Scene from the Yakutsk Conference on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace, July 2014 (T. de Graaf)

OGMIOS Newsletter 54: — 31 August 2014

ISSN 1471-0382 Editor: Christopher Moseley

Published by:
Foundation for Endangered Languages,
172 Bailbrook Lane,
Bath BA1 7AA, England
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1. Editorial

Okinawa is the site of this year’s annual Foundation conference, which is about to begin as you read this. As always – and I find this quite miraculous – we are going there not because our committee chose the venue – but because it chose us. The Ryukyu Islands are, like all our previous venues, a location of language endangerment. Everyone who attends one of our conferences comes away having learned a great deal about the language situation peculiar to the country of our venue, as well as situations from a wide range of countries. By choosing general language-related themes, not specific to a particular region, we ensure a good mix of papers. This year will be no exception. And we have been so lucky over the years, with a steady stream of willing hosts, offering their services and local expertise to perform and demanding and thankless, but ultimately enjoyable, organisational task of hosting an international gathering of like-minded linguists.

So if you reading this, or the institution you represent, feel minded to offer to continue our run of good luck, please get in touch with the Foundation. Organising a conference usually takes about a year, with a team of helpers formed into a local organising committee. We have prepared a document on conference organisation to help you. We now have eighteen years’ experience in organising these conferences, and although circumstances differ a bit from one country to another, the basic principles of conference organisation are much the same everywhere. If you look at the themes of our previous conferences (mentioned in the titles of the Proceedings volumes that are still in print and on sale through our website www.ogmios.org), you will see what general themes have already been covered.

And speaking of our web-site, it has needed rejuvenation for some time. That is why in the last issue of Ogmios we advertised for a new Web-master. I’m pleased to say that we got an instant response from our former Web-master David Nathan, who will need no training in the job. David had had to relinquish the post due to pressure of his other work, but he’s now in a position to come to our aid and make sure that the site is kept up to date, and you, the membership, are kept informed. He will be co-opted onto our Committee and welcomed back.

Can I appeal for more original articles for Ogmios? And now I would like to exercise a little editorial privilege and suggest something to the membership at large: has the Foundation now reached a level of maturity and prestige where we could award an annual prize? The prize could be awarded, for instance to an individual or institution that has done most in the past year to promote either an individual threatened language or the cause of threatened languages generally; alternatively, it could have a narrower mandate and be awarded only for, say, teaching materials or textbooks in an endangered language. This is a subject we haven’t even discussed in the FEL committee yet, but if and when we do, the question will arise as to whether it would be awarded from our existing funds or donated by a generous member, which is why I’m airing the idea here, in the hope that you sometimes read your editorials, and maybe even like to write to your editor!

Christopher Moseley

2. Development of the Foundation

FEL XVIII Okinawa~Uchinaa: Indigenous Languages: Value to the Community

The theme this year will be to consider kinds of value that an indigenous language may bring to its community and environment.

The 2014 FEL Conference will be held in Okinawa, the main island of the Ryukyu Islands in the extreme southwest of the Japanese Archipelago. Six mutually unintelligible Ryukyuan languages are spoken there. All Ryukyuan languages are either definitely or severely endangered today. Ryukyuan languages are part of the Japonic language family, which also include Japanese and the Hachijo language. The Ryukyuan languages separated from Japanese sometime before the 7th century and preserve several phonological distinctions already lost in Old Japanese. It is a probable conclusion that settlers from some part of Kyushu moved into the Ryukyu Islands from the 8th century onward and that the Ryukyuan languages developed on the basis of Kyushu Japonic and Hachijo on the basis of Eastern Japonic, making these languages not daughter languages of Japanese but sister languages. What languages were spoken before the Ryukyus and how they influenced the formation of the Ryukyuan languages remains as yet unknown. It was only after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and the establishment of a modern nation state that Japanese were spread in these islands. Japanese was however spread with such fervour that all Ryukyuan languages are set to become extinct by 2050 if no counter-action is taken.

Attempts to safeguard the Ryukyuan languages are rather recent and language revitalization efforts in a nascent stage. Given this situation in the Ryukyus, FEL XVIII seeks to discuss the societal benefit of maintaining indigenous languages in order to outline and clarify the benefits indigenous languages offer the communities speaking them. There is nothing to be gained in language
loss for communities speaking an endangered language. Quite the contrary is true, maintaining indigenous languages offers many advantages.

There are many ways in which indigenous languages profit their speakers. They fall into four larger categories:

Indigenous languages can be employed for cultural effects such as song, poetry, speech events, ceremonies or festivals. As a matter of fact, performing arts, Ryukyuan shimauta folk songs and kumiwudui opera, is one of two domains remaining intact for the Ryukyuan languages today (the other is indigenous religion).

Indigenous languages may also be employed for economic purposes. In recent years, Ryukyuan languages can increasing be often found on local food products, on restaurant menus and in the linguistic landscape. The rationale behind this phenomenon is economic. Local products and services employing local languages promise better revenues.

Indigenous languages also offer a wealth of knowledge to their speakers. Since these languages have been formed in a particular geographic and cultural environment, these languages are the carrier of local knowledge of this specific language ecology. Such knowledge pertains to climate, customs, beliefs, vegetation and so on. Needless to say, indigenous languages also inform linguists about such issues as their origin, development and contact, and ensure a more comprehensive understanding of language in general.

Indigenous languages also serve as a powerful tool for indigenous empowerment. All endangered languages are spoken by communities dominated in one way or another by a more powerful community. It is the language of this powerful community which is replacing the indigenous language. Maintaining endangered languages goes hand in hand with establishing a new, more balanced relationship between shifting and dominating communities. In the Ryukyu Islands, domination comes from mainland (hando) Japan. Besides language endangerment this domination also manifests in problems relating to the school curricula and textbooks, but most prominently in the long-standing military base problems (kiichi mondai) of Okinawa.

This range of topics is unified by the feature that these various issues all point to ways in which indigenous languages best profit the community.

**Okinawa International University, Ginowan City, Okinawa, Japan, 17-20 September 2014**

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**FEL Canada – an invitation**

**Invitation letter to potential vision partners**

**FEL Canada: Strengthening First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages of Canada**

Dear friends and colleagues,

We’re Canada-based members of the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL), writing to you to let you know about our vision to start a not-for-profit organization, eventually with charitable status, to strengthen Aboriginal languages in Canada: those of First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

This initiative arose out of the 2013 FEL Conference ‘Endangered Languages beyond Boundaries’ which you attended last October at Carleton University here in Ottawa. The conference highlighted the growing interest, concerns and ongoing research and collaborative efforts in the preservation, maintenance and revitalization of Aboriginal languages across Canada. Discussions during the conference wrap-up led to a proposal that a Canada-based effort be started to strengthen Aboriginal languages in Canada, in recognition of the challenges associated with their survival.

**A focus on the First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages of Canada**

As both recent and long-standing members of FEL (UK/International), we agree that, due to the urgency of the Canadian situation, a Canada-based effort is crucial; and the executive of FEL is supportive of the founding of an independent Canadian chapter. During the 2013 conference we were inspired by the stories and concerns shared by Aboriginal scholars and people working in endangered language situations all over the world, and here in Canada. The growing awareness of the importance of Aboriginal – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis – languages in Canada, and the significant ongoing efforts towards improving their survival suggest that the time is right, and that prospects are good, for a FEL Canada chapter to help make a difference in the future of Canada’s indigenous languages.

**FEL Canada: A unique contribution**

We recognize that there are already a number of important organizations working with Aboriginal languages in Canada, and we seek to work alongside them. On the government front, the Department of Canadian Heritage, through the Aboriginal Languages Initiative (ALI) program, funds a variety of community-based language projects, while other federal initiatives and programs also support educational and learning resources for Aboriginal languages across Canada, in communities and schools, on reserves, in northern and remote loca-
tions, and in urban areas. However, while these programs support some good work, we feel that it’s not enough to depend on government funding alone, since it is not always reliable, sufficient, easy to obtain, or easy to administer.

In addition, there are various First Nation, Inuit and Métis language and cultural organizations all across Canada, doing excellent work in developing language expertise and teaching resources for their communities, and often in collaboration with other organizations, schools, universities, governments, and institutions. There is, however, a need for additional awareness of the importance of the situation in the wider Canadian society, and engagement with the issues by all Canadians. Because of this, we will seek to facilitate the development of new sources of funding and collaboration from interested individuals, communities, organizations and corporations, and to channel resources toward efforts and projects supporting Aboriginal language and culture.

**Our purpose**

Our statement of purpose and our key aims are inspired by FEL’s manifesto and specifically adapted to the Canadian situation: FEL Canada exists to safeguard intangible cultural heritage for future generations by enabling the documentation, protection, revitalization and promotion of Aboriginal – First Nation, Inuit and Métis – languages in Canada, and endangered languages throughout the world.

The key aims of FEL Canada are as follows:

1. to reclaim and strengthen use of Aboriginal and endangered languages in all contexts: at home, in education, in the media, and in social, cultural and economic life

2. to raise awareness, both inside and outside the communities where Aboriginal and endangered languages are spoken, of the diversity of these languages, their value to community and individual well-being, health and educational outcomes, and their value to shared human heritage; and to raise awareness about challenges to their survival

3. to develop new sources of funding and collaboration, and to allocate resources – financial assistance, training, consultation, information and facilities – for use in the documentation, preservation and revitalization of Aboriginal and endangered languages

4. to promote the availability and use of Aboriginal languages in education at all levels in Canada, both within formal school systems and in the context of community initiatives; to enhance educational quality and outcomes; and to enable collaboration and the sharing of educational expertise among language communities

5. to promote the recognition of Aboriginal languages as national and co-official languages of Canada, and to work out practical and financially responsible ways in which this recognition can be implemented.

