



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



THE ALPHABET OF HOPE



W R I T E R S F O R L I T E R A C Y

N. SCOTT MOMADAY



N. Scott Momaday. His work as a novelist, scholar, painter, print-maker and poet, combines modern Anglo-American literary methods with Native American traditions of poetry and story telling. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1969 for his first novel *House Made of Dawn*. He founded the Buffalo Trust, a non-profit foundation, to preserve, protect and reconstitute Native cultural heritage. In 2004 he was appointed UNESCO Artist for Peace.

On the value of literacy

As a poet, I cannot imagine a life without words. Language is the element in which the mind lives, and it is the very basis of human being.

It is that which distinguishes Man from all other creatures. To speak, to read and write, to encounter the power and beauty and magic of words – these are gifts that enrich and ennoble our existence. It seems almost miraculous to me that a child, only two or three years of age, can learn the complexities of language. But children take possession of language naturally, as a birthright. And it should be by birthright also that the child learns to read and write, and is therefore enabled to discover the riches of the world and to share those riches with others. I believe with all my heart that every person in the world is entitled to the gift of literacy. We must provide that gift to the best of our ability, for doing so ensures our humanity and makes possible the realization of a more nearly perfect world.

N. Scott Momaday

