



# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

9 AUGUST



UNITED NATIONS

Media Advisory

PRESS CONFERENCE

## International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous Peoples' Right to Education

Tuesday, 9 August, 11:00 a.m.

Room S-237, UN Headquarters, New York

**Álvaro Pop**

Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues (Maya Q'eqchi, Guatemala)

**Karla Jessen Williamson**

University of Saskatchewan, Canada (Inuit, Greenland)

**Octaviana Trujillo**

Northern Arizona University (Yaqui, USA)

**BACKGROUND:** This year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is devoted to indigenous peoples' right to education. That right is protected by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as by a number of other international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Goal 4 calls for ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples. In spite of being recognized and legally protected, the right to education has not been fully realized for most indigenous peoples. Where data exist, they show persistent disparities between the indigenous and non-indigenous population in terms of educational access, retention and achievement in all regions of the world. Challenges also remain in ensuring education in indigenous languages, based on culturally appropriate methods of teaching and learning and with full recognition of the diversity of indigenous cultures.

**SPECIAL EVENT:** A special event in observance of the International Day will take place in the ECOSOC Chamber on 9 August at 2:50 p.m., organised by the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The event, as well as the press conference, will be webcast live at [webtv.un.org](http://webtv.un.org).



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## **SPEAKERS available for interviews:**

### **Álvaro Pop**

Mr. Pop currently is the Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. He is Maya Q'eqchi from Guatemala and the founder and president of Naleb, an organization focused on promoting multicultural societies and political participation of indigenous peoples. He headed the indigenous electoral observation mission in Guatemala four times between 1999 and 2011, among many other activities at the local, national and international level.

### **Karla Jessen Williamson**

Dr. Williamson was born in Appamiut, Greenland, and grew up immersed in the Greenlandic language of Kalaallisut. She graduated from high school in Denmark, and received a Bachelor's and a Master's degree from the University of Saskatchewan in Canada. She taught at the University of Saskatchewan for sixteen years, then served as Executive Director of the Arctic Institute of North America, and is currently a faculty member of the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan.

### **Octaviana Trujillo**

Dr. Trujillo, a member of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in Arizona, is the Founding Chair of the Department of Applied Indigenous Studies at Northern Arizona University, where she teaches courses on tribal nation building. She has served on local, national and international governing boards, including the Governmental Advisory Committee of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She was appointed by President Obama to serve as a member to the Joint Public Advisory Committee for the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

### **Juan de Dios Simón**

Mr. Simón, a Maya Kaqchikel, currently is Director General of School Education at the Ministry of Education in Guatemala. He graduated from Harvard University with a Master's degree in Education. After working with the National Council of Mayan Education, he served as Deputy Director of the General Directorate of Bilingual Intercultural Education in Guatemala, then as a UNICEF Education Officer coordinating a program on Intercultural Bilingual Education in the Amazon region, and as a social specialist for the Inter-American Development Bank.

**To schedule an interview**, please contact: Martina Donlon, UN Department of Public Information: +1 212-963-6816 or email: [donlon@un.org](mailto:donlon@un.org)

**For the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum**, please contact: Julia Raavad, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs: +1 212 963 5873 or email: [raavad@un.org](mailto:raavad@un.org)

**For more information**, please see [www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday](http://www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday).