

FOUNDATION FOR ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

# ΟΓΜΙΟΣ



*Some of the priceless holdings of the archive recordings in the sound archive of Pushkinskiy Dom, St. Petersburg, Russia. More about the television film exploring this archive in this issue.*

# OGMIOS Newsletter 47: – 30 April 2012

ISSN 1471-0382 Editor: Christopher Moseley

*Published by:*

Foundation for Endangered Languages,  
172 Bailbrook Lane,  
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## OGMIOS Newsletter 47

30 April 2012

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Kathmandu structures, and Newari poetess Yukta Bajracharya – two clips from Bob Holman's *On the Road*.

## 1. Editorial

Again I have to appeal for your indulgence for the late appearance of this issue. Our Foundation operates on a voluntary basis, as we're a charity, and the pressures of earning a living to sustain this charitable activity sometimes get in the way of the best will in the world. Thanks as always to our contributory editors for supplying material for publication: the world of endangered languages is a vast one, and many pairs of eyes are needed to peep into its interesting corners. Can I **appeal to our readers for more articles and copy** for future issues of *Ogmios*? Especially welcome are book reviews and material translated from other languages which we might not otherwise get to hear of here at our British base.

This year's FEL conference, our sixteenth, is the furthest we have yet been from our British base, in New Zealand. Our hosts will be the Auckland University of Technology, and the organisers are an enthusiastic team headed by Dr. Tania Smith. For those of us who have to travel a long way to it, it promises to be worth the trip. Details are published in the next section below.

Meanwhile here at our British base, FEL has had a presence, as always, at the Open Day held by the Hans Rausing Project and Endangered Languages Archive at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. It is always a welcome event in our calendar, being one of the few opportunities for our foundation to show its public and visible face.

*Chris Moseley*

## 2. Development of the Foundation

### FEL XVI Conference: Language Endangerment in the 21st Century: Globalisation, Technology and New Media

The XVI Foundation for Endangered Languages Conference will take place from **12th to the 15th September, 2012 in Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand.**

Since the beginning of the millennium unprecedented substantial social changes have been taking place across the world driven by technology, new media and social media networking.

The global diffusion of ideas and values linked to globalisation has become synonymous with the weakening of historical and traditional linguistic ties and their replacement by loose connections to consumerism and capitalism. Old traditions perish and new ones evolve.

In this world, everything is becoming increasingly 'mediatised', with the Web allowing all of us to be publishers and social media enabling everyone to be agents of public communication; from phone to Facebook and from SMS text to Twitter. What was once the language of private sphere is now more and more very likely to take place in a more public one e.g. the Facebook/Bebo arena, in an exchange of written messages as we perform our relationships with each other in front of a perceived audience. The private, intimate, oral domains that have traditionally been the base of endangered languages in the face of hostility in the public sphere are being opened up to more public modes of communication with literacy as an important currency. We need to ask:

- What will the linguistic impact of this shift towards the 'mediatisation' of intimate conversation eventually be on endangered languages?
- Will we see new patterns of 'digital diglossia', leading to a decline in the previously private domains where it used to be 'safe', 'acceptable', 'not controversial', 'natural' to use the minority and endangered languages?
- How do technology and new media impact on endangered languages?

However, globalisation can also be seen as a necessary step in the evolution of mankind, bearing the potential for growth, preservation of identity, fostering interdependence and forging new cultural hybrids.

Or, to view globalisation positively, can technology and new media act as positive and transformative catalysts in safeguarding endangered languages?

Over the years, technology from the tape recorder to digital archiving has become increasingly useful and has been universally deployed in documentation of endangered languages. What are the new possibilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

- How can technology and new media be exploited in the following:
  - o the teaching and learning of endangered languages?
  - o material development?
  - o the creation of new opportunities for endangered languages?
  - o the creation of new spaces for endangered languages?
- How have the mass media (as radio, television), and new media (as mobile phones, the internet) affected the image of endangered languages, or given them new voices?
- What potential do the creative industries have for endangered languages?

### 3. Endangered Languages in the News

#### Australia: High-tech bid to save ancient Top End language

*By Jano Gibson, from abc.net.au news, 17 January 2012*

Researchers are developing a mobile phone application in an effort to help save an ancient Aboriginal language that is close to being lost forever.

The language of Iwaidja is thousands of years old but on Croker Island in the Top End only about 150 people still speak it.

Iwaidja is one of about 50 known Aboriginal languages of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

Bruce Birch from the Minjilang Endangered Languages Project has been working with locals to try to save it.

"It is one of Australia's hundred or so highly endangered languages," he said.

Using \$100,000 of federal funding, a mobile phone application is being developed.

It will have 1,000 dictionary entries and almost 500 phrases.

"You will be able to look up the word and touch the word and hear it," Mr Birch said.

The application will be launched in May. Mr Birch hopes it will keep the language alive for future generations and help visitors to the region better understand the local culture.

"The idea for the mobile phone app sprang from the need to use up-to-date technology to attract people," he said.

He says it will help younger Indigenous people as well as non-Indigenous people who come into contact with Iwaidja speakers

#### Digital tools to save dying languages

*By Jonathan Amos, science correspondent, BBC News, Vancouver: BBC News: Science & Environment web page ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)) 18 February 2012*

Facebook, YouTube and even texting will be the salvation of many of the world's endangered languages, scientists believe.

Of the 7,000 or so languages spoken on Earth today, about half are expected to be extinct by the century's end.

Globalisation is usually blamed, but some elements of the "modern world", especially digital technology, are pushing back against the tide.

North American tribes use social media to re-engage their young, for example.

Tuvan, an indigenous tongue spoken by nomadic peoples in Siberia and Mongolia, even has an iPhone app to teach the pronunciation of words to new students.

"Small languages are using social media, YouTube, text messaging and various technologies to expand their voice and expand their presence," said K David Harrison, an associate professor of linguistics at Swarthmore College and a National Geographic Fellow.

"It's what I like to call the flipside of globalisation. We hear a lot about how globalisation exerts negative pressures on small cultures to assimilate. But a positive effect of globalisation is that you can have a language that is spoken by only five or 50 people in one remote location, and now through digital technology that language can achieve a global voice and a global audience."

Harrison, who travels the world to seek out the last speakers of vanishing languages, has been describing his work here at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

With National Geographic, he has just helped produce eight talking dictionaries.

These dictionaries contain more than 32,000 word entries in eight endangered languages. All the audio recordings have been made by native speakers, some of whom like Alfred "Bud" Lane are among the last fluent individuals in their native tongues.

Mr Lane speaks a language known as Siletz Dee-ni, which is restricted to a small area on the central Oregon coast.

