



# The IHLA Newsletter



## Included in this issue:

IHLA recognizes Gene Zwozdesky	2
IHLA Events in the 2018-2019 School Year	7
Upcoming IHLA Events	9
The Mentorship Program	9
At IHLA Member Schools	10
IHLA, Promoter of biliteracy!	13
The way we were... about the LAW!	15
Being a member in good standing	16

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# IHLA recognizes Gene Zwozdesky

By Olenka Bilash

It is with great honour and also a heavy heart that I begin this tribute to Gene Zwozdesky, a man of talent, community service and a great friend of the International and Heritage Languages Association (IHLA). A graduate of Victoria Composite High School, holder of two degrees from the University of Alberta, a former teacher with the Edmonton Public School Board, a member of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, and an advocate for local and community events, Gene brought life, energy and enthusiasm to all situations. He was charismatic, and his zest for life infectious. Whether he was playing his mandolin or singing a self composed tune to mark a special occasion, making a toast or giving a speech, congratulating others for their accomplishments or helping them make their worthy cause a reality, or just refereeing a hockey game, Gene lived life to the fullest. With his humble, caring and generous nature, Gene inspired the best in all of us.

Born in Nipawin, Saskatchewan on July 24, 1948, Gene was the second of four children. When he was still a preschooler the family made their way to Grand Centre, Alberta and eventually to Sangudo where they purchased a community store. From an early age, Gene displayed an interest in sports, especially hockey, and music. He travelled by bus to Edmonton for weekly accordion lessons and taught himself how to play the guitar. At the age of 12 his stardom began with the recording of “21 Songs for Ukrainian Children”. Since then he has recorded 12 albums of Ukrainian folk dance music and six bilingual children’s song books.

Family was always at the center of Gene’s life and he strongly supported community organizations that nurtured children and youth involvement in their ethnic and local community activities. Gene was proud of his Ukrainian identity

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and with Christine, his wife of 43 years and their children and now grandchildren, was fully immersed in Ukrainian community life. Being Ukrainian meant living the culture through language, religion and music. It also meant deeply respecting others for their language, cultural traditions and beliefs. Hence he was a strong believer in all that IHLA (and its predecessors -the Alberta Ethnic Languages Teachers Association (AELTA) and the Northern Alberta Heritage Languages Association (NAHLA)) stands for, and a proud attendee at many monumental IHLA events. As Executive Director of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Foundation and project director for the Alberta People Kit, he was a champion of multiculturalism and encouraged many ethnic community development projects. He also strongly supported the granting of high school credits to students in heritage language schools for their study of language, thus legitimizing the work of many community language and culture groups.



Gene's musical accolades are numerous and reached fans of many genres. They include: conducting the National Symphony Orchestra in Ottawa, conducting two Command performances for Queen Elizabeth II and a gala performance for President Reagan, as well as performing as a guest conductor with the Edmonton Symphony and Calgary Philharmonic Orchestras; in 1989, he won the AMPIA

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Award for best music score in a film; he was the Music Director for the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers for 25 years, served for 10 years as Music Director for Cheremosh and Rusalka (Winnipeg), and 5 years for Tryzub out of Calgary; Gene composed a wide variety of folk, bluegrass and country tunes, including “That Old Sheepskin Coat” to lyrics written by his mother, Anna, an instrumental melody that has been recorded by the Emeralds and more recently, a number of original gospel/bluegrass compositions recorded by Greg Blake. In appreciation of his musical contributions, Gene was inducted into CFCW’s Ukrainian Music Hall of Fame.

Among his many volunteer commitments, he served as a Director on the Edmonton Folk Arts Council, the local Canada Day Committee, the Heritage Festival, the Alberta Recording Industry Association, the Youth Emergency Shelter Society, the Edmonton Food Bank, the Alberta Friends of Golf, the World University Games, the Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society, and the Blueberry Bluegrass Festival as well as for a variety of Ukrainian organizations: the Alberta Ukrainian Self-Reliance League, the Order of St. Andrew, St. John’s Fraternal Society, the Ukrainian Male Chorus of Edmonton and the Ukrainian Foundation for College Education. One of his proudest volunteer experiences was acting as the Executive Producer of “SVIATO 25” – the largest celebration of Ukrainian arts, culture, heritage and spirituality in Alberta history, commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ukraine’s Declaration of Independence in August 2016.

