

IHLA NEWSLETTER

THE INTERNATIONAL AND HERITAGE LANGUAGES ASSOCIATION - IHLA - WWW.IHLA.CA

The Importance of the Mother Tongue

THE 9TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

On Saturday February 25, 2012 IHLA celebrated its 9th Annual International Mother Language Day Celebration. On the coldest of any of the Saturdays in the past when this celebration has taken place, IHLA had its largest attendance yet! Not only!

Amongst our special guests IHLA had the pleasure to welcome, for the first time, the Hon. Thomas Lucaszuk, Minister of Education, who took time to visit every single school table, mingle with the crowd, talk to many students and give everyone a warm greeting speech. The presence of the minister reaffirmed the long-standing relationship between IHLA community schools and the work done by the province to support and



Josephine Pallard, President of IHLA and the Hon. Thomas Lucaszuk, Minister of Education at the 9th Annual International Mother Language Day Event.

IHLA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

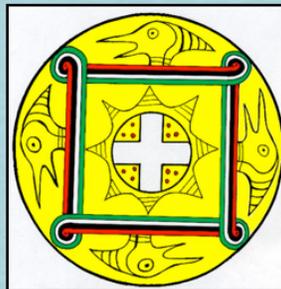
On **Monday, June 4, 2012 IHLA** will hold its annual general meeting (AGM). The AGM will take place at a special off-site location yet to be confirmed. The meeting will take place from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. ALL IHLA MEMBERS in good standing are invited to attend and to register. During this AGM IHLA will hold its Board of Directors Elections. To register please click on the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AGMIHLA2012>

continued on page 2



International and Heritage Languages Association
www.ihla.ca



OLENKA'S ARTICLE Check Dr. Bilash article on the importance of Mother Languages. Read more on page 10.



TELUGU LANGUAGE SCHOOL Check this great article featuring the Telugu Language School of Edmonton. Read more on page:

enhance language and culture education at the community level.

Other important guests included the Hon. Stephen Mandel, Mayor, City of Edmonton, Mr. Hai Nguyen, from the federal government and our visiting presenters from ILEA, Constantine Ioannou and Maria Makrakis, as well as Bernard Bouska, from CLA.

The event run as smoothly as ever, with everyone now enjoying the beautiful location and hall and with many schools, old and new, participating with performances, dances, clips and skits.

The celebration, now a tradition amongst IHLA's families and communities, is becoming a moment of reflection and celebration of language and culture programs that bring people together, open eyes and ears to words, sounds, colours, symbols and traditions that represent and give context to intercultural values that is a unique and important step in the life of community language schools. No other event in Edmonton, or in Alberta, celebrates the value of mother

SPECIAL THANKS



IHLA wishes to thank the Castledowns YMCA LITs for their great support. The event would not be possible without the support of these great leaders who help out from table supervision, to room set up to stage needs. The Leaders in Training in this program work under the inspiration and guidance of Carlo Dimailig and Tyng Ho.

languages in this fascinating and meaningful way, and IHLA plans to maintain this tradition for many years to come.

IHLA wishes to invite you all to set your calendars for next year's event, which will take place on Saturday, february 23, 2013 at the same location.

10th International Mother Language Day Event Saturday, February 23, 2013

ITALIAN CULTURAL CENTRE - EDMONTON, ALBERTA

MOMENTS AT THE



Visitors check school tables before the formal program if the event begins on stage.

MLD 2012 EVENT



Dr. Olenka Bilash talks about the importance of keeping the mother language alive. (see her article on page 10)



Students from the Korean Language School of Edmonton perform a special dance with small drums.

The Telugu School of Edmonton

by Dr Praveen Baradi

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The Telugu School of Edmonton is primarily established to teach Mother Language skills to keep the young generation connected to Telugu Culture. Children of all ages are introduced and encouraged to learn Telugu through Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. This school is open not only to the young children but to people of all ages.

Our Telugu School was originally started more than twenty years ago and after a brief lapse in between it was reactivated by some enthusiastic members of the Andhra Cultural Association, in 2005. Currently, the school has about 40 students, ages ranging between 3 and 14 and we have about 4 different grades. Several enthusiastic individuals, mostly the parents of the school are volunteering to run the Telugu School. We are maintaining a student to teacher ratio of 6:1. In addition, the students who have graduated from our school in the past are extending their volunteer services as assistant teachers. This enables them to keep in touch with their mother language. The lesson plans for various grades are reviewed periodically based on the valuable feedback from the current and past students and their parents.

We hold classes once a week, every Saturday from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm starting from the 2nd week of September until the last week of June at Maha Ganapathi Society of Alberta, Running Creek Road NW, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6J 7B1. At the end of every class we have about 20 minutes of assembly time. During this time students are encouraged to

share their thoughts, sing poems, narrate stories and importance of our various festivals etc., in Telugu. This enables students to gain confidence in their communication and presentation skills in Telugu.

Our focus is to enhance the association of our Telugu children to their culture. Our traditions and heritage are introduced to the children through stories, songs and dances. The Telugu School gives a golden opportunity for the School Children to keep in touch with our rich tradition and culture. The participation of Telugu School Children in the cultural activities conducted throughout the year during Telugu festivals is increasing since we started this school. This is clearly a success that we achieved in bridging the gap between the young generation and our heritage.

We have been members of IHLA since 2007-08. We believe that with the continued support from its participants, our Telugu School will stand up to the values and continue building connections to Arts and



Group picture of some students and teachers.

Culture for all Edmontonians including our Telugu community.

For more information about our Telugu School please contact Dr Praveen Baradi at praveenbaradi@hotmail.com



A student singing a Telugu poem.



A student writing Telugu words.

మాబడి

Edmonton లోని తెలుగు వారి ముందు తరం మన తెలుగు సంస్కృతి, సాంప్రదాయాలను మర్చిపోకుండా ఉండడానికి మరియు వాళ్ళకి మాతృ భాషని నేర్పించడానికి మాబడి (Telugu School of Edmonton) స్థాపించబడింది. అన్ని వయస్సుల పిల్లలకే కాకుండా పెద్ద వాళ్ళకు కూడా తెలుగు భాష వినడం, చదవడం, మాట్లాడడం మరియు వ్రాయడం నేర్పించడం జరుగుతుంది.