"Linguists came in and labelled our language moribund, meaning it was heading for the ash heap of history; and our tribal people and our council decided that wasn't going to happen. So we devised a plan to go forward to start teaching our dialect here in the Siletz Valley," he told the meeting.

Mr Lane has sat down and [recorded 14,000 words for the online dictionary](#). "Nothing takes the place of speakers speaking to other speakers, but this bridges

a gap that was just sorely needed in our community and our tribe."

Margaret Noori is an expert in Native American studies at the University of Michigan and a speaker of Anishinaabemowin, which is the sovereign language of over 200 indigenous "nations" in Canada and the US. These communities are [heavy users of Facebook](#).

"What we do with technology is try to connect people," Prof Noori said. "All of it is to keep the language."

Dr Harrison says not all languages can survive, and many inevitably will be lost as remaining speakers die off. But he says the new digital tools do offer a way back from the brink for a lot of languages that seemed doomed just a few years ago.

He told BBC News: "Everything that people know about the planet, about plants, animals, about how to live sustainably, the polar ice caps, the different ecosystems that humans have survived in - all this knowledge is encoded in human cultures and languages, whereas only a tiny fraction of it is encoded in the scientific literature.

"If we care about sustainability and survival on the planet, we all benefit from having this knowledge base persevered."

## First TV series to focus on endangered languages

*Press release by Stephanie Nikolopoulos at Rattapallax.com*

New York City: "Of the 6500 languages spoken in the world today, only half will make it to the next century," says poet Bob Holman, one of the founders of the Endangered Language Alliance and host of a new travel series spotlighting the cultures of endangered languages, premiering February 1, 2012, on LINK TV. "While endangered plants and animals are protected by law, who is looking out for the cultures and ways of life held in these words? That is the heart and mission of this series." Encounter the distinct cultures and peoples of West Africa, Asia and the Middle East in the three-part documentary *On the Road with Bob Holman* and discover ancient languages on the brink of extinction. Each of the half-hour shows, produced by Rattapallax in association with Bowery Arts and Science, will air on Link TV, which is available on local cable channels,

DVD, online, and on DirectTV channel 375 and Dish Network channel 9410.

"The way Anthony Bourdain goes after the edible delights of far-flung cultures," comments Bob Holman, "that is the way I reveal the extraordinary richness of languages that encircle the globe—the personalities who embody ways of life so different from, yet achingly familiar to, our own." Holman, who won three Emmys producing poetry shorts for WNYC-TV and founded the Bowery Poetry Club in New York City, discovers that the roots of spoken word go back thousands of years and span the globe. He goes *On the Road* to track them down! He throws himself into the life—sharing meals and participating in ceremonies, dances, and parties, as he trades stories, fun, recipes, insights, jokes, songs, and poems. Along the way, he gets passionately immersed in the Endangered Language crisis and guides us to the bottom-line question of survival of these systems of consciousness with respect, joy, and dedication to diversity. In 2010, with linguists Daniel

Kaufman and Juliette Blevins, he founded the Endangered Language Alliance in New York.

In the first two episodes, Holman visits West Africa to focus on the griots, keepers of the West African oral tradition and tribal genealogy through poetic songs. He travels up the Niger River and continues on to Timbuktu, where Beat poet Ted Joans lived in the 1960s. He discovers the roots of hip-hop, rap, and blues that originated in Africa and witnesses a kora-guitar jam session between griot Karamo Susso and Ali Farka Toure's son, Vieux. Holman then visits the Timbuktu Library, which houses volumes from the 16th century when the city was the center of African learning. We learn how to ride a camel before venturing into the Sahara, where we spend an afternoon listening to the hypnotic music of the Tuaregs, the nomadic "blue people," so named because their indigo-dyed clothing rubs off on their skin. Then it's on to Dogon country, where we witness a breathtaking mask ceremony. These two episodes air February 1 and February 8, 2012. The third episode focuses on the resurrection of Hebrew in Israel and the decline of Yiddish, Ladino, and other tongues. When poet Ronny Someck, a "true Israeli poet from Iraq," gives Bob a tour of Jaffa and suggests he visit the West Bank to hear Arabic, Holman takes the grueling journey through the endless checkpoints and the Separation Wall to reach Ramallah. Once across the Wall, he meets with some young Palestinian hip-hop poets who explain the complexities of living near the Separation Wall that dominates the landscape. The experience leaves Holman pondering how a national language creates barriers between the many different voices and languages of the

region and affects political thinking. This episode airs February 15, 2012.

Travel the road not taken, with Bob Holman, in *On the Road with Bob Holman*, beginning February 1, 2012, on LINK TV. More info at [www.rattapallax.com](http://www.rattapallax.com)

## Livonian ABC book published with Estonian and Latvian schools' help

The *Pärnu Postimees* newspaper in Estonian reported that on 9 March, the Metsapoole primary school and the Kilingi-Nõmme high school took delivery of copies of the first modern reading primer in the Livonian language of Latvia. Pupils from these schools as well as those at Pāle and Kolka in Latvia participated in a competition to provide the illustrations for the book.

## Udmurt language to be heard on Eurovision

*From the BBC News web-site 8 March 2012*

Folk group the "Buranovo Grannies" will compete in the Eurovision Song Contest, after winning a televised contest in Moscow to represent Russia.

The six grandmothers beat 24 other acts - including a duet between 2008 winner Dima Bilan and Tatu's Yulia Volkova - with song Party For Everybody.

Buranovskiye Babushki, from the Udmurt Republic, say they will use any cash raised to build a church in Buranovo.

"Grandmothers do not need glory and wealth," a member told Vesti news.

The singer, named only as "Grandmother Olga", said building the village church was their "only goal".

Their winning song, which begins as a traditional folk tune before a modern dance beat kicks in, features the refrain, "party for everybody, come on and dance".

The lyrics to the song, which feature a mixture of English and Udmurt - a language related to Finnish - were written by the grandmothers.

Buranovskiye Babushki became known in Russia with covers - sung in Udmurt - of classics including the Beatles' Yesterday and the Eagles' Hotel California.

In 2010, they came third in the Russian Eurovision qualifying contest with their song Dlinnaya-dlinnaya beresta i kak sdelat' iz neyo aishon, which translates as "long, long birch bark and how to make a hat of it".

The UK will also be represented by a pensioner at the 57th Eurovision Song Contest in Baku, Azerbaijan when 75-year-old singer Engelbert Humperdinck will perform the British entry.

The Russian singers will take part in the first qualifying heat on 22 May. The Eurovision Song Contest takes place on 26 May.

Meanwhile, Eurovision organisers have announced that Armenia had pulled out amid tension with old rival Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani and Armenian forces fought a war over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh in the 1990s which left at least 25,000 people dead.

