



# THE IHLA NEWSLETTER

Volume 14/ Issue 1

Fall 2016

Trudie Aberdeen (editor)

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's greeting	2
Spotlight on schools	3
The way we were ... about media	7
Spotlight on our communities	8
Speech presented at the Linguapax award	9
The status of heritage languages	14
The Linguapax award	18

## LINGUAPAX INTERNATIONAL VISITS IHLA!

In October IHLA was delighted to receive a very special guest from Barcelona, Spain- Dr. Monica Pereña. She arrived to visit our schools, learn about IHLA, and present us with the 2016 linguapax award. Please see <http://www.linguapax.org/english/what-we-do/linguapax-award> for more information.

## IHLA HAS A NEW OFFICE

You can feel free to come visit us at 12615 Stony Plain Road. Parking is in the rear.

---

*Materials for our annual*

*Mother Language Day are due on January 9, 2017*

---

## DON'T FORGET ABOUT MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Every year IHLA celebrates Mother Language Day in the spirit of UNESCO's plurilingualism. Each year our celebration focuses on a central theme. This year we are excited for children to explain, "How do I share my language and culture with others?" This year we will again be celebrating at The Italian Cultural Centre on February 25, 2017. For first time participants, please be checking your email in early December for important instructions about preparing your performance and your information booth.

## CHECK OUT IHLA'S NEW WEBSITE

We have been working to create a more informative website for IHLA. New features of this website include a community events page, a research page, and an online registration page. Please take a look and don't forget to send in your information so that we can update your school promotion page.

**Also don't forget to look at [www.eric.ca](http://www.eric.ca) for exciting professional development activities!**



Receiving our award from Dr. Pereña



# President's Greeting

Dear Esteemed Member Schools and Friends of IHLA,

Welcome to our first newsletter for our 2016/2017 Academic Year! First and foremost, please take a moment to welcome to IHLA, Ms. Trudie Aberdeen, PhD as our new Coordinator!

We started our Fall Term with a wonderful visit and honour from Dr. Monica Pereña from Linguapax International who thoroughly enjoyed visiting some of our IHLA Schools in October. This was followed by an event to welcome new Heritage Language Schools and also to reconnect and visit with Principals and Administrators as we look forward to IHLA's 40<sup>th</sup> Year!

I look forward to continuing the good work that IHLA does via *new*, engaging and informative workshops for Teachers and Administrators, developing new opportunities for schools, including the IHLA *Mentorship Program* given its success last year, our *Mother Language Day Festivities* including *IHLA's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala* highlighting our Heritage Languages and Cultures celebrating the incredible work done in these years. Along these same lines, this year, we will include *quarterly Principal Meetings* so that there is more communication and exchange of ideas between schools and the IHLA Board.

My hope is that we continue to strengthen our relationships amongst our HL Schools and our government liaisons, recognizing the importance and necessity of supporting Heritage Languages Education in Alberta. As we move forward, I look forward to working with everyone on the IHLA Board and all Member Schools to increase our profile and to encourage more active participation on behalf of all our Heritage Language Schools and Programs.

As a means of keeping abreast of happenings at all our IHLA Schools, I sincerely encourage everyone to send in notices about events/happenings, or projects your schools are doing so that we may include them on our new website ([www.ihla.ca](http://www.ihla.ca)), Facebook and within our quarterly newsletter.

Sincerely,

Antonella Cortese, President



Text by Krystyna Dembowski

Photos by Kathy Milanowski

## Poznajemy Polskę

Henryk Sienkiewicz Saturday Polish School has organized and run an annual summer camp since 2012 at the Polish Scouts camp base named “Kopernik”. This gorgeous plot of land at Garner Lake hosts over 45 children who learn and practice the Polish language. Campers spend 9-10 days in the month of August at the camp being immersed in Polish language and culture.

The camp is titled “Poznajemy Polskę,” meaning “Getting to Know Poland.” Through games, singing, dancing, music, crafts, drawing and enjoying nature, children learn about Polish history, geography, culture, and the traditions of our parents and grandparents. Each year we chose a new topic for the camp program, for example, past topics are “Dancing Through Poland,” “The Geography of Polish Land,” “Legends of Poland’s Large Cities,” “Detectives Through Poland,” and “Back to the Future.” One most memorable feature of the camp is the lunchtime skit titled “TV Kolonia,” where camp counselors play Polish news reporters who travel and explore the most exciting parts of Poland, meeting all kinds of guests along the way. This skit also features weather, fashion, sports and camp reports as well as a live lost-and-found show.

The kitchen staff cook Polish meals and dishes including traditional desserts and snacks, which the campers always gobble down with delight. During their stay at camp, children also practice cleanliness, tolerance, understanding and respecting others. Our Polish Kolonia isn’t just fun; the memories we make together last a lifetime.