మాబడి మొట్ట మొదటి సారిగా ఇరవయ్యే సంవత్సరాల క్రితం మొదలు పెట్టారు. కొన్ని కారణాల వల్ల మధ్యలో ఆగిపోయినా, ఆంధ్ర సాంస్కృతిక సంఘం ఆధ్వర్యంలో కొంత మంది ఉత్సాహం తో, చొరవ తో మళ్ళీ 2005 నుండి మాబడిని పునః ప్రారంభించాము. ప్రస్తుతం 40 మంది విద్యార్థులు, 3 ఏళ్ల వయస్సు నుండి 14 ఏళ్ల వయస్సు వాళ్ళు తెలుగు భాషను నేర్చుకుంటున్నారు. విద్యార్థులను నాలుగు తరగతులుగా విభజించి బోధిస్తున్నాము. చాలా మంది ఉత్సాహవంతులైన వాళ్ళు ముఖ్యంగా పిల్లల తల్లిదండ్రులు సేవా భావంతో మాబడి ని నిర్వహించడంలో నిరంతరంగా కృషి చేస్తున్నారు. మాబడి లో ఉపాధ్యాయుడు (ఉపాధ్యాయురాలు) మరియు విద్యార్థి (ని) ల నిష్పత్తి 1:6 ఉంది. అంతే కాకుండా మాబడి నుండి విజయ వంతంగా పట్టభద్రులైన పిల్లలు మళ్ళీ సహాయ ఉపాధ్యాయులుగా వారి సేవలను అందిస్తున్నారు. ఇలా చేయడం వాళ్ళు మాతృభాషకి మరింత దగ్గరవడంలో దోహద పడుతుంది.

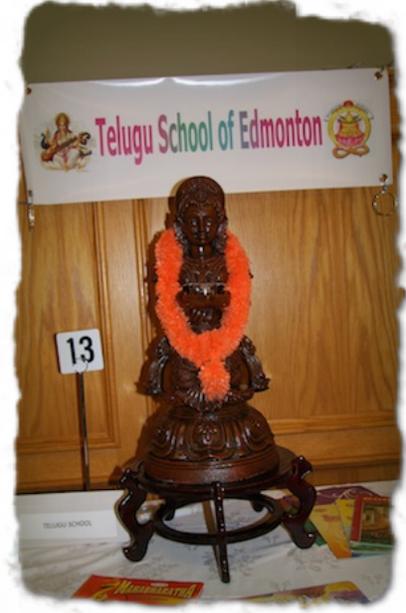


Two teachers evaluating the work of the Telugu students.

విద్యార్థుల మరియు వారి తల్లిదండ్రుల విలువైన సూచనల మేరకు ఎప్పటికప్పుడు బోధన పాఠ్యాంశాలను మెరుగు పరచుకోవడం జరుగుతుంది. ప్రతి సంవత్సరంలో సెప్టెంబర్ రెండవ వారం నుండి జూన్ నెల చివరి వరకు శనివారం మధ్యాహ్నం 3.30 నుండి ఐదు గంటల వరకు తెలుగు తరగతులను శ్రీ మహా గణపతి ఆలయంలో నిర్వహిస్తున్నాము. ప్రతి శనివారం ముఖ్యాంశాలను బోధించిన తరువాత చివరగా ఇరవై నిమిషాల పాటు పిల్లలు మరియు ఉపాధ్యాయులు సమావేశం అవుతాము. ఈ సమావేశం లో పిల్లలు వాళ్ళ ప్రతిభ ను తెలుగులో కథలు చెప్పడం, పాటలు పాడటం, పద్యాలు వల్లెవేయడం మరియు పండుగల ప్రాముఖ్యం గురించి చెప్పుకోవడం లాంటి ఆసక్తి కరమైన చర్యల ద్వారా ప్రదర్శించడం జరుగుతుంది. దీనివల్ల పిల్లల ఆత్మ స్థైర్యం పెరుగుతుంది.

మాయొక్క ముఖ్య ఉద్దేశ్యం పిల్లలను తెలుగు సంస్కృతి కి దగ్గర చేయడం. అందుకే కేవలం తెలుగు భాషను నేర్పిం చడమే కాకుండా, మన పద్ధతులను, సంస్కారాన్ని అలవాటు చేయడాని కి వివిధ పద్ధతులను అనుసరిస్తున్నాము. మాబడి మన నగరం లో ఉన్న తెలుగు వారికి మరియు వారి ముందు తరాల వారికి తెలుగు భాషను నేర్చుకొనడానికి ఒక సువర్ణావకాశం కల్పిస్తుంది. మాబడి ప్రారంభించిన నాటి నుండి తెలుగు పిల్లలు వివిధ సాంస్కృతిక కార్యక్రమాలలో పాల్గొన డానికి అధిక ఉత్సాహం చూపిస్తున్నారు. ఇది మాబడి యొక్క విజయానికి ఒక మంచి నిదర్శనం.

మాబడి 2007 - 08 నుండి IHLA సంస్థ లో సభ్యత్వం కొనసాగిస్తుంది. మాబడి తో సంబంధం ఉన్న ప్రతి ఒక్కరి సహకారంతో మున్నుండు మన నగరంలోని తెలుగు వారితో సహా ప్రతి ఒక్కరి నీ కళలు , మంచి సంస్కృతులకు దగ్గర చేయడంలో ప్రముఖ పాత్ర వహిస్తుంది అన్న గట్టి నమ్మకం మాకుంది.



**IHLA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
REGISTER TODAY AT:**

[HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/S/AGMIHLA2012](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AGMIHLA2012)

UPDATES



IHLA celebrated its 9th Annual International Mother Language Day event on Saturday, February 25, 2012.