As an acknowledgement of his many talents and effort to encourage and support worthwhile endeavours locally, provincially, nationally and internationally, Gene was duly awarded an array of honours over the years, including:

Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal 2012

Taras Shevchenko Medal 2009

Ami de la francophonie lors de Rond Point

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Alberta Association of Rehab centres Trail Breaker Award

Alberta Council for Ukrainian Arts Award

Alberta Motion Picture Industry Film Composer Award

Alberta Recording Industries Association (ARIA) Award of Distinction

Funken Prinzen гарде Honorary Knight Award

CFCW Canadian Ukrainian Hall of Fame

City of Edmonton Ambassador Award for Business and Tourism

Congress Of Black Women of Canada Merit Award

Edmonton Folk Arts Council Heritage Development Award

Edmonton Music Association Honorary Life Member Award

Friends Of focus Award (for work with disability groups)

Friends Of Inner City Edmonton Appreciation Award

Government of Canada Merit Award for Multiculturalism

Lebanese Cultural Association (Lac La Biche) Honorary Member Award

Pakistan Canada Association Award

Province Of Alberta Achievement Award for Culture

Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal

Royal Canadian Legion Community Service Award

Royal Canadian Norwood Legion Honorary Life Member Award

Sikh Federation of Edmonton Outstanding Community Services Award

Twin Parks Community League Honorary Life Member Award

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Ukrainian Canadian Social Services Certificate of recognition

Ukrainian Shumka Dancers Lifetime Member Award

Vohon Ukrainian Dance Ensemble Recognition Award

2005 Alberta Centennial Medal

Gene was first elected as the MLA for Edmonton Avonmore in 1993, and was subsequently elected 5 more times as the MLA for Edmonton Mill Creek. During his 22 years in office, he was appointed Minister of Community Development, Minister of Education, Minister of Aboriginal Relations, Minister of Health and Associate Minister of Capital Planning and of Health and Wellness.

His political highlights include researching, writing and presenting the “Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act” – a bill that passed all three Readings in one day and became only the second Bill in Alberta’s history to do so. In recognition of this historical Act, Gene received the Order of Ukraine Medal from the President of Ukraine and the Shevchenko Medal from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. Gene’s political career was capped off by becoming Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 2012 until 2015, a position through which he generously mentored many newly elected MLAs.

Thank you Gene for always being there – in the front lines and behind the scenes - to support IHLA. You will be missed.

Вічна йому пам’ять



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# IHLA Events in the 2018-2019 School Year

## October

### **Festivals, Festivities, Celebrations and More with Tracy Stener and Christie Nobel**

During this PD, IHLA teachers learned about how they can create special holiday music for their heritage language schools. We had songs about different kinds of festivals from around the world.



### **Strategic Planning PD with Rick Anderson**

During this celebration we had a great time learning about our schools. Some of the topics we covered were setting up a strategic plan for long-term succession, creating a mission statement, and ensuring long-term survival of our schools.



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**November**  
**Project-based Learning**  
**Amelie Gladu and Kara Weis**



These two great presenters laid the groundwork for some exciting projects in heritage language schools. We are so excited that they are coming back to share with us some more.

**School Leadership**  
**Milena Santoro**

In this workshop we learned all kinds of information to help keep our heritage schools running smoothly. We examined our leadership styles and how that contributed to running an effective school.



**January**  
**Teaching Canadian Style**  
**Maria Lekkos-Carrozza**

Maria took us on a journey to describe the differences between heritage learners, second language learners, and first language learners. We explored classrooms from around the globe, and we examined some teaching tips and tricks that are used in mainstream second classes that might make our heritage schools more fun. A special thank-you also goes out to the Hindi Parishad for hosting us and providing us with a lovely dinner.



**Snapshot Storytelling**  
**Judy Sillito and Karen Matthews**

Snapshot storytelling is one way to improve heritage language students' oral language skills. In this workshop, IHLA teachers learned how to transform a personal story into a digital story with the aid of a picture. It was an exciting and informative workshop.

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# Upcoming IHLA Events

*For Heritage Language **Teachers**- Monday March 11, 2019*

**Project-based learning (PBL) for Teachers- Part Two**

**Hosted by Kara Weis & Amélie Gladu**

**8720 144 AVE, Edmonton, AB T5E 3G7**

## The Mentorship Program

For the past three years IHLA schools have been encouraged to apply for the mentorship program. Two IHLA member schools are matched so that they can learn from one another. Schools meet at each other's schools to observe both similarities and differences. Depending on the needs of the teachers or administration in the schools involved, they then meet to discuss how they can improve their schools. This project leads not only to school improvement, but also to a financial reward. Participating schools receive money. This program is funded through our grant with Alberta Education.

This year's recipients of the mentorship program are

**Polska Szkola im. Henryka Sienkiewicza**  
and  
**Ukrainian Classes for Adults at ST. Andrews**

**Ramgarhia Khalsa School**  
and  
**the Hindi Parishad**

Congratulations to our schools! We are anxiously waiting to see what you have learned!