Text by Trudie Aberdeen

Photos by Linh Truong

## Trường Lạc Hồng School visits the U of Alberta

Did you know that you don't have to travel all the way to Southern Alberta to learn about dinosaurs and that there is an amazing dinosaur museum and laboratory at our very own University of Alberta? (Learn more at <http://www.museums.ualberta.ca/>)

The teachers at Trường Lạc Hồng School wanted to stay connected with students and staff over the summer holiday and arranged for a visit to the Dino Museum, Dino Lab and geology museum. We had a wonderful visit and learned about rocks and minerals, famous Albertan paleontologists, and dinosaur bone preservation. We had excellent guides who taught us about science and careers in science. We are extremely grateful for Howard Gibbons and Lisa Budney for taking the time to teach our students and make them feel like they belonged to the University of Alberta.

For the younger students we had many hands on opportunities to see and touch real dinosaur bones, to observe scientists reconstruct them, and to learn about the tools that they use. For older students, learning about careers and having the opportunity to visit new places on campus is essential for early career planning. For our school community it was a joyous time to come together, share a picnic lunch, and reconnect.



By Sona Grigoryan



## Summer Fun!

The Armenian School of Edmonton celebrated the end of the school year with a school trip on June 25th, 2016. I organized this trip for educational and fun purposes, for the Armenian students and their parents. We had an Armenian picnic with heritage food. We had a great time playing mini golf, shooting from old pistols, and learning old-fashioned checkers. Our students enjoyed the old carousel and different old-fashioned games.





## Warsztaty metodyczne dla nauczycieli polonijnych w Edmonton/ Lectures for Polish Teachers in Edmonton

Krystyna Dembowski

Director of Henryk Sienkiewicz Polish School

And Vice President of the Association of Polish Teachers of Canada

Z inicjatywy Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego w Kanadzie oraz Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego w Polsce w dniach od 25-28 października br. w Edmonton odbyło się szkolenie metodyczne w celu doskonalenia warsztatu pracy nauczycieli prowadzących nauczanie języka polskiego, historii, geografii, kultury polskiej oraz innych przedmiotów nauczanych w języku polskim za granicą.

Program realizowany był w ramach projektu opracowanego przez Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej w Polsce.

Wykłady i ćwiczenia, które prowadziła dr. Wioleta Próchniak, dotyczyły kwestii związanych z metodyką nauczania języka polskiego jako obcego w sobotnich, polonijnych szkołach Ameryki Południowej.

Dopełnieniem były propozycje gier i zabaw językowych, które mogą być stosowane w nauczaniu języka polskiego na różnych poziomach sprawności językowej.

Należy również podkreślić, że polscy nauczyciele dokładają wszelkich starań, aby nie tylko nauczyć dzieci po polsku, ale również wychować ich w duchu polskim.

Pracując z uczniami poza Polską stają przed szczególnym zadaniem: realizują program nauczania ojczystego języka oraz uczą poznawania i szanowania historii Polski, pielęgnowania polskich tradycji, wychowywania w kulturze polskiej przy współpracy z rodzicami i lokalnym środowiskiem polonijnym. Starają się również wykształcić czynną postawę społeczną ucznia i nauczyć go aktywności, nie tylko w środowisku Polaków ale również Kanadyjczyków.

On the initiative of the Association of Polish Teachers of Canada and the Catholic University of Lublin in Poland, a series of lectures took place between the 25th and 28th of October with the aim of improving teaching skills in language, history, geography, culture as well as other subjects taught in Polish. This program was held as part of a project envisioned by the Ministry of Education of Poland.

The lectures and exercises were offered by Dr. Violeta Prochniak and addressed Polish as a second language methodology in North American Saturday schools. Additionally, games and physical exercises which can be adapted to teach Polish to students of different levels were presented.