IHLA presented a session at the IISLE "Languages Matter" conference, in Edmonton on February 12, 2012. Over 50 people attended the session on podcasts, presented by Valeria Palladino.

250 copies of the MLD Book - Winter 2012 Edition were published for the Mother Language Day event - this publication is made possible each year with a contribution by the Alberta Association of Multicultural Education - AAME.

IHLA volunteers assisted the organization in running its casino fundraising. IHLA casino funds support a number of operational and special project activities of IHLA. Details about the funds will be communicated at the IHLA Annual General Meeting on June 4, 2012.

IHLA submitted a new proposal for funding to Alberta Education. The proposal is called "Leading Voices" and details will be made available at the IHLA upcoming AGM.



Professional Development Sessions Continue at IHLA



"IT'S IN THE TASK!"

This was, yet again, another great session that IHLA offered in collaboration with ILEA - the International Languages Education Association in Ottawa, led by Constantine Ioannou and Maria Makrakis. The session was offered on Friday, February 24, 2012 at the new IHLA office (see picture above), and was attended by eight IHLA instructors.

Bernard Bouska, from the CLA (Canadian Languages Association) also joined the session and helped with the different tasks. Instructors worked really hard to create new tasks. We even have a great sample of a special task recorded and available on the IHLA YouTube channel. The presenters will work with CLA to gather a database of ideas and tasks for heritage language instructors across Canada. [Click here for a peak at the special clip.](#)

IHLA will be offering two more sessions in April, as PD opportunities for all interested. One session will be on the use of wikis for supporting and teaching international and heritage languages at the community level, and the other will be an introduction and discussion forum on the use of the IHLA professional standards. See the following page for details and to register online.

IHLA PD NUMBERS

IHLA offers many PD sessions each year. Here some reference numbers for 2011-2012

3

Portfolio sessions - 7 schools represented

4

Technology-based PD sessions - over 40 instructors attended these sessions

3

PD sessions on speaking/listening and humanistic approaches to SL teaching - 27 instructors attended these sessions

THE MAGIC OF WIKIS

Attend this 3.5 hours workshop to learn how to set up, plan and use a wiki for your language classes. The session is tailored to instructors who have little to no knowledge about online tools. You will specifically learn the following:

- set up a wiki account (it is free)
- create pages in your wiki
- edit text, images, media and sound right in your wiki pages
- add links and videos
- plan fun activities for your students using a wiki

The session will fill fast, so do not waste anytime registering online today.

The session will take place at the
Computer Lab at the faculty of
Extension, University of Alberta, on
Thursday, April 19, 2012 - from 5:30 -
9:00 p.m.
Enterprise Square (10230 Jasper Ave)
- Lab2-955.

register online

[https://
www.surveymonkey.com/s/
magicofwikis](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/magicofwikis)

IHLA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Attend collaborative and interactive workshop to talk about the IHLA Professional Standards document and how it can support your school activities and planning. This session is specifically indicated for community leaders and administrators as well as IHLA member school teachers. During the session participants will:

- review the document and engage in collaborative tasks to add to its interpretation
- listen to and share concrete practices at the community level that IHLA schools engage in to uphold professional standards
- learn about a new project idea that IHLA will work on for the 2012-2013 school year

The session will fill fast, so do not waste anytime registering online today.

The session will take place at the IHLA
office - 10010 105 street - second floor -
on Thursday, April 26, 2012
from 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Parking at the IHLA parking lot is free
after 5:00 p.m. (free on the street after
6:00 p.m.)

register online

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/
s/profstandardsIHLA2012](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/profstandardsIHLA2012)

IHLA BOARD OF DIRECTORS - ELECTIONS 2012-2014

The IHLA Board of Directors will be re-elected for the year 2012-2014. Many positions will be open for nominations.

IHLA board of directors is usually comprised of a total of 13 members. The board of directors strives to represent all IHLA member schools in good standing, with inclusion of diverse languages and cultures amongst IHLA members.

If you are a member of IHLA in good standing or a member of an IHLA school in good standing, and have been a member for at least the last 12 months, you could be nominated for a position with the board of directors of IHLA.

To be an IHLA member in good standing means to be a paid registered member of IHLA for the current year.

1) How do I express my interest to be nominated?

You can email IHLA with a simple statement indicating your desire or availability to be nominated. The nominating committee will then contact you with more details. **Email IHLA at: edmontonihla@gmail.com by April 15, 2012.**

You will need to indicate the name of two other members of your community who are also members of IHLA in good standing - who will support your nomination.

2) If I am nominated, what happens next?

If you are nominated, you must attend the IHLA Annual General Meeting on June 4, 2012 - from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (location to be determined) and you will be elected by all members of IHLA in good standing who attend the AGM.

3) What positions can an IHLA member in good standing be nominated for?

The Executive Directors position will be open for election (see Executive Directors below). Members can also be elected as members of the board of directors.

4) What if I am elected?

Elected members will commit to meeting every first Monday of the month, from September to June, will lead subcommittees and support IHLA activities and may be asked to spend a few hours each month volunteering to run IHLA activities.

5) The Executive Directors

Positions for President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer of IHLA will be open for election. These board of directors are more closely involved with the activities of the board and the association. You may express interest to be elected in any one of these positions if desired (see point 1). Indicate that you wish to be nominated in any one of these positions in your expression of interest.

These positions will be directly elected by all IHLA members in good standing at the time of the elections, during the AGM.

ELECTIONS NOTE

All IHLA members in good standing can vote for the election of the new IHLA Board of Directors, on June 4th, 2012. Each IHLA member school in good standing, will have the right to vote - each one of the members who registered for the current year who is attending the AGM will have individual voting rights. IHLA is reviewing this information and all schools and individual members will receive a confirmation of membership in the next few weeks via email.

