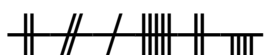


**FOUNDATION FOR ENDANGERED LANGUAGES**

# OGMIOS



The wild life at the !Khwa ttu San culture and education centre, Yzerfontein, Western Cape, South Africa: high jinks with speakers of !Xun, Xhosa, English and Afrikaans, and one glamorous other.

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Editor: Nicholas D. M. Ostler

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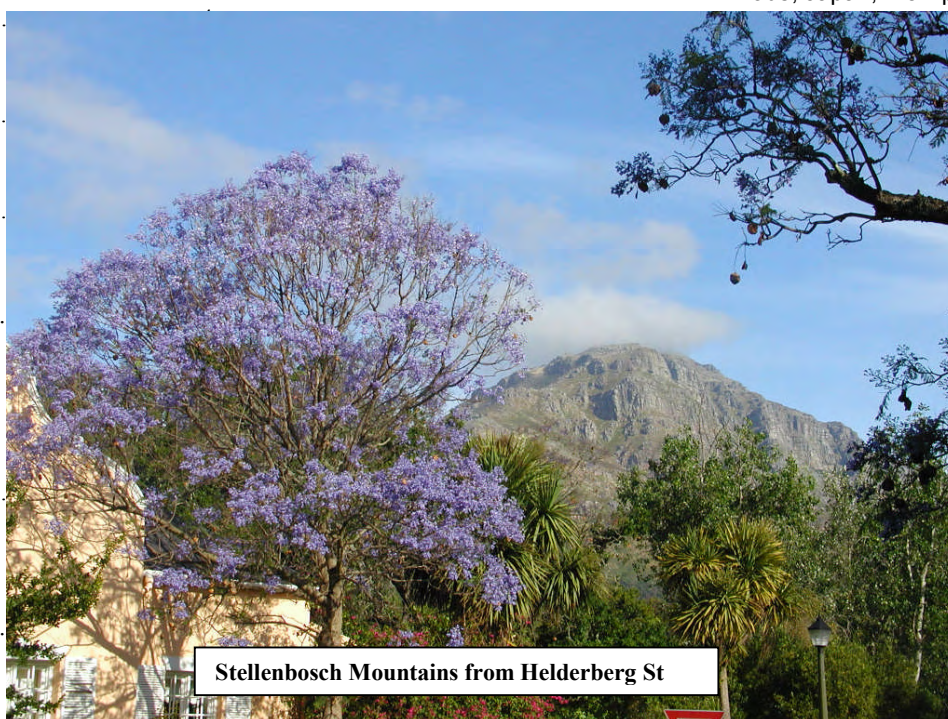
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### Guest Editorial:

#### What you and the !Khwatla have in common

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#### Visit to the !Khwatla San culture and education centre, Yzerfontein area, Western Cape, South Africa – Jane Simpson, Sydney University

A must-visit for any linguist touring South Africa is the new San Culture and Education Centre, !Khwatla, which means 'water pan' in the extinct !Xam language of the Cape of South Africa. We had the rare privilege of a visit to the centre before its official opening - thanks to Nigel Crawhall and Mikael Grut. A coach drove us there at the end of the FEL conference – about 75 kilometres north of Cape Town, and half-way up in the hills above the Atlantic. The Centre consists of a cluster of white farm buildings, some new, some 200 years old, on an 800-hectare farm.



It was started about seven years ago, when the Khoi San peoples, (a cover-term for some of the original inhabitants of Southern Africa) realised that tourism represented both threat and opportunity. A San chief, Mathambo, said that tourism is like a raging bull in a village; if you don't capture it, it will destroy the village. And the !Khwatla centre is an attempt to catch that bull.

It's a two-way centre; San people learn to deal with tourists (and the dealings cover anything from language to craft to marketing to intellectual property rights). And tourists can learn from the San, who are skilled trackers and observers of nature. The money from tourists goes to making the Centre sustainable - that's the goal of the Ubuntu Foundation of Switzerland and WIMSA (Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa) which provided the capital to start the Centre. But the !Khwatla people have been very busy on the treadmill of one-off grants, and they know that once the Centre is open, people

will expect them to be more self-sustaining. This is a heavy burden, which faces indigenous culture centres in other parts of the world. No agency is ever prepared to keep providing the salary and utilities bills needed to keep such centres running.

On arrival at the centre, we entered the restaurant, a fine old farm building which has been carefully and austere restored. We were introduced to some of the workers, most wearing blue smocks and green baseball caps.



From Namibia come Roman Nedja who speaks Khwedam and Kondino Samba who speaks !Xun. Others include Johannes Vaalbooi, Kerson Jackson, Pieter Poulo and Gruk Thys. Michael Daiber, the coordinator, speaks Afrikaans and English. They explain the function of the Centre to us, and gracefully answer our many questions about San languages.

South Africa's 11 official languages don't include any of the indigenous Khoi San languages. That's an indication of the dispossession of their speakers, who are the poorest in a country where the width of the gulf between the rich and the poor is a shock to visitors from the first world. It's caused a problem for signage in the centre - how many languages should signs be translated into? The solution for the toilets seemed easy - silhouettes of male and female eland. But the difference was a bit subtle for some linguists.



In fact, while signage in Khoi San languages would make an important statement, the most effective linguistic promotion is done by the guides, speakers of San languages.

Among the buildings are two small containers which have been converted into a school for the twenty or so children of the workers. The school was set up three years ago with help from Comic Relief, when the nearest school refused to enrol children from the centre who spoke San languages, but not much Afrikaans or English. So the energetic Bets Daiber negotiated with the local school department, bought a distance-education program close to the Government system, and started the !Khwatla Community San School. Bets talks in Afrikaans, and the mothers translate into the different languages. We met some of them, Alfreda Jackson who speaks Khwedam, Paula Samba and Donika Dala (!Xun), Baba Rosie and Ollie Thys (Afrikaans). As well as teaching, some of them prepare lunch for the children. The kids (ranging from 5 to 14 or 15) have been learning Afrikaans and English and now are scoring well on the primary examinations. They showed off their knowledge to us, singing songs in Afrikaans, English and !Xun and Xhosa. Creative accounting is needed to keep the school running, and of course donations would help.



Roman and Kondini showed us local plants and animals on the hayride to an excellent lunch on the top of a hill. We returned to the centre to hear Louis Nel from the Western Cape Provincial Government's Department of Culture and Sport's language unit (visit [www.capegateway.gov.za/language](http://www.capegateway.gov.za/language)). It was established in part to look after languages that deserve special attention: Khoi and San languages and Nama. We were provided with a booklet on the language policy of the Western Cape Province (in the three official languages of the province, !Xhosa, Afrikaans, English). Obligations include promoting the use of official languages, elevating the status of indigenous languages such as the Khoi and San languages, promoting the principle of multilingualism, empowering and affirming speakers of previously marginalised languages (including

!Xhosa). He talked to us about the complex linguistic history of the Western Cape in recent years, including the Griqua group that formed around Adam Kok in the nineteenth century. This complex history led first to the absurdity of the apartheid classification scheme – Nama speakers were classified as mixed race – to the modern difficulties of determining the Khoi and San languages within the boundaries of the Western Cape (exacerbated by the fact that there is no census data on Khoi San speakers), and to the controversy surrounding revival of the Cape Khoi San languages, a controversy sharpened by the recognition of how much work it has been to promote !Xhosa.

Louis also told us of the work on promoting Nama by Nama speakers, in particular Pedro Dausab. Some of the areas Mr Dausab thought important for work included place names and geographic names, and the influence of Khoi San languages on Afrikaans and !Xhosa. They have since held 18 workshops in the Western Cape introducing several hundred people to the language – these are awareness workshops rather than attempting to build mother-tongue fluency. The communities are very poor, and Mr Dausab had to devise ways of keeping people's interest. A number of people came to the first workshops because there was a meal, but the second time around they came and not for the meal. People have started composing speeches and dramas in the language, as well as psalms.

From the workshops, the Western Cape Language Committee produced a basic introduction to the Nama language (a little booklet with useful phrases and some comments on writing and pronunciation which might be a good model for other groups needing to promote their languages). However, they were forced to take the lowest tender for printing, and their printer was unable to cope with the fonts needs for the four click sounds. So Louis and Mr Dausab had to draw them by hand. This is an indication of the long way Louis and his committee have to go in raising the profile for indigenous languages. [Sigh.] Language problems - gowab !gomsigu as we learned from the Nama booklet.

Places like !Khwa ttu aim to get people away from their obsession with the Big Five (major animals which every tourist apparently wishes to see, and which ornament bedspreads, tourist shops,

placemats, etc.), and they aim to return control to the San of how they interact with tourists. It's a praiseworthy aim, and if our experience is to go by, future visitors to !Khwa ttu, linguists and non-linguists, should enjoy the remarkable privilege of meeting and learning from speakers of San languages like Roman and his co-workers.

!Khwa ttu Culture and Education Centre  
PO Box 348 Yzerfontein 7351  
Western Cape Province, South Africa  
sancentre@visualnet.co.za

For more information visit:

!Khwa ttu: [www.khwattu.org](http://www.khwattu.org)

the San: <http://www.san.org.za/>

Western Cape Language Committee:

[www.capegateway.gov.za/language](http://www.capegateway.gov.za/language)

Basic introduction to the Nama language  
& Western Cape Language Policy.