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# At IHLA Member Schools

## Maruni at Gurukul Nepal School of Edmonton

By Govinda Dhungana

*Maruni* is a popular folk dance of the eastern hills in Nepal. It is performed during various Nepali festivals though it was originally performed only during the *Tihar* festival. Previously, males dressed as females used to be the dancers, however, nowadays young girls also perform the dance. Based on the *shringaar rasa*, beauty expression, nine instruments, *naumati baja*, provide the music in which the beats of the *madal*, a two-headed drum, and the tune of the flute predominate. In the western hills of Nepal, *maruni* dance is performed in July-August and ends in December-January.



## Remembrance Day at Nebula Academy

By Dilek Derince

Nebula Academy students were commemorating the brave soldiers that have served our country. Thank you to the Member of Parliament Kerry Diotte, Ishak Yorganci and Mirzanur Rahman for coming to our school and speaking on behalf the Canadian Military and government agencies. Our staff and students appreciate your time and welcome back next year.



## Diwali Celebration at Hindi Vidyaalaya (School)

By Krishna Gupta, M. Sc., M. Tech.

Alberta Hindi Parishad (Association) was founded in 1985. Association started Hindi Vidyaalaya (school) in 1986 to offer formal and structured education of Hindi language and inculcate cultural values. School



uses books and curriculum developed by National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi, India, for educating children all over India. Classes were initially held at University of Alberta for several years. Same time Parishad members and volunteers worked hard, saved money and purchased commercial warehouse bays and converted that into Hindi Centre, housing classrooms, office and library of hindi books etc.

At present, 65 students of various age groups, 5 years to adults, learn hindi in 6 levels with the help of teachers and volunteer assistants. Last week, our school celebrated “Diwali” – festival of lights. Students from each class presented a cultural item, poem or essay to a gathering of parents and grandparents, participated in colouring contest, enjoyed lighting sparkles, and shared food items provided by parents and Parishad. Below are some pictures of the celebration

## Proud of their heritage!

By Agata Guzik

The grade 6 students from Maria Chrzanowska Polish School, inspired by the celebration of 100 years of Poland's Independence, learned more about Polish history. They completed a research project about Polish leaders: Józef Piłsudski - the first leader of the independent state in 1918; Józef Wybicki - the author of the Polish national anthem; Stefan Stażyński - the heroic mayor of the capital of Poland – Warsaw – during the beginning of World War II in 1939; and Władysław Anders - the Polish general whose army fought for Monte Casino during World War II.



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## The Community Legacy Award

Nina Paulovicova

I am very proud to announce that Slovak Heritage School received Wirth Community Legacy Award for the project Slovak Heritage School's Library.

At the occasion of its 20th anniversary, Wirth Institute announced Community Legacy Award "to support any individual or community based project(s), which capture and celebrate the immigrant experience, and ... to benefit, highlight and/or honour the immigrant communities as well as their individuals, and their experiences in Canada."

We would like to thank Wirth Institute for their hard work and dedication to preserve the heritage of Central Europeans in Canada. Without their generous support, our library could hardly be brought to life.



# IHLA, Promoter of biliteracy!

By Trudie Aberdeen and Olenka Bilash

Bilingualism is a gift that we offer our children, yet raising them to be bilingual is very difficult to do. In fact, an immigrant's grandchild in Canada has about a 10% chance of speaking his/her living ancestor's language (Houle, 2015). Parents who wish their children to be multilingual need to make a concerted effort. One of the things that parents can do is send their children to a heritage language community school where they can make multilingual friends, belong to a language community, and learn the basics of communication and literacy.

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Most Canadians learn how to read and write in school. However, learning to read a non-official language in Canada is a more challenging process. Depending on the language and family's location, children may have access to only minimal or no environmental print. They may not be read to because books are either too costly or not available, or parents may not know that they can be accessed in the public library in some provinces. Even with access to books, children, parents and teachers face limited matches to learners' linguistic ability, age and interest. Finally, children who are learning to read in a script different from the Latin alphabet that surrounds them, literacy learning can seem difficult and demotivating.

The Mother Language Day books serve to promote children's heritage language biliteracy in four different ways:

### **1. They motivate children to read and write their HL.**

As stated previously, heritage language children often do not get the same exposure to print in their language that they would get in English or French. As such, they might need additional motivation to read and write in their heritage languages. Being able to see their names and work in print is a special motivator to learn. As one member of IHLA states:

The MLD book never became best sellers, but it was a very tangible thing that the kids could take to their grandparents and say I wrote this!