Mother Language Day 2012

Dr. Olenka Bilash
University of Alberta obilash@ualberta.ca

HONORED GUESTS, IHLA BOARD MEMBERS, PERFORMERS AND MOTHER LANGUAGE LEARNERS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

It is a privilege again to be able to speak to you on the occasion of Mother Language Day 2012. As you know UNESCO declared February 21 International Mother Language Day in 1999 to celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity, to increase and maintain awareness of the risks of language loss around the world, to acknowledge and protect the place of languages in society and to understand the role of plurilingualism in world peace. Over the past week in every country and all major cities around the world, groups have gathered like us - multigenerational families - to share and celebrate language maintenance, language growth and language rights and to remind all of the risks of language loss and the benefits of language retention.

On May 16, 2009 the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/61/266 called upon Member States "to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world".

Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to

develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

<http://www.un.org/en/events/motherlanguageday/>

To contribute to achieving this mission today I have four goals: to impart information about the winner of Linguapax 2012 award; to provide an update on the project for UNESCOcat certificates for youth; to share stories of language shift; and to offer a challenge.

Linguapax 2012 award

The Linguapax prize is awarded as a recognition to linguists, researchers, teachers and members of civil society who have excelled in promoting linguistic diversity and multilingual education. Every year an individual and an organization in the world are recognized for their contribution to developing language awareness, language heritage, language resources and language rights for all languages in the world. This year the Linguapax award was given to Jon Landaburu, a driving force in the dissemination and revitalization of the linguistic heritage of Colombia.

Professor Jon Landaburu Illarramendi's contributions include: translating the Colombian constitution into several indigenous languages; training native leaders and teachers; and directing a political-administrative center - with the Program for the Protection of the Ethnolinguistic Diversity (PPDE) of the Ministry of Culture, which made way for the Colombian Native Languages

Act (2009). This Act granted 68 languages (65 native languages, 2 creoles and Romany) special legal instruments to stimulate their preservation and revitalization.

Dr. Landaburu joins other world leaders in making language rights a part of the social justice movement: Ganesh Devy (India) and CIIIT (Colombia) in 2011; Miguel Siguan (Basque) and Robert Phillipson (England) in 2010; Katerian Te Keikoko Mataira (New Zealand) in 2009; Neville Alexander (South Africa) in 2008; Maya Khmehlani David (Malaysia) in 2007; Natividad Mutumbajoy (Colombia) in 2006; Maurice Tadedjeu (Cameroon) in 2005; Fernand de Varennes (Canada/Australia) and Joshua Fishman (United States) in 2004; Aina Moll (Catalan) and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (Finland) in 2003; and Bartomeu Melià (for work in Paraguay and Bolivia) and Jerzy Smolicz (Polish-Australia) in 2002.



Mother Language Day 2012 (cont.)

UNESCOcat Linguapax certificate program update

The second goal of today's presentation is to provide an update of the UNESCOcat Linguapax certificate program, which I first described last year at this event. Because first languages are seen as enabling emotional expressiveness, and are associated with intimacy and establishing relationships, trust and closeness (Burke, 2004), and because "unfamiliarity with language(s) is perhaps the most commonly identified communication barrier in a multicultural society" (Srivastava, p. 113), the five-step certificate program is designed to increase knowledge and awareness about the diversity of languages in the world and in Canada, promote learning and sustaining use of additional languages, and value plurilingualism which entails learning to speak at least three languages and respecting and valuing the speaking of all languages.

The program further responds to the rapid rate of loss of mother tongue (MT) among aboriginal, immigrant, ethnic and migrant groups. Loss of MT can bring psychological pain and suffering to many. It can lead to the breakdown of inter-generational communication. It can lead to a loss of identity and a longing for the feeling of belonging. It can make some people feel negative towards certain groups and make the country feel less united, which challenges social cohesion. It also means a loss of ecological knowledge and know-

how for an entire society, and in our global age, to all of humanity.

"The wisdom of humanity is encoded in the language", says Lyle Campbell, director of the Centre for American Indian Languages (CAIL) at the Utah University, and professor of linguistics. "Once a language dies, knowledge dies with it. Let's take medicinal plants as an example. The bark of a tree can prevent cancer or AIDS, but the name of the tree (and the associated knowledge) is usually lost when the language is extinguished, a loss for the entire humanity", he adds. According to him, if 50% of all language spoken in the world were lost, we would lose 50% of human cognitive capacity, which is an "indescribable tragedy"...

"A language is not only made of words and grammar; it is a network of the history that united the people who once spoke it, all the things they did together, all the knowledge they shared with their offspring", says Anthony Arista, professor of linguistics at Eastern Michigan University.

http://www.en.globaltalentnews.com/current_news/reports/1782/Endangered-Languages-a-global-loss.html

Bilash (2010) points out the trend that in Canada non-English language users switch to English in public places. She argues that this prevents

the development of certain linguistic domains, contributes to subtractive bilingualism (Cummins, 1991), and raises questions about Canada as a multicultural country. What might be done to change this trend? Might an education intervention be helpful? Can we better inform youth about the advantages of multilingualism, help monolinguals develop tolerance and interest in other languages from a social justice perspective internationally and at home? Can we encourage Canadian youth to find renewed value in second language programs? This is the hope of the Certificate program.

The program aims to encourage young people to learn about and develop respect for languages and language use around the world and in their own community, learn a new language and/or expand their own capacity in their mother tongue as an additional language, recognize that competency in another language is an asset to an individual and to our society, and that language is a positive part of a personal, familial, community and national identity.

The program is divided into three different levels.

1. Students in grades 5-8 or between the ages of 10 and 14
2. Students in grades 9-12 or between the ages of 15 and 18
3. Adults who are stakeholders in education

The program is participant-directed and online-based, and consists of five different steps which must be

Mother Language Day 2012 (cont.)

completed sequentially. Participants will monitor their own progress through these steps and submit their work electronically. The five steps are as follows:

1. Language awareness in the world
Participants will learn about languages from a world perspective. They must complete and pass an interactive quiz online in order to advance to step 2.
2. Language awareness in your own community
Participants will learn about the languages used in their local and regional milieu while completing interactive tasks online.
3. Linking language and culture
Participants will learn about the link between language and culture by finding a language he or she does not speak, and by interviewing a speaker of that language.
4. What language means to people
Participants will interview someone who speaks at least two languages about what different languages mean to them.
5. Project proposal and conference
Participants will propose a project to increase awareness of language learning and language loss and interact with other youth registered in the certificate program.