**Who can be involved?**

In keeping with the 2013 FEL conference themes, our approach is one of collaboration, building on community connections and a variety of research, skills and disciplines. We welcome the involvement of people from all kinds of backgrounds, and with all kinds of skills: First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals, communities and organizations; people in research and education at all levels; people with experience in working with minority language communities; people with skills in organizational management, accounting, fund-raising, law and communications – in short, every person can make a difference in the future of Canada’s indigenous languages!

When the organization is founded, we would like you to consider joining. You could simply be a member, or you could also contribute through the organizational positions to be filled within FEL Canada: board member, organizational representative, communications manager, accountant, fundraiser, volunteer language expert or consultant, legal advisor, computational assistant, web designer. Can you help with one of these roles? Can you think of other people who might like to get involved? Are there other ways that people could help? Please let us know!

Since we are preparing for incorporation as a not-for-profit corporation, your timely comments, suggestions and statement of interest (within the next few weeks, if possible) would be very deeply appreciated, and will help guide the founding of FEL Canada.

Migwech – thank-you!

Mary Jane Norris (member of Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation; FEL member since 2003 and organizer of FEL’s 2013 conference)

Erik Anonby (Carleton University)

Serena d’Agostino (anthropologist working in Prévost, Québec)
3. Endangered Languages in the News

UNESCO conference on linguistic diversity in cyberspace

By Tjeerd de Graaf

The Third International Conference on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace took place from 28 June until 3 July 2014 in Yakutsk, Russian Federation. This conference gathered representatives from almost 50 countries of diverse regions of the world, in particular also from China, Mongolia and Japan. On behalf of the Centre for Russian Studies at Groningen University, Dr. Tjeerd de Graaf presented a report on the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger, and its improvement on the basis of census data, sound archives and fieldwork. A further discussion about this topic will take place in the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, 28-29 October 2014.

The conference opening gala took place in the Government House of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and its four working days included two plenaries and eight sessions of four sections. The key topics of the conference were focused on ICT, socio-cultural aspects, preservation, and education regarding linguistic and cultural diversity in digital realms.

The cultural programme at the conference included participating in the Yakut national celebration Ysyakh, visiting the Lena Pillars Nature Park and the Arctic Innovation Centre of the Northeastern Federal University of the Russian Federation. A more extensive report about the conference can be found on the Russian UNESCO Committee website, whereas a photo impression is shown at PicasaWeb.

As forests are cleared and species vanish, there’s one other loss: a world of languages

By John Vidal, from the Observer, London 8 June 2014

Benny Wenda from the highlands of West Papua speaks only nine languages these days. In his village of Pyramid in the Baliem valley, he converses in Lani, the language of his tribe, as well as Dani, Yali, Mee and Walak. Elsewhere, he speaks Indonesian, Papua New Guinean Pidgin, coastal Bayak and English.

Wenda has known and forgotten other languages. Some are indigenous, spoken by his grandparents or just a few hundred people from neighbouring valleys; others are the languages of Indonesian colonists and global businesses. His words for “greeting” are, variously, Kawonak, Nayak, Nareh, Koyao, Aelak, Selamt, Brata, Tabeaya and Hello.

New Guinea has around 1,000 languages, but as the politics change and deforestation accelerates, the natural barriers that once allowed so many languages to develop there in isolation are broken down. This is part of a process that has seen languages decline as biodiversity decreases. Researchers have established a correlation between changes in local environments – including the extinction of species – and the disappearance of languages spoken by communities who had inhabited them.

“The forests are being cut down. Many languages are being lost. Migrants come and people leave to find work in the lowlands and cities. The Indonesian government stops us speaking our languages in schools,” says Wenda.

According to a report by researchers Jonathan Loh at the Zoological Society of London and David Harmon at the George Wright Society, the steep declines in both languages and nature mirror each other. One in four of the world’s 7,000 languages are now threatened with extinction, and linguistic diversity is declining as fast as biodiversity – about 30% since 1970, they say.

While around 21% of all mammals, 13% of birds, 15% of reptiles and 30% of amphibians are threatened, around 400 languages are thought to have become extinct in the same time.

New Guinea, the second-largest island in the world, is not just the world’s most linguistically diverse place, it is also one of the most biologically abundant, with tree-climbing kangoeros, birds of paradise, carnivorous mice, giant pigeons, rats bigger than domestic cats and more orchid species than any other place on the planet.

Today, both its wildlife and its languages are endangered. According to linguist and author Asya Pereltsvaig, the language of Bo is spoken by 85 people, Ak by 75 and Karawa by only 63. Likum and Hoia Hoia have around 80 speakers, and Abom just 15. Guramalum in New Ireland Province had at the last count only three speakers and Lua is almost certainly extinct, with a single speaker recorded in 2000.

Ironically, Lua is now the name of a successful computer programming language.

More than half of New Guinea’s and one in four of the world’s remaining languages are threatened, says Jonathan Loh. This compares with estimates that suggest a quarter of all mammals, a third of all sharks and rays and one in seven bird species are endangered.

“There are extraordinary parallels between linguistic diversity and biodiversity,” says Loh. “Both are products of
evolution and have evolved in remarkably similar ways, and both are facing an extinction crisis."

But exactly why there should be such a close link between languages and biological diversity is unclear, even though it was noticed by Darwin. "Places of high diversity, especially tropical forests, have always been known to have high linguistic diversity, whereas tundra and deserts have low diversity," says Loh. "It is possible in some way that higher biodiversity is capable of supporting greater cultural diversity. The explanation seems to be that both biological and cultural diversity depend on the same environmental factors such as temperature and rainfall."

Conservationists fear that the loss of species due to man's activities is accelerating. And linguists say that the wealth of the world's human languages is now safeguarded by very few indigenous peoples, most of whom live precarious lives in developing countries.

Of the 7,000 languages spoken worldwide, half now have fewer than 10,000 speakers, and these 3,500 languages are spoken by only 0.1% of the world's population – equivalent to a city about the size of London. These eight million people are now responsible for keeping the wealth of human cultural history alive, says the report.

At the other end of the spectrum, because of colonisation, globalisation and the worldwide move to cities in the last 30 years, a handful of global languages increasingly dominates: 95% of the world's population speaks one of just 400 languages, each spoken by millions of people, and 40% of us speak one of just eight languages: Mandarin, Spanish, English, Hindi, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian and Japanese.

"We are losing the richness of human diversity, becoming more and more similar. The languages we speak define how we think and understand the world," says Mandana Seyfeddinipur, director of the endangered languages archive at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

"The loss of human culture is frightening," says Loh. "Nearly all the threatened languages are spoken by indigenous peoples and, along with the languages, the traditional knowledge of these cultures is being forgotten. The names, uses, and preparation of medicines, the methods of farming, fishing and hunting are disappearing, not to mention the vast array of spiritual and religious beliefs and practices which are as diverse and numerous as the languages themselves."

Loh and Harman argue that if you want to save nature it may be vital to conserve cultures too. "The vast store of knowledge that has evolved and accumulated over tens of thousands of years could be lost in the next 100 years," says Harman. "While linguists have made efforts to archive as many of the endangered languages as possible, and ethno-biologists have attempted to record the traditional use of plants, the most important conservation takes place on the ground as part of a living culture."

"As we lose rare indigenous languages we lose the cultures and all the knowledge that they contain. The knowledge of indigenous people is phenomenal. Conservationists should make use of it," says Loh.

The authors have developed an "index of linguistic diversity" which shows that the fastest declines have taken place in the Americas and Australia. Languages spoken in Africa, Asia and Europe are faring better. For biodiversity, the fastest rates of decline have occurred in the Indo-Pacific region, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.

"Species populations in North America, Europe and northern Asia have been more stable. Biodiversity has declined most rapidly in the tropics, but remained steady in temperate regions."

"However, linguistic diversity has declined rapidly in the new world [Americas] but more slowly in the old world," says Harman.

The explanation for the different speeds of decline, they say, lies with the threats that both languages and species face. "Habitat loss and degradation is the greatest threat for species, and since 1970 most has taken place in the tropics. In the developed world most habitat destruction took place before 1970, so biodiversity loss has flattened out."

"Languages do not usually go extinct because an entire population of speakers dies out, but because the speakers of a minority, usually indigenous, language shift to a more dominant language and, typically within a few generations, lose their mother tongue."

"Migration, urbanisation and national unification policies have been the primary drivers of language shift in Africa, Asia and Europe. In the Americas and Australia, the primary driver has also been migration, but where the migrants, mainly European, greatly outnumbered the indigenous populations."

"Ultimately both biodiversity and linguistic diversity are diminishing as a result of human population growth, increasing consumption and economic globalisation which are eroding the differences between one part of the world and another," says the report.

Benny Wenda says the link between human culture and biodiversity is clear because it is the indigenous peoples of the world who have mostly conserved nature.

"If you fell the trees then you destroy human culture as well as the birds of paradise. People depend on the forest and the forest has always depended on us. We are as one."

...
Online pioneer plans ‘ark’ to preserve African traditions

By David Smith, from The Guardian (London), 11 June 2014

Offline, off road and off the power grid, the forest village of Ndjoek-Nkong in Cameroon is not an obvious choice for an online venture seeking to emulate the online encyclopedia Wikipedia.

It is, however, a perfect place for an online African “ark” that will collect and preserve the continent’s endangered languages and tradition, says a local man with a mission.

Gaston Donnat Bappa embodies the combination of old and new: he inherited the title of clan chief from his great-grandfather, grandfather and father but has 34 years’ experience in computer technology. He hopes to bring the two worlds together in the user-generated African Traditions Online Encyclopedia.

“People think traditions don’t belong with information and communications technology (ICT) because traditions are so far behind us and ICT is so far ahead of us,” Bappa said. “But if you don’t know who you are, you don’t know where you are going.”

