

# The IHLA Newsletter

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## The Mother Language Day Edition



## President's Speech

Antonella Cortese, PhD

*IHLA President*

Sas-ree-akal-jee, khosh amadid, witamy, selamat detany, bienvenidos, bienvenu, benvenuti, welcome.

Thank you Svetlana Grigoryian and Naivedhya Rai for your kind introduction. It is my pleasure and my honour to welcome you all to our 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Mother Language Day Celebration. My name is Antonella Cortese, President of the International and Heritage Languages Association. I am proud to see our Member Schools here today and very excited to welcome our new Member Schools to showcase the wonderful work of our students and demonstrate the hard work of so many passionate and dedicated Heritage Language teachers.

I would like to extend a special welcome to our distinguished guests: Mr. Payman Parseyan and to His Worship Mayor Don Iveson. Thank you for attending our event and above all know how much we appreciate your support and dedication for the sustainment and promotion of Heritage Languages and multiculturalism in our City and the Province of Alberta. I also would like to extend a warm grazie di cuore to the Polish Hall and Banquet Center for welcoming us here and to WorldFM101.7 Ethnic Radio Station for covering our event all this week. It is the radio station that many of us listen to for music and news from our respective heritage language countries helping us stay connected to our roots.

When I talk with people about IHLA, one of the first things I talk about is the Mother Language Day Celebration. It is this event that galvanizes us as a community of like minded people and above all, one heart and love for the heritage languages and cultures we share with each other in solidarity.

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This year's theme, Trees and Roots was chosen to celebrate how we all survive and thrive thanks to our heritage language communities in the multicultural mosaic of Alberta and Canada. On January 8<sup>th</sup> our collective roots were profoundly affected with the downing of Flight 752. Not since the 1985 Air India Flight 182, have we, as a community, felt such loss at our core, at our roots. Our theme was chosen in October. Its significance is illustrated today in the time we share, the appreciation, respect and care we hold for each other, and above all, we see it and can hear it in the incredible energy to thrive and resilience against all things that our children encounter as the seedlings to our established forest of mother trees.

We have a wonderful program of events for you to enjoy today, starting with performances by our Heritage Language students with the guidance of their teachers and the incredible work of our IHLA volunteers. Thank you and enjoy the day.

## Our Mayor Visits MLD 2020!

Trudie Aberdeen

IHLA Coordinator

For the past 5 years IHLA has been very lucky to have our wonderful mayor with us in attendance. This year MLD was again graced with his presence. The mayor gave us a wonderful speech about how languages and diversity are our strength as Edmontonians! He even mentioned how he always looks forward to attending our annual event.

We were again honoured to receive a special plaque declaring MLD in Edmonton!



*Don Iveson presenting Antonella Cortese with a plaque declaring MLD in Edmonton*

# The Language of Trees

Payman Parseyan

Former President of the Iranian Heritage Society of Edmonton



Is it merely a coincidence that the abundance of life is directly proportional to the abundance of trees within an ecosystem? Even the most remote places on this planet, where there is an abundance of life, will be trees. Trees can alter depending on their environments, depending on where they originated, but they serve at least one major purpose – the continuation of life and systems within a biome. Tree can provide a home for life, providing warmth, cover, and promoting the idea to thrive collectively. A long time ago, the evolution and progress of life led to an abundance of diverse trees, working together to serve the life in their region with their unique traits. The smallest mutations within trees resulted in some of the most beautiful things within life on this planet. Today, the fruits of each tree ensures the development and preservation of life. Now re-read that paragraph and replace the words tree with language and life with humanity. This is a small, yet significant reflection that trees can be to mother nature - as language is to humanity. I

believe that the best way to promote and preserve culture is through the promotion and preservation of language; accordingly, I am grateful for the important work done by the International Heritage and Language Association.

# Vice-President’s Speech

Renata Krawczyk

Vice-President of IHLA

Thank you for this opportunity to close the Mother Language Day. My name is Renata Krawczyk and I am IHLA’s Vice President.



Photo of the St. George Hellenic School’s Table taken at MLD 2020

I don’t think I have to convince anybody that trees are good for our wellbeing. But in case you didn’t know (and I certainly didn’t before delving into the Hidden Life of Trees, the book that inspired this MLD theme)

that trees can be a source of deep knowledge to us and teach us a thing or two.

A few of the amazing lessons trees can offer us are:

**Communication is the foundation for strong communities.**

Even though trees communicate differently than us, they have developed a rather complex system of underground network. It is like they are using a language of their own! Trees send and receive messages of distress, warn each other of danger and have a connection to an average of 47 other trees in the area!