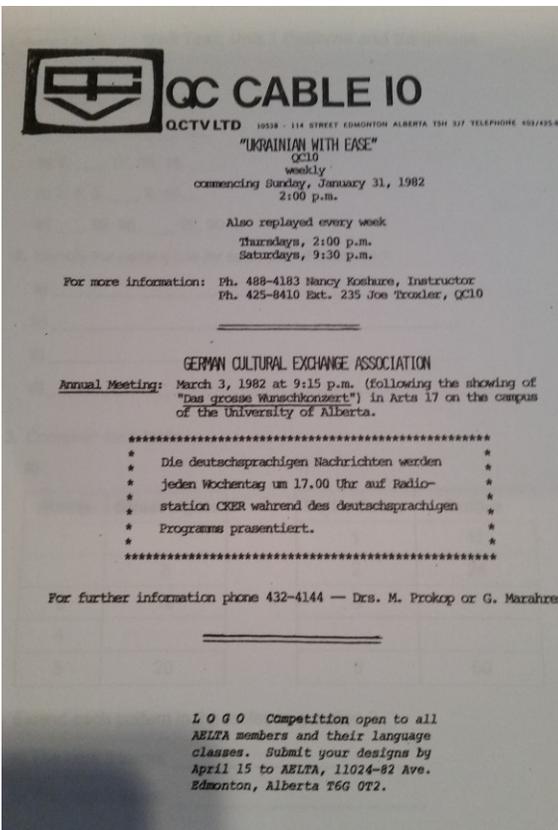
An important theme worth noting is that Polish teachers recognize the importance of not only teaching their students the Polish language, but also realizing that teachers must support parents and communities in raising them in the Polish spirit. Working with students outside of Poland presents specific and different issues from those raised in Poland in areas such as teaching mother language, respect for Polish history, and the upholding of Polish traditions. Teachers must recognize their role in helping parents disseminate Polish values and culture to children in conjunction with parents and the local Polish community. Teachers also strive to teach their students to be excellent citizens who are active in their communities both Polish and Canadian.



Teachers learning about teaching Polish as a heritage language

*The way we were ... about the media*

*by Trudie Aberdeen*



Although it seems unfathomable, there existed a time before YouTube, the internet, and even satellite TV. While today we are spoiled for choice through modern technology, heritage language teachers of years past often struggled to obtain authentic language samples for their students. The cost of obtaining materials was expensive and schools often struggled to find the funds to pay for them. Teachers often had to travel overseas to purchase records and books.

Some of IHLA's (then AELTA) first advocacy work was to petition for radio and television programming in languages other than English. When local communities had television programs available, it was celebrated. The advertisement that you see is to promote two programs, one in Ukrainian and one in German. You'll see that if you need more information you can contact Dr. Prokop or Dr. Marahrens, elders from the German and the Hindi community respectfully.

If today your family enjoys satellite tv stations or Hockey Night in Canada broadcast in Punjabi, you might want to thank an AELTA member for petitioning to make multilingual programming a reality in Canada.

# Spotlight on our communities

Please join the "January 27th Latino Heritage Cultural Extravaganza": Come out with your family and celebrate Community, Culture, History, and Roots with the Latino Community, where we work in partnership with the various not-for-profits, organizations, for-profits, groups, and individuals that keep our culture alive and that also contribute to the Diversity and Vibrancy of Edmonton.

This our 2nd Year and our 8th Gathering in City Hall. This is a FREE FAMILY EVENT open to the public, come share in our culture but also let's learn from each other, a XCultural experience, that is all about education and building community. Refreshments [food and drinks] are provided.

**SPONSORS:** We are always looking for sponsors, so if you are interested or if you know someone or an organization that loves to sponsor community initiatives please let us know.

**VOLUNTEERS:** This event can't work smoothly without the great help of the small group of volunteers. We are looking for High School students, University Students who want to put this on their resume; Kids who want to give back to the community. [Spanish is not a requirement but would be good to work with our elders]. If you are interested, please let us know.

**PARTNERS:** If you are interested in Partnering [Participating as a performer/need a table to share information/educate] please email us by replying to this Invitation. We have access to 20 tables, it is first come first serve if you need a table and if you'd like to perform, all performing groups/individuals get 30 minutes.

Bless you all and we really look forward to seeing you on January 27th!!!



HỘI NGƯỜI VIỆT EDMONTON HÂN HẠNH GIỚI THIỆU  
EDMONTON VIETS ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

**CHÚC MỪNG**  
Năm Mới  
*Happy New Year*

**Vietnamese Tết New Year Festival 2017**  
**Hội Chợ Tết Đình Dậu**

Location/Tại: The Enjoy Centre (101 Riel Dr, St Albert, AB T8N 3X4)  
Date/Ngày: Saturday, January 21, 2017  
Doors Open/Mở Cửa: 11:30am  
Program Start/Chương Trình Bắt Đầu: 1:00pm

- Văn Nghệ Múa Hát Của Các Hội Đoàn
- Các Trò Chơi Truyền Thống
- Múa Lân
- Trình Diễn Áo Dài
- Chụp Hình Kỷ Niệm Miễn Phí
- Bong Bóng Nghệ Thuật

- Cultural Performances
- Cultural Activities
- Lion Dance
- Vietnamese Dress Fashion Show
- Photobooth
- Balloon Artist

**VÀO CỬA MIỄN PHÍ**  
**FREE ADMISSION & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Liên Lạc / Contact Us: 780-424-8934 | 10534 - 109 Street Edmonton, AB



صبح صادق ندمد ناستب یلدا نرود  
مدرسه ایرانیان ادمونتون به همراه شما  
شب یلدا را جشن می گیرید