A ceasefire was signed in 1994 but no permanent peace deal has been reached.

## Guaraní - an indigenous language with unique staying power

*By Simon Romero, from the New York Times on-line edition, 12 March 2012*

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay — Legislators on the floor of Congress deliver speeches in it. Lovers entwined on Asunción's park benches murmur sweet nothings with its high-pitched, nasal and guttural sounds. Soccer fans use it when insulting referees.

To this day, Paraguay remains the only country in the Americas where a majority of the population speaks one indigenous language: Guaraní. It is enshrined in the Constitution, officially giving it equal footing with the language of European conquest, Spanish. And in the streets, it is a source of national pride.

“Only 54 of nearly 12,000 schools teach Portuguese,” said Nancy Benítez, director of curriculum at the Ministry of Education, of the language of Brazil, the giant neighbor that dominates trade with Paraguay. “But every one of our schools teaches Guaraní.”



### Palacio de Gobierno, Asunción

Paraguay differs significantly even from other multilingual Latin American nations like neighboring Bolivia, where a majority of the population is indigenous. Languages like Quechua and Aymara are spoken by different groups there, but rarely by people of mixed ancestry or the traditional elite.

In Paraguay, indigenous peoples account for less than 5 percent of the population. Yet Guaraní is spoken by an estimated 90 percent of Paraguayans, including many in the middle class, upper-crust presidential candidates, and even newer arrivals.

“Mba’éichapa?” asked Alex Jun, 27, a Korean immigrant who works in his family’s restaurant in Asunción’s old center, as he greeted customers with a Guaraní phrase translating as “How are you?”

“We’d go broke if we didn’t know the basics,” he explained.

Linguists and historians say the complex reasons for the broad use of the indigenous language here date to the earliest days of Spain’s incursions in the 16th century. The *encomienda*, a system common within the Spanish empire that forced indigenous people to work for Euro-

peans and their descendants, did not penetrate big parts of the territory that eventually became Paraguay.

Meanwhile, Jesuits created communities for the Guaraní and other indigenous groups covering vast expanses, as depicted in the 1986 film “[The Mission](#).” They armed Guaraní Indians against slaving expeditions, while nourishing the language in books and sermons.

When Spain expelled the Jesuits in 1767, more than 100,000 Guaraní speakers spread throughout Paraguay, said Shaw N. Gynan, an American linguist. Decades later, Guaraní speakers formed the bulk of support for the post-independence ruler José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, who took aim at the Spanish-speaking elite.

A despot who ruled until 1840, Francia was called Carai Guazú, Great Lord. He banned those in the light-skinned upper class from marrying each other, sealed Paraguay’s borders and used Guaraní-speaking informants called pyragues, or fleet-footed ones, to bolster his tyrannical regime.

The result: a hobbled Europeanized elite by the end of Francia’s rule. Other dictators would later use Guaraní to stir nationalist fervor. Generals rallied troops in Guaraní in the devastating Triple Alliance War in the 1860s, which killed more than 60 percent of the population.

Isolation also sustained Guaraní. The Paraguayan novelist [Augusto Roa Bastos](#), who mixed Guaraní with Spanish in his writing, called this landlocked, California-size nation an “island surrounded by land.”

Under Gen. [Alfredo Stroessner](#), the dictator who ruled from 1954 to 1989, Guaraní thrived. At one point during General Stroessner’s rule, the writer Graham Greene warned that visitors risked being shot in the street by police officers if they did not understand Guaraní.

General Stroessner, the son of a Bavarian immigrant and his Guaraní-speaking wife, made it an official language, employed his own espionage network of pyragues and

rewarded rural Guaraní-speakers with land for their loyalty.

“As disturbing as this may seem, political leaders in Paraguay have found it convenient to appeal to the masses in Guaraní, often suppressing liberalizing forces in the process,” said Mr. Gynan, the linguist. When democratic rule was established in the 1990s, steps again were taken to strengthen Guaraní. The 1992 Constitution made Guaraní equal to Spanish. Officials said they have aggressively expanded Guaraní instruction in primary schools.

Teaching Guaraní is a subject infused with nationalism and competing theories of how to prevent Guaraní from being eclipsed by Spanish, long dominant in the legal system and in business.

Meanwhile, Guaraní is treading into new realms. Works like “Don Quixote” and the “Book of Mormon” recently gained Guaraní translations. Those proficient in written Guaraní exchange text-messages farewells like “Ja-juecháta Ko’érõ,” which means, “We’ll see each other if tomorrow comes.”

A vibrant linguistic crossroads also persists in yopará, a mixture of Guaraní and Spanish. One yopará phrase is “ley del mbarate,” or “law of the strongest.” It captures the essence of a nation known as a haven for smugglers, arms dealers and counterfeiters.

Guaraní has also made diplomatic inroads. The former American ambassador, James Cason, a fluent Guaraní speaker who described it as “probably harder than Chinese,” recorded a [Guaraní folk-song album](#) in 2008 that put him on some radio stations’ playlists.

“It was obviously astute for Cason to do this,” said María Eva Mansfeld de Agüero, a member of the National Bilingualism Commission. “A diplomat here shouldn’t just speak Spanish at cocktail parties.”



Not everyone is bullish about Guaraní’s prospects. Ramón Silva, a poet and essayist who hosts a daily television program in Guaraní, is one skeptic. “Guaraní is slowly advancing to its death,” he said.

“It’s the perfect language for verbally disemboweling an adversary,” Mr. Silva said. “But Guaraní is in intensive care.”

He said his major concern involved the creation of new words in Guaraní to replace words borrowed from Spanish. “Using poorly created words may be well intentioned,” he said, “but neglects the reality of the language and pushes speakers into Spanish.”

Mr. Silva’s books still sell out, including a poetry collection titled “Na’ápe,” a work he proudly called “anti-dictatorial and vulgar.” The title, which translates as “take this” or “showing the middle finger,” opens a window, he says, into Guaraní’s mischievous capacities.

Others here share Mr. Silva’s concerns about Guaraní’s long-term future, pointing to factors like the increasing migration of peasants from the rural interior, where Guaraní is often the dominant language, to cities, where Spanish holds more sway.

Still, for a glimpse into Guaraní’s future, and the nationalist sentiment the language still arouses among some speakers, the writing may literally be on Asunción’s walls.



As many Paraguayans chafe at Brazil's rising economic profile, one line of graffiti scrawled here reads, "Itaipu Ñane Mbae." It refers to the huge Itaipu [hydroelectric](#) dam on the border with Brazil, owned by both nations but viewed by some as a symbol of submission to South America's powerhouse.

"Itaipu," the graffiti reads in translation, "is ours."