## 2. Development of the Foundation

### Treasurer's Travels

By Chris Moseley

Membership of the Foundation for Endangered Languages, or at least its committee, can be an interesting reason to visit parts of the world one might not otherwise have planned to see. Certainly that has been the case with your Treasurer. In 2005, as attentive readers of *Ogmios* will know, the venue for the ninth of our annual conferences (felicitously shortened to FEL IX by its organisers) was Stellenbosch, South Africa. And it certainly lived up to its cheerful acronym.

This was one of the more distant venues from the metropolitan centres of our activities and membership, so perhaps that was one of the reasons why attendance figures were a little below par this year - that, and the fact that university term-time was in full swing in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres. This resulted in a number of scheduled speakers being unable at the last moment to attend, and it slightly compacted the duration of the conference. Still, the quality of the papers was very high, and the camaraderie among the participants was all the greater.

There seemed to be less than usual for your Treasurer to do this year, leaving more time to get to know new friends and meet old ones. The staff of the Taalsentrum, or Language Centre, were amazingly efficient and helpful. Lize Vorster and her colleagues deserve our sincere thanks for being on hand for the day-to-day running of events. The director, Prof. Leon de Stadler, could not have been more helpful, presiding over the efficient running

of the event and personally collecting many of the guests from Cape Town International Airport and taking them back there, at all hours of the day and night.

The Taalsentrum had been planned as the actual venue for the conference, but it was shifted to the more spacious premises of the Ou Hoofgebou, the Old Main Building of the university, a stately white colonial edifice among the many stately buildings that dominate this university town. Accommodation was not on the campus, but in a number of guest houses dotted about within walking distance of the campus centre, which the guests had chosen for themselves from a list supplied by the Language Centre. Stellenbosch is a delightful place to walk in, with its avenues of oak trees providing cool shade from the early summer heat.

But of course the Language Centre was not the only organiser. Months, even years, of planning had gone into this conference, which was the brainchild of Nigel Crawhall, whom we had first got to know at our conference in Broome, Western Australia, and the rest of our organising committee. Nigel was closely involved in every aspect of the conference, but especially those concerning the indigenous San population of South Africa, who are the main focus of our interest in the country as Endangered Language specialists; he was also on hand on our excursion to the !Khwa ttu cultural centre which is being set up in the Western Cape as a living monument to the culture of the San peoples.

The theme of this year's conference was "Creating Outsiders: Endangered Languages, Migration and Marginalisation", so our speakers dealt with themes of internal displacement as well as external migration. South Africa's own rather unique situation in this regard was taken up by our Keynote speaker, Rajend Mesthrie of the University of Cape Town.



Raj Mesthrie in action

The country has not only endangered indigenous languages, but the waves of immigration to its shores have resulted in a complex ethnic mosaic in which some pieces,

notably the languages of the Indian subcontinent brought by the immigrant labourers (Tamil, Bhojpuri, Telugu, Urdu) are distinctly marginalised in KwaZulu-Natal. And later, outside the programme of the main conference, South Africa's major speech communities were represented in a panel of distinguished speakers to discuss South Africa's official language policy. As many of you will know, South Africa has 11 official languages, but this isn't immediately obvious to the casual visitor to a single region of the country; in the Western Cape, English and Afrikaans are clearly dominant, along with Xhosa in the Cape Town area; it was good to have the opportunity of a more general overview, and our thanks go to Mikael Grut for his initiative in arranging this discussion panel.

The papers presented at the conference naturally fell under various broad heads: Outward Migration, Inward Migration, First Peoples, Policy and Power, States and Minorities, and Migrations in History and Prehistory. The viewpoints expressed come from both endangered language communities and the academic quarter, and we were privileged to have speakers of some of the handful of surviving San languages addressing us.

Geographically, though, the spread was less even. Sub-Saharan Africa was of course well represented among the speakers, Australia also fielded a strong contingent, Europe had its fair share of speakers too, but sadly Eastern Asia and the Americas were sorely underrepresented, at least in terms of subject matter, and this was regrettable. It's a recurring problem, of course, representing not so much the location of the hubs of our membership, but rather the distance to be travelled from them, and it is part of the reason why we try to hold our conferences on a different continent each year. Wherever we go, we never fail to attract a high calibre of speakers and papers, and this year's conference was every bit as high in quality as its predecessors. Next year, on an entirely different continent (provisionally in India), I hope to be marvelling once again at the diversity and quality of dedication and talent in the endangered language movement. But it will be hard to erase the memory of Stellenbosch.

## Chairman's Report on the Year - Extracts

This has been FEL's most abundant year in its short life.

- We have been able to give 14 grants of our own, amounting to approximately £10,000 sterling, doubling the total that we could distribute in our previous year. (They are listed in Ogmios #26, for 30 April 2005.)

- We have enabled grants for Tz'utujil education in Guatemala, and Suya development in Brazil.
- We have held successful conferences in Barcelona and now here in Stellenbosch.
- We have also sold 222 copies of our Proceedings, grossing revenue of £4,312, compared with 167, grossing £2,868 in 2003-2004. That is an increase of 50% in sales revenues, and 33% increase in volumes sold.
- We have acquired our first employee, Funmi Adeniyi, working half time from December to August.
- One of our fund-raising officers, Louanna Furbie, has created a web-site which should make it possible for outside donors to make donations to us through the web-site: see <http://www.felgivingcatalog.org/>
- Our sister organization FEL inc – which has USA tax-free [501(c)3] status – has been enabled to release its funds for charitable purposes to recipients beyond the USA.

But we cannot be complacent. Our membership in that same period is not up, but down, and starkly down: it stands at 199 as against 309 this time last year, a loss of 35%. The change in the pattern of memberships is interesting, though, and slightly reassuring. Leaving aside perpetual memberships (Honorary Members, and the other charities with which we have exchange relations) all categories of membership have fallen except for Concessions, which have gone up by 80%: students and the retired, then, are our growth area. The main category of lost members is in fact those who joined free: whereas 50% of our members were free last year, this year only 40% are. Our paying members have declined by 25%, but our free members by 62%. It is sad to lose anybody, but the loss of free members actually means that our costs will go down: loss of 51 subsidised members cuts our yearly running costs by about £344, even as the loss of all those paying members, has cut our net revenues by £1,025.

In all, our membership revenues are down by about 28%. That means a decrease of £680. But luckily this year's receipts from book sales are up by twice as much, by £1,444. Even considering postage costs, the book profits are up by £1,334. So even leaving aside the charitable donations we have received, GiftAid etc., we can say that the 'business' side of FEL – its membership and sales activities – has grown from £4,925 to £5,580, a growth of 13%.

So much for our housekeeping. ... Financially, we are more than holding our own.

But in fact, we are potentially facing a different kind of crisis – a crisis of manpower.

We owe it to our membership – and even more to the language communities whose plight we are trying to help – to look for new

activities, new projects, and more influence in the world. But the sad fact is that we simply do not have the time and effort to do this. In brief, we do not have enough active officers: not enough workers to keep our regular activities going, while we seek to expand.

[The Chairman then gave a schematic view of FEL's activities, and the resources available to take charge of them. He showed that pretty much every officer has essential routine work to do; hardly anyone is free to do longer-term planning and development; there had been no time to follow up the Grant-holders of past years, and see what they have done with our grants, and very little time for strategic planning, or media publicity. Furthermore, with an outside appointment in Japan from April to September 2006, he would not himself have the opportunity to keep the FEL routine activities in motion, notably Ogmios, the Grants Competition, supporting the conference organization, and overseeing the distribution of FEL's publications.]

In view of the continuing lack of core funding, which would allow our activities to be put on a firm footing through the use of paid staff, the remedy for all this has to be volunteer work by the elected officers of the Committee (and no doubt co-opted officers who will be added in the course of the year). Without this, next year will see a breakdown. With it, we can try to organize membership campaigns, and extra financial support, which will put us on a sounder footing.

***Note:** Addressing this crisis is the first task for the new Committee. Any members who have time to get involved with FEL's administration (or ideas for growth and marketing opportunities) are encouraged to contact the Chairman (also currently editor of Ogmios) at the address given on page 2.*

## New FEL Committee for 2005-2006

### Elected officers

Chairman	Nicholas Ostler
Treasurer	Christopher Moseley
Secretary	Kipnyango Seroney

### Elected members

Paul Baker  
Hakim Elnazarov  
Louanna Furbie  
Salem Mezhoud  
Tjeerd de Graaf  
Michael Walsh  
Nigel Birch

### Members for co-optation

Christopher Hadfield  
Paul Lewis  
Steven Krauwer  
Tomasz Wicherkiewicz

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### 3. Endangered Languages

#### in the News

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#### **Putin Claims Some Former Soviet States' Policies Regarding Russian Language are Irrelevant**

27 Sept 2005 | 13:24 | FOCUS News Agency

*Moscow/Riga.* The policy of some former Soviet states regarding the Russian language is irrelevant, Russia's President Vladimir Putin stated in the frameworks of his annual live webcast with Russia's citizens, answering a question of a Latvian citizen related to Latvia's intention to abolish Russian language from the curriculum of the schools in the country. The debate was shown on Channel 1 of Russian national television.

"Just a few years ago we were all sharing one home, the Soviet Union. Subsequently, some states undertook the policy of ignoring their past, which is just irrelevant," Vladimir Putin said.