**Another lesson that we can learn from trees is that they look out for the most vulnerable.**

Did you know that if one tree is sick the “family” around it will provide the tree with extra nutrition by pumping minerals and water through the roots to make it heal faster?

**And lesson number tree: cooperation gets you further than singular ambitions.**

Trees intuitively understand that communities are stronger and more resilient when they work together in service of a collective purpose, as opposed to just looking out for our individual or niche needs.

Today we have the opportunity to gather together as a heritage language community. Regrettably we have witness one community suffer insurmountable losses. The Iranian community has gone through a terrible loss in the last month. We feel your pain and we want to assure you that now, more than ever, we want to support you on that difficult path to recovery. We, as one big heritage language family, are connected through via language network and can nourish each other just like the injured tree relies on the strength of the surrounding family to help them stand strong in the times of difficulty.

As the Vice President of IHLA I want to state that it would be my wish to see us support our heritage language communities like the trees are taking care of each other. I hope we can strengthen our bonds and we can create even stronger, and deeper bonds.

I want to thank our wonderful children for bringing such beautiful programs to us today. It was a pleasure to watch you sign, dance and recite in your heritage language on this stage here. Give yourselves a big round of applause because you deserve it!

I want to thank our guests today, His Worship Don Iveson, Mayor of Edmonton and Mr. Payman Parseyan, Iranian Community Member.

I want to thank the parents for bringing children to the Mother Language Day but also for bringing your children to your Saturday and Sunday schools – it is not an easy task, believe me, I know, I am one of those parents!

I want to thanks the IHLA Board for your hard work and incredible cooperation with the network of support for each and single board member. Thank you!

A forest is like a community and takes care of those within it. Please do know that we keep you all our heritage language communities dear to our heart and that your wellbeing is important to us. Thank you.

# Facts about Trees

Compiled from the Internet by Trudie Aberdeen

This year at MLD 2020, students participated in a scavenger hunt for tree facts. Below are the facts that IHLA students searched for. Lucky winners were able to win great prizes!

1. Portugal has the highest percentage of forest coverage in Europe (38%).
2. Russia experimented by creating the “friendship tree” to grow a new kind of mandarin orange. Instead 45 kinds of fruit grew on a single tree!
3. The Banyan is one of the sacred trees of India. It is the National tree of India and it is used for many health benefits such as improving one’s immune system, its antibacterial properties, and its support in controlling cholesterol.
4. Before WWII, forests covered up to 40% of Poland. During the war, trees were shipped to battle fronts across Europe, deforestation and slash and burn conditions of war shrank Polish forests to only 21% of total area of the country (as of 1946).
5. After degraded forests were leased out to local communities to protect and manage 40 years ago, Nepal’s community forestry program has won international praise for restoring the country’s tree cover.
6. During the Roman empire deforestation was common in Italy.
7. The giant beech tree was voted the most beautiful tree in the Czech Republic.
8. Slovakia is a country of trees. There are over 50 wooden churches listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
9. Armenia is famous for its apricot trees. They even have a special word for the color apricot. In folk songs, Armenians often use the apricot tree to symbolize the homeland.
10. Trees and forests were of immense significance in Iranian mythology which hails trees as good humans who have turned into trees after their death and have been given an eternal life. So cutting huge fruit trees was a practice widely frowned upon. Ancient Iranians believed that anyone who cuts a tree would lose a loved one in the same year.
11. When Eritrea was colonized by the Italians, there was 30% forest coverage. During the 50’s and 60’s it had roughly 11% forest coverage. Current estimates of forest coverage are 1%.
12. The Narra is actually the national tree of the Philippines. It can grow up to 30 meters high and its short stems can spread into luxurious branches.
13. The Amazon rainforest, covering much of northwestern Brazil and extending into Colombia, Peru and other South American countries, is the world’s largest tropical rainforest, famed for its biodiversity.
14. The Tree of Hippocrates is the plane tree under which, according to legend, Hippocrates of Kos (considered the father of medicine) taught his pupils the art of medicine. Paul of Tarsus purportedly taught here as well. The Platanus in Kos is an oriental plane (*Platanus orientalis*), with a crown diameter of about 12 metres, said to be the largest for a plane tree in Europe. Bamboo is an important and significant symbol in Vietnamese culture and daily life. It exists almost everywhere in Vietnam. The solid, straight and tall bamboo trees represent resilience, indomitability and the bravery of the Vietnamese people.

