

Celebrate!

# United Nations' International Mother Language Day

*Languages are who we are. By protecting them,  
we protect ourselves.* — UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova

February 21, 2013



**Join the Office of Head Start and the National Center  
on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness** and  
celebrate International Mother Language Day on February 21!

**What is it?** Mother Language Day, sponsored by the United Nations, honors the 6000 heritage/home languages spoken throughout the world, and encourages everyone learn and use multiple languages. Head Start programs, where over 140 languages are spoken, many of which are endangered, can lead local efforts to share the value, importance, and joy of all languages!

**Why celebrate?** “Multilingualism is our ally in ensuring quality education for all, in promoting inclusion and in combating discrimination” (UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova). Head Start programs are committed to taking every opportunity to affirm every child’s culture, language, and lifeways. International Mother Language Day provides an opportunity to celebrate diversity, increase understanding, and engage in dialog.

### **How can families participate?**

- \* Encourage all families to share at home with their children the stories, songs, rhymes, etc. of their childhood.
- \* Help families record the songs they sing in their mother/heritage/home languages for children in your program to hear.
- \* Share with the families of the children in your program the books in the classroom that reflect their home languages.
- \* Invite all families, community leaders, and Elders to share a song, story, or poem in their home language in the classroom and during family fun nights and home-based socializations.
- \* Encourage families to talk with their children about how people speak different languages and why that is a positive experience for all.
- \* Invite all families, community leaders, and Elders to share what their home language means to them.
- \* Using songs that are sung in the classroom, provide families with the words to these songs in different languages.
- \* Share word and language games that families can play at home, such as lotto games.