The program is free and should be available by September 2012 – be sure to ask your HL teacher for more information. See Figures 1, 2 and 3 for a sneak preview.

Not all languages are spoken by the same number of people.

- Millions of people speak some languages
- Only hundreds (or dozens) speak others



Which language in the world has the largest number of people who learned it as a first language, or mother tongue?

- English
- French
- Mandarin
- Spanish

Nice try, but only about 370 000 000 people in the world speak English as a first language. Try again! 😊

That's a good guess, but only about 70 million people in the world speak French as a first language. Try again! 😊

Way to go! Mandarin is one of the two major languages spoken in China. Over 880 million people have Mandarin as their mother tongue or first language. That's about 25 times the population of Canada!

Spanish is the fastest growing language, with over 330 000 000 people who speak Spanish as their first language, but it is not the most widely spoken. Try again! 😊

Figure 1: Sneak preview of some of the content for the UNESCOcat LINGUAPAX certificate

Stage 2 – languages on the seven continents

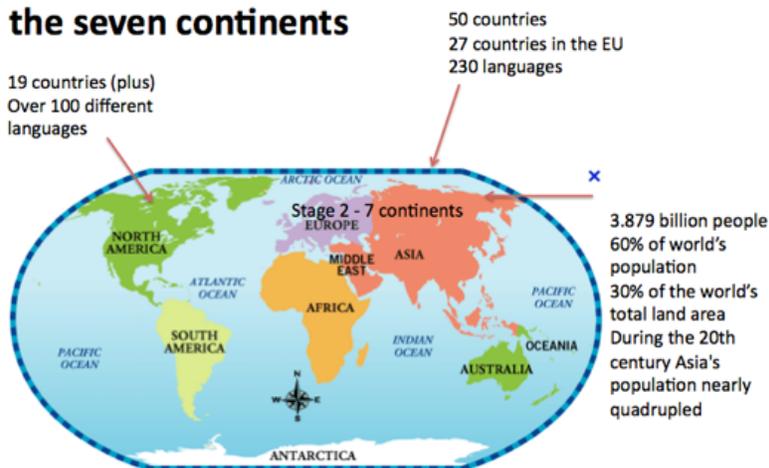


Figure 2: Some of what you will learn through the Certificate program

Mother Language Day 2012 (cont.)

Stage 2 - languages on the 7 continents

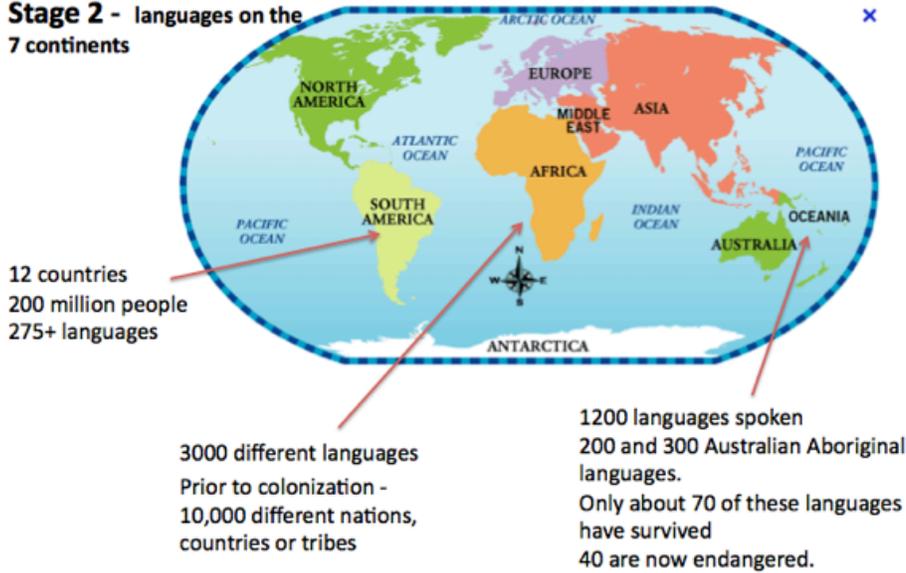


Figure 3: More of what you will learn through the Certificate program

Stories of Hope and concern

Although we know that many of the almost 7000 languages of the world are at risk and used less and less each day - sometimes only by the elderly or during special celebrations - some communities are uniting to increase or shift the use of their language within daily life. Today I shall share three of these stories of Hope – from the Mohawk, the Yuchi and Alberta's francophone communities – and some research statistics of concern.

Mohawk – the law helps

In *Spoken here: Travels among threatened languages* (2004) Mark Abley takes the reader inside the Mohawk and other communities that have become aware that they must work together to shift the language use in their communities.

Mohawk



Map 1: Kahnawake, home of the Mohawk

Mother Language Day 2012 (cont.)

He tells of Billy Two Rivers, a former professional wrestler, who after travelling around the world, returned to Kahnawake, the Mohawk's home land near Montreal. See Map 1. There he joined the Band Council and shared his insights. In reflecting on his world travels he realized the many assets of the Mohawk people – their fame as steelwalkers who helped to build high rises in downtown cities like New York, Boston, Detroit, and Buffalo, as athletes whose culture not only invented LaCrosse but in the last century also nurtured famous figure skaters, hockey players and Olympic level athletes. But he also noted the losses in their language and culture over the twenty years that he had been away: only people over 60 spoke and thought in Mohawk. "What we need to develop is recreational clubs. Mix in with the youth. You gotta recapture communication." (Abley, 2004, p. 181)

And with these thoughts he, the Council and the community began a two decade long project to re-build their language. Mohawk immersion programs began, an awareness campaign was undertaken in the local newspaper, and today the language is being revived. Reversing language loss ultimately involves systematic language exposure that depends on all levels of society: individual, family, community, institutions and government.

