

# MORE THAN WORDS

LANGUAGE ISN'T JUST A WAY TO TALK TO OTHERS.  
IT'S HOW WE EXPRESS WHO WE ARE.

People in England, New Zealand, Jamaica and parts of Canada speak English. People in France, Haiti, Cameroon and parts of Canada speak French. But that doesn't make them the same. Language is probably the most important part of a **culture** — the mixture of things that connect a particular group of people. What are some of the things that make up your culture? There's music, the way we greet each other, food, beliefs, art, jokes, religion, the way we expect others to behave, and much more. But you can't have a culture if you can't talk to the other people in your group. When a language dies, there are things that can no longer be expressed properly

because the way that culture said them also dies. That's why the people who usually speak up the loudest for a language are parents. They want to make sure their kids learn their language, whether that's during the regular school day or in special classes they pay for. After all, the more languages you can speak, the more people you can speak to, whether that's your grandfather or a person you meet on the other side of the world.



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# HOW CAN IT HELP YOU TO KNOW ANOTHER LANGUAGE?

## THE UNTRANSLATABLES

Every language seems to have some words or sayings that perfectly describe something that other languages don't. Think of French expressions like **Je ne sais quoi** (something you can't quite put your finger on) or **flâner**, which means to wander around a place, just people-watching and taking things in. Non-English-speakers have trouble coming up with a term that means exactly the same thing as our words **silly** and **cool**.

What would happen if you woke up tomorrow and could no longer speak your language? Worse still, what if you were the only person left who spoke your language? How would you talk to anyone else? How would you describe your feelings or ask for what you wanted?

Raffi Cavoukian



Singer Raffi Cavoukian

Hear that? It's the sound of musicians all over Canada who sing in more than one language. There's kids' entertainer Raffi — he speaks English, French, Arabic, Turkish and Armenian! — and the catchy tunes of La Bottine Souriante. Artists like Christie Lee Charles of the Musqueam Nation, Inuit pop singer Aasiva, and Wolastoq (Maliseet) classical singer Jeremy Dutcher make memorable music in all kinds of languages.