Recent collected essays in translation studies and public policy (e.g. Mus and Vandemeulebroucke 2011; Lane-Mercier et al. 2014) examine official and nonofficial multilingualism in societies around the globe, alongside the role of translation and interpretation in interlinguistic and intercultural negotiations, whose power struggles present clear challenges for translation (Lavorel 2015). While research delving specifically into Indigenous languages and cultures, and the impediments to translation and interpretation with which they are confronted has been published (see for example, Nevo and Fiola 2002; Cardinal 2004, 2005, 2014; Collombat 2014; Moyes 2016; Henzi 2017), the publications, until very recently at least, are nevertheless less numerous and often more scattered in diverse publications and harder to locate, than those dealing with official languages and translation. The demands of Indigenous peoples and the efforts of UNESCO, among other international organizations, have put the spotlight on the fragility of Indigenous languages and cultures, which, despite their frequent status of national languages (and cultures), do not generally benefit from the human (that is to say translators and interpreters who master the languages) and financial resources, or the political will necessary to ensure their survival (see, for example, the collected multidisciplinary volume edited by Lane-Mercier et al. 2018). Dominant, often colonial, languages and cultures traditionally believed that Francoprovençal (France, Switzerland and Italy), the Tamazight language (Maghreb), the Pama-Nyungan linguistic family, the family of Australian Indigenous languages, Innu and Cree (Canada) were destined to quietly die out. Even though Aboriginal languages, such as Quecha (Peru, 1975), Maori (New Zealand, 1987), Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun (Nunavut, 1999), have official language status, “several anthropological and legal sociological studies have in fact revealed that the majority of the world’s Indigenous peoples do not exercise their rights because of their
lack of knowledge about these rights, despite the fact that the latter have been officially recognized” (Lavorel 2015, our translation). As a result, they are unable to participate fully as active citizens in their respective multilingual society, thereby inadvertently contributing to undermining “democratic societies [that] are based on the ideal of participatory citizenship” (Meylaerts 2011, 743, our translation). To further fly in the face of participatory citizenship, “one of the greatest challenges facing multilingual societies is the development of an equitable translation policy” (ibid.) that harmonizes sanctions and application criteria. In fact, in 2015, Lavorel came to a similar conclusion by identifying the absence of an effective national translation policy, combined with the lack of political will and means as hurdles to linguistic equality.

In the twenty-first century, one of the translator’s tasks is to find creative and activist solutions, i.e. solutions that may positively influence world progress, to promote the sociolinguistic development of minority and Indigenous peoples, through their translation and interpretation work and with the support of translation policies adapted to the context and bolstered by sanctions and application criteria. To move a step closer to reaching these goals, this conference invites paper proposals that fall under the following general and non-exhaustive headings:

- Translation and interpreting policies, sanctions and application criteria
- (self-)Translation by Indigenous writers and creators
- Bilingual writing
- Particularities and pitfalls of legal and medical translation and interpreting from and into Indigenous languages
- Literary (including oral tradition) translation
- Case studies of “activist” translation or interpreting

We encourage the submission of paper proposals that will promote dialogue on these issues in the aim of deepening our understanding of the challenges that translator and interpreter activism involves. The conference languages are English and French.
Please send your 300-word proposal for a 20-minute paper by 30 September 2019 to the three members of the organizing committee:

Isabelle Collombat (isabelle.collombat@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr)

Fayza El Qasem (fayza.el-qasem@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr)

Denise Merkle (denise.merkle@umonton.ca)

References