Russia is ready to help in finding solutions to all the problems related to the Russian-speaking citizens of the former Soviet republics, President Putin added.

"Hurricane Katrina creates lots of potential cultural changes to the landscape of New Orleans," said Donald Dyer, interim chair of modern languages. "The dialects and languages of the New Orleans area are just one aspect of the expected changes."

Panelist and UM linguistics professor Allison Burkette said New Orleans residents scattered to more than 700 cities across the United States in the hurricane's wake. That relocation, she said, also dispersed the many English dialects associated with different New Orleans neighborhoods.

"In New Orleans, the dialects are identified with specific neighborhoods, such as the Irish Channel dialect, the Ninth Ward dialect and the Garden District dialect," Burkette said. "There are more, especially considering the varied backgrounds of New Orleans settlers, but these are the most recognizable."

"The future of the New Orleans English dialects is dependant upon who returns to the Crescent City," she continued. "Whatever happens, though, we can expect the dialects spoken in heavily flooded neighborhoods to eventually die off in successive generations if large groups of New Orleans residents do not return to rebuild their communities."

Recent polls suggest that as many as 40 percent of New Orleans residents will not return following rebuilding efforts. Burkette said those who don't return could even alter the English dialect in Houston, Texas, for example, where a majority of New Orleans residents relocated.

"Other cities can expect to see their dialect change if large portions of their population shifted as a result of New Orleans residents seeking new places to live," she said.

Another dialect examined as part of the roundtable discussion was Isleño Spanish. Since migrating from the Canary Islands to areas east of New Orleans in the late 18th century, Isleño Spanish-speaking residents had experienced a recent revival of their language, according to modern languages professor Felice Coles. That revitalization has diminished as a result of Katrina.

"Through social gatherings, newsletters and even a museum, Isleño Spanish was being revitalized, but that's been halted now," Coles said. "The disposable income of the Isleño Spanish-speaking residents used to revive their language is now being used for survival."

During the height of the revival, there were approximately 1,500 Isleño Spanish speakers in the New Orleans area. Since the hurricane, the number has dropped to an estimated 50 people.

"The key to maintaining these dialects is daily close-knit social interaction," Coles said.

"When you lose that interaction, then you are in danger of losing the language."

Sponsored by the Department of Linguistics, with support from the departments of modern languages and English, and the College of Liberal Arts, the roundtable also addressed the demise of Mississippi Gulf Coast French.

Although there were only an estimated 50 people who spoke French on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the early 1990s, Hurricane Katrina has all but killed the language, said independent scholar Rebecca Moreton.

"The French spoken along the Mississippi Gulf Coast was almost gone when Katrina hit," said Moreton. "Now because of the hurricane, we can easily say the language is dead."

For more information on the Department of Linguistics, go to [http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/modern\\_languages/Linguistics.html](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/modern_languages/Linguistics.html)

#### **Bunuba at Large**

By Chee Chee Leung, Education Reporter

THERE are nearly twice as many students attending Wesley College as there are people living in the largely Aboriginal town of Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia. But these two communities, almost at opposite ends of the country, have joined forces in a bid to preserve an endangered indigenous language.

In a trial project to be announced tonight, Wesley College will spend a term next year teaching the Bunuba language and culture to its grade 4 pupils.

It is believed to be the first time the language will be taught to schoolchildren outside the indigenous communities of Western Australia.

June Oscar, chairwoman of the Kimberley Language Resource Centre, said there were only about 60 older people who could speak the language fluently.

"If we don't know our language, we don't know our country, we don't know how we live," said Ms Oscar, a Bunuba speaker. "It's a great and fantastic opportunity for both our community and the Wesley community. "With an understanding of the language, a whole new world is able to be understood."

Grade 3 student Stephanie Fung is one Wesley pupil looking forward to the Bunuba classes.

"It's fun when you learn different languages," the nine-year-old said. "You learn about how they live and what they do."

Wesley College is among a number of independent schools — including Scotch College and Carey Baptist Grammar School

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### 4. Appeals, News and Views

#### from Endangered Communities

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#### **Linguistics Panel Examines Katrina's Impact on Gulf Coast Languages**

David Holzman <Dcholzman@aol.com>

The mass-migration caused by Hurricane Katrina has the potential to forever alter the distinctive language of New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast, as well as that of many other American cities. Linguistics researchers are studying how the storm affects language across the region.

Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, forcing tens of thousands to relocate across the United States. The migration required hurricane evacuees to take what possessions they could, including recipes, music and dialects. The rich cultural characteristics that make New Orleans renowned worldwide, such as jambalaya and jazz, were forced to other parts of the country as a result of the disaster. Also driven away were the many English dialects spoken by New Orleans residents. The topic was addressed recently at the University of Mississippi by a faculty panel and a local scholar during a round-table discussion on "The Displacement of New Orleans Speakers: Linguistic Consequences of Hurricane Katrina."

in Melbourne's east — that have pursued relationships with Aboriginal communities. The Bunuba language initiative at Wesley is part of a broader partnership between the independent school and the Fitzroy Valley community of the Kimberley region. The town of Fitzroy Crossing, within the Fitzroy Valley, is about 2600 kilometres north-east of Perth.

Wesley pupils and teachers visited the town in August, and a group of Fitzroy Crossing pupils have been in Melbourne since Sunday. "It's nice and cold — too cold," said Edmond Smiler, of the Bayulu Community School. The 11-year-old also noticed that there were many children "of different colours" at Wesley.

"You make friends out of them," he said.

#### REACHING OUT SCHOOL PROJECTS

■ Carey Baptist Grammar School has developed a relationship with the Robinson River School, in a remote Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory. Student exchanges that started this year are expected to continue, and teacher secondments are under consideration.

■ Trinity Grammar School offers four scholarships a year for indigenous students, in partnership with Melbourne University. Among the recipients for next year are two boys from the Northern Territory.

■ Scotch College offers two scholarships each year to students from the Tiwi Islands, north of Darwin, where boys spend a term as boarders at the school. So far six students from the Tiwi Islands have attended Scotch under this program.

■ Wesley College has established a partnership with the Fitzroy Valley community in Western Australia, which includes student and teacher exchanges, and plans to develop a curriculum to teach Aboriginal languages.

November 17, 2005  
[www.theage.com.au](http://www.theage.com.au)

#### Fort Gibson Schools to Offer Cherokee Instruction

<http://www.kotv.com/main/home/stories.asp?whichpage=1&id=92923>

The Fort Gibson Public School District plans to offer instruction in Cherokee culture and customs. Assistant Superintendent Linda Clinkenbeard says the district is working to get state certification in the Cherokee language.

The district has a 40 percent American Indian student population, most of them Cherokee. Clinkenbeard says she believes there should be an interest in the language. A 2002 study by the Cherokee Nation indicated less than seven percent of tribal members in northeastern Oklahoma can speak Cherokee.

#### Ngiaka Yalarrnga : Lance Sullivan's quest to save a language

*National Indigenous Times*, Issue 89, Australia, 19 Sept 2005

[www.nit.com.au/thearts/story.aspx?id=5707](http://www.nit.com.au/thearts/story.aspx?id=5707)

The language of the Yalarrnga people from western Queensland is no longer in danger of oblivion, thanks largely to the efforts of former Boulia resident Lance Sullivan.

While completing his full time studies in anthropology and archaeology at James Cook University, Lance embarked on a project that would see his peoples' language and culture preserved for years to come. Lance's book, *Ngiaka Yalarrnga* (sponsored by BHP Billiton's Cannington Mine), is the culmination of hundreds of hours he spent listening to and recording older speakers of the Yalarrnga language.

"I truly believe the youth of today must be taught their mother's tongue and given the knowledge of their birthright, and that is why I have written this book," he said.

"*Ngiaka Yalarrnga* is also a tribute to the Yalarrnga people who have passed before us.

"When I was a young man one of the elders told me never to forget who or what I am. She said to me, be proud, talk strong, walk tall, you are a Yurri an Anangu, an Aboriginal man. Our ancestors blood flows through your veins!

"I hope that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people enjoy reading *Ngiaka Yalarrnga* and I'm sure that my book will help reinforce the Yalarrnga language amongst Central Aboriginals," Lance said.

Cannington is distributing *Ngiaka Yalarrnga* to libraries and schools in north and western Queensland.

#### Cultural comics for Ahtna

CASEY RESSLER *Frontiersman*, Valley Life editor

[http://www.frontiersman.com/articles/2005/09/23/news/valley\\_life/feature1.txt](http://www.frontiersman.com/articles/2005/09/23/news/valley_life/feature1.txt)

Language is a fundamental link to Native cultures, and in Chickaloon, a book project is keeping language front and center for future generations. After creating a CD-ROM package of language lessons for students as part of the Koh'taen Kenaage project, the tribe has created three comic book-style storybooks that are aimed at keeping the Ahtna language fun and educational for students.

**Editor's note:** *Ahtna*, (also spelt *Ahtena*, or *Atna* - and also known as *Copper River language* or *Mednovskiy*) [AHT] is said by

*the SIL Ethnologue to have 80 speakers out of 500 population (on 1995 testimony from Michael Krauss). This Na-Dene language, closely related to Tanaina, is spoken on California's Copper River above the Eyak River at its mouth, and upper Susitna and Nenana drainages. There are 8 communities. Speakers are in their 50s or 60s and older.*

"We're trying to integrate traditional Ahtna language into lessons that are fun," said Dimi Macheras, who did all the artwork for the three books, the last of which was released this week. "It's one thing to have tapes with language spoken on them, but it's another thing to have something like a comic book or a CD-ROM to learn from." The third book, "C'eyiig' Hwnax," is available at Fireside Books in Palmer or through the Web site [www.chickaloon.org](http://www.chickaloon.org). Macheras said that the first two books in the project, "Tsaani" and "Besiiin" were very well received. "We printed 150 limited-edition copies, and now we're trying to print 1,000 more because they sold out," he said. "That's what we're hoping for this book, too."