Bappa, 56, is creating a site that he hopes will become the first port of call for African arts and crafts, food, laws, medicine, music, oral storytelling, religion, science, sport—anything that can be defined as tradition. A prototype is open for contributions, with early entries including Myths and Legends of the Bantu, and Concepts of Social Justice in Traditional Africa.

The idea grew from Bappa’s passion for customs from a young age in his village, Ndjoek-Nkong, where he has been chief for 22 years, as well as his travels to more than 20 African countries as a senior IT engineer and consultant and bank executive. Most urgently, he found in the web a chance to rescue a precious legacy on the verge of extinction.

“I saw that even in my tribe traditions are beginning to disappear. When I was going to other countries in Africa I saw it was the same. It’s not because young people don’t want to learn about them but because they don’t have the access in urban areas.”

Languages are a prime example, said Bappa, president of an association of 42 traditional chiefs. “Every week we lose a language in the world. Africa has more languages than any other continent—more than 2,000—and every one has 30 to 50 tribes. If you lose the language it’s very difficult to know the traditions of your area.”

But the Atoe will guard against forgetting, he hopes. The success of Wikipedia, whose English edition has more than 4.5m. articles, is a natural model. Similarly, the Atoe will use Wiki applications for volunteers to input, change or remove content in collaboration with others. Noting that there are already more than 1,000 websites on African traditions, Bappa is adamant that content will be referenced and verified for accuracy.

But unlike Wikipedia, born in 2001 and hosted by the Wikimedia Foundation in the hub of San Francisco, the Atoe’s headquarters will be starting from scratch. Ndjoek-Nkong is 93 miles from Cameroon’s capital, Yaoundé, and 19 miles from the main road in thick forest. There is no access to a telephone network, the Internet or the electricity grid for the population of fewer than 300.

Yet Bappa has a vision. He hopes to fit solar panels to generate power and install servers that will eventually host the Atoe. “We will bring satellite internet to the village so it is connected to the entire world. When we have our own servers, we’ll transfer all the data.”

Until then, Bappa is operating from Yaoundé and working to raise awareness of the project, which he will formally unveil at next year’s eLearning Africa conference. He plans to approach Microsoft and other potential sponsors in an attempt to raise €400,000 (£323,000) for the initial phase. He also hopes to incorporate content from Wikipedia.

“It is not only for Africa,” he said. “It will be open to all worldwide. It is for the whole of humankind because Africa is the cradle of humanity.”

Wakhi as an Endangered Language

By Irfan Ali

Wakhi is a Southeastern Iranian language of Tajikistan, Northern Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China. The people of these regions communicate verbally through the Wakhi language. The language has become contaminated mainly with Urdu and English and other neighbouring languages.

The Wakhi language (khik zik) belongs to the southern cluster of the Pamir languages, in the Iranian cluster of the Indo-European family of languages, where the diverse Ishkashimi and Wakhi languages are also incorporated. This language is spoken by little populations alike in size—all under 10,000—in adjacent, distant regions of Tajikistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China. The Wakhi region in Afghanistan is first and foremost in the Wakhan Corridor; in Pakistan, it is the northern-most part of the Gilgit-Baltistan region; in China, it is the southwest bend of Xinjiang Province; in Tajikistan, it is part of Gorno-Badakhshan.

UNESCO has listed the Wakhi language as one of the languages that will disappear in the coming 50 years. It is due to the fact that it has been a spoken language until now and no serious efforts were made to develop a standard script. Though some Western researchers worked on preserving the ancient...
folklore in this language, nothing - no research - is available on the language structure or grammar and composition. Some local literates tried to develop a text book, but due to limited research work, structural study and other resources, it was not possible for them to document the rich complexity of the language. The Gojal Ismaili Student Association, Karachi, made the first collective effort in the late eighties to document the Wakhi language, followed by efforts from Mr. Haqiqat Ali and some other individuals. Most recently at Al-amyyn Model School, Gultmit, the school administration has started Wakhi language classes.

The increased literacy among Wakhi people on one hand gave them access to new modes of knowledge and education as well as the opportunity to learn the new language; and on the other hand it negatively impacted their relationship with their mother tongue. Youngsters started adopting the new language and are now speaking a version of Wakhi that is completely alien to the older generation. Due to the fact that there is no standard script, we identified the following issues that have forced our youth to forget their original language:
- The language has become contaminated mainly with Urdu and English and other neighbouring languages.
- There is no text book in the Wakhi language which can be adopted for the students’ syllabus.
- The teachers teach the local language without any text book, there is an additional burden for the teachers to prepare their own material for teaching; and the students face the problem of learning from different teachers because of the unavailability of a proper text book.
- The students face the problem of revising, due to which the students concentrate less on Wakhi.

Even though Wakhi remains a very important language, still learned by groups of people, members of all ages, use of the language may be on its last legs in areas where the Wakhi are a minority and marginal.

Tajik is the acknowledged national language, and Shughni plays a position as a lingua franca in Gorno-Badakhshan. Outside relocation into the Pamirs and the troublesome effects of Tajikistan’s civil war represent threats and pressure to the Wakhi language. Orthographies for Wakhi have been urbanized in recent years by means of Arabic, Cyrillic, and Roman letters, but conventionally the language has not been written, with Persian as a “lofty cultural” written norm in the region.

According to the UNESCO Atlas of endangered languages the Wakhi language is definitely endangered. In order to bring it out of the list of the endangered language it is very important to adopt a standardized script and put it into use, especially at school level. Two Western researchers, Dr. Stablin Kamansky and Dr. Grün Berg, have done some extensive research and written two books on the Wakhi language. We have a plan that we will use the script they developed and used to work. Later researchers have also used the script developed by them. Most recently the script has been developed into computer font and could be used with any operating system and software including Microsoft Office.

Measures have to be taken so that the new generations in these regions have to use the vanishing words, idioms and names of various things that are totally vanished. Research and data have to be collected, interviews have to be taken from the old people in these various regions to find the vanishing words and their meanings and include them in the syllabus for the present and future generation.

Say G’day in an indigenous language!


Queenslanders are encouraged to greet each other in their local indigenous language the NAIDOC* Week for a new campaign prompting cultural awareness.

“Say G’day” in an indigenous language will run over the week of NAIDOC celebrations from 6-13 July 2014. “Say G’day” invites Queensland communities to discover and use an indigenous greeting from the traditional language of their local area. Led by the Yungaburth Museum Language and Heritage Research Centre, in partnership with State Library of Queensland, and supported by Dreamworld Corroboree, The Smith Family Partnership Brokers, The City of Gold Coast and 91.7 ABC Gold Coast, “Say G’day” supports a larger state-wide movement dedicated to the preservation of Queensland’s Indigenous languages.

State Librarian Janette Wright said participating in the campaign was a great way for Queensland communities to recognise the existence and importance of traditional Indigenous languages.

“Discovering local languages helps us connect with and better understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This connection is what NAIDOC Week is all about,” Ms. Wright said.

“Preserving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is vital to ensuring a rich cultural future for our state. The survival of these languages is reliant on them being shared, which is the responsibility of all Queenslanders.”

More than 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and dialects were once spoken in Queensland. Today only 50 of these continue to be spoken; fewer than 20 are used as first languages – predominantly in Far
North Queensland and the Torres Strait – and only two languages are categorised as ‘living’ or ‘thriving’.

Preserving and sharing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders cultural heritage, knowledge and experiences is a key priority of State Library.

“Our focus goes beyond just documenting these languages as part of Queensland’s past; State Library is dedicated to ensuring traditional languages are not only remembered but are accessible for future generations,” Ms. Wright said.

State Library of Queensland has been working with a network of Indigenous Language Centres, community organisations and other groups over a number of years to document, preserve and share Indigenous languages.

“Most recently we’ve charted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages spoken throughout Queensland through an interactive Indigenous Languages map.

“Say G’day” spotlights Indigenous languages and provides a way for people to connect with Queensland’s Indigenous cultures.

“Without being valued, heard and spoken today, these languages are at risk of being forgotten, and with them, some of the richness of Queensland’s living culture and memory,” Ms. Wright said.

Rory O’Connor, Director of the Yugambeh Museum, said that “Say G’day” is part of a cultural activation programme called ‘Yugambeh Mobo’, which is a community movement to connect the population of Queensland to local Aboriginal stories, language, tastes and culture through a series of annual events. All Queensland communities are encouraged to get behind the “Say G’day” campaign during NAIDOC week.


For more information on the “Say G’day” campaign and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, visit www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources.

“Say G’day” was developed through State Library’s Indigenous Language Project which is supported by funding from the Indigenous Languages Support programme (ILS) from the Australian Government Attorney-General Department, Ministry for the Arts.

*National Aboriginal and Islander Observance Day Committee - editor

**Australia: Star maps point to aboriginal songlines**

By Genelle Weule, from the ABC Science News web-site (Australia), 11 July 2014

Specific stars and constellations are used by some Aboriginal language groups to help them remember key waypoints along a route, detailed oral histories reveal.

The research, reported in the *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*, documents how people from two language groups in north-central New South Wales and south-central Queensland use the night sky.

Professor Ray Norris of CSIRO Astronomy and Space Science and colleagues from Macquarie University collected stories from Euahlayi and Kamilaroi people.

“A while ago I was contacted by a Kamilaroi man who had seen some of our work and wanted to tell us some traditional stories.

“They’re working with us to rebuild their language and we’re collecting the astronomy.

“During this process we discovered that there’s this fantastic store of knowledge about how people navigated.”

The two language groups have a long history of using the position of features in the sky such as the Milky Way to predict when resources such as emu eggs are available.

While some Aboriginal groups travel at night using stars as a compass, it was thought that the Euahlayi and Kamilaroi people, who did not travel extensively at night, did not use the night sky for navigation.

But the stories of the Kamilaroi and Euahlayi people provide the first evidence of how they use star maps to teach travel routes based on songlines.

“We’ve known for a long time that Aboriginal people have these songlines where the songs describe the features of the land.