## Latvian voters reject Russian as second official language

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*From Mercator Newsletter number 79*

In February 74.8% of voters in a Latvian Constitutional referendum rejected introducing Russian as the second official language of the country. The referendum was called in late 2011 after a successful collection of signatures headed by pro-Russian Dzimtā valoda (Native Language) organisation forced the Latvian institutions to do so. Thus, according to the results of the vote, Russian will not retake the status it had during the Soviet period and Latvian will continue to be the sole official language in the Baltic country.

With a turnout of 71%, the result confirms Latvian as the sole official language in the Baltic country. President Berziņš calls for a discussion on the "strengthening of the Latvian state". A majority of voters in the eastern region of Latvia support an official status for Russian. Moscow says the referendum was "unfair" because of the exclusion of ethnic Russians.

## 1,000 people ask for training courses in Sardinian in the University of Sassari

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University students' group Su Majolu has submitted 1,000 signatures before the rector of the University of Sassari, Attilio Mastino, and the president of Sardinia, Ugo Cappellacci, so that an official training course in Sardinian is organized from 2012-2013 onwards.

The students began a campaign to collect the signatures in late 2011. They consider that the course is needed in order to train potential teachers in pre-school and primary school so that they can teach Sardinian, the island's own language.

Su Majolu members also argue that the knowledge of Sardinian is important not only in the education system, but also in the world of work, since it is the "the language of the Sardinian workers".

## Can foreign speakers help the Irish language survive?

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*By Kate Dailey, BBC News Magazine, Washington, from the BBC news web-site, 16 March 2012*

For over a century, activists have been trying to save the Irish language. Can foreign speakers help keep it alive?

At a dimly-lit bar in Washington DC, a smattering of professionals gathered around a table to drink beer and speak Irish, with levels of varying success.

They all represented current or former students of Ronan Connolly's Irish language classes. Mr Connolly, an Irish native, has been teaching evening Irish classes for more than two years.

The students live thousands of miles away from Ireland. Some haven't visited in years, if at all. The group is not much bigger than a rambunctious family dinner party. Their language skills vary from fluent to very basic. But at a time when scholars are pondering the fate of the Irish language, could these American students play any role in its revival?

### **Losing strategy**

Despite much effort to revitalize Irish, some activists are frustrated.

"Irish is surviving as opposed to thriving." says Mait O Bradaigh, a principal of an Irish language immersion school in Ireland's Galway County. As early as 1366,

there have been records of Irish language under attack, and there has been a formal group in place devoted to preserving the language since 1893. But despite more than 100 years of effort, the campaign to save Irish has met with limited success, while other Celtic languages have made more progress.

100 years ago, there would have been the vision or the hope or idea of rejuvenation of Irish to the point that it was the main language in Ireland. I don't think that's realistic" – Ronan Connolly, Irish teacher.

Wales, for instance, organised its big campaign for language revival in the 1970s, and boasts a higher usage rate.

"Welsh speakers have got a good relationship with the language. Of people who cast themselves as fluent, 85% use Welsh every day. Compare that to Irish, where 20% use it every day," says Meirion Prys Jones, executive director of Bwrdd Yr Iaith Gymraeg (The Welsh Language Board).

Irish language has rarely lacked support or enthusiasm from both the government or the Irish population in general. But while most residents polled want to see Irish thriving, many fewer actually speak it.

About 80,000 Irish say they use Irish daily, but some scholars estimate that the number of true Irish speakers is much less.

At the Washington DC bar, Irish native Richie Morrin joined up with the revellers, but didn't speak any Irish. Despite studying Irish in school, he's lost his language skills. "After school you stop using it, and then you get rusty," he says. Though some of his friends took advantage of the Irish clubs and social gatherings offered for young adults, he never did.

That's starting to change. For the past 10 years or so, interest in Irish has been in an upswing, with a renewed emphasis on Irish media and Irish education.

"A lot of people are going to the educational system to learn Irish - not just learning it as a subject, but learning how to communicate and learn in Irish," says Brenda Ní Ghairbhí, acting manager for Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish language week). She also notes strong growth in extra-curricular Irish language societies.

But for language activists, the language is still under threat, with too few people speaking Irish regularly, and too much English being spoken in the Gaeltacht areas or regions, the concentrated communities where Irish is the primary language.

Mr Ó Brádaigh says that in 2007, it was predicted that the Gaeltacht communities would last for just 20 more years.

"There is a huge amount of fresh interest in speaking the language," says David Crystal, honorary professor of linguistics at Bangor University, North Wales.

"That's great, but it's really late. There is a question mark as to whether it's too little, too late."

## Digital direction

There is much to be done within Ireland to help maintain the language. But its growth globally, though slight, is an encouraging sign for some linguists and language activists.

The rise in American Irish-speakers has been rapid but small: according to the Washington Post, 409 American students enrolled in Irish-language classes in 2008, compared to 278 in 1998. But the rise in interest abroad signifies a new life for the old tongue.

"My view on it is that in such a multicultural world as we have now, what you're really striving for is to give Irish hefty status and help it stand on its own two feet," says Mr Connolly.

"In the past, maybe 100 years ago, there would have been the vision or the hope or idea of rejuvenation of

Irish to the point that it was the main language in Ireland. I don't think that's realistic."

What is realistic, he says, is to develop Irish so that it can co-exist with English in Ireland, and so that it's accessible to those who didn't grow up learning or speaking it.

That's where Irish language interest from American and other non-Irish students may help play a role. Their affinity for the language, coupled with their distance from Ireland, has helped create virtual Gaeltachts.

"When I go on Facebook, people are writing in Irish," says James Cooney, 30, one of the students in Mr Connolly's class. A native DC resident, he keeps up on his Irish through online correspondence, local meet-ups, and language-immersion vacations to places like the North American Gaeltacht outside of Ottawa, Canada.

The increased use of Irish online and around the world could help amplify the power of the language in a time when the concentrated geographical areas are on the decline.

"The biggest thing that an endangered community can do to ensure that its language survives is to have a very strong presence on the Internet. All over the world these virtual speech communities are becoming a reality," says Prof Crystal, author of the book *Language Death*.

These virtual communities also help those with Irish ancestry connect with their roots, providing a new audience for the language.

"Language learning is easier now, in terms of resources. Finding niches on the internet is so much easier, and that's a wonderful thing," says Mr Connolly. "In this day and age of everyone being so connected, people want to remind themselves of what makes them different. For some people, that something might be Irish heritage."

Still, Mr Ó Brádaigh warns that while interest in learning Irish is on the rise, the Irish-speaking communities that shape and protect the language are on the brink.

The ratio of Irish learners to Irish speakers is greater than any other language in the world, he says. "There's a worldwide network of Irish speakers, but the native speaker areas are under severe distress.

