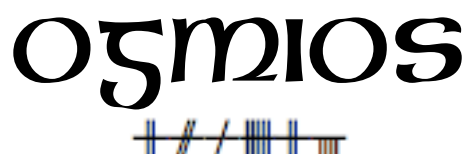


# FOUNDATION FOR ENDANGERED LANGUAGES



*Participants in the new initiative to promote the endangered Kristang creole in Singapore. Back row (left to right): Luís Morgado da Costa, Frances Loke Wei, Fuad Johari, Anirudh Krishnan, Hayley E. Ferguson  
Front row (left to right): Andre D'Rozario, Kevin Martens Wong*

**OGMIOS Newsletter 62: — 30 April 2017**

**ISSN 1471-0382    Editor: Christopher Moseley**

*Published by:*  
Foundation for Endangered Languages,  
129 High St.,  
Hungerford,  
RG17 0DL Berkshire, England

# OGMIOS Newsletter 62

## 30 April 2017

*Contact the Editor at:*  
Christopher Moseley,  
9 Westdene Crescent,  
Caversham Heights,  
Reading RG4 7HD, England  
chrmos50 at gmail.com

**Assistant Editor:** Hayley Ferguson  
**Contributing Editors:** Adriano Truscott  
**Finishing Editor:** Nicholas Ostler

### Table of Contents

<b>1. Editorial .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Development of the Foundation .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2017 FEL Grants awarded .....	3
Fourth newsletter from FEL Canada.....	3
<b>3. Endangered Languages in the News.....</b>	<b>3</b>
New initiative promotes endangered Kristang creole in Singapore .....	3
Venetian Language: new efforts and promising results need your support! .....	6
As ice melts and the seas rise, can endangered languages survive?.....	11
Language Legends Help Create a Colorful Snapshot of Australia's Linguistic Diversity.....	13
Study will explore best practices for creating free knowledge in indigenous languages on Wikipedia .....	13
<b>4. Obituaries .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Don Noé Siake, last fluent speaker of Ocaina, Colombia .....	15
<b>5. Letters to the Editor .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Baltic Muslims .....	15
<b>6. Places to go on the Web .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Global survey of language revitalization .....	15
Introducing Tribilingual .....	15
<b>7. Forthcoming events .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Endangered Languages Fund: Language Legacies grants .....	16
Engaged Humanities: Preserving and revitalising endangered languages and cultural heritage .....	16
London Language Show 2017 .....	16

## 1. Editorial

Like so many journals in today's digital world, *Ogmios* has now gone over to an on-line existence only, with the printed version being available only by special request at extra cost. As your Editor I apologize to those readers who preferred to hold a paper copy in their hand, and store it in a traditional archive or distribute it among their linguist friends. *Ogmios* is the Foundation's calling card and will continue to be.

Freed from restrictions on page numbers, no longer having to fill a multiple of four pages for each issue, or restrict the colour pictures to the front and back pages, I will have to learn anew the skills of editing and take advantage of the new freedoms. Luckily I have a talented young assistant, Hayley Ferguson, working with me from this issue onward. She will be bringing a fresh energy of this journal, and one evidence of this is in the first interview we have conducted with a linguist for publication. We hope this will be the first of many such interviews. You can expect many more changes to the scope and the appearance of the evolving *Ogmios*.

*Christopher Moseley*

## 2. Development of the Foundation

### 2017 FEL Grants awarded

The Foundation is proud to announce its award of seven grants to applicants in its 2017 grant round. The following applicants and projects were awarded funds:

- Elnur Aliyev (Sweden): Kryz language (Azerbaijan): trilingual electronic dictionary (Kryz-Azerbaijani-English) with Kryz pronunciation
- Laura Arnold (UK): Ambel language (Indonesia): printing and presentation of a trilingual dictionary
- Edwin Ko (USA): Crow language: development of curriculum and learning materials
- Samantha May (Canada): Uchinaaguchi language (Okinawa, Japan): development of an Uchinaaguchi Karate and Kobudo handbook
- Colleen O'Brien (USA): Camsá language (Colombia): documentation of Camsá, an endangered language isolate
- Robbie Penman (UK): Mapuzungu language (Chile): Mapuzungu immersion camps in southern Chile
- Zubair Torwali (Pakistan): Torwali language: supporting mother-tongue multilingual education students with reading materials

### Fourth newsletter from FEL Canada

In February, our sister organization FEL Canada announced the publication of its fourth newsletter – another lively, colourful and information-packed issue, concentrating on Canadian and North American language endangerment issues. You can find out more on-line: <https://www.felcanada.org>

## 3. Endangered Languages in the News

### New initiative promotes endangered Kristang creole in Singapore

*By Hayley Ferguson*

Singapore-based language preservation initiative Kodrah Kristang has accomplished a great deal since its launch in 2015. Papia Kristang – better known as 'Kristang' – is listed as a moribund language on Ethnologue, and until recently, it was heading straight for extinction. The language, a Portuguese-Malay creole, is roughly 500 years old, and with fewer than 100 remaining speakers in Singapore, and several hundred more in Malacca, Malaysia, a group of students at the National University of Singapore took matters into their own hands.

When director Kevin Martens Wong, 24, read about the language in his research for a project about language death, he was oblivious to the relevance that Kristang had to his own family. "Historically, the language had been called Portuguese, because [its speakers] thought it was Portuguese," says Wong. "My grandmother's grandmother was an exclusive Kristang speaker – she didn't speak any English. My grandma knew some heritage vocabulary before, and my grandparents talked about [the language] when I was growing up, but I didn't realise it was Kristang, rather than Portuguese."

Wong, who is half Portuguese Eurasian, has been running language courses in Kristang for a year and a half with the support of five core team members. The initiative began in his basement, but has taken off quickly, now running classes in the National Library. "There's an awareness within the Eurasian community that this language exists, but nobody was sure at the time how many could speak it fluently, and most people our age still don't know about it." Public consciousness of heritage languages is not strong in Singapore, particularly in the cases of minority languages. "Everybody knows about Mandarin and the so-called dialects, but people don't know a lot about the Austronesian languages, and especially languages like Kristang which were already on the fringes.

"I realised that the government didn't keep statistics on Kristang, and nobody was doing research on this language. There was actually very little academic documentation of it as it is spoken in Singapore." There have, however, been occasional scholarly publications about the language in Malacca, the other main community that speaks the language. In addition, a grammar, and several dictionaries, have been published for the Malaysian variant.

In 2015, the young linguist set out to find the remaining speakers on the island. 19 were found, but five refused to be interviewed. It was through his fieldwork that Wong became proficient in Kristang. "I had done a field methods course, and the faculty at NUS recommended that I try to do the fieldwork in the language. At the start, I had to use English, but as I became more invested, I improved my capabilities, and I started asking questions and interacting in Kristang." I ask him whether he

considers himself to be a fluent speaker. “I would hope so, after more than 1000 hours of teaching,” he answers.

“I wouldn’t say I’m completely fluent,” interjects Portuguese computational linguist Luis Morgado da Costa, a core team member, “but [even heritage speakers] often don’t remember all the words. Nobody can lead their entire life in Kristang right now. The existing dictionaries are just word lists. They’re poorly-built, which makes it hard to trace back to what people really meant. With my Portuguese, I can help people remember whether they’d say one thing or another in a particular context. People say: ‘Oh yes, I remember using something like that.’ The language has some gaps. If a language has gaps, it’s hard to define fluency, full-stop. This is a language that has been fragmented.”

In order to straighten out the issues posed by the gaps, most Singaporean heritage speakers resorted to code-switching between Malay, English, and Kristang in the past. In Malacca, the case is the same. “This perpetuates a cycle of doom for the language,” Morgado da Costa explains. “If we don’t do anything to stop it, people will forget more words, or code-switch a little more, and then in 50 years there will be very little left of the language.”

To address this, Kodrah Kristang’s participants have formalised a process of new word creation. “We now have a group of interested people: six heritage speakers and six learners who are interested in working on a lexical incubator for the language,” says Wong. “We’ve asked the community for new word suggestions. Part of this is because older speakers said that they didn’t know how they felt about [borrowing] – it just didn’t sound very Kristang. We’ve been very systematic about using morphological processes that we already know exist in the language, like blending, and clipping, and compounding. And we use that to build new words based on Kristang’s morphology and phonology, trying to keep those intact. In the cases where Kristang can’t deal with a particular concept, we borrow from a language that’s historically had an influence on Kristang, such as Portuguese, Malay, Hokkien, Cantonese, or Dutch.”

The word creation team has also tried to maintain the domains. For example, due to its influence on words like “nationalism” and “parliament”, Dutch has been borrowed from to construct cultural vocabulary, while Malay has been used to formulate many animal terms. “We’re not trying to be an authority on the language,” says Wong. “Some of these words are not going to make it, and that’s fine, that’s how language works. But we want people to be engaged in this process. As long as they’re involved and interested in protecting the language, then we’ve achieved our goal.”