“And we’ve known that [some Aboriginal groups] use the stars as a compass.

“But then people talk about these journeys that you can see in the sky but it’s never quite clear about how that maps onto the songlines on the ground.

“For the first time we are actually hearing the details of how this actually works.

“We’ve never been able to map one onto the other like this before.”

Rather than use stars as direction points, the Euahlayi and Kamilaroi elders use the stars as a reminder of where songlines go, often months before they travel to their destination.

“In some cases people have these songlines with the words of the song telling them how to navigate, but they also identify places on the ground with places in the sky,” says Norris.

The songlines covered thousands of kilometres, with one example going from Heavitree Gap near Alice Springs in
central Australia, all the way across to Byron Bay on the New South Wales east coast connecting the Arrennte people to the Euraiyal people.

The songline is marked in the sky by the star Achernar in the in the West overhead to Canopus, to Sirius, and then to the east.

"Songlines cross over the lands of many different Aboriginal groups, and each has their own bit of the song in their own language," says Norris.

"Someone from the east will recognise a specific star songline right across Australia, even though it’s not in their language."

Although massive songlines exist right across Australia, Norris says it is not known if they use star maps the same way as the Euahlayi and Kamarlori people.

Further research on the use of other star maps for travel by other language groups, particularly other language groups that may have met the Euahlayi peoples, may lead to a clearer understanding of the Aboriginal use of the night sky for travel, say the researchers.

**Toto language more endangered than tribe**

*By Shiv Sahay Singh, from *The Hindu*, Kolkata, 1 August 2014*

When scientists of the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) set out to conduct a study on language of the primitive Toto tribe, whose population has dwindled to 1,536, they did not realise that the language is more endangered than the tribe itself.

During their study they recorded the vocabulary, folklore, and even some songs in Toto language, and realised that the language has no script.

For centuries, the language that belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group of Indian languages, has survived in the small community completely orally without much research, Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay, research associate, Linguistics (AnSI), one of the prominent members of the research team, who visited the hamlet of Toto tribe, told *The Hindu*.

"Being a small community, we found that the Totos communicate among themselves in their own language, but the moment they leave their hamlet of Totopara in Madaribaad block of Alipurduar district, they prefer to not communicate in the language even among themselves," Mr. Mukhopadhyay said.

**Under threat**

Researchers and even the members of Toto community admit that the language is under threat and influence of others languages, particularly Nepali and Bengali, is increasing day by day.

Interestingly, despite the language lacking a script, members of the community, whose literacy rate as per a sample survey carried out in 2003 was just 33.64 per cent, have penned books and poems in their language albeit in the Bengali script.

Dhaniram Toto, one of the members of the community, has written two books in Toto language over the past two years.

Mr. Toto claims his book, Lokeswar, is about the folk culture of Totos and his other book Uttar Banga Lokpath is about folk tales of the community.

“Since our language does not have a script, I have to take help of the Bengali script,” he says, adding that there is an urgent need to develop a script for the language.

Mr. Toto, who is employed in West Bengal’s Backward Class Welfare Department, says there are others in the community such as Satyajit Toto, who write in the language taking the help of scripts of other languages.

**Keep it alive**

Their aim is just to keep the language alive. “We carried out this study to keep record of the language. It may happen in a few decades that the language may get extinct. The study of the Toto language is essential to understand the overall cultural ambit of the primitive tribe,” said Kakali Chakraborty, head of office, Eastern Regional Centre of (AnSI).

**Day labourers**

Totos, one of the primitive Himalayan tribes in the country, usually work as day labourers and porters carrying oranges from Bhutan to the local market in north Bengal.

Despite the geographical isolation of Totopara, the members have started laying emphasis on education, resulting in about half a dozen of graduates, which includes girls. But the elders point out that despite a number of schools being present in the locality, there is no one to teach the children in their own language, and as a result, the children are losing touch with their culture.

**Cree language camp at Wanuskewin Heritage Park teaches culture too**

*From CBC news web-site, Saskatoon, 14 August 2014*

About 15 adults stand in a circle, hands joined, studiously repeating Cree words and phrases.

They’re inside the building at Wanuskewin Heritage Park, in the circular glassed-in meeting area overlooking the forested grounds of the museum.

This is where a Cree language camp is taking place.
All this week, participants have been learning not only the words and grammatical structure of the Cree language, but also the world view of the people who speak this Indigenous language.

"I wanted to capture that essence of what does it mean to speak from a Cree world view, a nehiyaw world view," camp co-founder Belinda Daniels said. "Like, what does that mean because I was still outside the glass house."

Cree is Daniels' second language. Once she began to learn it, it inspired her to help others learn it, too. So 10 years ago, she helped launch it and became its director.

A few years ago, she switched from holding it in her home community of Sturgeon Lake, to the Saskatoon area.

**Cree connections**

Some of the participants, like Nahanni Olson, have roots in the Cree community, but have lost touch with the language.

Although she lives in Saskatoon, her family is from Onion Lake Cree Nation.

"I've been trying to learn how to speak Cree for about four years, and my mother is a fluent speaker, but she was never able to teach us," Olson said. "So now as an adult, I just found that it's been a piece of my life that's been missing."

Now that she has children of her own, she wants to be able to pass on her ancestral language to them.

Other participants do not have family roots in the Cree community, but they have other connections.

Randy Gudmundson is a licensing officer with the Indigenous gaming regulators.

"Because I am actually out in the communities with the First Nations people I wanted to learn not only a little bit of the language but also more of the culture," Gudmundson said.

He will certainly get that at this Cree language camp.

Plenty of traditional activities are woven into the program, like cooking over a fire, fishing and picking sweetgrass.

For Daniels, this is about more than simply keeping the Cree language alive.

"If we as Indigenous people ever want to move ahead and be a sovereign nation, we have to know our mother tongue," she said.

In other words, she added, revitalizing the language is essential to rebuilding the Cree nation.

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**Breath of Life conference to help California Indians save endangered languages**

*By IVN, from Imperial Valley News web-site, California, 26 May 2014*

Berkeley, California - Breath of Life, a biennial California Indian language restoration workshop at the University of California, Berkeley, is drawing Native people from across the state, including members of Ohlone, Chumash, Miwok, Tongva, Pomo and Karuk communities who want to save their native languages.

With 62 participants and 40 linguists assisting them, the event is the largest since Breath of Life began in 1994.

Breath of Life is a partnership between UC Berkeley's Linguistics Department and the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival. All of California's approximately 85 indigenous languages are endangered or dormant, and the aim is to enable members of Native communities to access, understand and work with archival materials to help restore or save their languages.

Assisted by faculty or graduate student linguistic mentors, participants will create individual or group language projects and report on them at the end of the week.

The program begins on Sunday, June 1, when participants check in. Work begins on weekdays at 8 a.m. and ends every day at 4 p.m.

Instruction will take place in Dwinelle Hall, near the center of campus, and in archives around the campus.

Participants will explore field notes, publications and recordings at campus archives that include The Bancroft Library, Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, and the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages.

Leading the conference will be three American Indian language revitalization experts at Berkeley: Leanne Hinton, a professor emerita of linguistics and founder of the program, Linguistics Department Chair Andrew Garrett, and Line Mikkelsen, an associate professor of linguistics who works with the Karuk Tribe. Hinton also leads a Breath of Life institutes in Washington, D.C.

Special speakers will include:

Jarrid Baldwin's father learned his Miami tribe's language of Myaamia entirely from documentation and taught it to his children. Jarrid and his siblings grew up as essentially native speakers of Myaamia. Jarrid, who attended Breath of Life as a child with his father, will talk about his family's language journey and will co-chair a panel on teaching endangered languages in the home.
Cody Pueo Pata, who is part Nomlaki and part Hawaiian, attended the first Breath of Life conference, and has become a fluent speaker and the linguist for his tribe. He has developed dictionaries and lessons plans for his language, and will talk about a new approach to teaching grammar with Cuisinaire rods, which are usually math teaching tools. Watch this YouTube video of Pata speaking in Nomlaki about the importance of learning one’s heritage language (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-3lANOHxxw) or singing his version of “America the Beautiful” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gqwlggKwJ8).

Instruction formally begins with a morning tour of a campus archive Monday through Friday. Class work will focus on basic phonetics, grammar, creating sentences and a dictionary and designing a tribal writing system, as well as language and politics, how to search the internet for language material and taking their language back home when the conference ends.

Two documentaries about Breath of Life are in their final stages of preparation, with one dealing with the Berkeley program and the other with the program in Washington, D.C. The unfinished films will be shown on the evening of Tuesday, June 3.

“The magnitude and popularity of the Breath of Life concept is clearly growing,” said Hinton. “Indigenous people whose languages are no longer spoken are using the documentation made by past anthropologists, linguists, and others, to reclaim their languages.”

$4m grant to support documentation of endangered languages

By Richelle Agpoon-Cabang, from the Marianas Variety website, Micronesia, 23 July 2014

A recent report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization stated that 14 languages are no longer used and considered extinct in the Micronesian islands.

China: Model Talk focuses on documentation of endangered languages

Tanasia Curtis, The Shorthorn, Arlington, USA, 24 June 2014

Bai Bibo and Xu Xianming, Yuxi Normal University professors, spoke Tuesday in CoLang’s Model Talk about documentation of endangered languages in Yunnan, China.

“We hope that in the future more people come to China because there are many languages that are not described yet, not documented yet, not archived yet,” Bibo said.

CoLang’s public events, Model Talk, are presentations that focus on native-language projects from communities from around the world.

A husband and wife team, Bibo and Xianming gave the audience a look at linguistic surveys, minority language identification and orthography design, and described the problems and pressures that exist in small language communities in the 21st century. They also talked about the challenges and successes of language documentation in China.

“Most of the languages in Yunnan are vulnerable,” Xianming said. “Documentation has been a challenge because the languages disappear faster than the documentation itself.”