How did the Mohawk lose their language? Abley cites conversations with Billy Two Rivers and Melvin Diabo, director of the Mohawk Language Centre:

The nature of our economy required that we men work in groups. As voyageurs. As guides. They spoke among themselves in Mohawk, although they had to be multilingual to speak

to the Indian nations across the country. The harvesting of oak forests – our people were involved...the steel trade...again, it required our men to work in a group...Mohawk was the working language of our men, and that dictates the language of the home, right up to about 1948...if a newcomer came into the group, he had to learn the language fast...

At home it was the women who kept the language ... mothers are the natural teachers! Slowly Mohawks began to marry outside the community. Not so slowly, radio and TV appeared on the scene. ... Our biggest fault is using that media as babysitter. And thus began the language shift ... Mohawk men switched to English on the job about the same time that Roy Rogers, Ed Sullivan and the Three Stooges entered their homes. (Abley, 2004, pp. 180-182)

They are right about the important role that young parents, especially women, play in first language learning. Many researchers refer to mothers as **transmitters** because the language a child's mother speaks at the start of his/her life is the best predictor of his/her future language use (Lyon, 1996 p. 110). The "proficiency of youth, especially in their child bearing years, holds the future of [any language] community. Put another way, young people who

have strong language abilities, cultural knowledge and identify positively with the community are its insurance policy!" (Bilash, 2008)

The Mohawk story also reminds us of how quickly and unexpectedly language loss takes place. In the 60's, when Melvin was a student, his mother called him aside one day and said: "Son, can I talk to you privately?" Melvin worried that he had done something wrong and listened attentively. She asked: "Have you forgotten where you come from?" Melvin frowned, uncertain about what she meant. "I talk to you all the time in Mohawk and you answer me in English. Son, You are going to live in two worlds. I encourage you to know English – but don't forget your Mohawk. Because the way things are going you are going to lose your language. And if you lose your language you have no business saying you are a Mohawk." (Abley, 2004, p. 182)

This was a critical incident for Melvin – he has never forgotten his mother's words. Further, as he continued to reflect on his Mohawk language, he calls it descriptive –picturesque. "When you're speaking in the language, it's like having a three-flavoured ice-cream – vanilla and chocolate and raspberry. But when you do the translation into English, you take out two flavours." (Abley, 2004, pp. 181-82)

So with the awareness of new leaders, the Mohawk community took action at the family, community and governmental levels. They even took Quebec's charter of language as inspiration and created their own language law - which became the further inspiration for the language protection laws of Nunavut, Canada's youngest territory.

Yuchi – the role of Elders

Today's second story of hope comes from the Yuchi people, an aboriginal group in the United States. In this

Mother Language Day 2012 (cont.)

language group, Richard, a lawyer and community leader, began a master-apprentice program (MAP) with elders. In this program young people spend time with an older person and for those in the 15-25 year range (or older), who can spend 20-30 hours a week, it has worked. The elders do not switch to English. The program does not take place in a school or classroom; rather, the MAP duo DO things together. They cook, garden, perform traditional tasks, all the while talking. "Fluency seldom develops in front of the blackboard," says Richard. (Abley, 2004, p. 74) He describes the hard work and commitment it has taken him and notes that his fluency in Yuchi depends on how much time he spends with his Mother and other elders. Richard further describes how his accomplishments nurture his desire to continue learning: "Good teachers create opportunities for pride." (Abley, 2004, p. 74) He reminds us of the need to be sensitive to language learners, to be patient and show empathy for their efforts. "People who do not speak their language well are hesitant to look bad in public. They may feel embarrassed or ashamed at their lack of fluency; they are nervous about saying things wrong. They fear failure." (Abley, 2004, p. 74) For more information about MAP visit: <http://ourmothertongues.org/language/Euchee/5>. See Figure 5 and visit <https://twitter.com/#!/yuchilanguage/> to learn more about Yuchi language projects.



Figure 5:
Yuchi
language
project
logo

The Yuchi and Mohawk stories are based on community will. Richard reflects on the power of taking initiative and the need to work both with funding sources and independent of them: "a lot of times communities will gear their language programs based on what they can get funding for. Funding is great, there should be more of it, but there's much you can still do without it." (Abley, 2004, p. 74)

In both of these threatened language communities hope entered through awareness of a problem, a community consensus to address it and a long term plan of effort and patience. In both communities the wisdom, skills and compassion of elders played a pivotal role. Elders "can be tremendous human catalysts in the pursuit of culturally relevant and dynamic programs which are created in concert with the communities they serve. They can provide a voice that will enable schools to become more aware and responsive" (Goulet, 2001). "They remember stories and legends, traditions and life on the land and that they preserved a rich history, while living and embodying Aboriginal knowledge." (McKay-Carriere and Bilash, 2010, p. 36)

Alberta's francophone community - learning from research

In the mid 80s Alberta's francophone community began to notice a language shift in their community. With globalization and mass media community leaders began to hear more and more English and less and less French. They knew that the language(s) used by and within a group sends a message about what is important and wanted to insure that young people continued to value their heritage, not only because of the rights that other generations had fought so hard to earn, but because they wanted the next generation to be able to savour

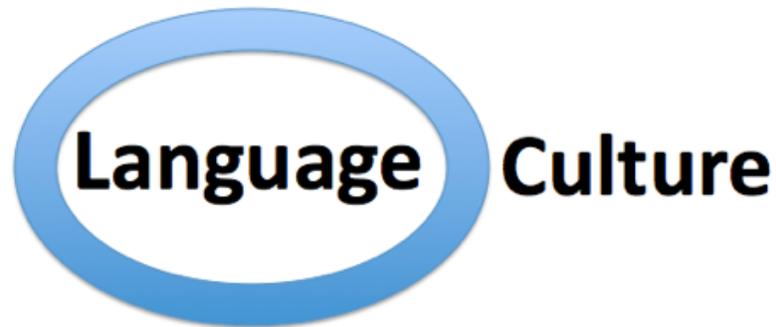
the taste of all of the flavours of ice-cream, like Mohawk Milton Diabo.

