streets, domestic servants in slave-like arrangements, or even as child soldiers.

The mentality and lack of awareness also play a major setback in the children's education. Students of indigenous populations have a mentality that the education they are offered by their respective states, promote individualism and a competitive atmosphere, rather than communal ways of cooperation and lie. They are not taught relevant work and survival skills suitable for indigenous economies, and they often return to their communities with a type of formal education that is unsuitable and irrelevant for their needs. They are exacted to seek employment in the national economy, which eventually lead to a vicious cycle of social fragmentation, brain drain along with acute development, especially since the salaries and jobs available to them often did not match their educational qualifications.

Thus the conditions of extreme poverty, isolation, and exclusion do not augur well for multicultural and sustainable indigenous education programmes.



Preservation of language and culture

Along with the importance of education and inter alia, UNESCO promotes the fruitful diversity of cultures since the creation of its Constitution in 1945. Its mandate was reaffirmed in the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. Cultural and Linguistic diversity is stated “as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature” (Article 1 of the UN Charter). This principle should be understood not only in terms of economic growth but also as an expedient to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence (Article 3 of the UN Charter). It also suggests a commitment to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom, in particular those of Indigenous Peoples. (Article 4 of the UN Charter). Linguistic diversity and multilingualism is now of such strategic importance that UNESCO promotes in all fields of its mandate, through an interdisciplinary approach which involves all programme sectors namely, information, education, culture, science, communication and social and human sciences.

Complex implications for communication, identity, social integration, education and development of languages, are of strategic importance for people and the planet. There is growing awareness that languages play a vital role in development, not only in ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, but also in the attainment of good quality education for all and strengthening cooperation, in building inclusive knowledge societies and preserving every nations’ cultural heritage and interests, and in mobilizing political will for applying the benefits of science and technology to sustainable development.

UNESCO is thus taking pressing measures to encourage broad and international commitment to promoting multilingualism and linguistic diversity, including the safeguarding of endangered languages, especially of indigenous people.



Mistreatment and abuse

Among other things, violations of indigenous people have been reported to be deep, systemic and widespread in the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms as per James Anaya, United Nations Special Rapporteur. There have been continued setbacks in education, health care and justice in spite of adoption of various measures which only proved to be potentially empty instruments.

Mr. Anaya along with other world leaders have urged concerted action to tackle these deep-seated problems.

Despite all the constructive developments in international standards of human rights setting, indigenous peoples continue to face serious human rights abuses and mistreatment on a daily basis. Matters of brutality and violence, dispossession of land, marginalization, continuing assimilation policies, denial of land rights, impacts of large-scale development, forced removal or relocation, abuses by military forces and armed conflict, and a host of other abuses, are an unfortunate reality for indigenous communities all across the globe. Examples of violence and brutality have been heard from every corner of the world, most often perpetrated against indigenous persons who are defending their rights and their lands, communities and territories.

According to reports by the Permanent Forum, an indigenous woman is more likely to be raped, with some estimates showing that more than one in three indigenous women are raped during their lifetime.

Indigenous people have frequently risen concerns about systemic discrimination and outright racism from their respective States and its authorities. This discrimination manifests itself in numerous ways such as unnecessary and frequent questioning by the police, condescending attitudes of teachers to students or even

rudeness from a receptionist in a government office. At their most extreme, these forms of discrimination lead to gross violations of human rights, such as rape, murder and other forms of intimidation or violence. These are often either difficult to verify and quantify or are simply not documented by the authorities, or not disaggregated based on ethnicity.

These individuals have also faced detention quite often due to the criminalization of social protest activities. One of the most grave flaws in human rights protection in recent years is the trend towards the use of legislation and the justice system to penalize and criminalize the social protest activities and admissible demands made by indigenous organizations and movements in defence of their rights.



Safeguarding and Defending Indigenous Languages

People's fundamental right includes safeguarding and defending their indigenous languages. By adopting Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/222, on the establishment of a subsidiary body of the Council, the United Nations and its Member States have pledged to resolve the problems facing indigenous people, particularly with regard to the safeguarding of languages and cultures. The International Mother Language Day is celebrated on 21 February each year in order to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.

Many United Nations bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and International Labour Organization reported to the permanent body in May 2015. Increasing amount of training had been conducted in indigenous languages, with many publications aimed at upholding the rights of indigenous people produced in these

languages. Similarly, the Millennium Development Goals were translated into several languages, just as ILO translated its Convention (Number 170) concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries into several languages, including indigenous languages, and is also planning on translating various teaching aids into these languages. In the context of the Global Environment Facility small grants programme, UNDP held training sessions in indigenous languages, particularly in Latin American countries.



