



Bangladesh-Canada Association, Windsor-Essex (BCAWE)

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY, 21 FEBRUARY:

Languages are among the most precious, and at the same time the most fragile, treasures of mankind. "International Mother Language Day" (IMLD) is a worldwide annual observance held on 21 February to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. First announced by UNESCO on 17 November 1999, it was formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution establishing 2008 as the International Year of Languages.

The date for the IMLD corresponds to the remarkable day in 1952 when students from the University of Dhaka, Jagannath University and Dhaka Medical College in Bangladesh, demonstrating for the recognition of Bengali as the mother tongue in which Bengali Nation start speaking at birth. Four students were brutally shot dead on the spot by police of the Pakistan Government during the protest.

Current International Mother Language Day events include multicultural festivals which promote the hearing of all voices, and display social cohesion, cultural awareness, and tolerance. The unique nuances and subtleties of linguistic communication which connect individuals to culture and personal identity are valued and encouraged. UNESCO supports mother language and multilingual education through International Mother Language Day (IMLD). As UNESCO is celebrating this day at different places in the world; the Bangladeshi Community in Windsor also organizing a rally and Bangladeshi National flag hoisting ceremony at 350 City Hall Square West, Windsor to recognize the day, the 21st February.

Below are examples of activities from past IMLD events by UNESCO:

School teachers:

- A scavenger hunts to teach about languages and cultures from around the world.
- Mapping of your students' mother tongues to demonstrate that perhaps many of their classmates may have mother language(s) different from the languages used for teaching.
- Student introductions and descriptions of their families and cultures including teaching a little of their mother language to the other children.
- Student recitation of poetry and stories -- or singing of songs -- in their mother language.
- Paintings and drawings with captions in mother languages for display both inside and outside schools.
- Short speeches by children, special guest speakers, prose readings, drama, features on literature, mime, traditional dancing, games and folklore, posters, displays, and children's creative writing including original poetry and class discussions, all in mother tongue.

University students:

- Interaction and debate competitions in/on mother tongue; reading and writing competitions in/on mother tongue.
- A course/workshop/seminar/conference/panel discussion/video-conference in/on mother language.
- Cultural activities such as films, plays and music that celebrate different languages.
- A survey of mother languages on campus by interviewing fellow students and publishing the results online

The media:

- Exhibitions on linguistic and cultural diversity
- Local and national media articles on local languages spoken in their regions and the cultural expressions of these languages. It is particularly important that these be available not only in printed media, but also on radio, television and websites.