Edith Diaz, CoLang volunteer and Spanish studies senior, said her experience with the program has been positive and she enjoys the events she’s participated in.

“What’s great about the Model Talks is that you get to learn different things about culture, languages and what these speakers are doing to help,” Diaz said.

Diaz said she loves languages and would be interested in going to different locations around the world to learn language and culture.

Taiwan: Pazeh writers get awards for preserving language

By Hua Meng-ching and Jason Pan, from the Taipei Times, 15 June 2014

Two Pazeh Aboriginal writers were honored by the Ministry of Education with awards at an event in Hualien County on Friday for their efforts to revive and preserve their critically endangered language, which they said has
been a very difficult task because the government does not officially recognize their people.

Award recipients Pan Ying-chieh (潘英傑) and Wang Pan Mei-yu (王潘美玉) are relatives from the Pazeh family clan, from the Ailan area (愛蘭) of Nantou County’s Puli (埔里).

Pazeh is one of Taiwan’s 10 Pingpu Aborigine groups, also known as lowland Aborigines. They say their language, culture and ethnic identity are disappearing because they are excluded from the benefits of official government recognition enjoyed by the nation’s 14 Aboriginal peoples.

Pan Ying-chieh said the Pazeh family clans in Puli have organized an association to promote their culture and to resuscitate the language, with seminars and classes being held at the local Ailan Presbyterian Church on weekends and during holidays.

“Our people decided that we must do this, because our mother tongue is nearing extinction, with just a few elderly speakers still using the language. It is like a patient dying in a hospital emergency ward, with doctors and families trying their best to save its life,” he said.

Pan, 66, said Pazeh is listed by the UN as one of 18 critically endangered languages in the world, with only a few native speakers.

He said he is very disappointed at the government’s continual denial of the existence of the Pazeh Aboriginal people and their language, which belongs to the Austronesian linguistic family of the Pacific Islands and Southeast Asian regions.

Wang Pan, 81, has lived in Puli’s Ailan area for most of her life. The town is one of only three remaining towns in Taiwan with a native Pazeh population. There are only a few thousand Pazeh Aborigines left.

“I learned the Pazeh language during my childhood, but most of the time I spoke Hoklo [also known as Taiwanese]. This is because in those times Taiwanese society was prejudiced and looked down on us Pingpu Aborigines. Other people called us “fan” [番, a derogatory label for Aborigines]. Because of this discrimination, I did not learn our Pazeh language well,” she said.

She again started learning the language in 2007, when Pazeh elders organized weekly seminars and classes in order to preserve their culture, save their mother tongue from dying out and passing their customs on to the younger generations.

Due to her childhood familiarity with the language, Wang Pan advanced rapidly and became a Pazeh language teacher herself. She now presents classes to young people.

Wang Pan said the main reason for writing in Pazeh and competing for the ministry’s language awards is to make the government and the public aware of the Pazeh people’s determined efforts to revive their culture, and to save their dying language.

Pan Ying-chieh said that several members of their Pazeh community are writing literature, poems and narrative stories in the Pazeh language, using the romanized alphabet system that is used by all of Taiwan’s Aboriginal writers.

“This year we had five members eligible for the ministry’s awards for Aboriginal literature. We were excluded from participating last year, because the government does not recognize the existence of the Pazeh language,” Pan said.

## Protecting Alaska Natives’ right to vote – whatever language they speak

*By Julie Kitka, from the Alaska Dispatch, Anchorage, 11 June 2014*

In an important Alaska voting rights case being tried in U.S. District Court this month, the state has asserted it isn’t required by law to translate all election materials into Native languages and that in general its language program is adequate. U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Gleason overruled the state, saying the constitutional right to vote requires Alaska to translate all election materials into Native languages.

The Alaska Federation of Natives has long endeavored to protect Alaskans’ right to vote. While the state has been slow to recognize the challenges facing Alaska Native voters, the federal government – including our Alaska Congressional Delegation and the federal Department of Justice – has been quickening its pace.

We are greatly encouraged by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder’s recent announcement suggesting a proposal to boost voting access for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The basic idea would be to require jurisdictions that include tribal lands and villages to locate at least one polling place in a venue selected by the tribal government. Associate Attorney General Tony West, in Anchorage this week, said in the Department of Justice’s announcement, “We take this step because voting is a legal right we guarantee to our citizens. We do it because it is right.” AFN’s only caution on this new idea is that we don’t want Alaska to be left out of comprehensive reform legislation on voting rights pending in both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski applauded the plan in a written statement. “Through better communication, obstacles to casting a ballot can be identified and addressed.” Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Sen. Patrick Leahy also
applauded the plan. "I welcome Attorney General Holder's comments about starting a conversation with sovereign tribes to address the very real obstacles that the American Indian and Alaska Native populations have in casting their vote," he said in a written statement. "The issue of voting rights is foundational to our democracy, and it is one that requires our commitment and our action." AFN looks forward to working with both Sens. Murkowski and Mark Begich and enacting legislation this Congress.

In May, Begich introduced a bill to protect Alaska Native voters from discrimination. The bill, Native Voting Rights Act of 2014 (S. 2399), would require close scrutiny of the closure of polling places and voter registration in Native communities, mandate acceptance by election officials of identification cards issued by federally recognized tribes and Native corporations, and provide increased protections for Native voters who cannot understand complex voting materials written in English.

Judge Gleason’s preliminary ruling is good for Alaska and entirely appropriate in light of the attorney general’s proposal. It highlights the larger issue of the state’s continuing neglect of a key sector of Alaska’s electorate: Alaska Natives in general, and Native senior citizens in particular, many of whose command of English is insufficient enough to warrant the language assistance program in the first place.

It is as much a policy position as it is a legal position. We can see the state’s dismissive attitude toward some Alaskan voters in the language state lawyers used in arguing for an order barring Alaska’s top election official, Lt. Gov. Mead Treadwell, as a witness. According to Richard Mauer’s May 30 Anchorage Daily News story, the state’s lawyers argued that his testimony would be a “waste of time.” “He knows very little about the day-to-day details of the language-assistance program,” the state wrote, adding that “high officials” like Treadwell should generally not be required to testify because they "have greater duties and time constraints than other witnesses."

This is outrageous. The number-one duty of the lieutenant governor is control and supervision of the Division of Elections. AFN is very concerned that the state’s top election official has “limited knowledge of the department’s Native language program,” according to the state’s lawyers. It is the duty of the Division of Elections from top down to work toward fair elections for every Alaska voter in our wonderfully diverse state.

When Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), it intended for all Americans to participate in elections. It is clear from the history of legal complaints and election statistics that state officials — under both Republican and Democrat administrations — have generally ignored their responsibilities. Let’s remember that Alaska Natives who vote here are U.S. citizens, Alaska citizens, serving our country with military service in higher numbers per capita than any other minority group. Native American Rights Fund (NARF), which represents the plaintiffs in the case, said the state’s “indifference has contributed to depressed voter participation in the neglected Native communities, including some with turnout 20 to 30 percent lower than turnout in non-Native communities. It is unfortunate that Native voters have had to turn to the federal court to secure their fundamental right to vote.”

To dismiss this responsibility is to dismiss a large part of Alaska’s history and cultural heritage. The Voting Rights Act was designed to enforce the voting rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. The act allowed for a mass enfranchisement of racial minorities throughout the country, followed by years of enforcement actions in Indian Country and across the nation.

There is a reason Alaska is one of seven states included in the act’s now-repealed coverage section for Section 5, which required that these states receive federal approval, known as “preclearance,” before implementing changes to their election laws. Alaska’s constitution included an English literacy requirement. Alaskans in 1970 voted in a statewide ballot to remove this section. But Alaska in 1975 was added to the preclearance section of the act anyway because Congress thought it was important to include our state.

You may be surprised that this voter restriction was not the first to limit voter access, particularly Native voter access, to the election process. Alaska Natives were officially granted citizenship and the right to vote in 1924. The Alaska Legislature soon after passed a literacy requirement. The problem with such literacy tests has always been not in creating a test but who’s doing the testing. Jim Crow laws created unfair tests in many Southern states and in Alaska mainly to discourage certain voters. Alaska’s literacy test was rarely enforced and no records of lawsuits exist. But the law stayed on the books, becoming part of the Article V of the Alaska Constitution.

The history of the suffrage struggles touches my own family. My brother-in-law’s grandmother, Laura Anderson-Youngstrom, marched in the streets in Minnesota as a young suffragette. It was 1906. A young wife and mother, Laura joined many other Americans in carrying banners calling for the right to vote for women. Women nationwide did not get the right to vote until 1920. That the state’s lawyers said the lieutenant governor’s testimony would be a “waste of time” is an insult not only to the plaintiffs in the case, but to all Alaskans.
A democracy is only as strong as the election process, which includes not only the act of voting but the information necessary for a voter to make sound decisions. Fair access to voting and voting information -- and a strong, informed electorate -- is something all Alaskans want. Alaskans cannot accept when one group of Alaskans, however large or small, is marginalized. When one voter is disenfranchised, we are all disenfranchised. And our democracy suffers for it.

Judge Gleason will decide whether the state Division of Elections is in violation of the Voting Rights Act’s language requirements and if so what remedial steps should be taken. AFN strongly believes that the both the state and the federal governments are obligated to protect voters’ rights and their access to the patriotic duty of voting. Our governments should continually take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that.

Building community and a better life for all Alaskans is an important goal for AFN. Voting is a powerful way to help improve the lives of individuals, their families and their communities. Earlier this month, AFN and NAAACP co-hosted a community picnic in Mountain View Lions Park. We were joined by many fine organizations, and companies, including Catholic Social Services, Pride Foundation, ANCSA Regional Association, Identity, Sealaska, First Alaskans Institute, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, Faces of Hope Community Services, and Native Vote. A number of first time voters registered. It was a great start to the voting season. We hope every eligible Alaskan registers to vote and gets out to vote in the primary and the general election. Let’s work together in every city and village to make that happen.

