12 Grants Awarded in 1999

This year the Endangered Language Fund selected twelve grants for support. Only ten grants were funded in 1998, so the number of grants has risen by two. Value of the grants came to a total of $20,000. We hope the number of grants funded each year will continue to increase as our financial resources grow. The continued support of our members is crucial in this effort.

Elena Benedicto (Purdue University) - Indigenous Women as Linguists

The goal of this project is to form a team of Mayangna women in linguistic techniques, so that they can later use that knowledge in the bilingual programs of Nicaragua. The more immediate goal is to prepare the lexical entry cards for a secondary school dictionary and a kindergarten picture dictionary, for which photographic material has already been collected. This is an indigenous effort to provide educational materials which brings the generations together in a single project. An unusual aspect of these dictionaries is that they will be bidialectal (Tuahka and Panamahka).

Marianne Milligan (University of Wisconsin, Madison) - Menominee Phonology and Morphology

Only a few speakers of Menominee remain, and they show varying degrees of fluency. Although it is true that Leonard Bloomfield worked extensively on Menominee, it is still true that no one researcher (even Bloomfield) can fully describe a language. The 7,500 Menominee tribe has expressed interest in revitalizing their language, but there is a lack of materials and speakers to contribute to the effort. The present work on the phonology and morphology of Menominee will provide some of the material for a language curriculum. Many traditional stories told by elders are being videotaped as well.

Jonette Sam (Pueblo of Picuris) - An Integrated Approach to Language Renewal at Picuris Pueblo, New Mexico

This grant allowed four members of the Language Committee of the Pueblo of Picuris to attend the 6th Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conference in Tucson, AZ, this past June. The four members of the Pueblo were able to meet with others struggling with the issues of language revitalization. The discussions of such topics as language camps, language in sports and other community recreation, language at work, language in religion and culture, language and the media, and language in community historical and cultural research proved very valuable.

Carolyn J. MacKay and Frank R. Trechsel (Ball State University) - A Linguistic Description of Pisa Flores Tepehua

This variety of Tepehua, spoken in Veracruz, Mexico, is a member of the Totonacan language family, a group of linguistic isolates in Mesoamerica. About 1,000 of the 10,000 Tepehua speakers use the Pisa Flores dialect, but it is rapidly being displaced by the national language, Spanish. Only one dialect has been described in any detail, and the present work will begin that task with Pisa Flores. The texts and elicited words will be used for a dictionary, grammatical descriptions, and, ultimately, interlinear translations of the texts.

Yogendra P. Yadava (Royal Nepal Academy) - A Study of the Dhangar Language

Dhangar is the only member of the Dravidian language family spoken in Nepal. It has been used by a minority in eastern Nepal but is facing gradual extinction for several rea-

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sons. Its speakers are scattered among predominantly Maithili speaking people, and the use of the national language Nepali is mandatory in schools and public life. Since restoration of democracy in 1990, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of the indigenous culture and the language that supports it. The present work will provide basic linguistic description which will be necessary for any serious language maintenance program. This will include the beginnings of work on linguistic affiliation, grammar, sociolinguistic perspectives, literacy and databased texts and lexicon.

Delphine Red Shirt (Guilford, CT) - Winyan Isnala: My Mother's Story

From her early days in North Dakota (see her autobiography "Bead on an Anthill", University of Nebraska Press, 1997), Red Shirt's mother was a source of wisdom, and recordings of their phone conversations and visits over the past several years included much of the history and lore of the Lakota people. Between the time of the submission of this grant and its being awarded, Red Shirt's mother passed away, making the transcription and editing of those texts even more urgent. The grant from ELF will help make that possible.

Yaron Matras (University of Manchester) - A Description of the Domari Language of Jerusalem

Domari is an Indic language spoken by a socially isolated and marginalized community of formerly itinerant metalworkers in the Old City of Jerusalem. It is one of several Indic diaspora languages spoken by communities that are thought to be descendants of artisans and entertainers spread throughout Central Asia, the Near East and Europe. All of the fluent speakers of Domari are over 40 years of age, most in their 60s, with Arabic taking its place. Very little description of the language exists, and Matras will begin a more complete description based on 20 hours of recordings already collected supplemented by further field work.

James T. Collins (National University of Malaysia) - Documenting and Describing the Tola' Language

Borneo is Asia's largest island, yet we know very little about the languages that are spoken there. Many previously ill-described areas are inhabited by autochthonous Dayak groups, speaking a number of diverse languages and dialects. With many of these dying out, it is imperative that information be collected before these links in this language ecology are lost forever. The language to be studied, Tola', is an undescribed Malayic variant spoken in four villages. One village already appears to have stopped transmitting
Grants Available to Native American Tribes

The United States Federal government has allocated $2 million in the current fiscal year for implementation of the Native American Languages Act (1990). These grants are designed to assist applicants in designing projects which will promote the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages. They are available to both Federally- and State-recognized tribes and groups including Native Hawaiians and groups in American Samoa.

There are two kinds of grants, Phase I and Phase II. Phase I grants are limited to one year and $50,000, while Phase II grants can be up to three years and $125,000 per year. Phase I is intended to collect data about a language’s state and suggest ways of improving its state. Phase II is the implementation of those plans. Proposals are due March 17, 2000; projects can start no earlier than September 30, 2000.

For more information, visit the web site: http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ana/notice.htm or contact the regional Administration for Native Americans that applies to your tribe.

Silverio Jimenez (Mexico City) - The Nahuatl from Milpa Alta

The Nahuatl spoken in this area of Mexico is relatively conservative in its changes from the Aztec times. Although Nahuatl is Jimenez’s heritage language, his own experience of learning only Spanish while growing up is indicative of the endangered state of this language. He will be using modern technology to help document that past, as embodied in the language and the stories of the elders. A growing sense of loss is leading to greater learning of the language by the young, but a lack of material makes this difficult. With ELF’s help, Jimenez will begin to provide those materials.

Veronica M. Grondona (University of Pittsburgh) - Material development for Bilingual Education among the Mocovi

Mocovi is a Waikuruan language of approximately 4,000 speakers scattered in communities in the southern part of Chaco province and the northern part of Santa Fe province in Argentina. Increased contact with Spanish has led to a decline in the use of Mocovi, and many speakers are migrating out of the area to look for better work opportunities, which further reduces the language’s viability. Grondona intends to make the material from her 1998 Ph.D. dissertation more useful to the native community by using it as a basis for developing bilingual education materials. A few chapters of a textbook have already been completed, but further sections required by the Argentinian school curriculum need to be implemented. Grondona will assist native speakers of Mocovi in the development of these materials.

David VanBik (Haka, Chin State, Burma) - Lai (Haka Chin)-English Dictionary

In Burma, minority languages such as Lai are not allowed to be taught in the schools, and Burmese is increasingly dominant in the linguistic landscape. The availability of a dictionary from Lai into English will increase the value of the minority language by giving its speakers access to a world language without going through the national language. VanBik has already completed an English-Lai dictionary; the Lai-English version will be of more practical use to the native community and will allow the inclusion of material previously collected by the late Dr. Chester Strait, which includes many older lexical items that have become rare since the introduction of Christianity.