“The great thing is that people have already started picking up on the words that we’ve been using, whether or not we’ve been pushing them. They even shortform them in text messaging,” says art director Andre d’Rozario.

But, has the filling of gaps rendered the language, to some extent, synthetic? “That’s something we discussed a little bit before we created this new word incubator,” says Morgado da

Costa. “The process must be natural, and feel natural to the speakers. So, we’re very happy that people play with language, because it’s only by the speakers and the learners having fun with the vocabulary that we’ll eventually end up with [a complete] language. These meetings are open to all students – everybody is welcome. We want them to be bigger and bigger, and with time we have to involve people so that they feel some sort of affiliation with the language. We want them to be able to say they helped create the words. That’s why we chose to do it like this. In introducing new words to languages that have been shielded from modern concepts, playfulness is important. People try out a few, until one sticks. This is what we want to simulate, but at an accelerated pace.”

“I’ve read about other revitalisation movements around the world, especially Hawaiian and Breton,” says Wong. “I know about the contestations by older speakers. They’ve felt that [the involved parties] have created some terms that don’t sound very Breton or Hawaiian. That’s why we’ve made a point of putting the remaining heritage speakers at the centre of what we do. In a lot of these cases, the [linguists] moved away from working with the heritage speakers, because they passed away, or because they slowed down the process. We’re very lucky that our own heritage speakers are very tech savvy, so they can be involved in this process when it’s made available online. They’re also adaptable, and happy that the language is getting a new lease in life. Some of these older participants feel that it’s good to create new words, because it helps young people come to the language and to care about it. They are very involved in the word creation meetings.”

“And it helps that some of the students come in families,” adds Morgado da Costa. “There are three generations in a few families attending the classes. Sometimes, in a revitalisation or relexification process, there are heritage speakers up against a new generation that is hardly related to them. But in our case, it may be their grandson or granddaughter. If it’s one of your family members who is changing your language, then it feels different. We’re all so happy that we have these families involved.”

From the beginning, the initiative has emphasised inclusivity. Because it’s so fragmented, there are different varieties of the language spoken. “And that’s okay. It’s okay for there to be different ways of spelling or pronouncing something,” says Wong. “What I tried to do when we started the initiative was raise the linguistic awareness of the people coming. A lot of what we understand as trained linguists are things the general public is not aware of. We tried to bridge that gap very early on, and the result is that most of the people in the classes have a very good linguistic awareness, so I can talk to them about variation, I can talk to them about new word creation and how the process mimics that of English and other larger languages.”

Kristang has also, until recently, not been written. However, Wong feels that because most of Kodrah Kristang’s core team members are not native speakers, it’s not their place to standardise the language. “We want it to happen as naturally as possible. These are artificial conditions. We’re presenting all

these different forms and telling the speakers: 'You all go and sort out how you want to spell it amongst yourselves.' Right now, in the initiative, we're saying all of these are correct, because there are people alive now who believe form x, or y, or z is correct. If we say only form x is correct, we're going to disprivilege those people who believe form y or z is correct. So we allow for all the standards, and by that, we continue to hope that future generations deal with this problem. But at this stage, we still are trying to reach out to people."

"It's also worth noting that a lot of our source material is not standardised," D'Rozario says. "We have three dictionaries, and in all of them, there are different spellings, definitions, tenses, and concepts. If our source material isn't standardised, who are we to say which is correct? You just have to let people pick whichever they feel most comfortable with, and eventually it will standardise naturally."

"But it is not something that we can say is not a problem," acknowledges Morgado da Costa. "There are people who want to standardise, and who believe if we were to convert to one spelling, that it ought to be theirs. But we all agree that at this stage, we don't have enough people to care about whether everybody writes in the 'proper' way. If we end up with nobody to speak the language, what's the point in having a flawless orthography? Our priority is to try to make sure that everybody feels entitled to their own language as it has been spoken until now. I do think, though, that people have this instinct [to standardise], and if there are two spellings for a word, they ask how we would prefer them to spell it. If they ask about our preferred spelling, we offer the one that we write amongst ourselves. So if somebody asks, I might say: 'Well, I write it with a k. If you want to write it like I do, you can do it that way.' That's the extent to which we go, and that's the healthiest for now."

With community at the course's core, attendees range between the ages of 11 and 86 – a select few are native speakers, while the majority are learners. Amongst the learners are Wong's own grandparents. The team is in the process of planning a children's class that will start this June – with locations yet to be confirmed. "I had the privilege of speaking with Larry Kimura, who advised us to pair the most fluent speakers with the youngest learners. You want to build strong links from the bottom. You want the most native Kristang to be spoken to those who are the closest to critical period. That's why we've got the kids' classes led by the oldest speakers, which is a very fine balance between fluency and energy levels," says Wong. "We have three 18 to 19 year olds who are heritage speakers, and one who's had passive reception since she was a child. The generational transmission actually started declining quite severely over 100 years ago, so it's been going on quite a long time. So, I presume there are very few families that we can do this generational tree with. I'm sure there are a few more out there, but most of them are part of the class."

Classes are open to anyone, and they are free of charge. A large proportion of learners have elderly relatives who speak the language, but a third of them have no Eurasian ancestry at all. "We know a lot of our appeal [to the government] has to

do with engaging the community. They like the intergenerational aspect, that older people are working with younger people. They also like that it's multiethnic. We're not saying that only Portuguese Eurasians can learn this language – we're making it a Singaporean thing, and it even has representatives from each of the major Singaporean races."

Singapore has recently seen a resurgence in not just tangible cultural heritage, such as temples and other sites of interest, but intangible cultural heritage. "Now we're seeing even more people who are also interested in preserving their culture," says Wong. "Many Singaporeans feel like their heritage has been forgotten, and want to reclaim it. The government seems to be responding; the National Heritage Board recently released a heritage master plan, which includes a new sustained focus on intangible cultural heritage. This is the first time it's ever been mentioned at state-level here. So it looks pretty positive in terms of how they're dealing with this."

The first Kristang Language Festival, which will take place in May, recently received significant government funding. "Not all of it is from the government, though. A third of it is from private donors, and my own university NUS," Wong clarifies. "But our two main sponsors are the National Heritage Board, which is the government-run statutory board that governs heritage here, and Our Singapore Fund, which supports community projects."

In light of the government support they are receiving, the team has avoided the initiative becoming politically charged, although Wong admits that "language is always political." They have also been careful not to challenge the dominance of Singapore's four official languages, English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. "These are important languages in Singapore for school and business. If we were to challenge that, we would probably face pushback. Kristang is a community project that people do in their spare time – none of us are paid."

"Grassroots movements are still very new concepts here. Freeing up that civil space is a new thing for the government, and they seem to be approaching it with caution – we're also approaching it with caution. But so far, it's going very well. The locations of the classes have been very generously sponsored by the government in nearly all cases. The National Library allows us to host these classes for free. We're queued to continue hosting them until at least the end of the year and are starting the kids' class in the end of June, which will hopefully be hosted at one of the libraries as well. The fact that we got this space is a really good sign – this is the National Library. That's a big thing."

One of the challenges that speakers of fringe languages like Kristang face in Singapore is direct access to family links and their own ethnic communities. While speakers once lived closer together geographically, government policy has spread populations around the island. A number of positive goals have been accomplished from this. For example, a common language has been established, and, as a foreigner, the city-state feels quasi-utopic in its uniquely cosmopolitan atmosphere. However, language is a sensitive topic here, with chil-

dren learning English as a first language, an obligatory second language – either Tamil, Mandarin, or Malay – that is selected on the basis of their father's perceived ethnicity, and an optional third language.

"In 1989, the government introduced five additional languages that you could take as a mother tongue, to cater to the non-Tamil Indian community. Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi or Urdu can be taken as mother tongue, provided you meet the perceived ethnicity criteria. That's a very small subset of people and the classes are not held as part of the curriculum. The community handles these languages. This is due to non-Tamil Indian communities feeling that the children in their communities were suffering, because they couldn't take their mother tongue in the school system. That only happened after decades of pushing. We don't want to get into that situation."

While the nation's approach to language learning is not always that cut and dried, the practice can present obstacles for children whose parents are of mixed ethnicity, and for whom the compulsory second language may not be relevant at all. "There used to be schools at which you could take Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil as the medium of education. Those weren't legislated out of existence, they closed down because of falling demand," says Wong. "I mean, we all know about the rise of English."

