



language legacies

12 LANGUAGE LEGACIES GRANTS AWARDED FOR 2014

In 2014, The Endangered Language Fund awarded 12 Language Legacies grants. They cover a range of countries, communities and languages. A number of projects will focus on workshops, training teachers, and development of materials. In addition, these funds will enable documentation, production of books and dictionaries, and linguistic contributions. Updates regarding funding opportunities in 2015 can be found at <http://www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/request.php>.

Konrad Rybka (University of Amsterdam)

“Lokono teacher training”

Based on his work in Suriname, French Guiana and Guyana since 2009, Rybka has been awarded an ELF grant to develop a week-long Lakono teacher training. Lokono’s (ISO 639 code: arw) moribund status is reflected in the small number of native speakers, average speaker age of over 70, and shift to Dutch and Sranantongo in younger speakers. The community also struggles with a lack of skilled teachers.

The project will build upon the previous establishment of an orthographic standard. Training will consist of: development of materials (exercises, reading materials, videos, sound files, etc.), participant preparation, and the training itself. Members of 13 villages and other language activists will be invited to the week-long training focusing on didactic skills, grammatical knowledge, and practical exercise. The training will provide prospective teachers with the knowledge and confidence to explain the rules of their language to others.

Rafael Bezerra Nonato (Social Museu Nacional-UFRJ)

“Documentation of endangered genres of the Kĩsêdjê oral literature”

This project continues documentation work of the Kĩsêdjê language (ISO: suy) initiated in 2008. There are roughly 350 speakers in five villages in the state of Mato Grosso in Brazil. Although many do speak the language, long-term

vitality is not guaranteed, especially with the growing use of Portuguese. Nonato and others are working to document Kĩsêdjê and record its oral histories before it is too heavily influenced by Portuguese.

The project has accumulated 35 hours of oral genre recordings, including singing, ritual, discourse, historic narratives, and mythology. This ELF grant will allow

researchers to continue building this audiovisual corpus and to transcribe and translate collected sessions. Further elicitation and audiovisual sessions will be held and incorporated into the existing Toolbox database. Later these products will be adapted for use at local indigenous schools.

Peri Ozlem Yuksel-Sokmen (CUNY)

“Lazuri Books and Picture-Word Learning Cards for Children ”

This year’s Isenberg award goes to this project supporting literacy for young Laz children.

Charles Isenberg was a professor of Russian literature at Wesleyan University and Reed College. This award is given in his memory to a project in the former Soviet Union. It is particularly appropriate that this year’s award focuses on literature and on the next generation.

Lazuri (Laz; ISO: lzz) is a South Caucasian language spoken along coastal regions between Turkey and Georgia. Parents no longer teach the language to their children and the younger generation prefers to speak the majority language.

A major challenge the community is facing is that teaching materials are insufficient and there is a lack of early pedagogical tools. Thus, the main goal is to develop language teaching materials for use at home with easily accessible print and e-versions for Laz families.

The 94 applications received this year made for many difficult choices; 15 worthy projects were selected for funding.

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Two children’s stories and two picture-word books have already been created. This grant will help publish the books and create online learning materials. The books will be distributed to libraries, daycare centers, and cultural centers. Digital versions with voice recordings of native speakers will be made available on the web to ensure these materials are accessible to the widest audience.



Caleb Brooks (University of Regina)

“Spatial Elements in Upper Tanana Athabaskan”

Recent estimates place the speaker population of Alaska’s Upper Tanana language (ISO: tau) at less than 90 elderly speakers.

This project will record and document Upper Tanana language material such as traditional stories, histories, and personal narratives. Transcription and translation of earlier recordings will also be pursued. The majority of materials collected will be narratives and conversation, which will be made available to community members and made publicly accessible (with speaker consent) through the Alaska Native Languages Archive.

Linguistically, this project will focus on the ways that spatial elements (directional adverbs, postpositions, place names, and spatial prefixes) are used in different genres.

Dr. Swintha Danielsen (University of Leipzig)

“A flora and fauna dictionary of (almost) extinct Guarasuñe’e (Pauserna) from Bolivian Amazonia”

Guarasuñe’e (Pauserna ISO: psm), spoken in Bolivian Amazonia, was thought to be extinct, but was recently discovered to have four last speakers living in a remote village at the river Guaporé. Danielsen will make use of the extensive corpus of previously gathered Guarasuñe’e vocabulary to check-in with the remaining speakers and their descendants, who

will be able to clarify ambiguities in translations, help with pronunciation and point out unknown plants in the field.

The project aims to publish a dictionary containing the Guarasuñe’e entry and a translation into local Spanish, with additional explanations including usage, Latin names, and related terms. It will be printed and distributed in Bolivia. A digital dictionary with photos will also be created.

Adam Roth Singerman (University of Chicago)

“Development and production of pedagogical, cultural and literacy materials in Tupari”

Singerman has been awarded an ELF grant for his collaborative project to document, describe, and analyze Tupari (ISO: tpr), an understudied and endangered language spoken in the Brazilian state of Rondônia. Economic and social pressures discourage the Tupari from maintaining their language and traditions.

This project will assist indigenous educators in producing literacy and pedagogical materials. These materials, will help contribute to the long-term maintenance and survival of the language.

Approximately 35 hours of elicitation sessions and six hours of video footage were previously collected and used to develop a working analysis of Tupari phonetics, phonology, and morphosyntax. With ELF funds, the focus will shift from elicitation sessions to textual collection and analysis.

Carol Priestley (Australian National University)

“Koromu traditional environmental knowledge and culture”

Koromu (ISO: xes) is an endangered language in the middle Ramu Valley of Papua New Guinea. There are about 700-800 speakers or children of speakers. In some settlements Koromu is only spoken by the parental generation and it is becoming increasingly unstable with social changes.