**16 DECEMBER 2016**  
**Address: Balwin Community**  
**12904-74 Street**

**نتب یلدا**

اجرای رقص توسط خانم فرحناز پذیرایی: شام رقص و ترنم موسیقی ایرانی به همراه دی جی با آهنگهای شاد  
بلیط: برای هر نفر \$ 25  
برای خرید بلیط و کسب اطلاعات بیشتر با شماره تلفنهای زیر تماس بگیرید.  
**780-270-2183**  
**780-802-9473**

محل فروش بلیط:  
مدرسه ایرانیان ادمونتون  
فروشگاه پارس  
فروشگاه شاهین

Edmonton Iranian school  
Edmonton Iranian school

## A CELEBRATION OF IHLA'S PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

### SPEECH PRESENTED AT THE LINGUAPAX AWARDS

BY DR. TRUDIE ABERDEEN

It may be surprising to many that Alberta's first public school opened in 1885, a mere 131 years ago. Perhaps what would be even most surprising is that Alberta's first public school teacher taught children in French. So it can be truthfully said that Alberta has been a pioneer in language education! At the very least we can claim that we've been actively involved in language education since pioneer times. However, there have been great changes between pioneer education of yesterday and what has led us to the educational system that we have today. My goal for this evening's talk is to share a little bit about the history of language education in general, but the services of IHLA in particular.

Prior to becoming the "Multicultural Canada" that we are today, many groups worked diligently to preserve their heritage and their communities. They often gathered to form small "schools" in church basements or private homes to offer children language and cultural education.

Although we are skipping ahead many years, by the 1960's "ethnic" groups found that they were struggling to help children maintain their culture and language as was evidenced in the quote by Dr. Dawson. Parents who wanted language and cultural education for their children often found it. Heritage language schools were often affiliated with religious groups or community centres. Somehow communities would find a teacher and a textbook and offer some form of instruction for their children. With each school operating independently and without opportunity to receive support or share struggles, one can only how imagine how this very important work was isolating for the teachers.

*"Beyond considerations of 'marginal ethnicity' and the lack of 'authenticity' in the ethnic school culture, the substantive issue of language retention emerges. In their follow up study to the RCBB O'Bryan, Reitz, and Kuplowska (1966, p. 170) report the loss of fluency in the mother tongue to be judged the most serious problem facing Canadian ethnic groups."*

The late 60s and early 70s marked a transformation in the Canadian context. A transformation was occurring in Quebec that would later be called the "Quiet Revolution". The French were growing in awareness that the power structures governing the province were English and that French-Canadians felt as though they were treated as second class citizens within their own province. The bilingual and bicultural commission petitioned to create a bilingual and bicultural country. Perhaps they may have succeeded, too, if not for the will of those in the west. Strong, politically-minded "ethnic" Albertans demanded to be recognized for our contributions to this country—contributions in clearing the land, contributions in growing the food that all Canadians eat, contributions in building the of the railway and trans-Canadian highway. In true Canadian spirit, a compromise was made and we officially became a "bilingual country in a multicultural framework" in 1971.

With the official adoption of bilingual and multicultural status came not only recognition, but funding for previously unimaginable projects. The Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism, also called the CCCM, offered one of their projects in Alberta. They decided to put forth a professional development workshop for the church-basement, “ethnic” teachers. When they did this something miraculous happened. When those in different schools began to talk with each other, they learned that although the languages they spoke were different, their challenges were similar: How do you keep students motivated and attending classes? How do you make classes fun, relevant, and appropriate? Where can you access support in organizing schools and staffing them with excellent teachers? Where can you find appropriate materials? As they talked with one another, they discovered that they were not alone after all. And the Alberta Ethnic Language Teachers’ Association was born!

AELTA began as a small volunteer organization that operated throughout the province that gave voice to many. The CCCM was an active contributor to monthly meetings and workshops. Local universities also contributed their knowledge to community schools. Conferences were organized and academic papers were written. The slide behind me shows a selection of some of the excellent work that was completed during this time.

Communities benefitted from the strong leadership opportunities that were given. Some of the names that shaped our names organization and our communities included Dr. Olenka Bilash, Dr. Josephine Pallard, Dr. Anne Anderson, Dr. Roman Petryshyn, Dr. Bruce Bain, Dr. I. G. Ngo, Dr. Wally Lazuruk, Mrs. Fiona Pelech. Mr. Sabatino Roncucci. Bonnie Sulcz, Father Caleta,

The organization always had teachers’ goals and aspirations at the heart of their work. AELTA crusaded for teachers, offering workshops and talks, petitioning for funding, advocating for more languages to be taught in K-12 schools, and to make university entrance and exit requirements. During this time period schools received federal and provincial funds for each student. Edmonton Catholic offered free classroom use for schools.

