



INTERNATIONAL

MOTHER

LANGUAGE

DAY

From the very first to the last moments of our lifespan, through generations and on all continents, language forms part of our daily existence and that is but only one of the reasons why we are inviting you to celebrate International Mother Language Day on 21 February. A language is definitely the most powerful instrument to preserve and develop our tangible and intangible heritage.

This day is celebrated to develop greater awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue. This day had been annually observed since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. The date represents the day in 1952 when students demonstrating for recognition of their language, Bangla, as one of the two national languages of the then Pakistan, the capital of what is now called Bangladesh.

Our Language Team at the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) promotes the principle of multilingualism and assists with the implementation of the Provincial Language Act aimed at ensuring the equal status of the three official languages, namely Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English. This team works very close with the Western Cape Language Committee in monitoring the implementation of the language policy. Special attention is also given to previously marginalised languages such as South African Sign Language and Nama, our indigenous language. Our country is characterised by a rich diversity in race, culture, religion and language which is reflected in the 11 official languages enshrined in the South African Constitution.

It is important to remain critical to seek alternative and creative ways to promote our uniquely Western Cape languages and cultures. As much as we need to be able to engage with one another it cannot be at the expense of our own languages and identities. In celebrating this day we call on Team DCAS to take pride in their mother language as we are in danger of losing our cultural roots, values and mother tongue if we don't nurture it and carry it over to the next generation.



DEPARTMENT of
CULTURAL AFFAIRS
and SPORT

Provincial Government of the Western Cape