Originally, the language project was the creation of eight CD-ROMS. After six of those eight CDs were created, two more needed to be completed, and the Ahtna language lessons were complete.

"So we decided to make those last two CD-ROMS actual stories that used the Ahtna language," Macheras said. "And after that, we decided to print the stories."

For Macheras, doing the artwork for the book was one way to not only put together one of his primary interests, art, but also to give back to his community.

"The stories are word for word like my grandmother, Katie Wade, a village elder, would say them," he said. "It's nice because I'm a part of the tribe, and this is something that helps the tribe."

Macheras has been drawing comic book-style graphics for years. He's only 24, but he can point to a simple project he did as an 11-year-old as his first paid art job. He went to Ya Ne Dah Ah, the Chickaloon Village school, for seventh- and eighth-grade. Now, he's hoping to make his passion for art a full-time career.

He said he's already working with someone in Juneau to illustrate a comic book detailing an "ancient Tlingit story," and he's working on his own book as well. He said he hopes his illustrations end up benefiting rural Alaskans everywhere.

"It's a lot of fun, and I've learned a lot doing this job," Macheras said. "I'd love to work with other villages designing books that they can use to teach, and to make money for their tribes."

## Niue fights to keep language alive

Oct 5, 2005

<http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411749/616440>

Teachers of the Niue language in New Zealand say one way to keep their tongue alive is by following the same road as Māori. Niuean people from around New Zealand were in Porirua this week for a four-day conference to discuss and debate the sustainability of their language. Latest figures put the language in a precarious situation with less than 20% of Niuean people speaking the language fluently.

Co-ordinator of the Niue literacy project Nora Douglas says the efforts Māori have made are a good example in regaining their language. Douglas believes elders have a pivotal role in ensuring their language, culture and heritage is preserved for future generations. She says the elders are a precious asset and must be utilised. Douglas says they are the role models and will help pass the language on to the next generation. Language teachers are also considering developing a Niuean Language Commission.

## Letter from Georgia: Ratification of the ECRML and the position of Mingrelian and Svan

*Dear Representatives of FEL.*

In the near future, Georgia is to sign and ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. We are very glad about this. Unfortunately, the speaker of the Georgian parliament Nino Burjanadze in her interview to the Georgian weekly newspaper *Kviris Palitra* (October 17-24, 2005) stated that this charter will not cover the Mingrelian and Svan languages, because the Mingrelians and Svans are not national minorities within Georgia. We don't know whether Ms Burjanadze knows that this charter applies not only minority but also to regional languages. We are disappointed with this statement of Ms Burjanadze. Please support us and don't let some forces separate the Mingrelian and Svan languages from this charter.

This charter is a last chance to save these languages. We need your moral support. Please contact Mr Hasan Bermek, who will be following Georgia's ratification process, and tell him that the Mingrelian and Svan languages should be protected by the charter too. His e-mail address is:

[Hasan.BERMEK@coe.int](mailto:Hasan.BERMEK@coe.int)

Thanks in advance.

Best regards.

- David Rapava <rapava21@yahoo.com>,
- George Karchava,
- Zaur Gaxaria,
- Valeri Gaxokia,

- Viktor Tsaava,
  - Roland Xazalia.
- (members of the Association for Colchis Culture).

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## 5. Allied Societies and Activities

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### Indigenous Language Institute (ILI)

The Indigenous Language Institute (ILI) recognizes the imminent loss of indigenous peoples' languages and acknowledges the individuality of indigenous communities. ILI facilitates innovative, successful community-based initiatives for language revitalization through collaboration with other appropriate groups and organizations, and promotes public awareness of this crisis.

ILI was founded as the Institute for the Preservation of the Original Languages of the Americas (IPOLA) by Joanna Hess in September 1992 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. ILI has a Board of Directors whose members are majority Native American. The Board's experiences in language work at various levels steer the program direction. A multidisciplinary corps of Advisors are called upon to assist the Board of Directors and staff in programmatic, administrative and fiscal matters.

[www.indigenous-language.org/index.php](http://www.indigenous-language.org/index.php)

### Call for proposals: Yiddish and Typology

The editors of a planned anthology, *Yiddish and Typology*, invite proposals for contributions to the volume. Papers may deal with any area of Yiddish linguistics (e.g., syntax, phonology, morphology, historical linguistics, areal linguistics, sociolinguistics) as it relates to more general issues of linguistic typology. Papers appearing in the volume will not be limited to any specific typological approach, and thus may vary from author to author.

#### Editors:

Neil G. Jacobs [jacobs.8@osu.edu](mailto:jacobs.8@osu.edu)  
 Howard I. Aronson [hia5@rcn.com](mailto:hia5@rcn.com)  
 Hans den Besten [j.b.denbesten@uva.nl](mailto:j.b.denbesten@uva.nl)  
 Thomas F. Shannon [tshannon@berkeley.edu](mailto:tshannon@berkeley.edu)  
 Anna Verschik [anna.verschik@tlu.ee](mailto:anna.verschik@tlu.ee)

#### Proposals.

An electronic version of your proposal may be sent to any of the five editors. It will then be forwarded to the rest of the editors. Proposals should be detailed abstracts, containing the following information: (a) author name(s) and affiliation(s), and contact information; (b) working title of paper; (c) clear statement of the problem, the typological issues involved, sample data, proposed solution, nature of the contribution your paper makes; (d) short bibliography of main sources to be used in the study.

PROPOSALS SHOULD BE SENT BY APRIL 30, 2006. The editorial committee will send out its responses by May 31. Information on style, format, etc., will be sent out at that time as well. For accepted proposals, finished drafts of the papers will be due by October 31, 2006. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any of the editors.

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## 6. Reports from the Field

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### Studies on the Pirahã and Arawak Languages

*Two studies that appear in the August/October 2005 issue of Current Anthropology challenge established linguistic theories regarding the language families of Amazonia.*

New research by Dan Everett (University of Manchester) into the language of the Pirahã people of Amazonas, Brazil disputes two prominent linguistic ideas regarding grammar and translation. The Pirahã are intelligent, highly skilled hunters and fishers who speak a language remarkable for the complexity of its verb and sound systems. Yet, the Pirahã language and culture has several features that not known to exist in any other in the world and lacks features that have been assumed to be found in all human groups. The language does not have color words or grammatical devices for putting phrases inside other phrases. They do not have fiction or creation myths, and they have a lack of numbers and counting. Despite 200 years of contact, they have steadfastly refused to learn Portuguese or any other outside language. The unifying feature behind all of these characteristics is a cultural restriction against talking about things that extend beyond personal experience. This restriction counters claims of linguists, such as Noam Chomsky, that grammar is genetically driven system with universal features. Despite the absence of these allegedly universal features, the Pirahã communicate effectively with one another and coordinate simple tasks. Moreover, Pirahã suggests that it is not always possible to translate from one language to another.

In addition, Alf Hornborg's (Lund University) research into the Arawak language family counters the common interpretation that the geographical distribution of languages in Amazonia reflects the past migrations of the inhabitants. At the time of Christopher Columbus, the Arawak language family ranged from Cuba to Bolivia. Yet, geneticists have been unable to find significant correlations between genes and languages in the Amazonia. Moreover, Arawakan languages spoken in different areas show more similarities to their non-Arawakan neighbors than to each other, suggesting that they may derive from an early trade language. As well, Arawak languages are distributed

along major rivers and coastlines that served as trade routes, and Arawak societies were dedicated to trade and intermarriage with other groups. But, the dispersed network of Arawak-speaking societies may have caused ethnic wedges between other, more consolidated language families with which they would have engaged in trade and warfare. Finally, there is increased evidence that language shifts were common occurrences among the peoples of Amazonia and were used as a way to signal a change in identity, particularly when entering into alliances, rather than migratory movement.

*Sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Current Anthropology is a transnational journal devoted to research on humankind.*

Contact: Carrie Olivia Adams

coa@press.uchicago.edu

+1-773-834-0386

University of Chicago Press Journals

## 7. Overheard on the Web

### Aboriginal Languages Mustn't Die: Goori Elder

12 January 2006

Darcel Moyle is a Goori woman from Minjerribah -- otherwise known as North Stradbroke Island, just off the coast of Brisbane. She's also an Aboriginal Education Officer with the Australian Education Union, as well as the Indigenous representative on the ACTU. Darcel was one of the speakers at a national language teachers' conference in Melbourne, exploring the topic, Languages and Cultures Education - Why?

Darcel Moyle's views can be heard at:

<http://www9.sbs.com.au/radio/index.php?page=vv&newsID=128145>

### Ethnocomputing

<http://www.ethnocomputing.org/>

The term *ethnocomputing* came up around 1999 in our discussions on cultural aspects of computer science. The concern was that the contemporary computer science education may cause some unnecessary cognitive overhead to people from non-western cultures, but now the concept of ethnocomputing has extended to include also a number of other aspects of computer science and computing. Although culture has recently been recognized as one factor in interface design, computer science and engineering in general are often thought to be culturally neutral. On the contrary, we believe that it is impossible to separate culture and people, and we believe that culture is an important factor in computational design, modeling, and theory.