Julie Kitka is president of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

Educators back Native American language bills

By Tanya H. Lee, Indian Country Today Media Network website, 21 June 2014

The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs found strong support for proposed legislation to increase federal support for Native American language programs during a legislative hearing that took up the Native American Languages Reauthorization Act of 2014 (S. 2299) and the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act (S. 1948).

The seven witnesses easily found consensus about the need to fund Native language programs for elementary and secondary school American Indian/Alaska Native children in order to preserve the dozens of indigenous languages under threat. “All but 15 or 20 of our Native languages are spoken only by adults who are not teaching their younger generations the language. When language becomes extinct, it takes with it the history, philosophy, culture and scientific knowledge of its speakers,” Clarena M. Brockie, member of the Montana State House of Representatives and dean of students at Aaniiih Nakoda College, told the committee.

That Native language learning provides huge benefits to students was another area where there was no argument. “Place-based and cultural-based education keeps students engaged and increases student achievement,” said Sonta Hamilton Roach, an elementary teacher at the Innoko River School in Alaska and a board member of Doyon Limited. “In Rural Alaska our communities are plagued with high suicide rates, and high drop out rates, which correlate directly with a loss in culture and language.”

Committee Chairman Jon Tester, D-Montana, took William Mendoza, Oglala-Sicangu Lakota, executive director of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, to task when he informed the committee that the White House did not yet have a position on the legislation. Tester was clear that the committee wanted a decision by the time Congress returned from its July 4 recess.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, urged the White House Initiative to aggressively demonstrate the nexus between Native language acquisition and the academic achievement and well-being of Native children, noting that it was one of the most important ways to improve educational outcomes of Native students.

4. Language Technology

Armenia: Citizens urged to write one Wiki each

From the BBC News from Elsewhere (BBC Monitoring) website, 31 July 2014

Armenians are being urged to do their patriotic duty - by each writing an article on Wikipedia, it seems.

The national campaign - One Armenian, One Article - aims to raise the number and quality of articles in the Armenian language and promote the culture, an ad on EU Armenia TV says.

It could even be competing with Georgia and Azerbaijan in the Wikipedia stakes.

It seems Armenian Wikipedia is outstripping its neighbours in page numbers - with more than 390,000 now. Reporting the number of Wikipedia articles has been on the agenda of Armenian TV and news agencies since the campaign began in March, and it's been noted there are
around 102,000 Wikipedia pages in Azerbaijan and almost 84,000 in Georgia.

What started as a YouTube clip has a new lease of life running on satellite TV to Armenians across the world. The Armenian diaspora - thought to number some eight million people - far outnumber the country’s resident population of about 3 million.

High profile artists, musicians and politicians are getting in on the act too. Education minister Armen Ashotyan says in the clip: “One Armenian, one article - I will definitely do that and believe you will too.”

Meanwhile, Defence Minister, Seyran Ohanyan, says he’s already added an article about the Armenian army. Articles by celebrities and ordinary citizens are equally valued, the ad says, and a young person is even shown writing an article about radishes.

5. Obituaries

Chester Nez

From The Economist, 21 June 2014

Chester Nez, the last of America’s Navajo code-talkers, died on June 4th aged 93

Life in the Marine Corps came easily to Chester Nez. He was used to loping long miles, sleeping in the open air, and to the hard work of herding sheep and goats under the cloud-studded turquoise skies of the New Mexico Checkerboard. He took danger in his stride too: as a Navajo warrior and protector, he wanted to defend his country and make his family proud. He liked the plentiful food, after a childhood when he often was “hurt by hunger” as his language, verb-rich and adjective-poor, put it. And, in his uniform, he could visit bard that banned native Americans.

Some things bothered him: looking people in the eye (disrespectful), shouting (even more so) and the careless treatment of cut hair (a dangerous weapon to enemies). Navajo religion forbids contact with the dead, and the battlefield stench of corpses spooked him. To keep the spirits of the dead at bay, he would think of beauty, mutter a Navajo prayer, and touch the buckskin medicine bag which hung at his neck, with its blessed corn pollen and tiny, secret souvenirs.

His first name was not Chester, nor was his surname Nez. The real ones had somehow got lost at boarding school, where the white world tried to civilise the rangy eight-year-old, born to a other from the Black Sheep Clan and a father of the Sleeping Rock People. They made him speak English, a language he had never heard. To get rid of the dirty gobbledygook he insisted on using, the matron brushed his teeth with bitter Fels-Naphtha Soap.

In vain. Nothing could take away his Navajo-part (though he did not know it) of a language family so complicated that linguistics needs special terms to describe it. Verbs do most of the work, agglutinated with suffixes and prefixes, in seven modes (including the usitative, iterative and optative), 12 aspects, such as the semelfactive (a half-completed action), and ten sub-aspects, including the completive and the semeliterative (a single repetition). It has four combinations of tines, plus glottal and aspirated stops. A shift in any of them can change a word’s meaning completely.

War of words

As America struggled to stem the Japanese advance across the Pacific following the disaster of Pearl Harbour, military codes - cumbersome and weak - were proving a fatal weakness. But Philip Johnston, a missionary’s son raised on a Navajo reservation, hit on the idea of using a language that the Japanese could not crack. Native American tongues had been used for battlefield messages in the first world war (Hitler had even dispatched spies to America in the nineteen-thirties to study them in case they would be used again). But Navajo had not been written down, and almost no outsiders spoke it fluently.

Moreover, to be safe, the code that Mr. Nez and his fellow Navajo volunteers in the secret 382nd Platoon helped devise was a complex one. The letter A was represented by any of three Navajo words: “ant”, “apple” or “axe”. Common military terms had words of their own: a fighter plane was a hummingbird (da-he-thi-hi), a battleship was a whale (lo-tso), a destroyer a shark (ca-lo). A hand grenade was a potato, and America was Ne-he-mah (“our mother”). The Japanese did eventually capture (and torture) a Navajo – but he was not a code-talker. He could not make head or tail of the messages.

Marine commanders were initially sceptical. But a message that took an hour to encrypt, transmit and decrypt on the existing mechanical Shackle system could be transmitted orally by code-talkers in just 40 seconds. Even America’s own code-crackers failed to break it.

On November 4th 1942 (the most frightening day of his life, he later recalled) he went into action on Guadalcanal, toting a hand-cranked radio, the size of a shoebox and weighing 30 pounds (nearly 14 kg.). His first message was: “Enemy machine gun nest on your right. Destroy.” The shells rained down as ordered. He was to serve in key battles of the Pacific war: Bougainville, Guam, Peleliu and Angaur. Everywhere the marines fought, Navajo code-talkers, under fire, hoarse, tired and thirsty, were vital in victory, directing fire, calling up reinforcements.
evacuating the wounded, and warning of enemy movements.

Gratitude came slowly. Many code-talkers (unable to talk about their secret wartime work) ended up penniless drunks. When Private First Class Chester Nez applied for a civilian identity card in 1945, an official took pleasure in reminding him that he was not a full citizen and could not vote (that did not come until 1948). He suffered from what would now be called post-traumatic stress disorder, fighting it, successfully, with traditional Navajo healing ceremonies. He started an art course, but ran out of cash (the University of Kansas awarded him his degree in 2012), and worked for 25 years painting walls and murals at a veterans’ hospital in Albuquerque. Only after 1968, when the code-talkers’ story was declassified, did the fame and honours begin – a bit embarrassingly, he said – to flow.

He mourned the suffering and injustice of his people’s past, but insisted that the Navajo story was ultimately of triumph, not sorrow. And his own life had been “100%”. But it did bother him that his country had tried to stop him speaking Navajo, when it had proved so useful.

6. Publications, Book Reviews

New EL publishing initiative

From Peter Austin, 24 July 2014

Dear colleagues

On Friday 18th July David Nathan, Julia Sallabank and I launched as Founding Editors a new initiative called “EL Publishing” (www.elpublishing.org) which is a free online open access publications platform that will publish a fully blind-refereed journal (Language Documentation and Description), multimedia publications, and a new monograph series, for which we have a 5 year commitment of support from CIPL, the International Committee of Linguists. The journal, multimedia and monographs will deal with the theory and practice of language documentation, language description, sociolinguistics and language policy, and language revitalisation. We will also be encouraging new and innovative forms of publication in these areas. All publications are free to download under a CC-BY-NC (Attribution-NonCommercial) licence and are published at no cost to authors. We will continue to publish in print form at a low cost as well for readers who prefer paper publications or have limited internet access.

The website at www.elpublishing.org contains the latest volume of Language Documentation and Description (LDD 12 – a special issue on documentation and archiving), an app dealing with Khoi-san languages, and the complete back catalogue of LDD volumes 1 to 11.

In this venture, David, Julia and I are joined by Consulting Editors Gerrit Dimmendaal, Lenore Grenoble, Jeff Good, and Tony Woodbury, and an international Editorial Advisory Board of leading scholars in endangered languages research.

Please have a look at the website and download the papers and app, but even more importantly, please let your colleagues and students know that EL Publishing exists and is an outlet for top quality fully peer reviewed publication of articles, multimedia and monographs. In order to keep the quality of the work we publish at a high level we need as many good submissions as possible, and we rely on our friends and colleagues such as you to help us spread the word.

You can also follow us on Facebook (E L Publishing) and Twitter (E_L_Publishing).

If you have any questions about this please get in touch at editors@elpublishing.org for submissions and publishing information or info@elpublishing.org for general enquiries.

Best wishes, Peter

Music Endangerment: How Language Maintenance Can Help

By Catherine Grant, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014

Reviewed by Nicholas Ostler

This book is, in a way, a homage to the movement for maintenance of endangered languages, since it is an attempt to derive general ideas and precepts from the movement’s policies of the last ten or fifteen years, and apply them to the task of protecting and promoting particular ethnic traditions of musical performance. Of course, this presupposes that maintaining languages and maintaining musics are analogous tasks – something that this book assumes, rather than demonstrates.

