

## Keep Your Home Language Alive!



### Why?

1. Your child will develop stronger English skills if you continue to use and develop your home language.
2. Your home language will help your child to learn. When a child knows about things in the home language, he or she will learn about things in the second language more easily.
1. Your home language supports your child's sense of identity.
2. Knowing the home language helps children to communicate easily within the family and the community. (adapted from Coelho, E. Adding English 2004 Pippin Publishing)

### How?

#### Ideas for Children of All Ages

- Talk to your children in the language you know best.
- Talk more about current events and issues.
- Go to formal and informal home language community events.
- Go to religious, family, or cultural events in the home language.
- Enroll your child in heritage or international language programs. (e.g. Southern Alberta Heritage Language Association: 403-233-7998)
- Show support for heritage or international language programs by visiting classes and developing relationships with teachers.
- Talk about why it is important to keep first language growing at home.
- Visit the public library and sign out resources in your first language.

#### 5-minute activities in the home language

Greeting questions: E.g. How are you today?

Same time everyday questions:

- E.g. What was something interesting you learned at school? What was the best part of today? What was the hardest part of today? How did you handle it?

Chats: Talk to your child at regular times. E.g. When eating together.

Music and Dance:

- Listen to songs in your home language.
- Listen to traditional music. Dance to the music!

#### Activities in the home language that take 1 hour or more

Family Journey:

- Make a family photo album.
- Show your family's journey to Canada.
- Use the photo album to tell stories about things that happened on your way to Canada.
- Write down the stories in your home language.



- Write and tell stories about your own father, mother, grandparents, and family.

Poster: Our Family is ...

- Make a poster of important words that describe your family. E.g. "Our family is together; Our family is loving; Our family remembers where we come from; Our family honours our ancestors."
- Put the poster where everyone can see it. Use drawings or pictures, especially for younger children.

Dictionary:

- Make a family dictionary of new words. Use your home language and English.
- Include words that reflect your family values, such as: honour, courage, loyalty.

First language programs:

- Watch YouTube or DVD's in the language of your home country.
- Watch talk shows to understand the latest way of using the home language.

### More Ideas for Younger Children

#### 10 – minute activities in the home language

Sentence game:

- Make sentences in your home language. Each person adds one word to make a sentence.

Board games:

- Use your home language to play simple games (e.g. Snakes and Ladders)

Traditional or Childhood Games:

- Teach your children some of the games you played as a child.
- Have a family fun night and play these games.

Books and stories:

- Tell stories and read to children in your home language.
- Read books from the library to your child in your home language.
- Talk about the pictures with younger children.
- Find dual-language books for children who are struggling with words in their home language.
- Share readings about the history of your culture.

Discussion:

- Talk about current events (e.g. Olympics)

#### Activities in the home language that take 1 hour or more

Word Games:

- Word-hunt in the house
- Give clues in home language about where to find things in the house
- Give a prize for finding five objects



## More Ideas for Older Children

### 10 – minute activities in the home language

Board Games:

- Try games where you can use first language while you play (such as Scrabble).

### 30 – minute activities in the home language

What's happening in the community or the world?

- Discuss current events in your home language.
- Help children understand new words. Encourage them to use the new words in the discussion.

### Activities in the home language that take 1 hour or more

Encourage higher thinking:

- Read a newspaper article
- Watch a news story, current affairs program, or television program
- Listen to the radio
- Watch a movie
- Talk about historical information and perspectives.  
Discuss, "What is the one big idea this program presented?  
Discuss how what you read or watched would affect the individual, family, and nation.

Books:

- Have your child choose books from the library in your first language.
- Read the same book.  
Discuss, "What is the one big idea?" found in the book.

Resources

- Internet
- International digital library
- YouTube
- TV
- Radio
- [www.tunein.com](http://www.tunein.com) has radio programs from around the world.
- DVDs
- CDs

*Keeping the home language strong is not always easy.  
Make a plan to keep using the home language every day.*