Priestley conducts research on the Koromu holistic approach to relationships between the environment (particularly plants) and people, cultural traditions surrounding childbirth and recent changes. This ELF supported project will produce materials for both care

Several community members have been awarded grants, while others bring linguistics to the community.

of perinatal women and for language use in children's elementary education.

The aim is to create 2-3 booklets for children on use and care of plants, a book on maternal health care for adults, a small book on social and environmental changes, digital materials that speakers agree to make public in their communities, and some audio-visual recordings with subtitles using Saymore software.

Sheena Shah (CALDi - Centre for African Language Diversity)

“An illustrated Nluu language reader for the #Khomani community”

With only five known speakers of advanced age, Nlng (i.e. Nluu and l’Au ISO: ngh) is one of the most endangered languages of Southern Africa. This project seeks to develop an illustrated reader to support language revitalization activities. This will require the collection of new language data and the evaluation of existing recordings of the language. Relevant semantic areas have been identified, including topics such as daily routine activities as well as animal and body part names.

The reader will include illustrations of word meanings, but also interactive language games, such as crossword puzzles and spot the difference. It will be made available in pdf format on the CALDi website, so that it will be accessible to a wider audience.

Philip LeSourd (Indiana University)

“Documenting Pitch Accent in Maliseet-Passamaquoddy”

Maliseet is spoken in five communities in New Brunswick, Canada, while Passamaquoddy is used in eastern Maine. The number of speakers of Maliseet-Passamaquoddy (ISO: pqm) continues to decline since few fluent speakers are younger than 50 years old and no children have been learning the language for many years.

Although some language programs are available, current writing systems do not indicate contrasts in accent, making it difficult for teachers and students. Since these contrasts carry a heavy functional load, educational materials that reveal how pitch accent works are needed.

LeSourd will use the support of ELF to fund a phonetic investigation of pitch accent in Maliseet-Passamaquoddy and to lay groundwork for a larger comparative study of this poorly documented area of the phonology of the language. Example words, phrases, and sentences chosen to illustrate known or suspected phonological and morphological determinants of pitch

accent and to reveal dialectal variation in the phonetic realization of pitch contours will be collected. Results will be made available to the community in the form of online material that will explain and illustrate how pitch accent works.

Bruce Smith (Ponca Tribe)

“Community-based Ponca Language Learning ”

With less than five fluent speakers, Ponca (ISO: oma), of Nebraska and Oklahoma is “moribund.” This project will focus on greater awareness of the Ponca Language through writing capability afforded by keyboard computer adaptation as well as messages and signs around the community.

Researchers will gather key phrases and words to create, print, and enlarge signage to be put up in and around the White Eagle Indian reservation. These signs and

placards will be placed in prominent public locations such as the White Eagle Health Center, Tribal Affairs Building, and Cultural Center. Efforts will be shared with the Northern Ponca relatives so they can benefit as well.

Kate Riestenberg (Georgetown University)

“A Task-Based Language Teaching Workshop in San Pablo Macuiltianguis”

The Zapotec language family is extremely diverse with reports of 56 distinct languages. This rich linguistic diversity makes revitalization efforts of San Pablo Macuiltianguis Zapotec (ISO: zaa), in Oaxaca, Mexico, crucial as the number of speakers rapidly decreases.

In 2003, the Law of Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Communities was established. However, structured support for teaching these languages is lacking in part because documentation materials are scarce.

Kiestenberg will organize a workshop on task-based language teaching (TBLT) with local teachers and native speaker elders resulting in a multimedia repository of Zapotec teaching resources. This approach is appropriate because extensive documentation is not necessary and task-based materials also serve as language documentation materials. In addition, the focus on language function and real-world tasks allows learners to acquire utterances with grammatical knowledge and to immediately put the language to use.

The three-day, hands-on workshop will introduce TBLT, develop Zapotec lessons and materials, and allow teachers to implement their new lessons.

Daily use of a language, which is often neglected in older sources, is the focus of several projects.

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Digna Lipaod Adonis (Ibaloy-Kankanaey Igorot)

“Esel ni Kaapoan, Ashalen tan Gajoan(Relearning and Protecting our Language): Preserving our Mother Tongue through Language Materials and Teaching Aids Production”

This ELF grant will enable the addition of Kankanaey (ISO: kne) and Kalanguya (ISO: ify) to a documentation project which began in 2010. Spoken in the Philippines, these languages have been affected by tourism, education, and modernization. Most children are taught regional or national languages.

In 2013, the Philippine Department of Education implemented Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, a K-12 basic education program which requires the learner’s mother tongue be used in the classroom for grades one to three. The hope is for children to develop a strong literary foundation in their own culture and language, which can later be transferred across other languages and schools. The community is in need of quality materials for use in this program.

Two workshops will be held to gather language knowledge and to produce books and materials. The first will compile words, phrases, sentences, songs, chants and other expressions from native speakers. The second will allow teachers of the curriculum to create teaching aids. Materials will be printed and distributed.

Ives Goddard receives lifetime achievement award



Ives Goddard was honored with a lifetime achievement award at the 46th Algonquian Conference, co-sponsored by the Mohegan Tribe and ELF. Goddard has been a mainstay of the field of Algonquian linguistics since his Harvard dissertation of 1969. He has been at the Smithsonian Institution since 1976, where he not only worked extensively on Munsee, Unami, Massachusetts and Meskwaki, he was also instrumental in the publication of the Handbook of North American Indians. He was the first president of the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas in 1981, and he was named the Collitz Professor of the Linguistic Society of America at the Linguistic Summer Institute in Ithaca in 1997. It was additionally fortunate the many members of Goddard’s family were able to see him honored by the conference that he has done so much to shape and promote.



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