15. Just like humans, trees need water to survive--and they drink a lot of it. In a single day, a large tree can consume 100 gallons of water out of the ground and discharge it into the air as oxygen and water vapour.
16. The “knock on wood” tradition comes from a time when primitive pagans used to tap or knock on trees to summon productive spirits that resided in them. Pine cones have genders. Male pine cones shed pollen and female pine cones make seeds, When the wind blows pollen into the female cones, the seeds become pollinated.
17. Trees are able to communicate and defend themselves against attacking insects. Scientists have found that trees can flood their leaves with chemicals called phenolics when the insects begin their raid. They can also signal danger to other trees so they can start their own defence.
18. “Moon trees” were grown from seeds taken to the moon in early 1971. After orbiting the Apollo 14 mission, these tree seeds returned to earth and were germinated by the Forest Service. After being planted with their earth-bound counterparts, these seedlings showed no discernable difference after 20 years of growth.
19. A tree can absorb as much as 48 pounds of carbon dioxide each year and can sequester 1 ton of carbon dioxide by the time it reaches 40 years old. It is estimated that US forests absorb as much as 10% of the country’s CO2 emissions each year.
20. Pine trees grow on 6 out of 7 continents. Only Antarctica has no natural pine trees.

## Upcoming IHLA Professional Development

For Teachers

**Global Citizenship- Wednesday March 18, 2020- University of Alberta, Education South-Room 218**

Dr. Olenka Bilash will speak to us about an essential topic in our heritage language schools- global citizenship. Learn about how heritage language learnings helps our students to embrace the world from learning empathy for immigrants and refugees, to understanding global politics and differing perspectives, to caring about our physical environment.

**Environmental Language Teaching- March 18 (K-7)- Location to be determined  
Environmental Language Teaching- April 15 (Grade 8 and up)**

IHLA’s own past president, Olga Prokhorova, will be sharing with us her experiences about teaching young students both her heritage language and about the environment. Not only does she foster a love of her mother tongue in her students, but a love of science as well. Her sessions are not to be missed!

## Our Feature Article

# Recommendations for Immersive Family Language Programs to Combat Language Shift and Loss in Edmonton: A White Paper



**Raquel Arraiza Lasas, Iman Fakhani, Adriana Onita**

A White Paper is a document that argues a specific perspective or position on an issue and/or proposes a solution to a problem. This White Paper, eventually to be sent to the City Of Edmonton, offers IHLA readers an opportunity to discuss and contribute to the idea of strengthening multilingualism within the framework of Multicultural Canada through immersive family language programs in the City's most popular venues.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The City of Edmonton does exceptionally well at recognizing and celebrating *multiculturalism*. We have the world's largest multicultural festival, the Servus Heritage Festival, showcasing over 100 countries and cultures at 71 pavilions, and attended by over 500,000 people in 2017 (Mertz, 2017). We also have numerous organizations devoted to promoting multicultural inclusion and facilitating newcomer integration, such as the City of Edmonton Multicultural Relations Services, Edmonton Multicultural Coalition, ASSIST, Centre d'accueil et d'établissement, Millwoods Senior and Multicultural Centre, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for

Newcomers, among many other programs, organizations, and initiatives

However, when it comes to celebrating *multilingualism* and fighting language loss in our diverse communities, we require more public awareness and proactive civic action to promote mother language retention. Thus, the purpose of this White Paper to Edmonton City Council is to demonstrate how the City could become a leader in promoting *language* alongside culture. First, we will paint our current ethnolinguistic landscape in Edmonton, including the staggering statistics on non-official first language use and mother language attrition and loss. Then, we will provide historical context while discussing the consequences of language shift, the process whereby a community shifts to speaking a completely different language (for example, English) over an extended period of time. Finally, we will provide a series of solutions for the City of Edmonton to help reverse language shift and loss among its citizens through Immersive Family Language Programs, and the eventual creation of a Mother Language Month in Edmonton. Our main objective is to increase public awareness of the importance of mother tongue retention in our city, and help combat language loss through language and culture integrated educational events and activities. We aim to educate and empower every family in Edmonton to believe that their children can retain their mother tongue (including Indigenous languages and Heritage languages) at the same time as becoming proficient in English/French.