AELTA also knew that schools were not only about teachers, but ultimately were about students. The organization focused on building, creating, and developing incentives for students. These included sports days that mirrored Edmonton’s Universiade, the Annual Alberta Culture and Linguistic Awards, debate nights, a senior high school conference and opportunities for sharing cultural performances. Schools, once operating in isolation, brought students together for shared multicultural events so that they could learn together and from one another.

Although 1986 doesn’t seem that far away, it is important to remember the technological changes that have happen during this time: e-mail, skype, cheap flights are but a few. Members of AELTA had to communicate through post, long-distance telephone calls, and driving. This all proved too much and the organization decided to split into two distinct groups: The Northern Alberta Heritage Languages Association (NAHLA) and the Southern Alberta Heritage Languages Association (SAHLA). Although the two organizations split symbolically, they were dedicated to remaining united.

NAHLA existed from 1986 to 2003. During this period a great deal of changes took place. Some of these changes unfortunately meant losses for schools. Both federal and provincial closing were cut without warning, forcing many schools to either merge or shut down. Edmonton Catholic changed its policy and now heritage language schools operating in Edmonton would have to pay rent. However, no matter what the struggles that were being faced by schools, NAHLA continued to work along the sidelines and support in whatever way it could. Under new legislation, schools could apply to obtain a “casino license” so that they could fund themselves in this manner. NAHLA worked to help schools secure this type of funding. NAHLA developed a program that would be offered at the then “Grant McEwan College” so that teachers could take part in a heritage language teaching program. While the program and its participants hoped this would ultimately lead heritage language teachers to an Albertan teaching license, this never materialized. The government ceased funding of the program shortly after it had begun and with many immigrant teachers struggling to make ends meet, they could not afford the financial commitment to a cost-recovery program that did not lead them to a credential. Dr. Bilash then encouraged teachers to take a degree at the University of Alberta which she personally taught so that language requirements could be softened.

Despite setbacks, NAHLA never stopped advocating for teachers. The turn of the century brought new and exciting changes for the Organization. A changing focus towards a more global outlook brought with it a name change for the organization. The once NAHLA proudly became the International and Heritage Languages Association, or IHLA as we affectionately call it today.

At this time, the Western Canadian provinces began uniting to create a shared curriculum called the Western Canadian Protocol. This document allowed for the development of curriculum documents so that other languages could be brought into the school system. IHLA worked with schools to make these documents and courses a reality. We worked with sister organizations to share our knowledge.

IHLA was aware that schools could not offer credit courses if they did not have teachers with Alberta teaching certificates, so they ran programs to ensure that internationally-trained teachers could obtain their credential. IHLA knew the struggles that teachers would face, so they offered scholarships. They supported teachers with ESL classes so that they could pass the university’s requirements. They went along to meetings and advocated for internationally-trained teachers to be treated equitably within the university system and with getting their overseas credentials recognized.

IHLA continued with its tradition of supporting research and attending conferences locally, interprovincially, and internationally. In addition to the scholarships for university education and the English lessons so that they would be able to enter, IHLA offered additional courses and workshops. They published the IHLA Newsletter so that heritage language teachers would have increased access to the latest developments in heritage language teaching.

IHLA's work focused not only on its teachers, but students remained in their central to their hearts. Thirteen years ago IHLA began celebrating UNESCO's mother language day. Not only did the organization offer students an opportunity to share their culture through their language displays and performances, but they also began publishing the annual Mother Language Day books. As our honoured Valeria Palladino once described them: "They were never intended to be international best sellers, but they did give children (and their grandparents) a reason to be proud!"

So what is our IHLA of today? As we mature to the beautiful age of 40, we look back with great pride of our accomplishments in supporting teachers and students. I cannot speak for all schools, but I can share what my Vietnamese Heritage Language school has received.

I can say that I am truly grateful for the services that IHLA has provided for Truong Lac Hong School. Over this past year, our teachers received excellent learning and professional development opportunities. Our students received a \$1,200 cache of new and exciting bilingual books. Our students also had the opportunity to perform at MLD and become published authors through the MLD books. Our board received support and guidance while establishing our school legally. Our principal got advice about establishing a high school credit program. And our auditor received a cheque for the school which allowed us to purchase our school's insurance. None of this could have happened without the benevolent support and leadership of our community heritage language elders such as IHLA's current president Dr. Antonella Cortese and our two past presidents Mrs. Olga Prokhorova and Dr. Josephine Pallard.

