

SAHLA 2026 Languages Education Symposium:

"Languages Learning: Cultural Understanding, Community & Social Cohesion, & Enhanced Career Opportunities."

Saturday May 16, 2026, 9am – 3:40pm

Selkirk Room, DoubleTree Hilton Hotel, 2120 - 16 Avenue NE Calgary

AGENDA

8:45-9:00 am - Registration / Breakfast

9:20 am - Symposium Opens. Host: **Michael Gretton**, Coordinator, SAHLA

9:30 am – Welcoming remarks from SAHLA – **Michael Embaie**, President, SAHLA

9:45 am Morning **Session I Workshop**

AI Use and Assessment for Learners:

Presenter: **Dr. Vincent Chiew**

Host: **Aurora Dacanay**, SAHLA Board Member

AI technology is proliferating everywhere now and fast. The learning curve is slow for instructors, while the exponential utilization line is fast for learners. So, where is the intersecting point of a happy place, if it exists, for both instructors and learners? In this interactive presentation, we will learn together how to better handle learners' AI use and assess learners' AI work. The presenter will share some of his practical approaches and consolidate interactive results for SAHLA to distribute to interested parties.

Dr. Vincent Chiew has been using and implementing AI since the early 80s. AI has been implemented in academia, enterprises, and the industrial and military sectors. He has been teaching AI for about 20 years. In the last few years, he has converted and implemented many courses' activities, lessons, and assessments using AI for business schools, technical schools, continuing education, and corporate training.

Learning outcome:

1. Understanding and handling the current state of AI
2. Using AI for teaching and learning
3. Assessing learners' AI work

10:50 am Morning **Session II Workshop**

**From Teacher-Led to Learner-Centered: Rethinking Heritage Language Classrooms in Canada
Heritage Language Teaching for Canadian-Born Learners**

Presenter: **Johnson Kunnel**, Instructor, SAIT

Host: **Ceceilia John**, SAHLA Board Member

Heritage language classrooms in Canada are often taught by teachers educated in more traditional, teacher-centered systems while their learners are Canadian-born children shaped by learner-centered educational expectations. This session explores the pedagogical adjustments heritage language teachers can make when teaching Canadian-born immigrant children in a Canadian context. Drawing on classroom experience and reflective practice, the presentation highlights common challenges, cultural and instructional shifts, and practical strategies for moving toward more learner-centered, participatory classrooms without losing the cultural values that underpin heritage language education.

Johnson Kunnel is an EAL educator who feels at home most in the classroom, learning alongside his students. He has worked across post-secondary and K-12 EAL programs in Canada, Kazakhstan, Oman, and India, teaching in a wide range of academic, workplace, and settlement contexts. He holds a Doctor of Education in EAL from the University of Calgary, grounded in a strong focus on learner-centered language education. Johnson serves as President of the ATEAL Executive Board and currently teaches learner-centered Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) courses at SAIT in Calgary.

12:00 pm **Lunchtime. Buffet.**

12:20 pm Lunchtime remarks from SAHLA: **Michael Embaie**, President SAHLA

Michael Embaie was born in Eritrea (East Africa or Horn of Africa) and came to Canada in 1983. Michael has a Bachelor and a Master of Social Work Degree with specialization in Policy and International Social work from the University of Calgary. Michael completed the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Law program, and as a result is a licensed regulated Immigration Consultant in Canada. Michael completed a graduate course (Diploma) in International Law and Protection of Refugees at York University, Toronto, Ontario. Michael worked for the federal Government of Canada, Department of Immigration and Refugee Board for 25 years as Chief of Research and Documentation Centre for the Prairie Region (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba); and as a Tribunal Officer and Dispute Resolution Officer for Western Canada. Michael has been teaching graduate and undergraduate courses as a Sessional Instructor at the University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work & Dept. of Sociology for 17 years. Michael also worked for the United Nations for seven years as a Resettlement Consultant & Training Expert.

12:30 Welcome from **Councillor Raj Dhaliwal**, Ward 5 City of Calgary

1:00 pm Afternoon **Session III Workshop**

Gamification: Making Language Learning Fun!

Presenter: **Dora Dilullo-Patten**, Instructor, University of Calgary.