### **2. They provide children with age- and linguistically-appropriate reading material.**

One of the leaders in a heritage language school explained the challenges of helping children find the right books to read. She says:

The interest levels and the abilities do not always go together. So in English that's fine, because we have this whole body of literature that is developed for high-interest, low-ability. You can go into any bookstore and you can find a book on dinosaurs that is written at a kindergarten level and you can find one that is written at a university level and everything in between. But that doesn't exist in every language group.

Mother Language Day books give children the opportunity to write, but they also give children access to linguistically appropriate reading material. Because the students receive copies of all of the stories, they are meant to be cherished with time. As students write, they leave behind linguistically appropriate stories for the generations that follow. Since the stories are written by children in Canada, they are the appropriate linguistic level for children here.

### **3. They encourage children to connect to their culture.**

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The theme of each of IHLA's books is chosen to inspire a connection to the children's cultures. In the 2016 book children were asked to write about their favorite celebration. Children wrote about events such as Korean Children's Day, Ukrainian Christmas Eve, or Sikh Holi. Children wrote and illustrated events, food, and family traditions. Previous themes included *Languages: A window to the world* and *The languages in my life*.

#### 4. The multilingual books expose children to many writing systems and promote a multicultural Canada.

Multiculturalism was declared a Canadian value in the Multiculturalism Act (1988). As such, heritage language schools are in a unique position to expose children not only to the cultures of their ancestors, but also to the cultures of other fellow Canadians. Children get to see their own writing in a published book and they also gain exposure to other scripts. Even if the children are unable to read them, they learn to see the beauty of different languages. As was suggested by Samuelson and Lund (2016) multicultural, child-authored books might also serve an effective tool in the promotion of peace education.

#### Conclusion

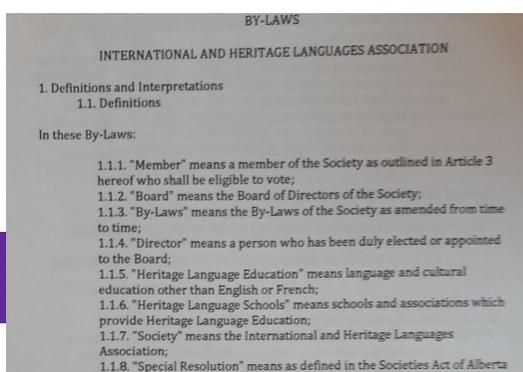
IHLA has worked to promote literacy for children and families who live in a minority language context. For the past 13 years one way that they have accomplished this task is through the publication of multilingual stories written by children. As shown above, publishing children's work is not only about providing children with an audience for their work, it also provides motivation to read and write age- and linguistically- appropriate material, make cultural and intercultural connections, and evolve respect and tolerance for others.

Houle, R. (2015). Recent evolution of immigrant-language transmission. *Statistics Canada*. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2011002/article/11453-eng.htm>

Samuelson, B., & Lund, J. (2016). "The world is our home": A book project to support literacy in Rwandan primary schools." Vancouver, BC: Comparative and International Education Society 2016 Poster Session.

# The way we were... about the LAW!

By Trudie Aberdeen



Ihla has been known by many names: The Alberta Ethnic Language Teachers' Association (AELTA), The Northern Alberta Language Teachers' Association (NAHLA), and

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now the International and Heritage Language Association. The name of our association reflects the times that we live in and says a lot about who we are. The removal of teachers from our name was due to a change in legislation with the Alberta Societies Act. We were no longer allowed to legally use the word teachers in our name. For more information please look here:

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/768a0630-488c-4655-9422-db43a9ba2648/resource/0c0ca07d-87a5-4953-ac43-134c11ad6cd9/download/how-to-form-society-2015-05.pdf>

Our not-for-profit status is governed by the Alberta Societies Act. Most (but not all) of our schools are registered as legal not-for-profit organizations. We have benefits from legally registering our schools. Having a registered school is one step in applying for funding through the Alberta Liquor and Gaming Commission (AGLC). IHLA has had a “casino licence” for at least two decades and operates through funding from the AGLC, Alberta Education, and its membership fees.

Some of the requirements of the Societies Act are that we hold Annual General Meetings, that we operate according to bylaws, and that we file annual reports. In 2015 IHLA underwent a process to review its operational bylaws. If schools are interested in the IHLA bylaws, they can contact us or purchase them from Alberta Service.

## Being a member in good standing

To be an IHLA member in good standing your school needs to a) complete a registration form, b) pay IHLA membership fees, c) participate at MLD through a table (and a book or presentation), d) volunteer at IHLA fundraising events, and e) participate in at least 3 IHLA sponsored professional development sessions.