

**GRADUATE STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION**
University of Saskatchewan



Emmanuel and St. Chad Chapel
1337 College Drive
Saskatoon, SK, S7N 0W6
(306)-966-8471
gsa.admn@usask.ca

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The Graduate Students' Association (GSA) observes the International Mother Language Day 2022 to promote cultural diversity, inclusion, and multilingualism. In 1999, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared February 21 as the International Mother Language Day. This day is observed to protect languages used by people around the world.

The concept of International Mother Language Day arose from a movement in Bangladesh in 1952 when the then united Pakistan's (East and West Pakistan) Prime Minister declared that "Urdu" would be the only official language of Pakistan. In 1952, more than 50% of the Pakistani population lived in East Pakistan, and more than 95% spoke Bengali. On February 21, 1952, a student-led mass gathering was observed at the Capital city of East Pakistan, Dhaka (Currently the capital city of Bangladesh), as a peaceful protest to have their mother language, 'Bengali,' as the second and first official language of United Pakistan and East Pakistan, respectively. Police opened fire on the rally and brutally killed many students, including the general public. Since then, the people of Bangladesh have been observing February 21 as the National Mother Language Day in tribute to this language movement. UNESCO believes that early life education should start with the mother language or mother tongue. In solidarity with the martyred Bengali language movement, UNESCO adopted February 21 as the International Mother Language Day. There are a lot of endangered and extinct languages worldwide, including in Canada. Also, there are fewer Indigenous languages, and some are even at the risk of declining further.

We will continue to educate ourselves and collaborate with the university and student organizations to continue our support to promote diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism. We also welcome our students to work with us to establish initiatives to help protect languages used by people worldwide and celebrate multiculturalism and multilingualism at the GSA.

GSA Executives
Graduate Students' Association
University of Saskatchewan