It is in part for this reason that, although a children's course is on the horizon, Kodrah Kristang is not interested in making their efforts part of the curriculum. The Eurasian community in Singapore is also very diverse – not everybody has Portuguese ancestry, and not everybody feels that Kristang is part of their heritage. "Additionally, I read up a lot on the Irish and Welsh revitalisation movements, and the stuff coming out of Ireland is not always positive. A lot of Irish kids [have had negative experiences]. The teaching may not be very good, or the kids don't like the materials, and when they come out of the school system, they resent it. That seems to be what's happening some Irish and Welsh kids, and the revitalisation movement is fluctuating as a result," Wong tells me.

"So, where we want to put Kristang is inside children's homes. It's not in school, but if you have parents speak to their children in Kristang, it'll be the language of their hearts – you can quote me on that," quips Morgado da Costa.

"It's a really important part of my conception as a Singaporean," Frances Loke Wei, the initiative's press officer, remarks. "This is exactly why Singapore is interesting in the first place. It's got so many different kinds of people, and if we took extra time out to learn about our friends and the people around us, then we would feel a greater sense of belonging to this country. It's not a Portuguese Eurasian cult, it's just Singaporeans coming together to learn about this corner of the country's culture that has been backgrounded."

Because the language is not economically relevant, the team has worked hard to make it culturally relevant to young people, by means of creating events like the Kristang Language Festival, cultural content, such as music, and visual art. D'Rozario was recruited to create materials of this kind, in-

cluding a board game that will launch at the festival. "I'm different from the rest of the contributors, in that I have absolutely no linguistic background," he explains. "I'm an arts graduate, so I draw and paint, and made the board game. I think that dabbling in new media, and transmedial storytelling, will be really crucial in revitalising the language. You engage people on the level of games and stories, and in the future, TV shows and music. When Kevin approached me about the game, I was really interested, because it allows me to contribute to the language in the way that I know I can. It's something through which I can put a piece of me into the language."

"We encourage this kind of thing, because it really helps both the language and individuals who want to contribute," says Wong. "We try to match these kinds of skills to what the language needs as well. The game looks great, and it's a fantastic way of promoting the language."

"Playing the games is supposed to be community-building," adds Morgado da Costa. "You have to know everyone in class, it's not just looking at the board. You have to make friends, you have to learn their backgrounds. We want the community to come back."

"I think the response to these classes is proof that the community-wide effort is a very strong one," says Wong. "It's had a lot of positive messaging because we're all so young. There's a lot of youthful energy that's coming from it, and I think that's made it something of a novelty. People are very eager to join." Kodrah Kristang plans to keep encouraging youth participation. "One of the things that we place a premium on is making the language attractive to youth. Our lesson material is pretty flashy, but we do that because we know that people will come to the lessons."

"The Singaporean government seems ready to say: 'Okay, we want to allow these forgotten languages to come back and claim more space, and community heritage,'" Morgado da Costa tells me. "If you want to make friends, and have festivals for learning about Eurasian languages, we'll give you the help you need."

## Venetian Language: new efforts and promising results need your support!

*By Alessandro Mocellin*

### *History and Name of the Venetian Language*

The Venetian language (ISO code: [vec]) is the language born and mainly spoken in the region historically named Venetia. Provinces and cities like Verona, Vicenza, Padua, Rovigo, Treviso, Venice, Belluno and others are Venetian-speaking ones. The name "Venetia" indicates the area of the "Veneti" people, a very old population who started building its own civilization centuries before the emergence of the Romans. The population inhabiting this area is still called "Veneti", and the modern administrative Region situated in the North-East of Italy is called "Veneto", whose capital is Venice.



Therefore, when using the syntagma “Venetian language” in English, one should refer first to the language spoken in the whole Veneto region and even further. In fact, some painters like Titian and Veronese are correctly named “Venetian painters”, not because they came from Venice like Canaletto, but because they came from Venetia, the whole territory. The local name of the Venetian language is “Veneto” (IPA: [ˈvɛneto]).

Moreover, the language is currently spoken by communities in Slovenia and Croatia (in areas which used to be part of the Republic of Venice) and, quite uniquely, in Mexico and Southern Brazil, where stable communities of Venetian speakers arrived and still are, due to emigration in late 19th Century.

Even if you may not even suspect it, in reality you already know some Venetian words, which are of common international use today, such as “Arsenal”, “Gazette”, “Firm”, and even “Ciao” (Youtube video: 7 International Words Born in Venice).

Therefore, the Venetian language already has played a role at the international level and its current dissemination claims an international interest and scope of action: it needs international means of support.

#### *Recent Efforts and Promising Results*

The Academia de la Bona Creansa, through its linguistic department named Academia de la Lengua Veneta, is a private cultural institution. It held 30 Courses in Venetian Language, conferring a diploma of proficiency to more than 500 people in the Veneto area. Single lessons and linguistic laboratories have involved more than 200 students in different schools, both in Veneto (Vicenza and Padua; age 14-19) and in Croatia (Umag and Buje; age 11-12).

The Academia has set a standard for Venetian language, and by these means it could also produce publications, children books, certified translations, and the first university handbook completely written in modern Venetian language (I Sete Tamizi), a scientific publication with the University of Frankfurt. The Academia also plans to visit Venetian-speaking communities in Mexico and Brazil (November-December 2017) for teaching sessions with students, training teachers and agreeing school projects.

#### *Report from the First International Conference on the Venetian Language (#1CILVE)*

Recently, on 18th February 2017, the Academia de la Bona Creansa, along with Rotary Clubs, organized the First International Conference on the Venetian Language (#1CILVE), with 10 professors and scholars from different Universities and Institutions (UNESCO, Universities of Amsterdam, Bangor, Frankfurt, Koper, Padua, St. Andrews, Venice) who dedicated the day to honoring the Venetian Language in the perspective of the UNESCO International Mother Language Day (21st February). Institutional authorities (from Veneto Region, Italy; and Istria Region, Croatia), local media (TV and Newspapers) and 200 high-school students with their teachers were also present and enjoyed an exciting international event. While academicians were deeply satisfied with the highly scientific value of the Conference, the young people present were caught by the thriving atmosphere. The event was hailed as a milestone on the path towards the revitalization of Venetian language.

*“Declaration of the 10th of April”: reasons and summary of contents*

The Declaration addresses 10 points of the current situation of the Venetian Language, in view of an active perspective for its institutional recognition. In fact, “APRIL” is to be read as an acronym for the Venetian phrase “Asion Pa’l Reconsimento Istitusione de la Lengua”, i.e. literally “Action for the Institutional Recognition of the [Venetian] Language”. There comes the name “10th of April”, a day which has no historical significance *per se*, but it symbolically represents the 10 points of this “Action”. Maybe one day, hopefully very soon, the day itself could represent internationally the struggle for the recognition of the Venetian language.

#### *How can I sign this Declaration?*

If you are a Professor, a researcher, a teacher, a graduate or a post-graduate, and you want to sign this Declaration on the Venetian Language, the Academia will be happy to add your signature side by side with the distinguished international professors who already signed the document, like prof. Moseley (UNESCO), prof. Stegmann (Univ. Frankfurt, DE), prof. Bertolissi (Univ. Padua, IT), prof. Todorović (Univ. Koper, SL) and others. To propose your signature, please write an e-mail to [cilve@academiabonacreansa.eu](mailto:cilve@academiabonacreansa.eu) enclosing your academic qualification.

You can freely choose that your adhering signature be public (the name will be displayed) or private (your name will not be displayed, but counted in the overall amount).

#### *How can I know more about Venetian Language and the Academia?*

If you want to know more or you'd like to help the Venetian Language in any possible manner (thank you!), or if you represent an institution in the cultural, scientific or anyway academic field and you want to share ideas and/or collaborate with the Academia de la Bona Creansa – Academia de la Lengua Veneta, please also write to [cilve@academiabonacreansa.eu](mailto:cilve@academiabonacreansa.eu) and your contact will be very much welcome.

## "DECLARATION OF 10<sup>TH</sup> APRIL"

### [D10A] - Measures aimed at establishing the Institutional and Official Recognition of the Venetian Language

**E**XISTENCE <sup>[1]</sup> - *The Venetian language exists and takes its name from the three thousand year-old civilization of the Veneti, who in ancient times began to settle in the area between the Eastern Alps and the northern Adriatic and to whom reference is made in the writings of all of the most important writers of antiquity.*

**D**ISSEMINATION <sup>[2]</sup> - *The Venetian language is currently spoken by at least 7 million people living in numerous mother-tongue communities in five different countries around the World: Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Mexico and Brazil. In the first three states, the Venetian (or 'Ve-*

netan') language has been widely spoken for many centuries. In the last two, the original Venetian language is still spoken by many people on account of the large numbers of Veneti who emigrated to these countries during the *Primo Ezenpon* (First Venetian Diaspora) of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In the countries chosen by emigrants during the *Secondo Ezenpon* (Second Venetian Diaspora), which occurred in the second half of the twentieth century - mainly Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland and Venezuela - there are also many people who still speak Venetian. Taking into consideration the number of people who have some passive knowledge of the Venetian language and - in view of international approval and the re-establishing of its prestige - the number of those who would willingly learn it, the number of current potential users of the Venetian language may be established as being between 15 and 20 million people around the entire world.