In the design and implementation of computing technology, residue of cultural characteristics such as beliefs, values, assumptions, ideas, and language of the designers is embedded in the product. We wish to stress the importance of understanding the context of ICT research, development, and use, as well as the importance of identifying the social, historical, cultural, or personal characteristics that affect computational ideas and artifacts. We believe that although it is important to recognize cultural content in technology, it is equally important to recognize the computational content in culture. Various activities in cultures, such as games, arts, design, and fashion, make use of computational ideas, and understanding computing in everyday things is a challenging pursuit on its own.

### Onkwehonwe.com: AI robots for endangered languages

For the past ten years I have been the developer of Onkwehonwe.com and of artificially intelligent robots for endangered languages.

There you will find a wide variety of endangered language robots. I am always adding a new bot for another endangered language, as I get time.

Behind the Scenes of Onkwehonwe.com:

<http://www.monigarr.com/cbstandardfeature.html>

Some Stats:

- Average of 3500 Mohawk language conversations (visitors) per week.
- Mohawk Language Robots currently have over 200,000 translations in brain.

Are you interested and able to sponsor a new endangered-language robot?

I give free personal (non-commercial) access to instant translations, pronunciations, and conversations to any computer, mobile device, cell phone, instant messenger, web-browser, and standard talking toys found in most retail stores, from <http://www.onkwehonwe.com>

mohawk talking toy example:

<http://www.monigarr.com/projectanima>

Best Wishes,

Monica Peters

Phone: 613-936-6512

Email: [Monigarr@Yahoo.com](mailto:Monigarr@Yahoo.com)

## 8. Places to Go -

### On the Net and in the World

### Karuk language resources

There are a wealth of resources on this language of northern California at (including many papers by the linguist Bill Bright):

<http://www.karuk.org/>

### A Gateway to Māori

*Kia ora* everyone, here are my contact details, and this is a link to our new website <http://koreroMāori.co.nz>

I especially like the interactive sessions, and there's more to come over the next few months so please have a browse if you'd like to see what we're up to here in Aotearoa.

It is part of the overall site

<http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/>

Nicola Bright

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori / The Māori Language Commission

Level 14, Investment Centre II, Ballance Street, PO Box 411 Wellington, New Zealand  
DDI: +64-4-4716725

[nicola@tetaurawhiri.govt.nz](mailto:nicola@tetaurawhiri.govt.nz)

### Romani History

There is a fascinating site on this, with a wealth of learned articles, at [www.radoc.net](http://www.radoc.net)

Particularly interesting to the editor was the chronology, which traces Romani history back to an errant group of kshatriya Rajputs in India. The common Italian word for Romani, namely *tzigani* (cf German Zigeuner) would derive from Greek *a-thinganoi* 'not-touch'. The originator of the site Ian Hancock <[xulaj@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:xulaj@mail.utexas.edu)> writes: it means (more or less) the "hands off" people, but that nickname was applied even earlier to the Byzantine Manichaeans, who were similarly exclusivist in their dealings with outsiders, and only later applied to Roma.

### Pakistan's Frontier Language Institute Website: latest updates

#### Palula sample text

A story about the game (Tug-of-war), played in Chitral during the British era. The speaker of the text is Fazalur Rehman of Ashret, Chitral.

#### Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Palula

Palula is a language with more than ten thousand speakers, living mostly in the southern villages of district Chitral: Ashret, Biori, Purigal, Ghos and Kalkatak are all

villages where people speak Palula as their mother tongue.

### **Dying Languages with Special Focus on Ormuri**

It is always difficult to locate the origin of a race when the question of its history is raised. One has to rely on the record available in hand, and room for further research is always open in view of availability of modern means of research.

Frontier Language Institute  
19F KKK Rd., University Town, Peshawar,  
Pakistan  
Ph: 091 585 3792 Fax: 091 570 0250  
[www.fli-online.org](http://www.fli-online.org)

### **Linguistic Fieldwork Preparation: a guide for field linguists**

A website of "Linguistic Fieldwork Preparation: a guide for field linguists" is now up and running. It is meant to be a comprehensive web-resource for the benefit of the linguistic community at large. The site's address is:

<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/lingfieldwork/>

The project was carried out as part of the LSA Committee on Endangered Languages and their preservation and under the supervision of Keren Rice, University of Toronto. All additions are welcome.

### **elf: Observatoire "Économie-Langues-Formation"**

This message is to let you know about the existence of the website of the Observatoire "Économie-Langues-Formation" (a.k.a. the "elf Observatory"), on

<http://www.unige.ch/eti/elf>

and also accessible simply through  
<http://www.elf.unige.ch>

The activities carried out at the elf Observatory aim at exploring the relations linking economics, language, and education.

The elf Observatory is intended to develop progressively into a resource and competence centre for research on these interrelations. The elf Observatory is funded by the Rectorate of the University of Geneva. It has only recently begun its activities, but we hope that you will find useful information and materials on our website. The elf Observatory website includes access to some recent publications by the Observatory's members, as well as a number of links to other research centres, university programmes and academic journals.

Prof. François Grin, Director  
Michele Gazzola, Research Assistant

### **27th Annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum, 24-25 February, 2006**

<http://www.gse.upenn.edu/cue/forum.php>

The 27th Annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum will be held at the University of Pennsylvania on February 24-25, 2006. The theme is "Educators and Ethnographers Negotiating Ideological and Implementational Spaces." The Ethnography in Education Research Forum is the largest annual meeting of qualitative researchers in education.

### **Conference on Endangered Languages and Cultures of Native America: 31 Mar-2 Apr, 2006, Univ. Utah, Salt Lake City**

This is the 2nd annual CELCNA conference.

#### **Key points:**

Keynote speaker: Victor Golla.

Session in Spanish (*ponencias en español*): One session will be set aside on Sunday morning, April 2, for papers in Spanish.

The poster session can include also demonstration of tools and toys for language documentation.

Forum discussions will include open discussion sessions dedicated to:

- (1) Discussion of training for documentation of endangered languages, and employment considerations for students dedicated to work with endangered languages.
- (2) Databasing and aids for language documentation.
- (3) Open forum to address matters that arise during the conference.

Accommodations: University Guest House, the official conference hotel – 100 yards from the meeting venue (Officers' Club) and CAIL (Center for American Indian Languages). To book accommodations, please contact the Guest House directly (mention CELCNA for the conference booking):

University Guest House University of Utah  
110 South Fort Douglas Blvd.  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84113-5036

Toll free: 1-888-416-4075 (or 801-587-1000),  
Fax 801-587-1001

Website [www.guesthouse.utah.edu](http://www.guesthouse.utah.edu)

(Please make reservations early, since rooms will be held for the conference only until early March.)

Sponsors: The sponsors of this conference are: (1) Center for American Indian Languages (CAIL), University of Utah, (2) Smithsonian Institution Department of Anthropology of the National Museum of

Natural History, (3) Department of Linguistics, U of Utah and (4) College of Humanities, University of Utah.

Registration fee: \$35. Additional information: for further information contact: Zeb Pischnotte [z.pischnotte@utah.edu](mailto:z.pischnotte@utah.edu), or for particular questions, write to Lyle Campbell at [lyle.campbell@linguistics.utah.edu](mailto:lyle.campbell@linguistics.utah.edu).

If you need information not easily arranged via e-mail, please call: Tel. 801-587-0720 or 801-581-3341 during business hours (Mountain Standard Time), or Fax 801-585-7351.

### **Indigenous Languages Workshop, UCSB, April 21-22, 2006**

The Linguistics Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara announces its ninth annual Workshop on American Indigenous Languages (WAIL), which provides a forum for the discussion of theoretical and descriptive studies of the indigenous languages of the Americas.

The annual Workshop on American Indigenous Languages (WAIL) at the University of California, Santa Barbara is presented by the Native American Indian Languages study group (NAIL), which has been meeting regularly in Santa Barbara since 1990 to discuss issues relating to Native American language and culture. The workshop is a forum for the discussion of theoretical and descriptive linguistic studies of indigenous languages of the Americas. WAIL is also sponsored by the UCSB Linguistics Department.

<http://orgs.sa.ucsb.edu/nailsg/>

### **Third Oxford-Kobe Linguistics Seminar: Linguistics of Endangered Languages: Kobe, Japan, 2-5 April 2006**

The Third Oxford-Kobe Linguistics Seminar, on 'The Linguistics of Endangered Languages', is being organized at the St. Catherine's College (University of Oxford) Kobe Institute, in Kobe, Japan, by Peter Austin (SOAS, University of London), Masayoshi Shibatani (Rice University & Kobe University), and John Charles Smith (University of Oxford), between 2 and 5 April 2006.

The goal of the seminar is **to elaborate** on the point (often made, but less frequently demonstrated) that **the loss of endangered languages means the loss of unique and unusual linguistic features that we would otherwise have no knowledge of**, and that the extinction of languages inevitably results in a poorer linguistics and a poorer language and cultural heritage for the world as a whole. The Seminar aims to bring together leading authorities in the field and invites them to

summarize their position in 'state of the art' papers, while simultaneously promoting collaboration and scholarly exchange between academic colleagues from Japan and other countries in a relaxed and convivial environment. We invite everyone with an interest in linguistic typology and endangered languages to join us on this occasion. A special welcome is extended to younger scholars and graduate students.