"In some ways, we spend too much time on learning, and not enough time addressing the Irish speakers we already have."

## 4. Appeals, News and Views from Endangered Communities

### Indigenous peoples ask Chilean government to officially recognise their languages

*From Mercator newsletter number 79*

Representatives of the eight indigenous peoples of Chile have asked for the official recognition of Quechua, Aymara, Mapudungun, Rapa Nui, Kawescar, Yagan and Selknam (the eighth language, Kunza, is already extinct) through a new Law on linguistic rights. The indigenous representatives, joined in the Network EIB, said on Tuesday that all those languages are endangered (Mapudungun, Quechua, Aymara and Rapa Nui) or critically endangered (Kawescar, Yagan and Selknam) and asked the Chilean president Sebastián Piñera to start a process aimed at the "recovery and preservation" of those languages.

The representatives of Network EIB consider that the indigenous peoples' cultures and languages should be integrated into Chilean school curricula, not only for indigenous children but also for pupils of European descent. This, they argue, would help in advancing towards a greater respect in Chilean society for the indigenous peoples.

## Appeal from Circassian Ubykhs

*Sent to the editor by Prof. Abas Sultan, Vice-President, International Federation of Indigenous and Ethnic Minorities, Nalchik, Russia (Edited version)*

On May 19, 2011, Georgian parliamentary committees endorsed a resolution recognizing the Circassian Genocide - see <http://www.circassian-genocide.info/>. Particularly hard hit was the Ubykh-Circassian Indigenous tribe from Sochi: 95% of Ubykhs were destroyed, and 5% were deported to Turkey. The Ubykhs are prohibited from returning to Sochi on their motherland. In 2014 in Sochi there will be the Winter Olympic Games – without the presence of the indigenous Ubykh Circassian tribe.

In 2010, during the population census in Russia, S. Tohtabiev, PhD, Chief of the Ubykh Circassian Tribe, a specialist in the Old Testament Hittites (the ancient Circassian Ubykhs), recorded himself as Ubykh. The Russian government must recognize that in Russia there now lives one Ubykh. A further fifteen thousand live in other countries like refugees.

Tokhtabiev has fought for 30 years, despite all the restrictions and harassment. In Russia there are also other Ubykhs, but they are intimidated and afraid to identify themselves. Yet Tokhtabiev does not give in. He will overcome the genocide of his Ubykh Circassian tribe. So Tokhtabiev needs International support. Indigenous Ubykh Circassians are mentioned in the Old Testament as the Hittites (or Hetty). The Old Testament records that Circassian Hittites saved the Jews from destruction under the pharaohs.

I ask you to help save the Ubykh Circassian Tribe. Please help to translate and publish his stories in the USA.

[www.saklyamirov.narod.ru](http://www.saklyamirov.narod.ru)

*Tokhtabiev says about the Circassian Genocide:* There are seven million Circassians living outside of my country in exile. And in this respect I keep up strong action to revive my people. In summer 2011 in Nalchik I met a delegation of representatives of the Circassian

Museum in Israel. I plan to inform the world public that Circassians are mentioned in the Old Testament as the Hittites (or Hetty) and that the Circassians are one of the founders of modern European civilization. I would like to point out that in the UN building in New York there is the first peace treaty of humanity between Hetty (Circassians) and the Pharaoh of Egypt, Ramses II. In 2008 I was invited to the UN Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva. There, I offered my two new projects: World Festival of Culture and Ecology of Indigenous peoples in Geneva under UN auspices where dancing, singing, indigenous cuisine will be exhibited as well as traditional lifestyles of indigenous peoples to protect the environment. The second project is a World Rally from Tokyo to Sochi and London for promotion and protection of indigenous rights and environment.

Also my project Yaranga of Peace was supported by the indigenous peoples of Sakhalin and the Khabarovsk Territory.

Today, we Circassians face a very real possibility of losing our civilization. As a result, we are witnessing an unprecedented mobilization of Circassians from around the world to attempt to reverse this situation. At the heart of these efforts is the quest for the right to return to our homeland. Unfortunately, these events are playing out to a backdrop of a Russian Federation that refuses to acknowledge the historical connection of Circassians to their homeland, Circassia, and is creating policies that significantly exacerbate our problems. What is emerging now is a classic war of narratives. One, the authentic story of the people and plight in question, and one, the artificial yet ultimately self-fulfilling prophecy of a power that is unwilling to address the real issues, and therefore creates different ones.

The Circassian movement to obtain our rights to our homeland and in our homeland has been, from day one, an adamantly peaceful, secular and progressive movement. It is the epitome of a civil movement, using international laws and standards, information and

awareness campaigns and peaceful protest to obtain our rights. Circassians are a European people with European sensibilities who want to develop with and contribute to Europe. The hallmarks of Circassian life are rooted in our ancient etiquette, or *khazbe*, which stresses reverence for the old, respect for the young, the high esteem of women in society, hospitality, integrity, tolerance, fairness and courage. Despite tremendous efforts by the Ottomans and Russians over the centuries to “civilize” us, these virtues are still sacred to us and continue to define us to this day. Our struggle to obtain our rights shall and must continue. If we lose our *khazbe* in our struggle to save our nation, then we lose everything.

## 5. Allied Societies & Activities

### Te Kōkō Tātākī - journal of Māori studies

Issue 2 (February 2012) of this on-line journal sponsored by Te Ipukarea and the International Centre for Language Revitalisation has appeared, and focuses on *Tāmata Toiere*, the digital repository of *waiata* and *haka* lore for users of the Māori language in New Zealand. The journal is edited by Dr. Tania Smith, local coordinator of the FEL conference due to be held at Auckland University of Technology in September this year. Further details from Tania Smith: [tania.smith@aut.ac.nz](mailto:tania.smith@aut.ac.nz)

### Terralingua E-news issue 15

The 15th issue of our kindred spirit Terralingua appeared in February 2012. It contains a call for submissions for the next issue of the Terralingua Landscape. You can view the journal on-line by going to [www.terralingua.org](http://www.terralingua.org).

### The last strains of a language: TV film

*Our colleague and committee member Dr. Tjeerd de Graaf of the Mercator European Research Centre at the Fryske Akademy has released a film on his activities in St. Petersburg researching the archive holdings there on endangered languages. Here is the accompanying press release:*

In 2001 the Frisian Broadcasting Company Omrop Fryslân has produced a series of five documentary films for the national TV in the Netherlands which shows the position of some minority languages in Eastern Europe and the Russian Federation and the work related to the study and safeguarding of these languages.

The first film in this series describes the reconstruction of historical sound material in the archives of the Pushkinsky Dom, the Russian Institute of Literature in Saint-Petersburg. It shows the collection of Edison wax cylinders and the way material of some endangered languages in Russia can be obtained from these recordings. The Mercator Centre has put this film on the internet and makes it possible for a general public to learn about the use of these archive materials for the study of endangered languages.