**HISTORY** <sup>[3]</sup> - *The earliest document which exemplifies the transition from mediaeval Latin to the vernacular or late Vulgar Latin is the Indovinello Veronese or 'Veronese Riddle' (late eighth or early ninth century, but according to some scholars written in the year 790 ca), which precedes by about half a century the Sacramenta Argentina (Oaths of Strasbourg) written in the year 842 and presenting the first written example of vernacular Proto-French and Old High German. The Veronese Riddle already presents various characteristics of the Venetian language and in particular even extant features of the Veronese variant.*

**The real success and affirmation of the written Venetian language within the literary, political and juridical spheres** (considering texts that have survived) should be established as occurring, however, between the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. The first examples of the written Venetian-style vernacular include the brief *Ritmo Bellunese* (dated between 1183 and 1196) and many other documents, presenting in particular the variant of the City of Venice itself, comprising a series of proverbs compiled in the 'illustrious vernacular' of the twelfth century and the thirteenth-century high point of *The Fasti* by Pietro Giustiniani (1202), *the Treaties between Venice and the Sultan of Aleppo* (1207 and 1225) and *the Treaty between Venice and the King of Hungary* (1244). Marco Polo's fascinating work *Il Milione* ("The Million", or the Travels of Marco Polo) was also written at the end of the thirteenth century. Apart from the original text dictated by Marco Polo himself to Rustichello da Pisa a version of this work also exists in the Venetian language. This historical phase also saw the development of the fascinating so-called Venetian-Provençal literature, which reveals the experiences of troubadour poets in Languedoc and is influenced by the form and substance of the Venetian language normally used in *Venetia* in the mediaeval period. Among the works of this flourishing age it is worth noting the *Entrée d'Espagne* by an anonymous Paduan writer (about 1320), the so-called Franco-Venetian *Orlandino* by an unknown author (about 1340) or the *Aquilon de Baviere* by Raffaele da Verona (end of the 15th century). Moreover, in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (1305) Dante himself refers to Venetian as a clearly defined and widespread tongue, with respect to both the mainland form (the so-called "Trevi-

giano' variant) and the '*variante di mare*' (the coastal variant or Venetian as it was spoken in the city of Venice). Nor indeed is it possible to conceal the large number of loan words having an evident Venetian origin of which there are traces in the Divine Comedy, and we should recall that Dante Alighieri was in fact exposed to the Veronese variant of the Venetian language on a daily basis during his repeated and prolonged stays in Verona. *We may thus state that the Venetian tongue is an important historical European language, and indeed one of the oldest.*

**P**RESTIGE <sup>[4]</sup> - *From the literary point of view, the Venetian tongue boasts a significant corpus of highly original and in many ways timeless works, such as (to name but a few) On the Heavenly Jerusalem by Giacomino da Verona (about 1275), The Travels of Marco Polo (Il Milione) (1298), the singular and rather complex medical treatise El libro agrega de Serapiom by Iacopo Filippo da Padua (end of the 14th century), the algebraic treatise called L'Arte de l'Abbacho or the Arithmetic of Treviso composed by an anonymous writer from that city (1478), La Moscheta, a play by Ruzante (1529), La guerra de' Nicolotti e Castellani, a poem with a satirical flavour written in 1521 by an anonymous sixteenth-century author, La Venexiana, a splendid dramatic work written in the 16th century by an unknown playwright, the astronomical treatise called the Dialogo de Cecco da Ronchitti attributed to Galileo Galilei (1605), the extraordinary, innovative plays produced by Goldoni, including La Locandiera, I Rusteghi, Le Baruffe Chiozzotte and Sior Todero Brontolon (1753, 1760, 1762, 1774), which served as an important point of reference and inspiration for other playwrights such as Giacinto Gallina (1852), Renato Simoni (1875) and Gino Rocca (1891), as well as the thousands of poetical works written by dozens of distinguished authors, such as Marsilio da Carrara (1294), Vincenzo Querini (1478), Andrea Calmo (1510), Angelo Ingegneri (1550) Maffio Venier (1550), Giulio Cesare Bona (1620), Dario Varotari (early 1600s), Paul Briti (1600s), Giorgio Baffo (1694), Angelo Maria Labia (1709) and, more recently, Berto Barbarani (1872), Biagio Marin (1891), Giacomo Noventa (1898), Andrea Zanzotto (1921) and Luigi Meneghello (1922) in addition to other very worthy living authors. A further virtue underlying the prestige afforded to Venetian literature is to be found in the outstanding presence of distinguished female writers - the sole examples in the literary world of the time - such as Cassandra Fedele (1465), Gaspara Stampa (1523), Veronica Franco (1546), Chiara Varotari (1584), who was also a painter, Elena Lucrezia Cornaro Piscopia (1646), the first female university graduate in the world (1678), and Cornelia Barbaro Gritti (1719). Entire libraries might be filled with the literary, artistic, legal, juridical and scientific writings produced in the Venetian language.*

*Over time, many literary and religious works have been translated into the Venetian language.* These include *Tristano e Isotta*, of which two separate versions were produced by two anonymous Venetian authors in the fifteenth century, a part of *Orlando Furioso* translated by Benedetto Clario (1554), *Gerusalemme Liberata* translated by Tomaso Mondini (1693), the *Iliad* translated by Giacomo Casanova (first volume in 1775) and by Francesco Boaretti (1788), the *Gospel according to St. Matthew* by Gian Jacopo Fontana (1856), the *Divine Comedy* translated by Giuseppe Cappelli (1875), *Romeo and Juliet* translated by Vittorio



Betteloni (1906), the *Odyssey*, various excerpts of which were translated by Thomas Pellegrini (1987), the *Gospel according to St. Luke* translated by Thomas Pellegrini (2000), *Le Petit Prince* translated by five different authors (2003-2015) and many other past and present works. In South America even the Liturgy is frequently translated into Veneto-Brazilian.

*The Venetian language is also adopted in the world of music* and, in particular, in musical drama and opera. Pre-eminent nineteenth-century works comprise the famous *La Biondina in Gondoleta* by Anton Maria Lamberti (1788), set to music in three different versions by Johann Simon Mayr (1788), Ludwig van Beethoven (1816) and Reynaldo Hahn (1901), and the triptych *La Regata Veneziana (the Venetian Regatta)* by Francesco Maria Piave (1858), the musical score of which was composed by Gioachino Rossini (1858). Musical drama produced in the twentieth century gained fame through productions featuring the participation of opera singers of international renown, such as the tenor Franco Corelli (who recorded and performed in *La Biondina in Gondoleta* at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden in London) or the soprano Toti Dal Monte, who recorded and sang the piece *Redentor in Famegia* by Guido Bianchini (1929) at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. Since the later post-war period following World War II, musical works with lyrics written in the Venetian language have adapted to modern styles and now comprise melodic songs, pop music, rock, rap, folk-rock, ska and punk music (to mention only what we may consider as the better-known genres), thus stimulating a significant flourishing of its presence in all musical genres from the twentieth century to today. Musicians who have gained international fame include groups such as I Belumat (1972), the Anonima Magnagati (1974), Pitura Freska (1978), the Radiofiera (1992), the Rumatera (2007) or Los Massadores (2009) and also individual artists, including award-winning songwriters such as Leo Miglioranza (1973) and the extraordinary performers of quite diverse genres such as Oliver Skardy (1959), Herman Medrano (1972), Patrizia Laquidara (1972) and Erica Boschiero (1983). In their televised performances, the actors Lino Toffolo (1934), Marco Paolini (1956) and Natalino Balasso (1960) have promoted and honoured the Venetian language in various plays, sketches and events aimed at stimulating reflection on certain cultural and social themes.

*Venetian is not merely a written language*, this being a condition which in itself would be deemed insufficient to identify a live and 'powerful' language; it is also a language that is used in everyday life and adopted in all social networks and forms of electronic communication at every level. It is spoken by a vast range of individuals in many professional spheres, during religious events and even in the context of public administration.