### Timetable

The Seminar will begin in the late afternoon/early evening on Sunday, 2 April 2006, with Registration and a Welcome Reception. The three days from Monday, 3 April to Wednesday 5 April, inclusive, will be devoted to papers and discussion. It is suggested that participants should arrive during the morning or early afternoon of Sunday, 2 April, and leave on Thursday, 6 April. All papers will be invited plenary lectures and will last 50-55 minutes. The language of the Seminar will be English.

### Programme

- Peter Austin, SOAS, Univ. London, UK
- Peri Bhaskararao, Tokyo Univ. Foreign Studies, Japan
- Claire Bowern, Rice Univ., USA
- Shuanfan Huang, National Taiwan Univ.
- Ritsuko Kikusawa, Nat. Mus. Ethnology, Osaka, Japan
- Friederike Luepke, SOAS, Univ. London, UK
- Martin Maiden, Univ. Oxford, UK
- Elena Maslova, Stanford Univ., USA
- Denny Moore, Museu Goeldi, Belem, Brazil
- Osami Okuda, Sapporo Gakuin Univ., Japan
- Keren Rice, Univ. Toronto, Canada
- Malcolm Ross, Australian National Univ., Australia
- Masayoshi Shibatani, Rice Univ., USA / Kobe Univ., Japan
- Graham Thurgood, California State Univ., Chico, USA
- Tasaku Tsunoda, Univ. Tokyo, Japan
- Roberto Zavala, CIESAS-Sureste, Mexico

### Participation: Papers & Poster Session

All papers will be plenary, and will be followed by discussion. As before, we hope to publish a volume of proceedings.

Although the papers at the Seminar will be by invitation only, a period will be set aside for poster presentations.

### Registration

There will be a registration fee of JPY10,000 (approx. GBP50, EUR75, or USD90) for participants other than organizers and invited speakers. This includes coffee and tea, buffet lunches, and drinks before dinner will be provided at the Institute, but not Dinner after

the Welcome Reception and a Conference Dinner (both buffet style).

To register for the Seminar, and/or to obtain more information about the Seminar and the Kobe Institute, please contact the Chief Bursar of the Kobe Institute, Dr Kaizaburo Saito, at:

kaizas@kobeinst.com

Postal address: St. Catherine's College (Univ. Oxford) Kobe Institute, 53-1 Maruyama, Gomo-Aza, Nada-ku, Kobe 657-0801 Japan

tel: +81-78-881-2277 fax +81-78-881-2552

web: <http://kobeinst.com/3lg01.htm>

A downloadable registration form will be available shortly.

The deadline for registration will be 3 March 2006.

### II Congreso por l'Aragonés, Zaragoza et al., 13-15 July 2006

San Chuan de Plan, 17 d'abiento de 2005  
Apreziau/ada amigo/a:

Como ya sabrás o pasau 29 de chinero de 2005, zelebremos en Uesca una importán trobada con buena cosa de chen, rerepresentando a una ripa d'asoziazions, de bels cuantos lugares y redoladas. Allí s'aprebó o "Manifiesto por la Unidad de la Lengua Aragonesa", un documento que ha replegau asabelos de refirmes entre a soziedá aragonesa (espezialmén en l'Alto Aragón).

Tamién se dezidió de reyalizar un Segundo Congreso d'a nuestra luenga, con l'ochetibo de creyar una Academia de l'Aragonés, ta o que se constituyó a comisión organizadera, "Chuntos por l'Aragonés". Ista Academia ha d'estar una autoridad lingüística que s'encargue d'esfender y beilar per a continidá d'as bariedaz de l'aragonés que encara se charra y de fixar una norma de luenga común, en a que todas as barians se i sientan representadas. Dende ixé inte a comisión ha treballau de firme en a paranza d'ista importán trobada. S'han manteniú buena cosa de reunions y trobadas en diferens puestos de l'Alto Aragón, mirando d'arroclar á fabladors, asoziazions y instituzions arredol d'o proyeuto.

O deseyo de "Chuntos por l'Aragonés", asinas como d'as asoziazions y coleutibos que forman parte d'ista comisión, ye que en l'Academia se i troben conoxedors de todas as bariedaz bibas d'a luenga, asinas como miembros destacaus en l'estudio, a imbestigación, a creyación cultural y lingüística... Á la finitiba, queremos una Academia representatiba, zientifica, independiénd y multidisciplinar. Per ixa razón te femos plegar ista carta, con a firme intenzió d'embrecar-te en iste asperanzador

prozeso, ta que puedas partizipar-ie. Asperamos contar con a tuya colaboración.

O "II Congreso por l'Aragonés" se zelebrará os diyas 13, 14 y 15 de chulio de 2006, con sessions en Zaragoza y en diferens localidaz de l'Alto Aragón. Dica o 31 de chinero puez formalizar a inscripció en o Congreso plenando y nimbiando a fuella d'inscripció, que puez descargar dende l'enlaze que tiens en o cobaxo, a o trestallo postal 181, 22080 Uesca, u l'e-mail:

[segundocongreso@laragones.com](mailto:segundocongreso@laragones.com)

Por atro costau, os partizipans en o congreso podrán proponer a os primers miembros de l'Academia entre os diyas 1 de febrero y 15 de marzo de 2006, queremos que iste prozeso siga lo más ubierto posible por ixo insistimos en que ye muito importán l'alportazió que i puedas fer.

Grazias per a tuya atenzió. Quedamos a la tuya disposició ta si quiers que te ixamplemos a informazió que te'n damos. Amás tamién somos ubiertos a que colabores, en la mida en que puedas, en a organizazió y paranza d'un congreso tan importán t'o futuro d'a luenga nuestra.

Un fuerte abrazo

Manuel Castán Espot Presidén Comisión Organizadera "Chuntos por l'Aragonés"

Fernando Sánchez Pitarch Secretario Comisión Organizadera "Chuntos por l'Aragonés"

### Resource-Scarce Language Engineering, 31 Jul - 4 Aug, 2006, Málaga, Spain

1ST CALL FOR PAPERS  
[http://altiplano.emich.edu/resource\\_scarce/](http://altiplano.emich.edu/resource_scarce/)

organized as part of the European Summer School on Logic, Language and Information ESSLLI 2006 <http://esslli2006.lcc.uma.es/> 31 July - 11 August, 2006 in Málaga

### Workshop Organizer:

Edward Garrett <[egarrett@emich.edu](mailto:egarrett@emich.edu)>

### Workshop Purpose:

This workshop will bring together scientists from academia and industry, as well as advanced PhD students, to present and discuss research on the theoretical and practical challenges of engineering resource-scarce languages. We intend to provide an inclusive forum for exchanging ideas on a broad range of topics in areas represented by ESSLLI, including basic text processing, speech analysis, and machine translation.

### Workshop Topics:

Seen through one lens, "resource-scarce languages" are languages for which few digital resources exist; and thus, languages whose computerization poses unique

challenges. Through another lens, "resource-scarce languages" are languages with limited financial, political, and legal resources, languages that lack the clout or global importance of the world's major languages.

In spite of these challenges, resource-scarce languages and their speakers are not being ignored. Individuals, governments, and companies alike are busy developing technologies and tools to support such languages. They are driven by a variety of motivations - from the desire among academics and community activists to preserve or revitalize endangered or threatened languages - to the desire by governments to promote minority languages - to the need by other governments to detect hostile chatter in diverse tongues - to the strategy of some companies to enhance their stature in emerging markets such as China and South America.

Recognizing the above trend, this workshop will serve as a forum for the discussion of academic and industrial research on resource-scarce language engineering. Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- multilingual text processing and the Unicode Standard
- machine translation and speech recognition with minimal training data
- rapid portability of existing language technologies to new languages
- the use of multilingual resources for monolingual annotation
- the annotation of new language data on the basis of knowledge of related languages
- coping with data of inconsistent or uneven quality or coverage

In addition, there will be a shared task on a specific resource-scarce language - Tibetan (details to be announced separately).

#### Submission Details:

Authors are invited to submit a paper describing completed work in the area of the workshop. Each submission will be read by at least two members of the program committee, and will be evaluated according to its scientific merit, its relevance to the workshop, and the degree to which its ideas are expressed fully yet concisely. Submissions of any length will be accepted, but acceptable formats are limited to postscript and pdf. Papers sent in other formats will be subject to immediate disposal. Please send your submission electronically to [egarrett@emich.edu](mailto:egarrett@emich.edu) by the deadline listed below. Accepted papers will appear in the workshop proceedings published by ESSLLI.

#### Workshop Format:

This workshop is part of ESSLLI and is open to all ESSLLI participants. It will consist of five 90-minute sessions held over five

consecutive days in the first week of ESSLLI. There will be at least 2-3 slots for paper presentation and discussion plus one invited talk per session. On the first day the workshop organizer will give a general introduction to the topic.