Grant is systematic and methodological in approach. So after outlining the likelihood of musical endangerment and attitudes to it, she devotes her first chapter proper to aspects of the reception of musical traditions which may cause alarm in modern conditions. She then elaborates the analogy between language and musical endangerment, and the measures that have been defined to measure them. Next she draws from these some important points that can be learnt from the discussions. This chapter, in particular, I found fascinating. Armed with these
benefits, she re-designs the system of measures to fit musical endangerment, as she sees it, and applies the resulting framework to the case of Ca Trù, an ancient musical tradition of Vietnam, of which she has some direct experience. Finally, she considers what can be done with her new framework in the future.

The virtues of the book – from an endangered languages point of view – are the extremely close and well-informed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the various metrics for language vitality that have been developed; even those who have been involved in the definition of the various SIL and UNESCO systems will probably find interest in some details in chapters 2 and 3, where she assesses (sympathetically) past work on languages. There is also a glimmer at the end of chapter 6, where she notes that music is just one type of cultural display in human societies – like theatre, dance, storytelling – so that others too might be assessed socially by systems of criteria like the one she is proposing.

The down side may already be evident from the tone of this review, since the book mostly reads like an official report, dominated by its systematic structure, and with very little illustration from actual music traditions. Even in the “case study” chapter, on Ca Trù, there is very little engaging detail about the nature of the music itself (although there is a fair degree of social and historical background). To an extent, one might have hoped that the difficulties of representing music in a book of this kind might have been overcome by copious quotation, with audio and video, in the companion website to the book, but its musical content is scant (and in the case of Ca Trù, at least on my MacBook, rather quiet and difficult to hear). Strangely, it is mainly taken up with graphical tables which were adequately shown in the book itself.

As a linguist and a philosopher, I felt that Grant never notes a key point of difference between music and language. Music is above all a display medium, what was called an “epideictic” art in Greek theory of rhetoric: it is above all a skill to put on a certain kind of performance to an audience. Language, by contrast, though it can be used epideictically, yet has a vast background which is functional, both for practical co-operation within groups, and indeed (underlying that) for individuals to organize their own thoughts.

Looking at Grant’s new system, I was reminded of too many applications of transformational-generative grammar in the 1960s, by literary critics or pedagogues or theorists of just about anything, who saw “deep structure” wherever they looked and thought they were being Chomskyan. The purpose of linguists’ analytic frameworks is to fit language and its characteristics like a glove, not to provide a general purpose framework for anything similar. I feel that, in this work, Grant has never done enough work to relate and distinguish music and language, and so derive from that not only what is inapplicable in a framework for measuring languages, but also what language measures will always miss in a crucial account of the reception of a musical system.

Language and music are both essential to human nature, and they have a clear overlap in song (of which Grant, strangely, says nothing at all). But they play different roles in human social life, as well as – no doubt – in the organization of the human mind. Perhaps the two are comparable in being human faculties which only mature in the presence of a particular cultural background, so that people grow up not with language and music, but with a specific language (one of 7,000 currently extant) and with a specific musical tradition – e.g. for most Europeans and North Americans, the diatonic scale. But display arts are not a natural necessity like a mother tongue: they are subject to aesthetics, and pursued at the discretion of the performer. If you fail to meet the aesthetic standards of your community, you will be told you can’t sing, or you can’t play your instrument: you will not be told you can’t talk if others don’t like your style.

It is a matter of objective fact, then, if a language is being spoken less, and so is endangered. It is far more subjective to judge that a music is endangered, when it is played less as it used to be: perhaps the style is just changing, or the old style is exhausted. A whole new set of arguments are needed to distinguish music maintenance from nostalgia, or indeed from ethno-centrism.

All in all, this is a useful book, since it provides a framework which – if applied – can clarify a new type of endangerment situation. But it will be useful more to activists, bureaucrats and policy-makers, who need to know where they stand, than a concerned public, who want to know what is endangering music at a deeper level, and what, if anything, can or should be done about it.

Moreover, by taking the viewpoint of music, it provides an interesting sideways look at scales of endangerment for languages. So it will stimulate debate about those scales among linguists: but it will not explain how much relevance those scales have to any human ‘practice’, and how much they are distinctive to language, or again to music.

This is a solid work of evaluation, not of linguistics and not of ethnomusicology.
7. Places to go on the Web

New Internationalist magazine features endangered languages

Issue 473 of the New Internationalist magazine (May 2014) features a cover story entitled ‘The politics of language loss’ by Jo Lateu. The journal is available in print and online, accessible at www.newint.org.

Other articles in this issue relating to endangered languages are:

‘Voices under the ice’ by Nora Marks Dauenhauer, on the preservation of her native Tlingit language in Alaska;

‘They nicknamed me Terrorist’ by Naila Bozo, on the experience of Kurdish speakers in Turkey;

‘Languages – the Facts’ on the rate of attrition of the world’s languages;

‘Marni naa pudni Kaurna yarta-ana (Welcome to Kaurna country)’ by Katrina Power on the reclamation of the Kaurna language of South Australia;

‘Up and down’ on factors affecting language survival;

‘Of speech and species’ – Suzanne Romaine on why saving languages is good for the environment and tackling poverty.

And the following article, reproduced here:

‘Our language is our soul’: saving Aymara

By Alexia Kalaitzi, from New Internationalist magazine, May 2014

‘Could you imagine yourself speaking a language, your mother tongue, at home and then going to school and learning a foreign language? It is a big shock,’ says Ruben Hilare, an activist from the Bolivian indigenous community of Aymara, trying to describe the reality of many children in the community.

Aymara is a language as well as a people: it is a native American language spoken by over a million people in Bolivia and several large communities in Peru, Chile and Argentina. Although it is an official language in Bolivia, it is underrepresented in the public sphere, where Spanish dominates. The only media sources exclusively in Aymara are a handful of television shows and radio programmes, while the language is taught at school for only an hour a week.

Until recently, Aymara did not have an online presence, either. But this is changing. Ruben Hilare and other community members are making an effort to save their language and promote it on the internet, establishing a virtual community called Jaqi Aru.

The goal of Jaqi Aru is to spread Aymara on the web, creating digital content (such as blogposts, videos and podcasts) and via social media. The team has already launched Wikipedia in Aymara, and has almost finished the translation of Facebook.

‘Our language is our soul. For us it is everything. It is knowledge, our parents, our heritage. Our ambition is to give the next generation the opportunity to use Aymara in every field: technology, chemistry, biology, new media,’ says Ruben. He explains that by modernizing the language and ‘constructing’ new words to respond to the needs of the 21st century, young people will be able to use their mother tongue in every aspect of their lives. ‘I remember when I was at university, professors would give me books in Spanish, and so sometimes I had to read them three or four times to understand the meaning. I do not want this to happen any more. This is the reason that I am personally involved in this project; it is an investment to Aymara.’ .

Elias Chura, an enthusiastic volunteer for Jaqi Aru, joined the team when he was at university: ‘It was the first time that I saw my language on the internet and I felt great. From then on I knew that I wanted to do more to support this effort.’

Some of Elias’ peers do not want to use their language. ‘They do not use it because of the prejudice, but also because in Spanish there are words for everything: technology, science... They do not understand that Aymara can be like any other language. Part of my work is to make them value our mother tongue. If we lose Aymara, we will lose our language and culture,’ says Elias.

During the 1970s and 1980s the communities that spoke the language faced severe discrimination. The situation has improved since then; now even the Bolivian president, Evo Morales, comes from the Aymara indigenous community.

Ruben admits, though, that there is still discrimination against those who use the language. Writing Facebook posts in Aymara has resulted in several commentators calling Aymara speakers ‘peasants’.

The migration of many Aymara young people from rural areas, where indigenous communities live, to big cities, makes the transmission of the language and culture even more difficult. Using the powerful tool of the internet, Ruben and his team hope to encourage more and more young South Americans to use their mother tongue to save Aymara for future generations.
The moment has come for us to save our Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian languages

By Ishmael Hope, Sealaska Heritage Institute, from Cultural Survival web-site (www.culturalsurvival.org), 13 May 2014

“At Khuwaháa haa yoo x’atángi wutusaneixhí.” “The moment has come for us to save our language.”– Joe Hotch, Gooxh Daakashú

In 1980, the Sealaska Corporation brought together Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Elders in Sitka, Alaska, for a gathering of discourse, stories, and traditional songs and dances in the first Sealaska Elders Conference. During one evening, Charlie Joseph, Kaahl.átk’, an Elder of the Kaagwaantaan clan, led traditional performances of Tlingit songs and dances, many of which, he told his peers, had not been seen or heard in many years. He asked his Elder peers to have patience and forbearance for the young dancers, as they were learning and could make mistakes. The Elders ended up overwhelmingly embracing Charlie Joseph’s leadership. In thanking Joseph, William Johnson, Keewaaxh.awtseixh Ghuwakaan, said that, “I ítnáxh ghnéi kghwa.áat.” “People will begin to follow your example.” (Haa Twaanággu Yis: Tlingit Oratory, edited by Nora and Richard Dauenhauer, 1990.)

The people really did follow the example of those Elders at the Shee Atika Hotel in 1980. That conference led to the creation of the Sealaska Heritage Foundation, later to be renamed the Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI), with a mission to perpetuate and enhance Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian cultures. In 1982, following the example led by Charlie Joseph and other Elders who were instructors in schools across Southeast Alaska, SHI created the biennial Celebration, a large gathering of Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian traditional singers and dancers. It has grown to host over 2000 traditional dancers and 3-4000 visitors who take in all the festivities and rich culture.

