



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the Inauguration of the Exhibition “Children of the  
North – Yamal”**

**UNESCO, 13 December 2016**

Excellency Alexander Kuznetsov, Permanent Delegate of the Russian Federation to  
UNESCO,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I am grateful to Ambassador Keznetsov and the *V. I. Vernandsky  
Nongovernmental Ecological Foundation* for this exhibition.

Let me also say a special word of thanks to Mr Danil Khusainov, the artist behind  
these stunning portraits.

The *V. I. Vernandsky Nongovernmental Ecological Foundation* is an Official Partner,  
with Consultative Status, of UNESCO.

The Foundation is inspired by the spirit of the great Academician Vladimir Vernadsky,  
the first thinker of the concept of ‘biosphere,’ where life on earth is seen in its totality,  
as one whole in space and time.

I see this as the core message of this exhibition, which presents to us the faces of  
Russia’s North viewed through wonderful portraits of nomadic children.

This brings to home the great cultural diversity of the Russian Federation as a wealth  
for all to share.

For UNESCO, humanity's cultural diversity cannot be separated from the earth's biodiversity – this is the essence of UNESCO's integrated approach to celebrating heritage, while conserving the planet's biological and geological diversity, and promoting sustainable development.

This inspires UNESCO action through what is the world's only global network of internationally-designated areas for safeguarding and conservation – including natural World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves, and Global Geoparks, on every continent.

I believe these sites paint a new map of the world – a map of a living planet, a map of humanity and nature seeking to live in harmony.

Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchu Tum put it this way:

*“The Earth is the root and source of our culture. She keeps our memories, she receives our ancestors and she demands we honour her and return to her, with tenderness and respect, those goods that she gives us.”*

This is our responsibility.

We are one family, on one planet, and we must defend it together.

The Arctic faces rising pressures from global changes, including climate change, affecting peoples and communities living in these regions, impacting on their land and resources, their livelihoods and cultures.

We must support these peoples and communities in every way – we must also learn from them, nurturing and sharing their knowledge and wisdom.

This is the message UNESCO brought to the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the COP21 one year ago in Paris and the COP22 recently held in Marrakech – I recall well the International Conference we held here on 27 November, on *Resilience in a Time of Uncertainty: Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change*.

This same message guides all UNESCO's action -- through our *Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems* programme -- through our support in Russia's southern Yakutia (Sakha Republic) and Northern Amur region, working with Even reindeer herders to combine indigenous knowledge with those of scientists to understand and cope with processes of climate change -- through the resources created by the *UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education* on the knowledge of indigenous peoples in Russia's Far North.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Les peuples autochtones supportent aujourd'hui une part disproportionnée du fardeau des conséquences du changement climatique.

Ils possèdent aussi des connaissances, des savoir-faire qui sont une chance pour relever les défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés.

Ils ont mis au point des systèmes de connaissances extrêmement fins, qui sont utiles à toute l'humanité, et que nous devons mieux promouvoir et partager.

Je crois que c'est l'esprit qui nous unit aujourd'hui – un esprit de connaissance et de solidarité ... c'est ce message que nous pouvons lire sur le sourire des enfants, dans les yeux de ces jeunes gens.

Encore une fois permettez-moi de remercier la délégation permanente de la Fédération de Russie, et je souhaite à tous une merveilleuse exposition.