#### Invited Speakers:

Tom Emerson, Basis Technology Corporation  
John Goldsmith, University of Chicago  
Rada Mihalcea, University of North Texas  
Richard Sproat, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Cathy Wissink, Microsoft Corporation

#### Workshop Programme Committee:

Deborah Anderson, University of California, Berkeley  
Emily Bender, University of Washington  
Steven Bird, University of Melbourne  
Alan W. Black, Carnegie Mellon University  
Sean Fulop, California State University, Fresno  
Andrew Hardie, Lancaster University  
Baden Hughes, University of Melbourne  
William Lewis, University of Washington  
Steven Loomis, IBM  
Joel Martin, National Research Council, Canada  
Mike Maxwell, University of Maryland  
Tony McEnery, Lancaster University  
Manuela Noske, Microsoft Corporation  
Charles Schafer, Johns Hopkins University  
Tanja Schultz, Carnegie Mellon University

#### Important Dates:

Submissions: April 7, 2006  
Notification : April 28, 2006  
Full paper deadline: May 19, 2006  
Final program : June 30, 2006  
Workshop Dates : July 31 - August 4, 2006

#### Local Arrangements:

All workshop participants including the presenters will be required to register for ESSLLI. The registration fee for authors presenting a paper will correspond to the early student/workshop speaker registration fee. Moreover, a number of additional fee waiver grants might be made available by the local organizing committee on a competitive basis and workshop participants are eligible to apply for those.

There will be no reimbursement for travel costs or accommodation. Workshop speakers who have difficulty in finding funding should consult the local organizing committee on chances of a grant.

About the workshop:  
[http://altiplano.emich.edu/resource\\_scarce/](http://altiplano.emich.edu/resource_scarce/)  
About ESSLLI:  
<http://esslli2006.lcc.uma.es/>

## 2006 People's Poetry Gathering: Poetry from the World's Endangered Languages

The Gathering is part of a multi-pronged initiative to document and disseminate some of the world's endangered oral poetry traditions through public programs, publications and the web, spanning the chasm of language.

The People's Poetry Gathering invited poets working in threatened, contested, stateless, and endangered languages to submit work for consideration for:

### 1) The Poetry Map of the World

Curated by the New York-based People's Poetry Gathering, this website features work by contemporary poets working in non-majority languages. The map focuses on language and cultural areas rather than national boundaries and includes selected poems and song cycles from the traditions from which the poets have emerged.

### 2) The 2006 People's Poetry Gathering Program Magazine

The magazine will be published by Rattapallax Press ([www.rattapallax.com/](http://www.rattapallax.com/)) during the New York festival in May 2006 and will be distributed to the Gathering's audience of 10,000 and Rattapallax's subscribers as well as to communities and academic institutions where endangered languages are spoken.

Examples of languages to be considered were as follows (but not limited to):

- threatened: Welsh, Tibetan, Yiddish
- contested: Australian Aboriginal Kreole, Romani
- stateless: Catalan, Mapuche, Kurdish
- endangered: Ainu, Mohawk, Sami, Haida, Sharda Script, Cucapás

Examples of languages which would NOT be considered are:

- official languages of the United Nations (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic)
- languages with a high number of speakers and majority status in specific geographic regions (Bengali, Javanese)
- state languages (Norwegian, Korean)
- dialects of majority languages (Spanish, Franglais)

*Should you have questions regarding eligible languages, please email us at.*

#### \*Submission Guidelines \*

*Submit 3-5 poems or 7 pages (or 10 minutes of media) total per poet.*

*Poems were to be submitted in the original language with an English translation. Poems might be lyric or epic. Song cycles were also*

considered. Submissions were to be postmarked by 1 Dec 2005, allowing 2-3 months for response. Poets selected will receive 2 copies of the magazine:

*People's Poetry Gathering*

c/o City Lore

72 East 1st Street

New York, NY 10003, USA.

[ppg@citylore.org](mailto:ppg@citylore.org).

For information about past gatherings:

[www.peoplespoetry.org](http://www.peoplespoetry.org)

## 2007 Conference of the International Society for Language Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, 2-4 April, 2007

By Serena D'Agostino

*Lehulehu nā ʻōlelo; ho'okahi na'e mana'o*

Many through our languages, but one in our thoughts

In cooperation with:

- *Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani*, College of Hawaiian Language, University of Hawaii at Hilo
  - *Kula Kaiapuni O Amuenue*, Hawaiian Language Immersion School
- and possibly others.

The 2007 conference of the International Society for Language Studies will feature field experiences related to Hawaiian language and culture, in addition to a full program of international papers on language studies:

- Hawaiian Language Studies
- Discourse and Identity
- Policy
- Language in Professional and Workplace Contexts
- Language Teaching Practices and Pedagogy
- Research Methodology
- Teacher Development
- Conceptualizations of Language

*Paper proposals accepted from 1 May 2006*

See ISLS website for updated conference info

[http://www.isls-](http://www.isls-inc.org/conference.htm)

[inc.org/conference.htm](http://www.isls-inc.org/conference.htm)>[http://www.isls-](http://www.isls-inc.org/conference.htm)

[inc.org/conference.htm](http://www.isls-inc.org/conference.htm)

## 10. Recent Publications

### **The Last Speakers: Documentary from Ironbound Films**

This was given a special rough-cut screening at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, held in Albuquerque NM in early January.

The film tells how languages become endangered and the awesome task of

recording, archiving, and returning them to use.

For more details of the film, see:

Daniel A. Miller

Ironbound Films, Inc.

T/F: +1.718.433.4044

[miller@ironboundfilms.com](mailto:miller@ironboundfilms.com)

[www.ironboundfilms.com](http://www.ironboundfilms.com)

<http://www.ironboundfilms.com/ironsfire.htm>

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### **Maya Honda and Wayne O'Neil, *Understanding First and Second Language Acquisition***

Handbook 10 in *Awakening our languages:*

ILI handbook series, The Indigenous Language Institute, 2004.

This series of handbooks is designed to aid Native communities in reversing language loss, primarily the loss of indigenous languages of North America. In Handbook 10, Honda and O'Neil summarize some basic research on first and second language acquisition and suggest ways in which that research can be useful in programs of Native language revitalization. Wayne O'Neil is Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy  
[http://web.mit.edu/shass/soundings/issue\\_05f/booknotes.html](http://web.mit.edu/shass/soundings/issue_05f/booknotes.html)

## 11. Book Reviews

### **Batibo, Herman M.: *Language Decline and Death in Africa - Causes, Consequences, and Challenges*. Reviewed by Mike Cahill, SIL International**

Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, Somerset UK, 2005 (# 132)

<http://linguistlist.org/issues/16/16-3542.html>

#### **Description of Contents**

The first four chapters of this slim volume (129 pages of text, plus several indexes and appendices) are a good introduction to the language situation in Africa as a whole, while the last four chapters explicitly address issues of language endangerment.

Chapter 1 is a useful summary of the language families of Africa - where they are spoken, and a few sample languages. Batibo (B) also introduces what I find a useful term - "plurilingualism" - to label a situation where a country or continent has many languages, reserving "multilingual" to describe an individual speaking several languages. He also sketches the situation with regard to language contacts between African languages, both ancient and modern, and the situations that arise from these.

Chapter 2 introduces patterns of language use and prestige. B presents an admittedly idealized "triglossic" structure of language use, with a colonial language often having higher prestige than a dominant indigenous language. However, the dominant indigenous language has more prestige than a minority language. Here he also mentions that national leaders associate ex-colonial languages with socio-economic development, and this trumps resolutions for promotions of indigenous languages passed by OAU and similar bodies (including linguists...). He describes characteristics of dominant languages which make them dominant, and also the dynamism of languages in contact that leads to phenomena of code-mixing, code-switching, and borrowing. His summary statement is a guiding principle for those involved in trying to sustain endangered languages: "As long as speakers see some social status or socio-economic value in their languages, they will certainly wish to maintain them."

Chapter 3 talks of characteristics of African languages, viewing them as a resource. First he discusses the functions that languages play, focusing on Africa, but the same points could be made elsewhere in the world. Language serves as a vehicle for cultural transmission, as a means of self-identity, societal cohesion, social stratification, of socialization and even establishing social relations (a young lady in Lom addressed by a young man in the Mina language may answer in French as a sign that she does not desire any relationship with him). B then goes on to summarize the unique linguistic characteristics of African languages, from clicks to labiovelars to ATR vowel harmony, noun class systems, serial verb constructions, etc. The cultural wealth of African languages is illustrated, with figurative speech, proverbs, "joking relations," etc. The indigenous languages could be used for national development, but generally are not.

Chapter 4 delves into the status of minority languages in more detail, defining them not only in terms of low number of speakers, but also functionally as not being used in official or public domains. Colonial languages may be actually spoken by relatively few people, but they function in public domains more commonly. Local languages may be areally dominant, and these are not considered minority languages either. In most African nations, most of the languages are minority languages. Speakers of these are often caught in a dilemma, wishing to retain their own linguistic and cultural heritage, but also wanting access to education and better-paying jobs. Even though studies have shown the advantages of mother-tongue education, most minority languages have no resources for such. Governments, in their understandable desire for national unity and to eradicate tribalism, often devalue or actively discourage minority languages in their language policies.