*Above all, the Venetian language is a tongue that has been commonly used and preferred by many distinguished men and women in their everyday professional communication.* These include illustrious citizens of the former Venetian Republic, such as Marco Polo (1254), Andrea Mantegna (1431), Giovanni Bellini (1433), Victor Carpaccio (1465), Giorgione (1478), Titian (1480), Sebastian Cabot (1484), Luigi Da Porto (1485), Antonio Pigafetta (1491), Andrea Palladio (1508), Jacopo Bassano (1515), Tintoretto (1519), Paolo Veronese (1528), El Greco (1541), Vincenzo Scamozzi (1548), Paolo Sarpi (1552), Tomaso Albinoni (1671), Scipione Maffei (1675), Antonio Vivaldi (1678), Giuseppe Tartini (1692), Giambattista Tiepolo (1696), Canaletto (1697),

Francesco Guardi (1712), Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720), Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749), Antonio Salieri (1750), Ippolito Pindemonte (1753), Antonio Canova (1757), Ugo Foscolo (1778), Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778), Giuseppe Jappelli (1783), Pasquale Revoltella (1795), Pompeo Marino Molmenti (1819), Carlo Scarpa (1906), Tobia Scarpa (1935) and dozens of others. This also applies to various researchers and scientists who spent very long periods in Venetia, such as the physicist, astronomer, philosopher and mathematician Galileo Galilei (1564) and the famous hydraulic engineer Bernardino Zendrini (1679). At the Ducal Palace in Venice, an inscription placed beneath a marble bust dedicated to the latter informs us that he was "a mathematician of the Republic" who was born in the Val Camonica and had acquired the citizenship of the Republic through personal merit. Other famous individuals who had learned and were capable of conversing in the Venetian language include the admiral of the Imperial Austrian Fleet Wilhelm Von Tegetthoff (1827), the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph of Habsburg (1830) and even the famous American writer and Nobel Prize winner Ernest Hemingway (1899).

**V**ITALITY <sup>[5]</sup> - *Venetian is a living language.* Like all living things it will of course change in space and time. From the Venetian point of view, variety, the existence of a wide range of different cultures and flexibility are not pathological conditions to be shunned but

should rather be seen as constant factors of reality. Only by adopting a degree of flexibility and thanks to their spirit of adaptation was it possible for the ancient Veneti to found their capital in the lagoon. Only by means of their acceptance of variety were they able to face the world with an open approach and vision, understanding and facilitating mutual exchange. From the very beginning, only by accepting the existence of cultures that differed from their own were the Venetians able to promote within their state a multicultural atmosphere, reflecting the essential nature of a multifaceted world. It is by no mere coincidence that since the earliest days of their long history the colour constantly associated with the Venetians is blue: the colour of the sea surrounding their city.

*The vitality of the Venetian language, however, is not only a result of the intrinsic strength and structure of the language itself; it is above all due to psycholinguistic factors, human interaction and communication on the part of those who speak this Romance language in various parts of the world.* Conscious and occasionally subconscious dynamics are combined and interact, prolonging a desire on the part of each new generation to perpetuate the use of their language and the values of the old civilisation with which it is so strongly linked. Indeed today in various parts of the world people continue to work, study, write and teach using the Venetian language. The Venetian Language is in fact studied and promoted in various ways by an academy - the *Accademia de la Bona Creansa* - and language courses that have been held for those who wish to acquire a better knowledge of this ancient tongue have been very successful. The *Accademia del Teatro in Lingua Veneta* is involved in the organisation and performance of theatrical works written in Venetian. Various literary awards and also international competitions for poetry and prose in the Venetian language have also been established and organised. Various theat-

rical events have been held to present prose, poetry and opera in the Venetian language (Incant'Arte). A company of Venetian Translators and Authors (Contraversion) was recently set up to produce modern translations of classical world literature and to promote a Venetian localization of IT products and the use of the Venetian language in general, also through the creation of original works.

**I**NTERNATIONAL STATUS <sup>[6]</sup> - *The Venetian language enjoys - and indeed always has enjoyed - an autonomous stance at the international level.* This is true not only on account of its current use in as many as four continents and not only because it is studied and promoted by illustrious international linguists such as Ronnie Ferguson (*A Linguistic History of Venice*, 2007), Christopher Moseley (*Atlas of the World's Languages*, 2010) and Tilbert D. Stegmann (*I sete tamizi: La chiave par capir tute le lengue romanse*, 2016). It is true above all owing to the presence of certain linguistic features on account of which Venetian may be considered a sort of 'bridge language'. The lexicon is mainly Italic, but the language presents certain phonetic characteristics similar to those typical of dialects of Iberian origin and a syntax comparable in many ways to that of the French language. There is also the occasional occurrence of forms of sentence construction reminiscent of the Germanic languages, such as English or German. In the past these characteristics, which make it the Romance language closest to the languages of the Germanic area and the European language with the largest presence of words derived from Greek, allowed the language of the Venetians - especially with respect to the variant commonly used in the lagoon - to become a *lingua franca* in the eastern Mediterranean and beyond. It is for this reason that Venetian has also 'contaminated' such major languages as English, French and German with the introduction of a few common terms such as 'Arsenal', 'Gazeta' and 'Ciao'. Moreover, as shown for example by the modern international use of the fifteenth-century Venetian '@' symbol in computer science, Venetian traditions may be often seen as quite innovative and even 'modern' and international.

**C**OMPLETENESS <sup>[7]</sup> - *Venetian may be considered as a complete and highly successful language in terms of its chronological continuity, its use in a variety of professional fields, its stylistic variety and its popularity in all areas of personal and social life.* The Venetian language is widely used not only in the literary context (poems, plays, novels, translations) but also in scientific works (mathematical treatises, astronomy, architecture, medicine, etc., as well as university theses, research papers, university publications in the form of collections, monographic works and also manuals), in legal documents (international treaties, diplomatic letters, oaths taken by the Doge of Venice, legislative rulings, court documents, wills and testaments, dowry statements, contracts, etc.) and in the world of music (from eighteenth and nineteenth-century opera to all musical genres of the later twentieth century and in contemporary popular music, melodic compositions, rock, folk-rock, rap, ska, punk, etc.). The Venetian language is not only a splendid ancient treasure; in both the recent past and in the present it is above all a gem that still shines in

works pertaining to the human sciences, various technical fields and the various contexts of common day-to-day modern life. Its broad use is most certainly worthy of note and the aforementioned types of written communication may be deemed essential points of reference for reflection and for the Venetian language of the Third Millennium.

**T**EACHING <sup>[8]</sup> - *Thanks to the availability of this wide range of literary and intellectual works the Venetian language may be taught and passed on to future generations, allowing for its growth and evolution in the present and in the future.* The works to which reference may be made are not only those pertaining to literature, art, theatrical productions and poetry or those which have been written in the fields of law, public administration, history and social studies, but should especially comprise many scientific works perfectly suited to teaching the Venetian language at all levels and may facilitate the free intellectual growth of those who study the language.

Scholastic aids and instruments available include primary-school courses, such as *El Parlar de la Mama* by Ada Adamo Bazzani (1924) or *Inparar el Venetian* by Daniele Marcuglia (2008), Venetian grammar books such as the *Manual Gramaticale Zenerale de la Léngua Vènetà e le só varianti* by Michele Brunelli (2012), dictionaries such as the *Dizionario della Lingua Veneta* by Gianfranco Cavallin (2011) and university theses on the Venetian language, such as the first scientific analysis of modern Venetian orthography as compared to traditional Venetian spelling and the orthographic rules of the German language by Zeno Stizzoli (2016) and also university textbooks such as *I sete tamizi: La chiave par capir tute le lengue romanse* by Alessandro Mocellin, Horst G. Klein and Tilbert D. Stegmann (2016). In addition to organising Venetian language courses throughout the Veneto (since 2014) and the development of online language courses for speakers of foreign languages (for Anglophones in 2015; for Francophones in 2016), some middle and high schools have also recently begun to valorise the Venetian linguistic heritage.

**S**CIENTIFIC NATURE <sup>[9]</sup> - *According to various highly esteemed international linguists the Venetian tongue may be certainly considered a language in its own right on account of the existence of its particular phonetic characteristics and syntactic structures.* The language presents an unmistakable 'phonetic style', its own particular lexicon and typical morphological features, as well as long-established syntactic elements which clearly demonstrate the independent evolution of the Venetian language with respect to other Romance languages, both near and far. Apart from any consideration of its juridical recognition on the part of local bodies such as the Veneto Regional Council (2007) or foreign States such as Brazil (2014), the Venetian language is a language in its own right according to international linguistic studies. This is confirmed by the United Nations organisation, which, through UNESCO recognizes its status as a separate and autonomous language. Venetian is included in the UN Atlas of the World's Languages with the ISO 639-3 'VEC' language code, with which it is internationally recognized at scientific level.

R

ECOGNITION <sup>[10]</sup> -

Venetian is already a well-known standard language that simply requires its long-awaited OFFICIAL RECOGNITION.

## As ice melts and the seas rise, can endangered languages survive?

By Kate Yoder, from the Grist web-site ([www.grist.org](http://www.grist.org)), 12 October 2016

Wherever you are in Greenland, the way the wind feels can place you in relation to the sea and the ice.