So what can we expect from the future? It is difficult to predict where IHLA will most likely need to lend a hand, but there are some societal changes which we have to be prepared for if we are to offer any support. Our communities are changing and Canada is continuing to blossom into a truly beautiful, ethnocultural garden. European communities are not entering in the numbers that they once were and this change means that their schools are often shifting focus from teaching fluent language speakers to teaching languages to children as second language speakers. IHLA needs to continue to support heritage language schools so that the infrastructure remains in place to maintain university courses.

The influx of refugees, notably from Africa and Asia where they speak languages with oral histories, require instructional methods which may be different from communities with more-traditional literacy-based approaches to language instruction. Canada will need to acknowledge the special privilege it has to help these communities retain and save these languages which are risk of being lost forever. One example of this Fabian, a community leader whom I interviewed for my doctoral work, belongs to a community who speak a language which have approximately 5 literate speakers in the city in which he lives. Imagine the potential we have to help this language survive and be documented!

IHLA needs to continue its excellent work in not only supporting each heritage language school become the best that it can be, but to act as an agent that brings schools, teachers, and students together so that we can learn about ourselves, and learn from each other. We need to continue to focus on global citizenship. Not only so that we can continue to seek business opportunities, but so that we can raise our children to follow in Canada's excellent reputation of creators of peace.

I would like to conclude with a heartfelt thank you to Dr. Perena who has presented us with this wonderful award, to the executive of IHLA who invited me tonight, and especially to IHLA's elders who are not with us physically, but are watching us from above. We would like you to know that the seeds of love of language that you planted many, many years ago are continuing to bloom. We promise to take the awesome responsibility of this multicultural garden. Thank you.

## References

Bain, B. (1975). Commentary: A Canadian education: Thoughts on bilingual education. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 10(3), 57-61. Retrieved from: Assn #2000.516.67 (file 4 of 4).

Bain, B. (1981). English as a second language needs assessment. Edmonton, AB: Edmonton Public Schools. Retrieved from Assn#2000.516.54 (file 4 of 4).

Dawson, D. (1984). Ethnic mother tongues as languages of instruction in the Canadian classroom. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 21(1-6), 229-234. Retrieved from: Assn #2000.516.67 (4 of 4)

Kolmes, J. (1976, Jan 31). Alberta teachers working on comprehensive Canadian studies. *ATA News*. Retrieved from: Assn #2000.516.55 (file 1 of 3).

McCurdy, S. (1981, May). Report on the task force on second languages for the Senate meeting of the University of Alberta. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta. Assn#2000.516.54 (file 4 of 4).

Pelech, F. (1980). Heritage language programs in Alberta. Retrieved from: Assn # 2000.516. (File 4 of 4).

Pelech, F. (1983). *Status of Heritage Languages in Canada*. Edmonton, AB: The Central and East European Studies Society, The Central and East European Studies Association of Canada, and the Department of Slavic and East European Studies, University of Alberta. Retrieved from: Assn #2000.516.55 (File 2 of 3).



The Common Curriculum Framework

International Languages

Kindergarten to Grade 12



## The status of Heritage languages 1

Dr. Olenka Bilash, University of Alberta [obilash@ualberta.ca](mailto:obilash@ualberta.ca)

Given that Edmonton is the home of Canada's youngest population, that about 20 percent of Canadians are born abroad, and that baby boomers are retiring it is likely that many Edmontonians are not aware of important historical events that lead to heritage language status in Canada. In the next few IHLA newsletters I intend to revisit some of these significant events to help readers either recall or learn about them.

First it is important to note that heritage language (HL) learning has existed formally and informally around the world since the migration of peoples began. First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) and settler groups that came to this land even before it became known as Canada in 1867 gathered to pass on their traditions and values through their language in their homes and the community institutions they built. To expand on what French and British colonizers developed, the Canadian government solicited immigrants from various parts of the world: the Chinese helped to build the cross-Canada railway system; the Austro-Hungarians (Europeans and Eastern Europeans) and Scandinavians cleared the land and brought their farming and forestry expertise; Europeans and Japanese helped to evolve fishing and pulp and paper industries; the southern Europeans brought construction skills and small business savvy; more recent immigrant groups had to meet more stringent entry requirements including meeting both proficiency in one of Canada's official languages and a financial capital quota, thus being expected to expand the business sector of the country's economy. And over the last 70 years Canada has accepted refugees from natural disasters and war-torn areas from all over the world to join the Canadian spirit of social justice and multiculturalism. All brought their foods, dances, songs, and *joie de vivre* giving Edmonton first rate bakeries, restaurants and cultural festivals. All groups recognize the high quality educational and employment opportunities that Canada provides and through work and school learned to integrate and respect one another. Thus today we see first-, second-, third- and more generational settlers and FNMI in all professions and walks of life.