In Chapter 5, B starts in on specifics of endangered African languages, first defining endangered as "threatened by extinction," and noting that endangerment is a sliding scale, with "highly endangered" on one end and "safe" on the other. He discusses factors leading to language endangerment when two unequal languages are in contact. These include the resistance of the weaker language to the stronger one, the amount of pressure exerted by the stronger language, and finally, the perceived advantages of joining the stronger community. He acknowledges that any attempt to quantify endangerment runs into the problem of inadequate data, and so many of the conclusions must remain "highly speculative." For information on specific languages, B cites a number of resources which the serious investigator might consult, including the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 2000), and various papers from Brenzinger's (1998) volume. The remainder of the chapter is a country-by-country summary, listing population, major languages, and what B considers highly endangered languages. His judgment of the latter is based on population figures, degree of bilingualism in the dominant language, socio-political pressures, negative attitudes and non-transmission of the language to children, and especially where only older people spoke the language. It is admittedly based on partial information in many cases, but he estimates that 14% of African languages are presently highly endangered.

In Chapter 6, B defines more carefully the processes of language shift and language death. He mentions the Gaelic-Arvanitika model of Sasse, based on causal factors leading to cessation of transmission of the language, but spends more time on his own model, a process-based one. This model assumes that for language shift and eventually death to take place, there must be bilingualism, a differential prestige in the 2 languages, and that attraction to the new language outweighs resistance to change. It has five phases: 1) relative monolingualism, 2) bilingualism with L1 predominance, 3) bilingualism with L2 predominance, 4) restricted use of L1, and 5) L1 as a substratum, at which stage L1 is dead. He mentions sudden language death due to disease, genocide, or deliberate decision to switch languages, but most language death is gradual, involving the factors discussed in the models. He stresses that attitudes toward language are crucial.

Chapter 7 concentrates on language maintenance, particularly in cases of the lesser of two unequal languages. It is common in Africa for two (or more) languages to exist in a more or less state of equal prestige. In this case, L1 and L2 speakers learn each others' language, which B calls "unmarked bilingualism." If L1 is more dominant than L2, L2 is maintained only when people are able to resist pressures, and the most important factor is their attitude toward their own language. B gives a summary of a

previous study of his application of Auberger's "proficiency resistance model." Lists of factors by Blench and UNESCO are also given. Among these factors is a written form of the language, something that is missing in many African languages. B also discusses language revitalization, but gives non-African examples such as Maori, since there has been virtually no documentation of any African language being revitalized. He is not optimistic about most African minority languages, since "gains in the prestige of minority languages are not a common phenomenon."

Chapter 8 speaks of language empowerment. We have the label of "minority" languages, though the sum total of "minority" language speakers in a country is often a majority of the population. But they are often disenfranchised from national life and discourse - the powerless. Language empowerment measures are discussed here, including specific language policies by governments, planning and what is often more difficult, implementation of those plans. B singles out Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa as having explicit language policies, but these are not the norm in the continent. There are ideological and technical issues to be dealt with, and B gives a number of recommendations for government actions. He lists a number of African initiatives of recent decades, most of which have vanished, as well as listing a number of organizations that are becoming quite interested in endangered languages recently.

B ends with three useful Appendices. The first lists the nationally and areally dominant languages, country by country. The second, more debatably, lists highly endangered, extinct, or nearly extinct languages for each country. The third lists the number of dominant and minority languages of Africa, also by country, concluding that of 2477 African languages, 308 are highly endangered. A Language Index as well as a Subject/Author Index are included.

### Evaluation

This is an excellent introduction to the topic of endangered languages in Africa. But beyond that, by referencing and summarizing much of the theoretical literature on endangered languages, it actually serves as a readable primer to the factors that make languages endangered around the world and what can be done about them. Those who would like more detailed and specific African case studies may want to take a look at other works such as Brenzinger (1998).

B is occasionally uncritical of sources, as when he labels the predictions of Michael Krauss that 90% of the world's languages will disappear by 2100 as "statistics" rather than speculation. He cites Sapir and Whorf uncritically, whereas their views are a continual source of debate. He also calls labialvelars as "unique" to Africa, whereas they also occur in Papua New Guinea,

Vanuatu, and (rarely) in South America as well. His book is understandably weighted by his experience in Tanzania and Botswana, and would benefit especially from more West African input. However, these are minor quibbles compared to the book's overall value.

Also, I believe there is reason to be somewhat more hopeful than Batibo is about the survival of many African languages. With orthographies being developed by groups such as NACALCO and CABTAL in Cameroon, BTL in Kenya, SIL and Lutheran Bible Translators in various countries, as well as by other groups, several hundred languages are in the process of receiving orthographic representations, literacy materials, and Bibles in their own language, and a number of these are also getting dictionaries and grammars. Besides the direct value of having literacy and other materials available, the presence of these tends to raise the prestige of the language in the speakers' minds, and their attitudes towards their own languages become crucially more positive (as B himself notes in the case of the Naro language). Still, it remains to be seen how much these positive factors will be able to counteract the negative ones against the survival of the minority languages of Africa.

### References

- Grimes, Barbara (ed.). 2000. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 14th edition. Dallas: SIL International.
- Brenzinger, M. (ed.) 1998. *Endangered Languages in Africa*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.

### About the Reviewer

Mike Cahill did on-site linguistic investigation in the Konni language of northern Ghana for several years, including application to literacy and translation work. He received his Ph.D. from Ohio State University in 1999, and his primary research interests are in African phonology. He was a member of the LSA Committee on Endangered Languages and their Preservation from 2001-2003, chairing it the last year. He currently serves as SIL's International Linguistics Coordinator.



||Kabbo, who revealed the |Xam language to Wilhelm Bleek in 1871.

# Foundation for Endangered Languages

## Manifesto

### 1. Preamble

#### 1.1. The Present Situation

At this point in human history, most human languages are spoken by exceedingly few people. And that majority, the majority of languages, is about to vanish.

The most authoritative source on the languages of the world (Ethnologue, Gordon 2005) lists just over 6,900 living languages. Population figures are available for just over 6,600 of them (or 94.5%). Of these 6,600, it may be noted that:

- 56% are spoken by fewer than 10,000 people;
- 28% by fewer than 1,000; and
- 83% are restricted to single countries, and so are particularly exposed to the policies of a single government.

At the other end of the scale, 10 major languages, each spoken by over 100 million people, are the mother tongues of almost half (49%) of the world's population.

More important than this snapshot of proportions and populations is the outlook for survival of the languages we have. Hard comparable data here are scarce or absent, often because of the sheer variety of the human condition: a small community, isolated or bilingual, may continue for centuries to speak a unique language, while in another place a populous language may for social or political reasons die out in little more than a generation. Another reason is that the period in which records have been kept is too short to document a trend: e.g. the Ethnologue has been issued only since 1951. However, it is difficult to imagine many communities sustaining serious daily use of a language for even a generation with fewer than 100 speakers: yet at least 10% of the world's living languages are now in this position.

Some of the forces which make for language loss are clear: the impacts of urbanization, Westernization and global communications grow daily, all serving to diminish the self-sufficiency and self-confidence of small and traditional communities. Discriminatory policies, and population movements also take their toll of languages.

In our era, the preponderance of tiny language communities means that the majority of the world's languages are vulnerable not just to decline but to extinction.

#### 1.2. The Likely Prospect

There is agreement among linguists who have considered the situation that over half of the world's languages are moribund, i.e. not effectively being passed on to the next generation. We and our children, then, are living at the point in human history where, within perhaps two generations, most languages in the world will die out.

This mass extinction of languages may not appear immediately life-threatening. Some will feel that a reduction in numbers of languages will ease communication, and perhaps help build nations, even global solidarity. But it has been well pointed out that the success of humanity in colonizing the planet has been due to our ability to develop cultures suited for survival in a variety of environments. These cultures have everywhere been transmitted by languages, in oral traditions and latterly in written literatures. So when language transmission itself breaks down, especially before the advent of literacy in a culture, there is always a large loss of inherited knowledge.

Valued or not, that knowledge is lost, and humanity is the poorer. Along with it may go a large part of the pride and self-identity of the community of former speakers.

And there is another kind of loss, of a different type of knowledge. As each language dies, science, in linguistics, anthropology, prehistory and psychology, loses one more precious source of data, one more of the diverse and unique ways that the human mind can express itself through a language's structure and vocabulary.

We cannot now assess the full effect of the massive simplification of the world's linguistic diversity now occurring. But language loss, when it occurs, is sheer loss, irreversible and not in itself creative. Speakers of an endangered language may well resist the extinction of their traditions, and of their linguistic identity. They have every right to do so. And we, as scientists, or concerned human beings, will applaud them in trying to preserve part of the diversity which is one of our greatest strengths and treasures.

#### 1.3. The Need for an Organization

We cannot stem the global forces which are at the root of language decline and loss.

But we can work to lessen the ignorance which sees language loss as inevitable when it is not, and does not properly value all that will go when a language itself vanishes.

We can work to see technological developments, such as computing and telecommunications, used to support small communities and their traditions rather than to supplant them.

And we can work to lessen the damage:

- by recording as much as possible of the languages of communities which seem to be in terminal decline;
- by emphasizing particular benefits of the diversity still remaining; and
- by promoting literacy and language maintenance programmes, to increase the strength and morale of the users of languages in danger.

In order to further these aims, there is a need for an autonomous international organization which is not constrained or influenced by matters of race, politics, gender or religion. This organization will recognise in language issues the principles of self-determination,

and group and individual rights. It will pay due regard to economic, social, cultural, community and humanitarian considerations. Although it may work with any international, regional or local Authority, it will retain its independence throughout. Membership will be open to those in all walks of life.

### 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:-

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

Membership in the Foundation is open to all. If you need an application form, please contact the Editor at the address on page 2 above.