The Inuit have relied for nearly a thousand years on tiny nuances in the breeze to guide them on foggy, starless nights, and they gave these winds special names. A single word, *isersarneq*, communicates something like: "This is a wind in the fjord that comes in from the sea, and it can be hard to get home, but once you get out of the fjord, it's nice weather."

But recently, as the winds change and become unpredictable, these terms are disappearing.

"It's a very complex set of factors driving language change, and climate is definitely one of them," says Lenore Grenoble, a linguist at University of Chicago who specializes in Greenlandic.

Based on a dialect spoken in western Greenland, Greenlandic is the country's official language, though other dialects are spoken in the east and the north. It's a fascinating language, Grenoble says, made up of extremely long words that can be customized to any occasion. "There are as many words in Greenlandic as there are sentences in English," she says. "There's a lot we don't know about how it works, or how the mind works when it does this."

Some things, like the words for different winds, are disappearing before we get a chance to fully understand them.

We've lived past the peak of cultural diversity on Earth. Every two weeks, a language vanishes — one whose evolution stretches back to the earliest hominids traipsing the savanna.

Though it's not a perfect measure, language is one of the best ways we know to gauge cultural diversity. And that diversity is in danger. Linguists predict in the next 100 years, half of the 7,000 languages currently spoken in the world will vanish.

The most common cause of language death is when people let go of their old language for a more dominant one, according to the *Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*. People have an incentive to adopt languages of power, ones that have come

to dominate through colonization and offer higher social status and better job opportunities. Languages can also die when a population is physically threatened through natural disaster, famine, disease, or war.

If you're well versed in the effects of climate change, that list will sound familiar. As the world heats up, we're on track to see more intense storms, rising seas, prolonged droughts, and the spread of infectious diseases — all of which can, in turn, lead to chaos, armed conflicts, and migration. And when people settle in a new place, they begin a new life, complete with new surroundings, new traditions, and, yes, a new language.

Perhaps no place on Earth is a clearer testing ground for rapid warming than Greenland. In the last four years, more than one trillion tons of ice have melted from its massive ice sheet. This year, the pace of melt was so shocking to climate scientists that they initially doubted their measurements were coming in right.

As Greenland's environment is transformed, plant and animal communities are reshuffling faster than almost anywhere on Earth. Polar bears are moving south, mosquitoes are proliferating, new fish species are arriving, rain is falling erratically, and the air is getting more humid.

The way of life for native Greenlanders is shifting, too. While people used to use the winter sea ice in northern Greenland to hunt and travel, that ice is weakening. Now, a misstep could plunge you into ice-cold water.

Traditional Inuit food sources, like caribou, are also affected. Baby caribou tend to show up at the same time each spring, when plants are usually in their prime. But as the Arctic warms, plants are blooming and withering earlier. This mismatch means that young caribou and their mothers are eating lower quality food.

"The connection between Greenlanders and the animals is absolutely central — just as central as their language to how they identify as Greenlanders," says Ross Virginia, director of the Institute of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth.

As climate change impacts the life and land around us, it shapes where we go, what we eat, how we talk, and who we are.

On the other side of the globe, Greenland's melting ice is contributing to a similar existential crisis in the Marshall Islands. The chain of low-lying coral atolls stationed between Hawaii and Australia is experiencing a mass migration on the level of the exodus seen during the Irish Potato Famine. A fifth of the population left the country between 1990 and 2011, and climate change is increasingly a factor in the decision to relocate.

As the ocean swallows up the sandy islands, flooding streets with sewage and inundating freshwater supplies, people will be forced to migrate, likely to the United States. The largest population of Marshallese outside of the islands is in Spring-

dale, Arkansas. There, Marshallese immigrants would likely assimilate and lose their traditional language within the span of a few generations.

“There’s definitely the sense that if you don’t speak Marshallese, you’re not really a Marshallese person,” says Peter Rudiak-Gould, an anthropologist who has studied the Marshall Islands for 10 years. “The culture couldn’t really survive without language.”

Coral atolls do have a built-in resistance to rising seas: Healthy corals grow and die, washing up on island shores as sand, naturally building them up over time. But the process can’t keep up if sea level rises too fast, or if reefs are lost.

“Anywhere there’s a coral atoll and a unique cultural group on that atoll, there’s that potential for mass migration and extinction of languages,” said Rudiak-Gould, Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Maldives are all examples of this. Like the communities in the Arctic, the islanders of the South Pacific are facing down an uncertain future from unsteady ground.

It’s difficult to pin migration solely on any single factor, which may explain why climate’s impact on indigenous languages hasn’t been studied closely. The *Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages* includes one tiny paragraph on the subject. It notes that climate change has been “largely overlooked” by linguists, even though it’s already begun to affect Arctic languages and will accelerate the decline of indigenous languages around the world.

Rudiak-Gould says we don’t really have any idea how many languages will go extinct. “Whatever it is, it’s probably higher than we estimate,” he says, “because climate change has not really been taken into account in those estimates.”

In an email to Nicholas Ostler, chair of the Foundation of Endangered Languages, I asked why the linguistic community hasn’t looked into climate change more closely. In reply, he wrote: “Well, climate change is a slow-acting trend — until it reaches a tipping point, I suppose.”

But climate change isn’t some far-off scenario: It’s the reality we live in now. In the Andes, isolated communities rely on glaciers and lakes that are vanishing. Coastal villages in Alaska are already relocating to escape rising seas and melting permafrost. Once-fertile farmland in sub-Saharan Africa is turning into desert. These communities have to negotiate life in a new, unpredictable environment — or leave, throwing tradition and identity to the winds. Climate change could displace an estimated 200 million people by 2050 (even up to one billion!). If we’re not at the tipping point yet, it’s on the way.

Emigration can threaten languages, but so can migration. Greenland, with only 50,000 residents, is facing a veritable invasion of foreign workers flocking to the small country to take advantage of opportunities opened by the retreating ice, largely in oil and mineral extraction. The boom is catapulting Greenland into 21st century geopolitics. Most projections esti-

mate the new wave of industry could bring in about 2,000 foreign workers, but one found that as many as 200,000 migrant workers could come to the country — four times the current population.

“This would be massive social disruption,” Lenore Grenoble says. It’s a controversial topic at the moment. Some Greenlanders want to take the opportunity to claim their economic independence, while others are worried that foreign contact would threaten their identity. If huge numbers of workers speaking foreign languages come to the country, nothing is certain.

While the mining and drilling hasn’t begun, Greenland is already inundated with visitors. Many are “doomsday tourists” who want to see the country’s famous icy wilderness before it melts beyond recognition. About thirty-five thousand people visit Greenland by plane each year, plus another 30,000 cruise visitors.

“You have these cruise ships that land and empty out hundreds of people getting off the boat, wearing the same color jackets — like they’re all red or yellow,” Grenoble says. “And they just descend upon a small town for a few hours and leave.”

Greenland is strengthening itself against this tide, defending its language the way an island might bolster its eroding shoreline by trucking in sand.

The government is replacing Danish place names with the traditional Inuit ones, translating written materials into Greenlandic, and ensuring the language is used in schools. There’s even a language committee that legislates new words. Katti Frederikson, the head of the language secretariat, helps develop and approve new Greenlandic terminology for all sorts of subjects: economics, science, mining industries, and law.

In 2013, the council approved the Greenlandic term for climate, *silap pissusia*, and climate change, *silap pissusiata allanngormera*. These terms are explained (following a brief overview of Greenlandic by Grenoble) by Lene Kielsen Holm, a Greenlandic who works as a scientist at the Greenland Climate Research Center.

“It’s hard to talk about change the way the Westerners are talking about it, because the Westerners are doing it in an abstract way,” Holm says in the video. “It is also abstract for the scientists — while for the Inuit living with the changes, it is something that we have to live with.”

When asked about the future of Greenlandic, Grenoble said, “I hope it lasts. The one language that I’m optimistic about in the Arctic really is Greenlandic.”

“If we lose our language, lots of stories will be lost, and lots of the traditional knowledge about nature, climate, medicine, and landscape,” Frederikson says. “And of course the way we think, the way we act, will be lost. So what I’m trying to say is



that by the time people stop speaking *Kalaallisut*, we'll have lost Greenlanders."

Every language represents a way of thinking that's been built up over time through organic processes, like an ecosystem adapted to a particular time and place — and it can be disrupted, even destroyed, by sudden changes.

To keep theirs alive, Greenlanders have to do more than hang on to their vocabulary. They need to keep the language relevant, shaping it to an unfolding world of miners, tourists, and changing winds.

## Language Legends Help Create a Colorful Snapshot of Australia's Linguistic Diversity

By Eduardo Avila, *Rising Global Voices*

What better way to visualize the diversity of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages than with a multimedia online map?