## 2. WHO WE ARE

Three passionate multilingual educators write this White Paper:

- **Raquel Arraiza Lasa** is a researcher and scholar from the Basque Country of Spain, who is well versed in linguistic rights
- **Iman Fakhani** is an Arabic bilingual educator in Edmonton Public Schools, representing one of the fastest growing immigrant languages in Edmonton.
- **Adriana Onita**, born in Romania, is a Doctoral student at the University of Alberta in second language education, and founded *The Polyglot*, Canada's first multilingual magazine

We are all passionate about the integration of language and culture in everything we do. We hope our expertise in language education will help the City of Edmonton understand the urgent issue of mother language retention, and also respond to our call to action to help us create monthly immersive family language programs that will aid in reversing language shift.

## 3. EDMONTON'S CURRENT LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Edmonton is rapidly becoming the most linguistically diverse city in Canada (Wakefield, 2017):

- Census data from 2017 shows that the number of people in Edmonton who use a language other than English or French as their mother tongue **surged 31% between the 2011 and 2016 censuses** - a faster rate than in any of Canada's other big cities (Wakefield, 2017).
- Recent statistics show that although more than a quarter (345,000) of Edmontonians claim a non-official first language, of those, only **87,115 regularly** speak their language at home. (Wakefield, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2017).
- **Mother tongue retention** of Edmontonians is only **57 per cent** (Wakefield, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2017), a number which drastically decreases throughout generations.

These statistics are illuminating and sobering: If 43% of individuals in our City experience language attrition and eventual loss of their mother tongue, we are not meeting our goal as a city to be “inclusive for both newcomers and all other citizens” (Multicultural Relations Services, 2017). Thus, this White Paper is designed to help City Council and the City of Edmonton see that even though we are the fastest growing linguistically diverse city in Canada, we have a lot to improve on when it comes to **improving mother language retention and reversing language loss**.

### **Why is it concerning that Edmontonians are losing their mother tongues over time?**

The consequences of language loss are detrimental to our community in many ways. Dr. Heather Blair, a professor at the University of Alberta specializing in Indigenous language revitalization, states that “when we lose a language, we also lose the culture that was embedded in the language, including identities, customs, philosophies, knowledge, values, worldviews, humour, morals, personality, intent, and expressions of love, hope, honesty” (Blair, 2017). She points out that community attitudes towards different languages greatly affect the ways languages are maintained and transmitted intergenerational. For this reason, it is important to take civic action on preventing mother language loss.

In this White Paper, we hope to demonstrate how it is beneficial for the City of Edmonton to focus on language preservation initiatives, such as creating immersive family language experiences in citizens’ mother tongues, in order to show our Indigenous, settler, and immigrant communities that languages are valued and important. In the next section, “Historical and Contemporary Significance of Our Project,” we will outline the history of Canada’s multicultural/multilingual reality, including immigration, indigenous linguicide, Canada’s Multiculturalism Act, and more.

## **4. HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR PROJECT**

### **Canada’s Multicultural and Multilingual Peoples**

The contemporary multicultural/multilingual reality of Canada is a result of many factors, including the diversity of Indigenous people that have lived on this land for millennia, settler colonization and conflict, and several waves of immigration that the country has received over the past few decades. We would like to address a few crucial issues around linguistic rights that inform the diverse nature of Canadian society:

- It is important to **acknowledge the painful parts of Canada’s regretful history with regards to planned linguicide** (the deliberate killing of languages). It is a human and cultural tragedy that Indigenous languages spoken in Canada have suffered a very aggressive process of assimilation (ie. through Canada’s residential school system) that has not only endangered the vitality of these languages, but also impaired the ability of their speakers to engage within their own mother tongues.
- We must focus efforts on **Indigenous language reclamation**, or bringing languages forward to new uses and new users (Hornberger & King, 1996), including claiming the “right to speak a language and to set associated goals in response to community needs and perspectives” (Leonard, 2012, p. 359). Fortunately, the current federal government earmarked **90 million in funding** to “preserve, protect, and revitalize” indigenous languages over the next three years (Morin, 2017).

- **Francophone communities in Canada have also felt the constant risk of assimilation** due to the fact that English has become the predominant language not only in North America, but around the world. This has resulted in Francophone communities outside of Quebec having to fight for their right to minority education (as well as Anglophone communities in Quebec).
- Nevertheless, French and English have been the two main communities with linguistic “power,” and the only two languages currently explicitly protected under law (Official Languages Act, 1969). With a new Indigenous Languages Act on the way, we predict that over +60 First Nations, Metis, and Inuit languages in Canada will also be protected and funded under new legislation. **But where does this leave heritage languages?** Canada is a country that has welcomed wave after wave of immigrants, including those from the homelands of the official languages; all have contributed to the country’s wealth and diversity. Their languages need to be acknowledged, and protected as well.