Second, before looking at key events from the 1960s and 1970s, we must acknowledge the enormous volunteer efforts of the leaders and teachers of these minority HL and culture communities. They have admirably stepped forward and filled the gap created when a group loses all that it takes for granted in a majority language and culture environment. In such a milieu parents and grandparents do not have to worry about their children's acquisition of language or cultural practices because they are transmitted through all residents in the surroundings of street names, statues to historical heroes, names of public buildings, friendly conversations and the beat of daily and seasonal life. However, in Canada there are fewer domains and spaces for HL use and it competes with the English influence of hundreds of television stations, the music of pop culture, the propensity for internet use, increased consumerism, and peer pressure.

With these acknowledgements in mind, let us now revisit five important events in Canadian history and recognize their impact on HL.

### **Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism**

In 1963 the government of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (also known as the Bi and Bi Commission and the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission) to "inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution". (<http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pco-bcp/commissions-ef/dunton1967-1970-ef/dunton1967-70-vol1-eng/dunton1967-70-vol-part2-eng.pdf>) This commission consisted of 11 members, including Professor Yaroslav Rudnitskyj from Edmonton who was sufficiently disillusioned with the final report of the Bi and Bi that he generated an alternative report.

Rudnitskyj contended that Canada should embrace a regional bilingualism to acknowledge the many ethnic communities that already nurtured bilingualism in their homes. This would support French English bilingualism in Quebec and other language combinations in English speaking parts of Canada. However, fearing a demoted status and a threat to their French language and culture, the Québécois opposed this suggestion and the idea did not move forward. To learn more please visit these links:

[http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac\\_reel\\_c4884/12?r=0&s=1](http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c4884/12?r=0&s=1) and  
<http://www.lopparl.gc.ca/content/lopp/researchpublications/2009-20-e.pdf>

### **Multiculturalism**

Although the francophones opposed Rudnitskyj's proposal, the idea did not completely die. In line with the recommendations of the Bi and Bi Commission, leaders from many ethnic communities advocated strongly for the implementation of legislation and policies that recognized Canada as a multicultural country and society and in 1971 the Canadian government announced the policy of multiculturalism.



Senator Paul Yuzyk and his wife, Mary, speaking with Prime Minister P.E. Trudeau, after he announced the policy of multiculturalism at the Ukrainian Canadian Congress in Winnipeg, October 9, 1971

## **Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism**

In the stir of the announcement, the Canadian government created the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism. (CCCM) This body had regional representation from across the country and beginning in 1973 met several times a year in different cities to advise on how to implement the policy. (I was privileged to attend one of these meetings in Ottawa as a youth delegate. A dozen of us were given working group tasks to discuss over the weekend and in addition to learning about one another's cultural groups and regional compositions, we presented the results of our discussion to all members of the CCCM.) The group strongly advocated for bilingual programs, akin to the 1967 experiment with French immersion for anglophone children in Québec.

## **The School Act and Bilingual Education**

With the Commission's instruction to take into account contributions made to Canada by the other ethnic groups to the nation's cultural enrichment and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution, the framework of multiculturalism allowed ethnic groups to claim that governments have an obligation to support minority languages and cultures in public institutions. Thus, Alberta's world envied bilingual programs were born, the first being the Ukrainian English bilingual program.

Before the Ukrainian Bilingual program was accepted as a three-year pilot project the provincial government had to revise the School Act to permit education to take place in a language other than English. School boards also had to designate sites for such programs and schools were selected based on parents signing forms of commitment to sending their children to these programs. Since school trustees also felt a responsibility to safeguard learners' reading and mathematical skill development in a program with reduced use of English in the school day the pilot project had annual tests built into its review. With success among students registered in grades 1-3 trustees then approved continuation of this program as a pilot project into grades 4-6 and when studies revealed that children from these bilingual programs were even outperforming their unilingual peers, the program was fully integrated into the school system and spread both to other languages - German, Chinese and Polish, and eventually Spanish, Arabic and Cree – and provinces (Saskatchewan and Manitoba)

The desire for bilingual education was strong; however, some ethnic groups did not have the population base in one geographic area to sustain a Monday to Friday program in one local school. Thus, some parents chose to send their children to the new immersion or bilingual programs during the week and the HL community school programs on the weekend, helping their children develop trilingualism. Furthermore, since bilingual programs were also required to cover Alberta's curriculum in all subject areas, they did not have the space to include some of the content typically prescribed in HL programs, namely the history, geography and literature of countries where the HL is spoken. This further secured ethnic communities' interests in their HL schools.