"Gambay," which means "together" in the Butchulla language of the Harvey Bay region in Queensland is a colourful resource map that provides information on more than 780 of the country's native languages. Each dot on the map represents a different language region, and those dots showing similar colours indicate those languages that may have characteristics in common. Only around 20 of these languages are used on a daily basis by fluent speakers, so being able to establish links between similar languages is an important strategy to establish mutual support.

First Languages Australia formed a partnership with the Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee, which shared the technology developed for Nyurrangu Ngardji, a similar map displaying languages of Queensland.

Important contributions were collected from "Language Legends," who are speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages working as local advocates. These individuals provided video testimonials outlining the importance of maintaining and revitalising the languages for current and future generations. These contributions are an ideal way for these local leaders to introduce themselves to their own community as individuals committed to language promotion who can be called on for language advice and support.

Special emphasis was placed on how the language communities choose to represent themselves through the video testimonials, and verifying the location and spelling of the word they use to call their language. According to Melinda Holden of First Languages Australia, this feature is especially relevant as Australian languages were oral languages prior to the settlement, and they have been named/spelled various ways over the years by the missionaries, government officials, linguists

and other researchers who have worked with the language communities; and by community members themselves.

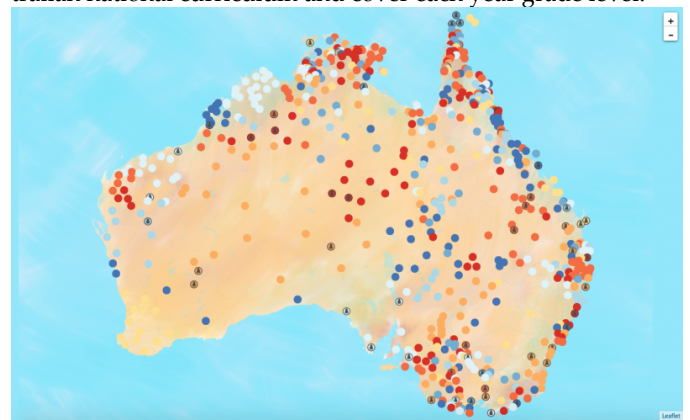
This map places that decision-making ability back into the hands of community members to decide for themselves on how they are represented.

Another "Language Legend" featured in the map, Bridget, a speaker of the Warrgamay language, writes:

*I'm a Djambi in our language. That means old woman. I'm a linguist, I prefer to use the term community linguist or first language linguist. I translate resources from English into our languages, and look at the materials that we need to support language learning. I work a lot with our community. We have a lot to do with our people, talking and agreeing on ways to support language.*

*I live it and breathe it everyday. Language work is the best thing I can do. Who wants to go out and do other things, when I can be saving our languages?*

Additional ways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to contribute and participate in Gambay and control how their culture and language is represented in cyberspace are being developed in conjunction with the "Language Legends" and regional language centers. The content currently displayed on the map could be used in the classroom across key subjects including English, Maths, Science, History, Geography and Civics. The notes it provides are linked to the Australian national curriculum and cover each year grade level.



## Study will explore best practices for creating free knowledge in indigenous languages on Wikipedia

By Rodrigo Pérez, translated by Jenny Benyon, *Rising Global Voices*

Cempohualxochitl, Ñe'ëpoty Guaraníme and Qhichwa simi are just a few of the articles found on Wikipedia written in some of the indigenous languages found throughout Latin America, such as Nahuatl (Huiquipedia), Quechua (Wikipidiya) and Guarani (Vikipetã).

Wikipedia founder Jimmy "Jimbo" Wales describes Wikipedia as "an effort to create and distribute a free encyclopaedia of the

highest possible quality to every single person on the planet in their own language". The Wikimedia Foundation's main page reads:

"Imagine a world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge. That's our commitment."

Following this principle, the site was first launched in January 2001 and currently provides more than 37 million articles in 287 languages, written on a cooperative basis by volunteers from around the world.

Languages in which the highest number of Wikipedia articles are written:

English	5,324,403 articles
Swedish	3,782,312 articles
<b>Cebuano</b>	<b>3,705,677 articles</b>
German	2,017,176 articles
Dutch	1,889,392 articles
French	1,829,771 articles
Russian	1,363,717 articles
Italian	1,323,560 articles
Spanish	1,306,439 articles

Source: Wikipedia Statistics, October 2016.

The number of Wikipedia entries published in indigenous Latin American languages is very low, however, and currently stands at 19,900 articles in Quechua, 9,940 articles in Nahuatl, 3,830 in Aymara and 3,128 in Guarani.

In order for native people to fully participate in emerging knowledge societies, they must be able to fully use their own language online. The use of digital platforms such as Wikipedia narrows the digital divide and the existing knowledge gap as far as possible. It is, therefore, crucial that indigenous languages and their communities have access to a multilingual internet, with high-quality content created not only on an international and regional level, but also on a local level.

From a cultural point of view, speakers of non-dominant languages must be able to express themselves online in their native language in a meaningful way. The internet should be a multilingual arena, in which each culture and each language can enjoy its own space. Wikipedia articles written in indigenous languages offer enormous potential for improving the free movement of information and ideas throughout the world.

It is in this context that we see questions arise regarding the way in which these indigenous languages have been able to establish themselves on this platform. Who are the editors promoting this site? What are their motivations? What challenges do they face?

To answer a few of these questions and to support future Wikipedia projects in native languages, Global Voices launched a project in the study of Wikipedia in indigenous languages in October 2016 through their outreach initiative, Rising Voices, with the backing of the Project Grants Program from the

Wikimedia Foundation. This initiative focuses on knowledge-creation; its main purpose is to document and evaluate Wikipedia's position with respect to indigenous languages, in order to determine current capabilities and the difficulties involved with establishing and maintaining long-term participation, in particular by native speakers.

Researcher and digital activist of the Zapotec Language, Rodrigo Pérez Ramírez, will head up the study in close cooperation with existing indigenous-language editors at Wikipedia, as well as with the Wikimedia Foundation and its affiliates, readers, indigenous organisations, academics and Global Voices.

The purposes of the study are as follows:

To document the history and context of 25 indigenous-language Wikipedia sites through interviews with the relevant editors, and to examine any technical, linguistic and sociocultural challenges more closely.

To analyse current demand, as well as the impact and potential use of these Wikipedia projects by a number of different populations.

To determine good practices and lessons learnt, and to carry out recommendations for future initiatives, which will be based on the evidence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact achieved.

The study will be observational, descriptive and exploratory in nature, and will call for an assessment of the achievements, successes, and challenges of indigenous-language projects on Wikipedia. It will also examine the usefulness of this contribution, which has enabled access to information written in indigenous languages. Nonetheless, the underlying educational purpose of this exercise is to rationalise the knowledge and experiences of indigenous-language editors in cyberspace, as well as to analyse both the possibilities and the challenges they may face.

The study will be divided into two parts on a methodological basis; the first part will entail a qualitative and critical review, in order to identify the capability and difficulties involved with ensuring native speakers are able to fully participate in the creation of Wikipedia projects in indigenous languages. The second part will follow an empirical path, and will seek to apply ethnographic methodologies to determine good practices and lessons learnt, and to carry out recommendations for future initiatives based on the evidence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact caused by this indigenous-language Wikipedia project.

The study has been running since November 20, 2016, and will continue until May 30, 2017. It will be restricted to documenting existing cases in Latin America.

It also aims to gather information from a number of different participants involved in the research, in the hope that their opinions will help strengthen the initiative, allow conclusions



to be reached and recommend how to better support indigenous communities with creating and broadcasting content in local languages both online and through mass communication methods, at the same time introducing new languages to the digital world, and with multilingual access to digital resources in cyberspace.

Progress on the study will be made available via the web page Activismo Lenguas and via Wikimedia's Meta site, where an online survey will be set up to enable readers to give feedback and contribute to the study.



**VIKIPETÃ**  
Opaite tembikuaa hekosãsóva renda

**Wikipedia masthead in Guaraní**

## 4. Obituaries

### Don Noé Siake, last fluent speaker of Ocaina, Colombia

*From the web-site of the Instituto Caro y Cuervo ([www.institucional.caroycuervo.gov.co](http://www.institucional.caroycuervo.gov.co)), 7 September 2016, translated by the Editor*

The death has occurred of Don Noé Siake, the last acknowledged expert on and fluent speaker of the Ocaina language. This language is one of the most endangered in our country, with four dispersed speakers and no practical possibility of using it together.

With this old man there vanishes an immeasurable store of knowledge, partially inherited by his children and grandchildren. So that don Noé's descendants have a passive competence in Ocaina. On the other hand, they speak their mother's language, Minica, a variety of Murui-Muina or Witoto, fluently, as well as Spanish, which they acquired at La Chorrera (Putumayo estate) on the rubber plantation there and at the state institutions.