Host: **Susan Eng**, SAHLA Board Member

Gamification will help take your classes from humdrum to great fun! Gamification is using game elements in educational activities. In this workshop we will talk about the benefits of using it in

language learning. We will explore ways to use gamification. We will discuss some activities and tools for your classes. Finally, an overview of the Teaching Second Languages program at the University of Calgary will also be provided.

Dora Di Lullo-Patten (M.Ed. TESL) has been in the field of second language acquisition for over 40 years. She has taught students and teachers on 5 continents at various universities, colleges and schools. She has taught at the University of Calgary for over 30 years and had her own business Specialists in English Training for 23 years. Dora has a passion for mentoring and teacher training. She teaches in the Teaching Second Languages Program at the University of Calgary, has been a LINC PBLA lead teacher at the CBE, and an ACE trainer and examiner for several international exams such as IELTS. She has served on the ATESL board in the presidential chain from 2019-2022 and was the representative for Alberta to TESL Canada from 2022 to 2023 and currently she sits as the Vice-President of TESL Canada Federation.

2:00 pm Afternoon **Session IV Workshop**

Community Language Schools Panel Session. Schools Overview, challenges and solutions

Principals from 5 different language schools will share some highlights about their schools.

-Bangla School – Sultanul Islam, IT Secretary

-Alberta Chung Wah Chinese School – Herman Ng, Teacher

-Calgary Korean School - Rachel Kim, Principal

-BCAA Brazilian Portuguese Language School – Janaina Jardim, Teacher

-Ukrainian School – Ridna Shkola – Taras Voytkiv, Principal

1. Purpose & overview of school. What year school was first established. School location, # of students, teachers & volunteers. Grade levels taught, # of classes.
2. Brief overview of school responsibilities, curriculum, classroom teaching & learning activities.
3. Language school operations, budget & overhead costs (facility rental & instructors' honorarium). Funding/fundraising activities.
4. School collaboration with country of origin; And collaboration with other language schools in Calgary, or schools in other cities or provinces.
5. School successes and challenges.

Questions and answers.

3:30 pm - **Closing remarks / Symposium close**

SAHLA wishes to thank ALBERTA EDUCATION for its grant support.

Alberta Education's funding is essential for SAHLA and our schools for our programs and services including the teaching and learning of international/heritage languages, schools' curriculum and classroom teaching resources development and language instructors' professional development.

SAHLA wishes to THANK all of our Language Schools, Principals, Teachers, Students, Parents and Volunteers for their commitment to the teaching and learning of international languages.

SAHLA and our 45 language schools represent 600 teachers and principals, and over 7,000 K-12 students in the teaching, learning and development of international languages education.

SAHLA leads, coordinates and deliver professional development programs and activities for language schools, instructors and principals; including the University of Calgary Teaching Second Languages (TSL) Certificate Program, workshops and our annual Symposium. SAHLA assists schools with curriculum development support, CBE classroom facility rental support and teaching resources support for community language schools, principals, teachers and students.

Southern Alberta Heritage Language Association (sahla)

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Alberta Education: International languages

Programs of study under Provincial curriculum to support study in 9 international languages.

<https://www.alberta.ca/international-languages>

University of Calgary Teaching Second Languages (TSL) Certificate Program

www.conted.ucalgary.ca/tsl

<https://conted.ucalgary.ca/public/category/courseCategoryCertificateProfile.do?method=load&certificateId=3081675>

Calgary Board of Education - School Rental Request Process: SAHLA Language Schools:

<https://www.cbe.ab.ca/FormsManuals/Southern-Alberta-Heritage-Language-School-SAHLA-Guidelines.pdf>

Calgary Board of Education - International Certificate Program:

Module A: 5 credits or 125 hours of Second Language Study with SAHLA Language Schools.

www.cbeinternational.ca internationalstudents@cbe.ab.ca

Calgary Public Library: World language storybook readalouds for children

Read and listen to picture books in 65+ languages, including English, French, Spanish, Ukrainian, Punjabi, Tagalog, Arabic, German, and Russian.

<https://www.calgarylibrary.ca/read-learn-and-explore/digital-library/lote4kids>

Calgary Indigenous Treaty land acknowledgement:

We acknowledge and pay tribute to the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which include the Blackfoot Confederacy (the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations). Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta (Districts 5 and 6).