**AELTA** Following the federal declaration of multiculturalism in 1971, Alberta was one of the first provinces to embrace a provincial policy on multiculturalism and created a Cultural Heritage Branch within its Ministry of Culture to oversee it. This Branch, lead by Beth Bryant, offered expert facilitators to help communities understand how to use the new resources allocated by the government. They included Caterina Greco (LLB.), well known for her development of language teaching resources; Hai Minh Nguyen (PhD), the commissioner for the planning of the Vietnamese-Canadian federation in Ottawa; and Roman Petryshyn (PhD), a sociologist with expertise in building relationships between universities and ethnic groups and a researcher at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. All three were also members of the CCCM.

At the encouragement of the CCCM, this Branch was quick to recognize the need to bring ethnic groups together to discuss their commonalities. One such meeting in 1977 focused on heritage languages and instructors from across the province. They listened to university experts and language consultants from large school jurisdictions discuss contemporary approaches to language learning and through discussion discovered that they shared many common concerns, such as the need for teacher training, student motivation, HL program promotion, and teaching and learning resource development and adaptation. Through workshops on community development, they also discovered how much more they had to gain through partnership and collaboration.

In 1978 some of the attendees met again and the Alberta Ethnic Language Teachers Association (AELTA) was formed and incorporated. It would eventually become what we now know as IHLA. AELTA's first executive consisted of the following:

Fiona Pelech (President)

Dr. I-Ngo Chen (Vice-president)

Ann Tchoryk (Secretary)

Paul Kanto (Treasurer).

The unpaid executive continued to work closely with the expertise at the Cultural Heritage Branch (and CCCM) to develop an inclusive and professional collaborative community organization. In these pre-cellphone and internet years, members from northern Alberta travelled to the south for meetings and vice versa. Members benefited not only from contact with other HL teachers and ethno-cultural groups involved in similar efforts, but they also received practical help and encouragement from several levels of government, administrators and specialists. For this and to support AELTA activities and qualify for provincial and federal funding, HL schools were charged a membership fee of \$5 per year.

While HL schools continued to operate independently within their communities, AELTA acted as a voice for all HL programs and was able to leverage its numbers, organizational structure and legal constitution to bring awareness to politicians and the public about the needs, value and role of HL in forming the fabric of Canada's multicultural society. In this way we can say that the 1970s marked the first change in HL status in Alberta.

The unpaid executive continued to work closely with the expertise at the Cultural Heritage Branch (and CCCM) to develop an inclusive and professional collaborative community organization. In these pre-cellphone and internet years, members from northern Alberta travelled to the south for meetings and vice versa. Members benefited not only from contact with other HL teachers and ethno-cultural groups involved in similar efforts, but they also received practical help and encouragement from several levels of government, administrators and specialists. For this and to support AELTA activities and qualify for provincial and federal funding, HL schools were charged a membership fee of \$5 per year.

While HL schools continued to operate independently within their communities, AELTA acted as a voice for all HL programs and was able to leverage its numbers, organizational structure and legal constitution to bring awareness to politicians and the public about the needs, value and role of HL in forming the fabric of Canada's multicultural society. In this way we can say that the 1970s marked the first change in HL status in Alberta.

#### The Linguapax Award by Dr. Olenka Bilash

In October 2016 IHLA hosted a visit by LINGUAPAX President Dr. Monica Perena. Dr. Perena arrived from Barcelona late on October 14, but was up early on Saturday, October 15 to visit Edmonton's Portuguese HL School, Ukrainian HL School and Russian HL School. In the afternoon she attended the National meeting of the Greek Hellenic Society and attended their banquet of delicious food and cultural presentations. On Sunday, accompanied again by IHLA President Dr. Antonella Cortese and Dr. Olenka Bilash from the University of Alberta, we visited the Punjabi School as well as the Vietnamese School. All schools showed their warm cultural hospitality and left Dr. Perena with a most positive impression of IHLA and Edmonton.

Later in the week Monica offered a lecture on assessment sponsored by the collaborative efforts of Edmonton Catholic Schools and the Ukrainian Language Education Centre (ULEC) at the University of Alberta and another on the Catalan immersion schools designed for more than seven million people in Spain, sponsored by the University of Alberta's Modern Language and Cultural Studies and ULEC. These events were well attended and helped to bring attention to IHLA's work as well.

The highlight of her visit took place on October 20 when Dr. Perena presented IHLA with the 2016 International LINGUAPAX award. The event was carefully orchestrated by IHLA executive to welcome city and provincial officials, representatives of Edmonton's ethnic communities and HL schools and also included a presentation about the history of IHLA by Dr. Trudie Aberdeen. Congratulations to this committee for creating a memorable program of exquisite food and decor, energetic and graceful dance performances and professional and informative presentations.

---

## TAKE NOTE:

If you have not done so, please submit information about your school so it can be updated on the new IHLA website

Remember the deadline for submissions to our annual Mother Language Day book is Monday January 19, 2017.

Please feel free to share the IHLA Newsletter with those who might be interested.

Please like us on Facebook.