However, as George Davis, Kichnáañxh, noted at the 1980 conference, “Ch’a yéi guğèńk’ áwé a kaaxh shukaylis’úxh haa tágú khwáanx’i aadéi s khunoogú yé.” “We have uncovered only a tiny portion of the way our ancient people used to do things.” He also said, “Tsu héidei shugaxhtootaan yá yaakhooqé daakeit haa jeex’ a nakh has kawdik’ée.” “We will again open this container of wisdom that has been left in our care.” There was so much more of this “container of wisdom” to be shared, and SHI’s Council of Traditional Scholars and Board of Trustees recognized that much of that deep knowledge of Tlingit culture and worldviews was embedded in the Tlingit language. In 1997, the trustees adopted language restoration as the foremost priority of SHI. Revered Tlingit Elder Walter Soboleff, for whom SHI’s new cultural center is named, told his Elder peers, “Yak’èi áyá has du ee tududaheeyi wáa sá khoóo at dultóow yá yoo x’atángi yoo x’atángi has du exx yáa uhaán Tlingit xh’éinaaxh yoo x’atulu.áti.” “It would be good if we help whoever is teaching the Tlingit language, those of us who speak Tlingit.” (1996, KTOO Radio Conversations, edited by Keri Eggleston, et al.)

These and many other words of the Elders deeply inform the work of SHI, and continue to inspire and motivate leaners today. It was like they planted little seeds, embedded pockets of knowledge and meaning in our hearts and minds, meaning which would only deepen within us as we matured and were in need of the wisdom that was left in our care. Guided and encouraged by the Elders, SHI, over many years of advocacy and development, joined with many organizations, Southeast Alaska school districts and the University of Alaska Southeast in developing a comprehensive, region-wide network of Tlingit language programs, learners and teachers. There are now over 500 students of the Tlingit language in the Juneau School District, for example, and many teachers who dedicate their lives to learning and passing on their knowledge of the language. Many of these teachers received scholarships from the Sealaska Corporation, attended SHI’s language immersion camps, and have always been supported by SHI as their efforts bolstered SHI’s mission and goals. It is truly a community effort. Additionally, SHI hosts a Tlingit Language Master Apprentice Program, currently in its first year, which supports Tlingit language immersion for six master-apprentice teams in three Tlingit communities. The teams will speak at least 260 hours of Tlingit together over the course of three years. As SHI President Rosita Worl said during the launching of the program, “All languages reflect world view. And there is a lot of knowledge and experience embedded in that language. And for our human society that’s been around for thousands and thousands of years we want to be able to capture that knowledge.”

SHI also documents hundreds of hours of Tlingit language audio recordings and texts from its extensive archival collections. We most recently completed a National Science Foundation project that produced transcriptions and translations of 31 Tlingit language texts. Tlingit linguist James Crippen estimates that less than one percent of the total available Tlingit recordings are transcribed and translated, so this project adds significantly to the body of work for study. The greatest stories, along with everyday conversations, were documented. Students of the language can now mine the texts for stories of the Migration and Great Flood, for Xh’a Eetí Shuwe Kháa, Slap Bucket Man, and for funny conversations among elderly Tlingit women, or passionate advocacy for subsistence or the Tlingit language. The tiny portion
of Tlingit knowledge that we have uncovered is slowly beginning to unwrap for us, available for the eager and dedicated learner.

The Sealaska Heritage Institute also stood with Tlingit Elders, students and faculty of the University of Alaska Southeast, and many others, Native and non-Native, in advocating for the passage of the historic state House Bill 216, which officially recognizes 20 Alaska Native languages as equal in standing with English. Advocates for the bill were passionate testifiers and lobbyists, eventually hosting a sit-in at the Capitol building lasting from mid-day to 3:30 am on April 21, when the bill finally passed to a great cheer of the packed galleries. With the signing of the bill into law by the governor, Sean Parnell, Alaska, with Hawaii, will become one of the two states that recognize Native languages as "official languages of the state." This is one of the civil rights struggles of our times. Our world is in our language, our breath of life. We are truly equal when our particular, unique container of wisdom—haa yoo xh'atängi, our language, haa khs-teeyi, our way of life—is acknowledged, honored and respected.

The Elders always gave us this strength. Sometimes we didn’t even fully comprehend what we were told until it came back to us like a vision of strength and forbearance that helped us to continue on. Elder Nora Dauenhauer tells Tlingit students that the Elders told all kinds of stories to people of all ages. No one told children’s stories. Everyone heard the complex, deeply layered, sophisticated, beautiful stories. Nora and her scholar husband, Richard, often mention that people “grow into it.”

In one of the most popular stories of Yéil, Raven, the Raven is said by some to have stolen the sun, moon, stars and daylight from his grandfather, Naas Shagee Yéil. The way that Austin Hammond, Daanawáakh, told it, however, was that “Haa dachxháns’i yán áyá tusixhán.” “We love our grandchildren.” The Raven’s grandfather gave him the things he most treasured, even at the risk of losing it. The Raven opened those boxes and let free much of the universe, the material of life. It’s nothing less than the universe that we’re opening when we open the container of wisdom, given to us from the love of our grandfathers and grandmothers.

“Tsu khushtuyáxh daa sá yaa tushígéiyi át
du jeedéi yatzh ghatooteeyi'n
haa dachxhánxh siteeyi kháa.”

“Even those things we treasure
we used to offer up to them,
to those who are our grandchildren.”

- Charlie Joseph, Khaal.átk’

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**Scripps Ranch Advocates for Language Preservation**

Here is a healthy new initiative from schools in San Diego, California. The initiators, Scripps Ranch Advocates for Language Preservation, say in a message to FEL on 28 July 2014:

Our website is up, so link to if us if you’d like to, and provide us with any feedback, please. Please also note that it is a work in progress, and much of our student material from high schoolers is not sure if we clarified that we are not a nonprofit, we are not affiliated with our high school for the moment, and we currently consist of high school students from San Diego will be uploaded in the coming weeks. It is located at: srlanguagepreservation.weebly.com

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**8. Forthcoming events**

**Exhibition of First Nations’ culture in Victoria, BC, Canada**

*From the website of the Royal BC Museum (www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca)*

On June 21, 2014, the Royal BC Museum and our partner, the First Peoples’ Cultural Council, will open a new exhibition, *Our Living Languages: First Peoples’ Voices in BC.*

This groundbreaking, interactive exhibition celebrates the resilience and diversity of First Nations languages in BC in the face of change.

Learn what First Nations communities throughout the province are doing to help their languages survive and flourish, in this beautifully designed exhibition space, featuring original First Nations artwork and interactive stations.

**Language endangerment in China: two conferences**

*From Prof. David Bradley*

We will be holding two conferences on language endangerment in China on 20-21 and 22-23 October.

The former will be at Yuxi Normal University, 70km south of Kunming in Yunnan, the 4th conference on ‘Heritage Maintenance for Endangered Languages in Yunnan, China’.

The latter will be at Yunnan Nationalities University in Chenggong, 20 km south of Kunming in Yunnan, the 3rd Sociolinguistics of Language Endangerment conference.
Oral history project in Bangladesh

The Leaf From Heaven, financed through Kickstarter.

This story is the property of the Marma Indigenous Communities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh.

To write, illustrate and publish four books in the endangered languages of indigenous cultures in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region.

Preserving endangered languages and traditional folklore through children’s literature

Located in southeastern Bangladesh, the Chittagong Hill Tracts is a steep and forested area that is home to 13 different indigenous peoples, each with their own distinct cultural identity, history, and traditions. Many have their own languages, but those languages, and the culture they are a part of, are in danger of being erased. After decades of intense violence this region is still highly militarized and suffering from insecurities with their educational system.

Virtually all schools in the Chittagong Hill Tracts teach classes in the imposed language of Bangla, the country’s official national language. However Bangla is not a language spoken in the Hill Tracts, and as a result the children’s education is difficult, confusing, frustrating, and often futile. By second grade, 35% of students drop out, and that number jumps to 65% by fifth grade. Not only is an entire generation growing up without an education, but in being denied the opportunity to learn in their own languages, like many Native Americans and Aboriginal Australians, they lose a sense of their own cultural history and identity.

Our Golden Hour is a nonprofit organization that is expanding educational opportunities for children in the Chittagong Hill Tracts by building schools in the region, and, in collaboration with the Endangered Alphabets Project and the Champlain College Publishing Initiative, publishing educational materials in indigenous languages. With your contribution, we hope to create children’s books in the alphabets of Mro, Marma, Tripura, Chakma, and others in an effort to promote learning and to preserve the cultural identity of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

As part of this project the students in the Chittagong Hill Tracts have been tasked with collecting oral histories from tribal elders and community leaders. A group of authors and illustrators then compile the stories into children’s books that are translated into the indigenous languages of the Hill Tracts as well as English and Bangla. As Maung Nyeu, the founder of Our Golden Hour, states, “This will not only only save our alphabets, but will also preserve the knowledge and wisdom passed down through generations. For us, language is not only a tool for communication, it is a voice through which our ancestors speak with us.”

Funding, printing and shipping of these books is expensive. To ensure these books reach the students in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the students and professors of the Publishing Initiative have been working tirelessly to reach this objective, but we can’t do it alone. By contributing to our cause, you will not only be helping educate these children, but you will also be assisting in restoring and preserving several long-established cultures for generations to come.

From the FEL Manifesto

2. Aims and Objectives

The Foundation for Endangered Languages exists to support, enable and assist the documentation, protection and promotion of endangered languages. In order to do this, it aims:

1. To raise awareness of endangered languages, both inside and outside the communities where they are spoken, through all media;
2. To support the use of endangered languages in all contexts: at home, in education, in the media, and in social, cultural and economic life;
3. To monitor linguistic policies and practices, and to seek to influence the appropriate authorities where necessary;
4. To support the documentation of endangered languages, by offering financial assistance, training, or facilities for the publication of results;
5. To collect together and make available information of use in the preservation of endangered languages;
6. To disseminate information on all of the above activities as widely as possible.