The film is available on the Internet at:  
<http://vimeo.com/39651564>

## 6. Obituaries

### In memoriam Ülo Sirk (1935-2011)

*By Aleksandr Oglobin*

Dr. Ülo Sirk, an outstanding scholar in Austronesian linguistics, passed away on 15 December 2011 in Moscow.

His interest in this field arose when he was student at the faculty of geology, the University of Tartu in Estonia, then a part of the Soviet Union. There existed a circle for Oriental languages in that university. Sirk began learning Indonesian and before his graduation was able to teach it and to translate Indonesian prose into Estonian.

In early 1960-ies he applied for doctoral scholarship at the Institute for Asian Peoples Studies (formerly and later, up to present Institute of Oriental Studies) in Moscow under the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, nowadays of the Russian Federation. It was just a period of intensifying exploration of Southeast Asian languages in Russia. After having defended his dissertation, Sirk remained fellow at the same institute until his death, living in Moscow, but maintaining connections with scholarly life in Estonia.

Beginning with research of Malay/Indonesian grammar, his work expanded into the study of Bugis (Buginese), the language of important regional written tradition in the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia, as well as the broad field of Austronesian comparative philology.

Working on Indonesian syntax Sirk established the nature of *yang* 'which, who, that' being a relative function word, not a pronoun as was commonly stated in grammar textbooks. This word, by far the most frequent in Indonesian text, is connected to informational structure of the sentence, introducing the topic, besides its function of a special attribute marker. Other articles on Indonesian concern syntactical relations and the general frame of noun phrase. Meanwhile being a co-author of the first Russian comprehensive grammar of Indonesian, he described parts of speech, adverbs, pronouns and other substitutes, function words, complex sentences. This grammar was later issued in Indonesian translation.

Sirk's work on Bugis continued more than thirty years. Its writing system of Old Indian provenance is phonetically defective and its grammar differs from Malay/Indonesian in many respects. Sirk consulted works of Jacobus Noorduyn as well as Dutch publications from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and when his book on Bugis grammar was translated into French and English (Sirk 1979, 1983), he was already active participant in the international community of Austronesianists. Particularly, he published on the complex system of Bugis pre- and postverbal pronominal morphemes, the language of different social strata, the verse metrics, the specific linguistic traits in epos, the etymology. A new version of Bugis grammar emerged after he had visited Sulawesi for the first time doing observations on authentic reading of traditional texts. Close to Bugis matters are works on substantiating the South-Sulawesian language group.

A broader typological, comparative and areal view is represented by his articles on relative constructions and on verbal substitutes in languages of Indonesia, on Malay prefix *sẽ* and its cognates in Western Indonesian languages, on historical typology of verb structure in Indonesian and Philippine area, on classifying in the Austronesian family, on areal contacts between Austronesian and non-Austronesian in Eastern Indonesia. Proper comparative is the article on merger of labial consonants in Ambonese languages, which is an important criterion of genealogical classification. Later articles are on types of reduplication, high-level subgrouping and again on classifying in the Austronesian family, on the Austronesian homeland, on the history of transitive suffixes. These studies were a prerequisites to his large general survey, where he stated that this book was result of his studies during 50 years.

The aim of this work was, according to the author, "to show the course of development from the Early Austronesian language which was supposedly a chain or a web of closely related dialects, to the younger language groups (up to modern ones) comprising the Austronesian language family". The difference with Otto Demp-

Dempwolff who layed the foundation for Austronesian comparative studies in his etymological dictionary (1934-38) is that Sirk pays much attention to morphology.

The book consists of six large chapters: I – general characterisation of the Austronesian family, II – the history of its exploration, III – the conception of Early Austronesian (phonemic and morphological reconstruction), IV – the main structural features of Austronesian languages in connection with the early phases of family's existence, V and VI – specific character of language branches and groups after the disintegration of early protolanguage communities. Sirk's approach to Austronesian languages includes descriptive, typological, areal and comparative dimensions, demonstrating unordinary erudition, intellectual brightness and very circumspect, cautious approach to interpretation of multivarious data. Concluding the book is author's hope for intensifying documentation of endangered languages in Austronesian area, maybe with participation of Russian linguists.

He taught Austronesian linguistics in several academic institutions in Moscow and was ready to give hints and constructive critique to his students and colleagues. His depart is a irremediable loss for his friends and colleagues, for our linguistic studies.

## 7. Publications, Book Reviews

### New collection of articles on the topic of multilingualism and the Internet

*From Mercator newsletter issue 81 (April 2012)*

In March 2012 the Maaya World Network for Linguistic Diversity has released a new collection of articles on the topic of multilingualism and the Internet. *Net.Lang: Towards the Multilingual Cyberspace* aims to raise awareness and explores strategies for improving Internet accessibility for speakers of all languages.

Among the contributing researchers is Dr. Tjeerd de Graaf of the Mercator Centre. In a chapter entitled "How Oral Archives Benefit Endangered Languages" De Graaf investigates the way historic recordings in sound archives can be restored and used for the safeguarding and revitalisation of endangered languages (pages 269-285). *Net.Lang* is can be downloaded for free in English and French. A Russian translation is in process and the publisher invites translations in additional languages.

## Endangered Human Diversity: Languages, Cultures, Epistemologies

It is a pleasure to announce the forthcoming Special Issue "Endangered Human Diversity: Languages, Cultures, Epistemologies" to be published in the journal Sustainability (ISSN 2071-1050; <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/>). The Special Issue is now open to receive submissions of full research papers and comprehensive review articles for peer-review and possible publication. This special issue focuses on the threat to human diversity in terms of epistemologies, languages, cultures and traditions. When a language disappears, mankind loses a part of its rich cultural heritage. When cultures and traditions are marginalized it impacts on identity development and construction. Moreover, what are the consequences of the hegemonic role of Western epistemology in terms of human diversity globally? While the answer to this question is often contradictory and multiple, there is a sense that Western hegemonic epistemology does not necessarily play a positive role in preserving linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. On the contrary, the hegemonic Western discourse is often seen to be closely related to what could be called linguistic and cultural imperialism, resulting in the marginalization of peoples' languages, cultures and epistemologies, particularly in the global South. It seems necessary to replace the monological focus on Western knowledge production with what Gregory Bateson calls double or multiple descriptions. Such an approach allows for the incorporation of various linguistic, cultural and epistemological manifestations in the discussions of sustainability, sustainable development and a sustainable future. There is a need for new conversations and questions about epistemologies, cultures and languages in the global village.