### **Language Policies in Canada**

Awareness around the benefits and necessity of acknowledging the multilingual reality of Canada is growing, and the **Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1985** is one of the pioneering policies that acknowledges it. In reference to languages, the Act says:

3 (1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to

(i) **preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French**, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada; and

(j) **advance multiculturalism throughout Canada** in harmony with the national commitment to the official languages of Canada.”(Canadian Multiculturalism Act <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/page-1.html>)

As we have mentioned previously, even though the **multicultural** aspect of Canada’s reality is widely **celebrated**, it is most often done **in English or French**. Given that languages are one of the richest aspects of culture, if we do not acknowledge their relevance in the public sphere, multiculturalism is incomplete. We must note that several important initiatives have spearheaded the maintenance and revitalization of minority languages in Canada, for example, immersion, bilingual, and second language programming, and Saturday heritage language schools through the International Heritage Language Association. These are all crucial steps towards ensuring the ethnolinguistic vitality of languages in Canada.

One of the problems that arises in this type of language planning policy is that a **language remains strong for its academic or school subject use, but more often than not, it is still heavily endangered in its private use in the home**. This would correspond to Status Four on Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruptional Scale: where languages like Ukrainian, Polish, Spanish, Arabic, are in vigorous use in schools, but maybe not outside of the school at all. Families are left alone with family language planning, and many families do not have the time or awareness about the importance of maintaining their mother tongue. We would like to bridge that gap and raise awareness about the benefits of mother tongue retention in our multicultural and multilingual city.

### **Recommendation from researchers:**

Katherine Chronopoulos, in her study “Investigating Language Practices in an Albertan Greek Community” under Dr. Olenka Bilash’s supervision, found out some areas where action could be taken in order to improve the ethnolinguistic vitality of a minority language (in this case Greek) in Alberta. Her findings highlight the complexity of language ethnolinguistic vitality programs, and our project would cover at least one of those angles, the one that refers to the community:

**“Summary of findings:** According to the results from the questionnaires, many participants felt that there was a shortage of events in the Greek community where Greek could be heard and used. **Recommendation:** Other than the holiday presentations that the students put on in the school four times a year, Heritage Days, and Greekfest, there are not many other informal social gatherings for children and adults of all ages. Dances, movie nights, game nights, and community dinners, could be organized with the explicit purpose of using more Greek and engaging in cultural practices.” (Chronopoulos, p. 64)

The complexity of language planning and the impossibility of having an impact in every single aspect of it should not stop us as a society from creating dynamics that aid language usage in the complex setting of multilingual societies. In the City of Edmonton, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of bilingual school programs: in the past 5 years, enrolment in second languages in public schools has increased by about 65 percent. Moreover, a well established International Heritage Language Association (Aberdeen, 2016), and a commitment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report has created a golden opportunity to consolidate the multilingual character of The City by **supporting the presence and usage of French, Indigenous, and Heritage languages** through a series of initiatives, described in the following section.

## **5) IMMERSIVE FAMILY LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**

To raise awareness about mother language loss, shift, and preservation, and celebrate the importance of mother languages in our city, we have several recommendations for the City of Edmonton to create “Immersive Family Language Programs.” We recommend immersive activities and events at different City venues for family participation *in* their own mother languages. For example, each month, families would attend a free “language field-trip” together in French, Cree, Arabic, or Spanish, organized in-situ at popular city venues such as the Muttart Conservatory, City Hall, or Fort Edmonton Park, and led by enthusiastic second language educators.

### **Multilingual BMO All Day Sundays at the Art Gallery of Alberta**



Our idea for Immersive Family Language Programs is already gaining community support. In 2018, we approached Evelyn Liesner, the Interim AGA Head of Learning and Education, with our vision and she was very enthusiastic and open to our project. The AGA already offers French and Spanish immersive K-12 art experiences for children, created by Adriana Onita, and is currently working with Iman Fakhani to expand its bilingual programs to include Arabic as well. Their education department also leads a well-attended program called BMO All Day Sunday once a month, where families gather to take part in engaging art activities for free. Currently, these art activities are in English, but the AGA is willing to help us achieve our linguistic goals by using their bilingual instructors to offer family activities and guided tours in different languages (French, Spanish, Arabic, Cree).