There still persist many hurdles to the use and safeguarding of indigenous cultures and languages, as noted in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people (A/60/358). In this aspect, UNESCO has put the spotlight on the need to develop curricula, adapted in terms of language and cultural aspects, in which the relevant history, languages, values and oral traditions are acknowledged, encouraged and respected.

However despite attempts over the past years to ameliorate conditions and to increase recognition of indigenous rights through law and policy, national dialogue, litigation, and enhanced leadership opportunities, full accommodation of indigenous rights remains elusive.

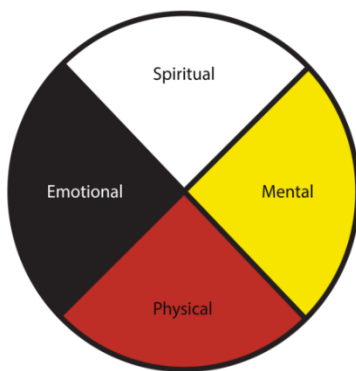
Hence this global issue, calls for the governments to implement stringent laws and policies that bring the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to life, particularly around effectively consulting indigenous peoples to obtain their prior, free and informed consent for decisions that affect them, maintaining their distinct cultural identities, living free from discrimination and the threat of

genocide along with having secure access to the lands and resources essential to their ways of life and well being.



POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Seeking inspiration from the holistic medicine wheel, the need for reconceptualizing what constitutes an Aboriginal student has never been greater. The medicine wheel stands for the cyclical nature of life, incorporating the feelings of wholeness, interconnectedness, harmony and most importantly balance. A model for holistic education, the medicine wheel perceives the learner as the sum of their body, mind, heart and spirit. By educating the complete person rather than a part, an education program can ensure that a learner achieves a sustainable balance with the self and the community. Therefore, the medicine wheel can serve as a blueprint in indigenizing the educational process



For the preservation of indigenous languages, a promotion of it being included locally in school curricula makes a strong case. A survey in Canada found that 36% of adults fluent in an aboriginal language were literate in that language. The governments may be obliged to consider the active promotion of partnerships between

businesses/industries and colleges/universities to ensure native professional capacities are set up to support native tribal and community self-sufficiency and help society in general.

On a national level Indigenous languages to be declared as official languages and founding languages of the countries could serve as a mainstream force in the adaptation of a life-span approach to language revitalization. Communities can be supported to come up with whole community approaches. Languages being established as living and communicative languages in families and communities such as in hosting informal dinners and organizing language practice arenas. Sims in 2005 shared a practice in New Mexico where two Pueblo communities put on a community carnival with different activities and food booths are manned by fluent speakers who reinforce the language with students who want to play a game or

order food – progressively bringing the language learning out of the classroom and into the community.

In the end it is the national governments which in coordination with regional leaders and indigenous communities have to unanimously agree to an intertwined strategy towards sustainable education and language preservation by implementing UN recommendations in order to steady the gradual fading away of indigenous languages and the dying out of the indigenous identity.

CONCLUSION

In this background guide, we have tried to incorporate as many aspects of the agenda as possible whilst staying relevant to the agenda. Our goal was to make the delegates aware about the multiple facets that can be and are expected to be covered in the committee. This does not mean that the delegates are limited to the background guide alone but are encouraged to explore external, related and concerning topics. The delegates are expected to deliberate upon the existing legal issues regarding the societal status of indigenous people and their culture. We have attempted to list the causes and consequences of the impact of their identity on their education and moreover their literacy.

We have tried to incorporate all the concerning topics in this document and have developed it in a way we want the committee to progress with the moulding and influence of the delegates who actually shape the committee hence are encouraged to be diplomatic, inquisitive and resourceful.

In the end, the two executive board members would like to wish the delegates all the luck in the world and hope for a progressive, innovative and vibrant committee!

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

- ❖ How can awareness be raised and education be imparted to indigenous people?
- ❖ What ways can be undertaken to preserve the cultural and linguistic heritage of these people?
- ❖ Ways to increase accessibility to National Human Rights Institutions to indigenous people?
- ❖ What additional measures can the major United Nations mechanisms that work exclusively to advance the rights of indigenous peoples adopt?
- ❖ How can violent extremism and other complex forms of conflicts be addressed and combated in order ensure international human rights standards are met to these people?

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