Their study explored what Fishman (1972) described as "domains" of language use or where, with whom, about what and how often French was used. Knowing that we speak one language in the domain of the home and another at work, still another when engaging in certain social interactions like watching TV, a film or play, playing sports or joining a choir, and a fourth in ritualistic contexts, the community commissioned a study about the domains of multi- and inter-generational language use and the perceived status of speaking French. The 1988 results revealed an alarming shift in language use among francophone youth in grades 11 and 12 in participating schools. (Landry and Allard, 1988) With rates significantly higher in urban areas, community organizations and institutions (church, schools, halls, radio and TV stations) collaborated to increase media, sports, cultural and intergenerational activities for youth in French.

A follow up study by Denise Moulun-Passek (1999) ten years later revealed that the community's efforts were successful. By using French not only in church and rituals, but also in the home and car, at sports clubs and through media, the Francophone community followed the rule that the greater number of domains in which a language is used the greater will be its health in an individual and group. They chose what David Crystal (2000) describes as an obligatory relationship of language and identity: community members feel that they cannot belong to the community without speaking the language; they feel obliged to learn and use it. See Figures 6 and 7. Further, the francophone community insured that language learning was widely accessible to any age of learner, thus welcoming new members and facilitating their participation.

Mother Language Day 2012 (cont.)

Figure 6: David Crystal's Language as Obligatory to identity and community involvement



"If a community adopts the **obligatory view**, it will expect revitalization to be focused on matters directly to do with language – language teaching resources and training... (Crystal, 2000, p. 124).

Figure 7: David Crystal's Language as Optional to identity and community involvement



"If it adopts the **optional view**, it will expect revitalization to be focused on matters to do with the culture – providing social welfare, for example or introducing measures to boost the economy" (Crystal, 2000, p. 124).

The francophone community also knew that the perception of using French had to be seen as positive both within the groups of the community and by those outside the community. They knew that messages about language use – its presence or absence in the public sphere – are sent consciously and unconsciously (Landry and Bourhis, 1997).

Perceptions of language use in different institutions varies (Grin, 1992; Grin & Vaillancourt, 1997; Grin & Vaillancourt, 1999). In Alberta, for example, the English language is observed in a variety of large/high status domains (government, education, science, media), while

other minority languages, such as French or Cree or heritage languages are mostly observed in the smaller/lower status domains (arts, friends, family). When the language is only used in these smaller/lower status domains "Folklorization" occurs. Because such minority languages are often restricted to these domains, there is a greater danger for language shift: "With each loss of a domain, it should be noted, there is a loss of vocabulary, discourse patterns, and stylistic range. It is easy to see how a language could eventually die, simply because, having been denuded of most of its domains, there is hardly any vocabulary left to do it with" (Crystal, 2000, p. 83).

The francophone communities have worked tirelessly to provide a framework of high status domains for public use of French. They acknowledge that the source of discomfort using a language other than English in Western Canada suggests a "de facto language policy and practice" (Shohamy, 2006, p. 110) and they have chosen to confront this phenomenon by building institutions that develop youth understanding of the purpose of speaking French and confidence and pride in using it.

Research of concern

It is not only francophones *hors de Québec* that are concerned about language loss. The following five studies, among many, suggest

Mother Language Day 2012 (cont.)

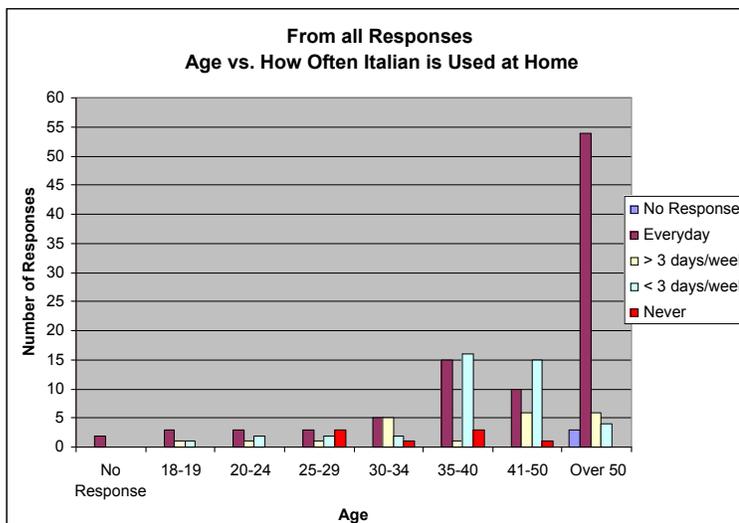
concerns about the dominance of English and the lessening of the status of non-English language use in Canada.

1. Although Chart 1 of Attitudes to immigration and immigrants based on the 2003 International Social Survey Program reveals Canadians' openness toward immigration levels and perceptions that they are assets to the economy, simultaneously, as the last column conveys, there is a very strong sentiment that they should adapt to Canadian cultural ways, namely, mainstream Anglophone ways, including use of English. Although this chart reveals Canadian tolerance for diversity, multiculturalism and immigration, and at rates much higher than those of other western nations included in the survey, an assimilationist attitude remains. "Despite the policy objective of defining integration as a two-way street that requires the accommodation on the part of both immigrants and Canadian society, the integration discourse suggests that it is immigrants and not Canadian society and its institutions that are required to change" (Li, 2003, p.10), and such change involves use of English!