Don Noé didn't want to have his "profound" knowledge recorded on voice recordings and videotapes; rather he preferred listening and talking to his own people in the big "maloka" house.

This enormous loss will not pass in discreet silence. Today at La Chorrera, following traditional rites, the Ocaina and the other members of the *Hijos del tabaco la coca y la yucca dulce* will render homage to this sage, deepening and accelerating their sense of bereavement and recalling the legacy that they must perpetuate.

## 5. Letters to the Editor

### Baltic Muslims

*From Neil Olsen, 31 August 2016*

I enjoyed Tharik Hussain's BBC article on "The amazing survival of the Baltic Muslims" in *Ogmios* 59. When we visited our daughter in Brooklyn in mid- August, we made a special field trip to see the mosque. It is situated in a nondescript neighborhood. There are no outside markings or signs which indicate what faith the building houses. However, there is a crescent on the top of the roof ornament. The building is currently addressed as 106, not 104 as stated in the article. Not a big deal. I thought you would enjoy a follow-up on one of your articles. Keep up the excellent work you do!

Neil H. Olsen, Ph.D.

## 6. Places to go on the Web

### Global survey of language revitalization

*From the Smithsonian 'Recovering Voices' web-site ([www.recoveringvoices.si.edu](http://www.recoveringvoices.si.edu))*

The Recovering Voices initiative of the Smithsonian Institution is carrying out a survey of language revitalization initiatives worldwide. If you are involved in language revitalization please share your experience with us.

The information you provide will allow us to do a comparative analysis of the factors that may improve the outcomes of revitalization efforts. We expect the results to yield insights of value to revitalization practitioners around the world.

### Introducing Tribilingual

*From Claudia Soria, Outgoing FEL Membership Secretary*

Dear FEL Members,

It is my pleasure to introduce you to Tribilingual:

<http://tribilingual.com>

Tribilingual is a language learning platform that teaches only rare and endangered languages. Their mission is to prevent these languages, and cultures, from dying through growing the number of speakers - not only within the local community but all over the world. If someone is interested in learning an endangered language, he should be able to do so.

Tribilingual works closely with speakers of the language who are ready to both develop an online course and run 30-minute weekly Skype 1:1 sessions with students. The fee charged from the student is shared between the teacher and Tribilingual.

During the course development, the teachers will receive guidance and support from Tribilingual on methodology and customizing the materials for online use. The course length is expected to be 7-8 weeks. On top of learning grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, Tribilingual wants their students to learn more about the unique culture of the community - through weekly Skype sessions and the topics selected for the course materials.

If you consider developing a course with Tribilingual or know someone that might, get in touch with

them: [teachers@tribilingual.com](mailto:teachers@tribilingual.com), [hello@tribilingual.com](mailto:hello@tribilingual.com).

With my best regards,

Claudia Soria

## 7. Forthcoming events

### Endangered Languages Fund: Language Legacies grants

*From the Endangered Languages Fund. NOTE that the deadline for applications has passed; this is for your information only*

The Endangered Language Fund is pleased to announce its 2017 Request for Proposals for Language Legacies grants. The Language Legacies program supports language documentation and revitalization efforts throughout the world. It is open to community members, language activists, and academic researchers from any country.

The deadline for application is April 10, 2017. The RFP can be found on our website

at <http://www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/request.php>. For more information, you can email us at [elf@yale.edu](mailto:elf@yale.edu).

Monica Macaulay

President, ELF

The second annual Cambridge Group for Endangered Languages and Cultures Postgraduate Workshop will be held on July 3rd, 2017 at the University of Cambridge, with FEL Chair Nicholas Ostler acting as plenary speaker. The event will be held on the day before the seventh Cambridge Conference on Language

Endangerment:

<http://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/news/seventh-cambridge-conference-language-endangerment>

Abstracts for 20-minute presentations will be accepted for review until midnight, May 18th, 2017: [http://groups.ds.cam.ac.uk/celc/graduate\\_workshop.html](http://groups.ds.cam.ac.uk/celc/graduate_workshop.html)

The organising committee is as follows: Luigi Andriani, Hanna Danbolt Ajer, Kim Groothuis, Oliver Mayeux, and Eleonora Serra.

Interested parties can get in contact with the organisers at [celcworkshop@gmail.com](mailto:celcworkshop@gmail.com)

### Engaged Humanities: Preserving and revitalising endangered languages and cultural heritage

A call for submissions to *Engaged Humanities: preserving and revitalising endangered languages and cultural heritage* by the partners of the Engaged Humanities project, the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" at the University of Warsaw, SOAS, University of London, and Leiden University closed on April 16th, 2017.

The papers will be presented at the first international conference on Engaged Humanities, on November 15th and 16th, 2017, at the Faculty of "Artes Liberales", University of Warsaw, ul. Dobra 72. 00-312 Warszawa, Poland. Successful applicants will be notified by May 12th, 2017; the registration dead-

line is September 1st, 2017. Registration for the conference is free. Coffee and tea will be provided in the breaks, and catering will be available during lunches and can be paid on site.

The plenary speakers will be Peter K. Austin (SOAS, University of London), Lenore Grenoble (University of Chicago), and Julia Sallabank (SOAS, University of London).

The Engaged Humanities project aims to strengthen scientific and innovative capacity, as well as social impact in the field of participatory action research in linguistic-cultural heritage and revitalisation of endangered languages. The assumptions behind the project reflect the need for a holistic and problem-oriented (not disciplinary-limited) approach to both theoretical and applied issues in the study of language, culture, and society. An essential goal also includes finding solutions for bridging collaboration and knowledge-transfer gaps between academics, members of local communities/ethnic minorities and non-academic organisations.

The Engaged Humanities project and this conference was preceded by the conference on Integral Strategies for Language Revitalisation, held in Wilamowice, Poland in June 2014.

The conference will directly follow a workshop on digital humanities and efficient integration of disciplinary perspectives/practices for effective engagement. Participants in the conference are also welcome to attend the workshop.

Successful conference proposals will address one or more of the following topics:

- Multipurpose documentation of linguistic and cultural heritage
- Language revitalisation in theory and practice
- Participatory action research and community-driven projects
- Indigenous research methodology and traditional knowledge in language and cultural revitalisation
- Economic impact of language preservation and multilingualism
- Language and wellbeing
- Cognitive effects of multilingualism
- Language contact in the context of endangerment
- Language policy for endangered language and cultures
- Pedagogical approaches to minority languages

#### Scientific committee:

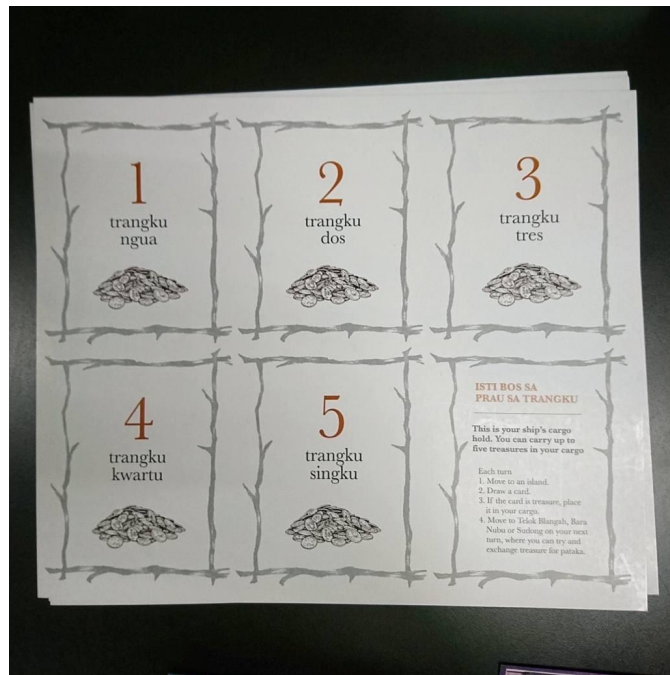
Willem Adelaar, Joshua Birchall, Robert Borges, Piotr Chruszczewski, Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kołaczyk, José Antonio Flores Farfán, Maarten Jansen, Friederike Lüpke, Justyna Olko, John Sullivan, Tomasz Wicherkiewicz

For more information, contact the ENGUM project at [enghum@al.uw.edu.pl](mailto:enghum@al.uw.edu.pl)

### London Language Show 2017

The annual Language Show will be held at the Business Design Centre, London from 13 to 15 October 2017. More details available from [www.languageshowlive.co.uk](http://www.languageshowlive.co.uk).





*The Kristang creole revival project in Singapore:  
Language learners play People Bingo, a game invented by the initiative,  
requiring knowledge of classmates.*

### *Participants in the project*