There are many benefits to starting our Immersive Family Language Programs at the Art Gallery of Alberta, and then possibly expanding to City of Edmonton venues and attractions.

- Firstly, it is important for families to visit the AGA, in the heart of the city of Edmonton, and *discover* that family art activities and programs are available in their languages. **Since awareness about language issues is one of our main goals**, the Art Gallery provides an **excellent authentic environment** to educate and **integrate language and culture** through art education activities.
- Languages, art, and education are such a powerful trio, as they incite families to have **open-ended conversations, reflect on cultural products, and enjoy themselves** in a relaxing, welcoming cultural environment. Art represents the expression of our deepest feelings; it is a way to communicate across cultures through a visual language. Guided interactive tours in patrons' mother tongues will be an effective way for families to keep up their language.
- In addition to guided exhibition tours, families could also **create art projects together**. Staff at the AGA Education department are trained in **creative, open-ended, process-based art making that engages all families**, regardless of whether they consider themselves "artists" or not. Their innovative art programming will pair well with our linguistic objectives of ensuring more fun cultural opportunities for families to take part in activities in their mother tongues.
- Finally, since BMO All Day Sundays are **free** at the Art Gallery of Alberta, families can enjoy enriching multilingual programming in their mother tongues without worrying about being able to afford it or not.

## Next Step: Multilingual activities in City of Edmonton Venues

The next step would be to replicate this Immersive Family Language Program model in several other City of Edmonton venues, for example the Muttart Conservatory or Fort Edmonton Park, where families could enjoy guided tours and activities in their mother languages. Our White Paper group has connections to several linguistic communities, including French, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Cree, Romanian, and Mandarin. The active role of these communities is key to the success of our initiative, in order to guarantee that it is alive and attached to the linguistic necessities that the communities identify. We would like to start small, with only four languages, (French, Spanish, Cree, Arabic), and then expand to include other languages such as Italian, Mandarin, Punjabi, Romanian, Tagalog, etc.

## Dreaming big: Mother Language Month in Edmonton

Eventually, our dream is to create an official Mother Language Month in Edmonton, beginning on January 21, and ending on February 21 (Mother Language Day, which Mayor Don Iveson declared in 2015). In this month, we could hold many immersive activities and events throughout the city for families to participate in their mother languages, including films, dances, concerts, poetry readings, etc. In the final weekend, Mother Language Month would culminate in a large celebratory event at the Edmonton Expo Centre, where local families can interact with artists, musicians, poets, food vendors, to speak and showcase their language and culture. Since our main objective is to increase public awareness of multilingualism in our city, and help combat mother language loss and attrition through our **language-focused events and activities**, we believe all of our ideas and initiatives (Immersive Family Language Programs, Mother Language Month) could have a great impact in Edmonton valuing its own ethnolinguistic vitality.

## 5) CONCLUSION & IMPACT: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE LANGUAGES?

We hope that this paper has provided some insight to the City of Edmonton on the **importance of maintaining and preserving mother languages** (both indigenous and heritage languages) in Edmonton. Linguistic preservation through Immersive Family Language Programs would truly make the City reach its diversity and inclusion goals. By providing opportunities to integrate language and culture, families can discover not only that **the City values their languages, but also makes a conscious, informed effort in preserving them**. As we mentioned in the introduction of this White Paper, despite the huge efforts of Edmonton's multicultural organizations, coalitions, and festivals, the "language" aspect of culture is always missing in City events and venues.

- We would all benefit from **a new vision for multilingualism** within our city, of language and culture as an integrated, coherent whole, never separated.
- We need to **educate and make families aware that mother languages are important**, and should not be given up in an effort to help children integrate or assimilate.
- We need to raise awareness about the tragic **consequences of language loss**, both at the individual and community level.
- We need to become **deeper thinkers, wiser planners, and creative inventors** when it comes to language planning.

Edmonton is already on the right track with all of our multicultural initiatives that connect families and communities. Cultural events and practices have proven to bring people together: just look at the staggering 500,000 attendees of the three-day Servus Heritage Festival- to celebrate multiculturalism! If we **expanded City initiatives to include language revitalization and preservation**, they would be even richer. We must start taking advantage of the amazing cultural venues in our City to promote mother language retention throughout generations. In doing this, every Edmontonian family would see first hand **how the City embraces and welcomes both their culture and their languages**. We believe that this shift in attitude would be the biggest impact of our project. Edmonton is the most linguistically diverse city in Canada: let's keep it that way!

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