Chart 1: Attitudes to immigration and immigrants based on 2003 International Social Survey Program

	Reduce immigration levels	Immigrants increase crime	Immigrants good for economy	Immigrants should adapt
Austria	61.0	68.8	38.2	67.5
Canada	32.2	27.2	62.6	71.1
Germany	70.3	62.6	28.6	64.2
Netherlands	69.9	47.8	26.7	87.8
Norway	71.3	79.0	30.5	79.8
Spain	51.5	57.6	49.2	68.1
Sweden	57.8	57.2	44.3	84.7
UK	77.8	39.8	21.6	75.3
USA	56.3	26.8	45.5	52.6

2. Palladino's study of language use in the Italian community in Western Canada reveals that frequency of use of Italian decreases with age (See Figure 3) (2005, p. 62). Such rates seem to somewhat contradict statistics from the same participants about their beliefs: 92% of all respondents indicated that speaking Italian is important to communicate with family members and friends in Italy; 51% to speak with family and friends in Canada; and 77% indicated that speaking the language was important to feel connected with their Italian origins.



Mother Language Day 2012 (cont.)

3. In Chronopoulos' 2008 study of Greek language use in Alberta students reported that they speak the most Greek with their mother, father, and grandparents and are also most likely to speak to grandparents (grandmothers in particular) in Greek all the time. Language use with others are much less frequent, revealing that like the Yuchi's MAP initiative, the older generations who speak the Greek language, especially grandmothers, are a great resource for children trying to learn the Greek language. Are today's parents capable of succeeding their parents as transmitters of the language in the same way?

4. Even with capable bilingual leaders and youth participants in a Spanish-language scouting group, Guardado found that English was sometimes used. "... the implicit message the children may have received was that although Spanish is valuable, some things are too important to be done in Spanish" (Guardado, 2009, p. 117).

5. Among bilinguals, attitude and social support for language use has a powerful influence on identity. "In a minority situation, the support received from ingroup members is just as important for identity and adjustment as language maintenance" (Gaudet and Clement, 2009, p. 223). "Within a community, attitudes will be mixed: some members will be in favour of preservation, others will be against it. There will be pride, apathy, guilt, denial, regret, and many other emotions. Moreover, the reasons for support and opposition will be mixed (Crystal, 2000, p. 103). In some situations, families may not feel the HL has helped them to gain anything in the economic sense, or as Salegio's study (1999) suggests, may not see the threatened language holding any sort of value. Attitude, Crystal (2000) states, is what counts: "If speakers take pride in their language, enjoy listening to

others using it well, use it themselves whenever they can and as creatively as they can, and provide occasions when the language can be heard, the conditions are favourable for maintenance" (Crystal, 2000, p. 81).

Challenge

I close today's talk with a challenge – a challenge to all of you of all ages to conduct a self assessment about your own use of your HL. Has English crept in like Milton's mother had noticed in her teenage son? Are grandparents key conduits of the HL for your family? Are they involved in doing things with the young people, like in the master-apprentice program of the Yuchi? How much English do you use with your children? Your parents? Is it always necessary? Are the youth in your family and community prepared to be language transmitters to the next generation, or are you relying on immigration to renew? What do you need to renew your commitment to the energy required to increase the use of the HL in your home and community? Would a language use assessment in your community unite community organizations as it did for the francophones? Are you using your HL to search for internet sites and modeling for youth in your community?

Closing

When a language dies on our planet we all lose its wisdom, its eco-ethno-biological knowledge, its stories of socialization and its worldview. When a language falls from use in a family, all lose its knowledge, values, beliefs as well as a personal connection to another place on the planet.

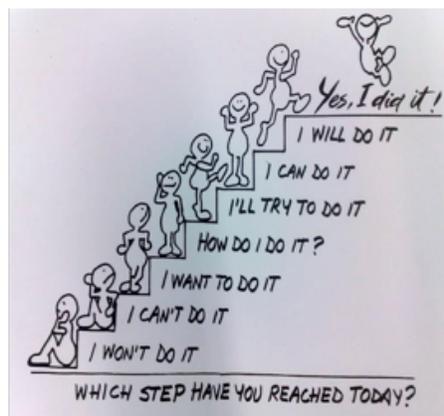
"Language is more than a mere means of communication, it is part and parcel of the identity and culture of the people speaking it. It is the means by which individuals understand themselves and the world around them."

- Mahe et al. vs the Queen in Right of Alberta, Supreme Court of Canada, 1990



Thank you.

Special thanks to Christie Jensen for her assistance to date on developing the UNESCOcat LINGUAPAX website.



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IHLA - NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2012



IHLA is a non-profit umbrella organization that has been in existence since 1978, under former names of AELTA and NAHLA.

During the past 10 years as International and Heritage Languages Association this coordinating body has evolved with its member schools and focused its efforts towards becoming a crucial element in language education at the community level in Northern Alberta (north of Red Deer).

IHLA's network of friends, followers and supporters, includes a number of very important organizations, locally, provincially and at the national level.

Through its activities of professional development in the area of international and heritage language education promotion, support and awareness IHLA is an important

stakeholder in educational matters in the province of Alberta.

IHLA member schools maintain active annual membership and participate in its numerous activities, thus contributing to the life and events of the organization. IHLA also welcomes individual members who wish to be involved in language education at the community level.

The IHLA Board of Directors, consisting of committed individuals from its member schools who are elected every two years, are the driving force of the association's key endeavours in supporting and promoting its values and ideas in the community.

IHLA is a member of numerous professional and non-profit organizations that promote language and culture education.

IHLA's annual activities include the celebration of the International Mother Language Day, the publication of professional newsletters, offerings of professional development opportunities to members and non-members alike, awareness and promotion of cultural identity, to technology integration for second language classes, to leadership in the community, to and creation and adaptation of learning resources.

Since 2001 IHLA has received funding support from Alberta Education that has enabled IHLA to continue and expand its key activities throughout these years. IHLA receives additional funding from membership dues, donations and regular Casino fund-raising initiatives.

For any further information email IHLA at: edmontonihla@gmail.com

TOP TEN ACTIVITIES AT IHLA (to promote language learning)

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3. MLD BOOK
4. PD SESSIONS - FREE
5. TEACHER SUPPORT
6. SCHOOLS SUPPORT
7. NEWSLETTER
8. RESOURCES
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IHLA

2nd floor - 10010 - 105 STREET

T5J 1C4 - Edmonton - Alberta

www.ihla.ca

edmontonihla@gmail.com

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