Questions of what kind of knowledges and cultures exist, for instance in learning institutions, are seldom asked and problematized, even though there is common knowledge that the traditional knowledges and cultures of millions of students are dislocated and rubbished. Questions related to the kind of knowledges, traditions and cultures for a sustainable future seldom transcend the Western knowledge universe. To what extent does globalization hinder epistemological, cultural and linguistic diversity? In this issue of Sustainability we welcome manuscripts which both address issues of human diversity and sustainability from a global perspective, and more localized or micro studies. Manuscripts discussing the impact of globalization on epistemological, cultural and linguistic diversity are particularly welcome.

Special Issue: Endangered Human Diversity: Languages,

Cultures, Epistemologies

[http://www.mdpi.com/si/sustainability/endangered\\_human\\_diversity/](http://www.mdpi.com/si/sustainability/endangered_human_diversity/)

Deadline for manuscript submissions: 31 August 2012

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You may send your manuscript now or up until the deadline.

Submitted papers should not have been published previously, nor be under consideration for publication elsewhere. We also encourage authors to send us their tentative title and short abstract by e-mail for approval to the Editorial Office at [sustainability@mdpi.com](mailto:sustainability@mdpi.com).

## 8. Places to go on the Web

### People are knowledge

*From the web-site [www.notechmagazine.com](http://www.notechmagazine.com)*

"The Oral Citations Project is a strategic research project funded by a Wikimedia Foundation grant to help overcome a lack of published material in emerging languages on Wikipedia. The idea behind the project is a simple one. Wikipedia privileges printed knowledge (books, journals, magazines, newspapers and more) as authentic sources of citable material. This is understandably so, for a lot of time and care goes into producing this kind of printed material, and restricting citation sources makes the enterprise workable. But books - and printed words generally - are closely correlated to rich economies: Europe, North America, and a small section of Asia."

In India and South Africa, for instance, (to take just two countries in the rest of the world), the number of books produced per year is nowhere close to, say, the number of books produced in the UK. What this means for indigenous language Wikipedias from India and South Africa is that there is very little citable, printed material to rely on in those languages; in turn, it means that it is very difficult for any of those languages to grow on Wikipedia. (There is a related problem: writing this local knowledge on English Wikipedia is a task similarly hampered by a lack of good printed sources)."

"As a result of this disparity, everyday, common knowledge - things that are known, observed and performed

by millions of people - cannot enter Wikipedia as units of fact because they haven't been written down in a reliably published source. This means that not only do small-language Wikipedias in countries like India and South Africa lose out on opportunities for growth, so also does the Wikimedia movement as a whole lose out on the potential expansion of scope in every language." Description of the project, audio files, movie and links to news articles can all be found on this page <[http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Oral\\_Citations](http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Oral_Citations)>.

## 9. Forthcoming events

### International Centre for Language Revitalisation: New York Symposium

31 May – 1 June 2012

#### Two-day Language Symposium in New York

Registrations are now open for the language symposium: *Language Revitalisation in the 21st Century – Going Global, Staying Local*. To register please visit the conference website:

<http://opencuny.org/languagerevitalizationinthe21stcentury/>

Two additional invited speakers have been confirmed for Day 1 of the symposium.

- Jonty Yamisha, Circassian, Nassip Foundation: The founder and Executive Director of the Nassip Foundation. Established in 2010, the Nassip Foundation is a secular organization that exists to protect and promote the Circassian language, history and culture

- Elsa Stamatopoulou, Columbia University: Has devoted some 21 years of her UN work to human rights and served in various positions at the UN offices in Vienna, Geneva and New York. From 2003 to 2010 she was the first Chief of the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Day 2 of the symposium, hosted by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian includes:

#### Workshops:

*Endangered Languages and Language Revitalization* presented by Phillipe Kridelka (Director) UNESCO, New York,

*Recovering Voices: Using the Collections* presented by Gabriela Pérez Báez, The Smithsonian Institute

*Language Revitalization: Technology and Learning* Presented by AUT's International Centre for Language Revitalisation, Dr Wharehuia Milroy QSO, Hana O'Regan, Dr Leilani Basham, Professor Tania Ka'ai and Professor John Moorfield.

#### Short films:

The Amendment, Kevin Papatie (Algonquin); Our First Voices Series, (Canada); Horse You See, Melissa Henry (Navajo); Writing the Land, Kevin Lee Burton (Swampy Cree).

Feature film: We Still Live Here - Âs Nutayuneân Round table with Anne Makepeace (Writer/Director), Jessie Little Doe Baird, and Elizabeth Weatherford, moderated by Juliette Blevins

#### The Centre's Facebook and Web pages

The International Centre for Language Revitalisation webpage has been updated. The url is: [www.languagerevive.org](http://www.languagerevive.org).

### ICLASP: Extended deadline

The next conference of the International Association of Language and Social Psychology, ICLASP 13, will be held between 20-23rd June, 2012, in the charming city of Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, the capital of bilingual Fryslân in The Netherlands. The conference will be held in conjunction with Mercator, the European Research Center on Multilingualism and Language Learning, which is part of the **Fryske Akademy**. Further details of keynote speakers and other aspects of the conference are at [www.mercator-research.eu](http://www.mercator-research.eu) and [www.ialasp.org](http://www.ialasp.org).

This conference will bring together scholars from different disciplines who explore language and communication in their social contexts using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The focus is mainly on aspects such as identities, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, motivations, norms, behaviour, policies and so on in their individual and intergroup contexts. Topics covered in previous conferences include language and health communication; language learning; bilingualism & multilingualism; language and discrimination, interpersonal, intercultural, interethnic and intergroup communication; nonverbal communication; miscommunication and communication failure; discourse analysis; language and ageing; language and mass media; language and humour; language and gender; language and authority; language and tourism; language and technology; language and security; endangered, regional and minority languages; language planning; and so on. Papers and symposia are invited for submission on these and related topics.

#### Registration and Submissions of Papers and Symposia/Panels

Registration details are available at [www.mercator-research.eu](http://www.mercator-research.eu). Submissions will be accepted in two forms: Symposia or individual papers/abstracts. Details for each are provided below. **Please note that (i) all submissions and presentations need to be in**



**English; (ii) by submitting a proposal for presentation at ICLASP13 you are agreeing to register for and attend the conference should your paper/symposia be accepted.**

## Lyon Summer School: documentation and revitalization

*From Julia Sallabank, SOAS, London*

The website and registration form for the 3L summer school on language documentation and revitalisation, to be held in Lyon, France, 1-13 July 2012, is now available at [http://www.ddl.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/colloques/3l\\_2012/index.asp?Langues=EN&Page=](http://www.ddl.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/colloques/3l_2012/index.asp?Langues=EN&Page=)

It also includes an International Conference (6 and 7 July) entitled: "1992-2012: twenty years of research on language endangerment" including internationally known figures in the field.

