

Speaking Notes  
The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella  
Speaker of the Senate

On the occasion of a Reception for the  
Quilt of Belonging

Ottawa, December 8, 2009

Mr. Shariff,  
Speaker Milliken,  
Distingués invités,  
Mesdames, Messieurs,

It is a great pleasure to be here this evening, and I would like to begin by thanking the Aga Khan Foundation for providing this wonderful space in their new headquarters, the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat, for the public viewing of the Quilt of Belonging. People in the National Capital Region will be able to view the Quilt in this superb environment tomorrow.

Since 1980, the Aga Khan Foundation of Canada has fostered links between Canadians and the developing world through youth and professional exchanges, it has developed links between universities and hospitals, and it has held annual awareness events to inform Canadians about issues in the developing world as well as providing information about what they can do to help. Operating on the principle that effective social and economic progress is based on partnership with individuals, communities, businesses, governments, and non-governmental organizations, the Foundation has helped Canadian people and policy-makers further their understanding of complex global issues.

The Quilt of Belonging is a remarkable achievement with 263 blocks representing all of Canada's main First Nations groupings and every nation of the world. They are all a part of Canada's complex social fabric, represented here in actual fabric. Directed by Ms. Esther Bryan, who is with us this evening, the design is innovative and sophisticated in its use of form, line, texture, and colour to allow the maximum diversity in aesthetic points of view. Fabric and textile definitions have been challenged as the materials which have been used range from sinew and sealskin to miniature carpets, from tapa cloth to bark, from gold thread to 200 year old homespun linen. These parts and materials form a bold, integrated, and unified artwork to reflect a bold, integrated, and unified Canada.

The Quilt has served as a cultural ambassador for Canada. Since its first exhibition at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, this immense tapestry has travelled across the country. Its Canadian travels included a 10 week trek across the Arctic, the first of its kind. The Quilt has traveled to the United States, where it was exhibited at the International Quilt Festival. So impressed was the Mayor of Houston, Bill White, he issued a proclamation declaring October 31<sup>st</sup> Quilt of Belonging Day. After it has finished its exhibition here, it will continue on to Vancouver where it will be part of the 2010 Cultural Olympiad during the 2010 Winter Olympics. The Quilt of Belonging will give visitors around the globe an idea of the breadth and complexity of Canada's cultural mosaic.

The Quilt of Belonging is a rare accomplishment, a piece of collaborative art that has educated Canadians and the world about our society and will continue to do so for years to come.

Thank you,