## 3rd International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (ICLDC)

The 3rd International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (ICLDC), "Sharing Worlds of Knowledge," will be held on **February 28-March 3, 2013**, at the Hawai'i Imin International Conference Center on the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa campus.

By popular demand, the 3rd ICLDC will be a full day longer than the previous two conferences. The conference program will feature an integrated series of **Master Class workshops**. An optional Hilo Field Study (on the Big Island of Hawai'i) to visit Hawaiian language revitalization programs in action will immediately follow the conference (March 4-5).

This year's **conference theme, "Sharing Worlds of Knowledge,"** intends to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of language documentation and the need to share methods for documenting the many aspects of human knowledge that language encodes. We aim to build on the strong momentum created by the 1st and 2nd ICLDCs to discuss research and revitalization approaches yielding rich records that can benefit both the field of language documentation and speech communities. We hope you will join us.

For more information, visit our **conference website:** <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ICLDC/2013/>

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

#### Topics

We especially welcome abstracts that address the conference theme of the interdisciplinary nature of language documentation. Language encodes knowledge from many facets of life: kinship, science, taxonomy, material culture, spirituality, music, and others. We encourage presentations on documenting these topics through the lens of endangered languages.

We are also seeking abstracts on the science of documentation and revitalization. Documentation is usually portrayed as a means of collecting language data, and revitalization is generally seen primarily as a kind of applied work directly benefiting communities. However, each of those domains is a genuine area of research, and we welcome presentations that treat documentation and revitalization not merely as activities, but also as domains requiring theorization in their own right.

In addition to the topics above, we warmly welcome abstracts on other subjects in language documentation and conservation, which may include but are not limited to:

- Archiving matters
- Community experiences of revitalization
- Data management
- Ethical issues
- Language planning
- Lexicography and reference grammar design
- Methods of assessing ethnolinguistic vitality
- Orthography design
- Teaching/learning small languages
- Technology in documentation – methods and pitfalls
- Topics in areal language documentation
- Training in documentation methods – beyond the university
- Assessing success in documentation and revitalization strategies

#### Abstract submission

Abstracts should be submitted in English, but presentations can be in any language. We particularly welcome presentations in languages of the region discussed. Authors may submit no more than one individual and one joint (co-authored) proposal.

Abstracts are **due by August 31, 2012**, with notification of acceptance by October 1, 2012.

We ask for **abstracts of no more than 400 words** for online publication so that conference participants will have a good idea of the content of your paper, and a **50-word summary** for inclusion in the conference program. All abstracts will be submitted to blind peer review by international experts on the topic.

We will only be accepting proposal submissions for papers or posters. Please note that the Advisory Committee

may ask that some abstracts submitted as conference talks be presented as posters instead.

Selected authors will be invited to submit their conference papers to the journal *Language Documentation & Conservation* for publication.

**To submit an online proposal, visit our Call for Proposals page:**  
<http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ICLDC/2013/call.html>

### Scholarships

Scholarships of up to US\$1,500 will be awarded to the six best abstracts by students and/or community-based (non-academically-employed) language activists, to help defray travel expenses to come and present at the conference. If you are eligible and wish to be considered for a scholarship, please select the appropriate "Yes" button on the proposal submission form.

## Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea Annual Conference 2012

The Linguistic Society of PNG is pleased to announce its annual conference to be held at SIL-PNG's New Training Centre, Ukarumpa, on 25-27 September 2012.

The goal of this year's LSPNG Conference is to provide a venue for presentation of the best current research on Austronesian and Papuan languages, linguistics and literacy and to promote collaboration and research in these areas. All paper abstracts submitted will be subject to assessment by the Programme Committee.

### Programme

The Conference programme will be available at the Language and Linguistics in Melanesia (LLM) website after the acceptance of abstracts. Please visit [www.langlxmelanesia.com](http://www.langlxmelanesia.com) for more details.

Papers presented at the Conference will be collected and published in the LLM online journal.

### Registration

Registration: K50 (nonrefundable), payable by 27 July

Conference dinner: K40 (nonrefundable)

Conference accommodation and meals: K540 (single occupancy); K420 (double occupancy), payable by 24 August

Please notice the dates by which you must pay for registration and accommodation and meals. More details regarding payment and registration will be posted at the LLM website later. Please contact Ray Stegeman at [lr-linguistics@sil.org.pg](mailto:lr-linguistics@sil.org.pg) for more specific information on registration and in-country travel recommendations.

**Sponsor:** SIL-PNG · Box 1 (418) · Ukarumpa, EHP 444 · PAPUA NEW GUINEA

## Call for Abstracts: Papuan Languages Workshop

The Third WORKSHOP ON THE LANGUAGES OF PAPUA (WLP3)

11-15 February 2013

Jayapura, Papua, Indonesia

WLP3 focuses on the most linguistically diverse part of the world, Melanesia, which straddles countries of Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Melanesia contains around a fifth of the world's 6,000 languages in under 3% of its land area and less than 0.2% of its population. The scope of the workshop includes all languages known as 'Papuan', plus the Austronesian languages that are spoken in the vicinity of Papuan languages in New Guinea plus parts of Indonesia, East Timor and the Solomon Islands.

These languages are astonishingly diverse, barely known to science, and face the threat of extinction without trace in the coming century unless concerted international efforts are made to meet the huge challenge of documenting them. WLP addresses the scientific issues raised by these languages, covering the whole gamut of linguistic questions from phonology to syntax to typology to historical linguistics, as well as topics bordering musicology, anthropology and prehistory; it also includes papers on digital archiving, documentary linguistics, scientific infrastructure and the training of linguists from minority language groups. In addition, WLP addresses various practical issues concerning the cultural and linguistic rights of minority groups in Indonesia, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea, including language support and maintenance, and, in particular, the need for education programs that allow children to receive part of their schooling in their mother-tongue.

Persons wishing to present a paper at the symposium are invited to submit a one-page abstract in electronic form (preferably pdf, but MsWord also acceptable) to David Gil at the following address:

gil AT eva.mpg.de

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 1 September 2012: <http://email.eva.mpg.de/~gil/wlp/3/index.html>



# FEL 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:

To raise awareness of endangered languages, both inside and outside the communities where they are spoken, through all media;

To support the use of endangered languages in all contexts: at home, in education, in the media, and in social, cultural and economic life;

To monitor linguistic policies and practices, and to seek to influence the appropriate authorities where necessary;

To support the documentation of endangered languages, by offering financial assistance, training, or facilities for the publication of results;

To collect together and make available information of use in the preservation of endangered languages;

To disseminate information on all of the above activities as widely as possible.