The Endangered Language Fund’s Native Voices Endowment: A Lewis & Clark Expedition Bicentennial Legacy is pleased to announce the awardees from our 2011 competition. NVE grants are awarded to enrolled members and teachers at tribal universities of the tribes that took part in the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial. Funded projects range from documentation to revitalization of Native languages, as well as scholarships and Master-Apprentice programs.

For the 2011 grant cycle, six awards were made. The grants covered a range of community-initiated projects: Master-Apprentices programs, summer immersion camps for youth, and audio/video recordings. All of these projects further efforts to protect and promote culture and tradition that is so intertwined with native languages.

The deadline for applications for the 2012 competition is October 17, 2012. Description and process for applications can be found on our website, at http://www.endangeredlanguagelfund.org/NVE_request.php. Projects can be from one to three years in duration, with budgets up to $10,000 per year. The 66 tribes that are eligible are listed at www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/NVE_eligible_tribes. These are the tribes that were contacted by the Lewis and Clark expedition and who took part in the Bicentennial activities via the Council of Tribal Advisors in 2007. As always, we are eager to receive this year’s applications in the fall.

Levina Wilkins (Yakama Nation Language Program - Ichishkiin Sinwit)

“Anachxi Na Sinwit’a” (We will restore/revitalize our language)

The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, located in southern Washington state, have 10,268 enrolled members. Of that, only about 159 are first speakers of the language Ichishkiin (ISO 639 code [yak]). These native speakers are all over the age of 64.

The Yakama Nation Language Program recently finished a three-year Master-Apprentice Program through the Administration for Native Americans (ANA). Utilizing the recordings gathered through the Master-Apprentice Program, the ELF grant will further these efforts by filling the community’s desire for usable teaching materials and additional course materials. The grant will fund a new position of curriculum developer who will create seasonally-based coursework. This developer will transcribe 390 hours of previous recordings and create teaching materials. Materials will include nine books to complement the curriculum, plus nine translated children’s storybooks. Each book will be supplemented with an audio file, vocabulary word list, and annotations on culturally-relevant aspects. This multifaceted learning reflects the way of learning of the Yakama people - through listening, seeing, and doing activities.
Michael Oltrogge (Nebraska Indian Community College)

“Native Voices Elder Native Speakers Projects”

Omaha and Santee Dakota are both highly endangered languages in Nebraska (ISO 639 codes [oma] and [dak]). Native first-language speakers of Omaha are limited to a small group of fifteen, and while the Dakota language has a higher number of first-language speakers, there are only ten remaining speakers of the Santee Dakota dialect. For both dialects, all of the speakers are in their 70s and 80s.

The project funded by the ELF will support a series of twelve Native elder speaker programs. In each program, elders will meet with students in an immersion setting to provide the students with the opportunity to hold long conversations in either Omaha or Santee Dakota.

After each discussion session, there will be a traditional meal, also conducted in the respective native language. For many of the young students, these language-intensive programs will be their first opportunity to speak with an elder in their Native language.

With the acquisition of recording devices made possible by ELF, the twelve sessions will be documented to provide materials for future projects of the Language Center of Excellence at the Nebraska Indian Community College. Over the course of the year, the program will provide students with approximately 30 hours of conversation time with the elders.

Zane Joseph Rosette (Native American Community Academy)

“Native American Community Academy (NACA) Lakota Language Program”

The seven tribes of the Oglala people, who make up 40% of the Siouxan people, predominantly speak Lakota (ISO 639 code [lkt]). Their communities cover a wide area, across southern Minnesota, northern Montana, northern Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and into Canada. Of the 16,000 speakers of Lakota or Dakota in the US, those who speak Lakota as a first-language have an average age of 60.

The Native American Community Academy (NACA), located in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is a public charter school for grades 6-12. The NACA model facilitates student success in using culture as the foundation for all points of curriculum. At NACA, a college-preparatory school, students receive foreign language credit for learning Native languages. The Lakota Language Program provides students with a culturally-based setting to speak Lakota daily, both inside and outside of the classroom.

The Lakota Language Program will fund three Lakota classes for 40 students, a trip to South Dakota for a Lakota summer camp, provide support for integrating the student and community populations with the language program, and bridge the gap between Native populations and urban communities. The grant from ELF will cover the costs of teacher salaries and travel expenses for the Lakota camp. The goals of the program will be students having a higher proficiency of Lakota, learning and describing various Lakota cultural concepts and practices, and a video documentary of why learning Lakota is important to them.
The collaboration between the youth and the elders of the Assiniboine & Sioux tribes highlights the value of using different generations’ skills and contributions.

Jacob Manatowa-Bailey (Sac & Fox Nation of Oklahoma)

“The Sauk Language Mentor Program”

The Sac & Fox Nation in central Oklahoma is home to about 2,550 enrolled tribal members. Sadly, there remains only 5 fluent speakers of Sauk, all of whom are elders over 70, and only 3 people with partial knowledge of Sauk (ISO 639 code [skc]). The Sauk Language Master-Apprentice Program funds the full-time employment of two youth interns. These interns would be able to be in an immersion setting with elders for 20 hours per week. Furthering the efforts that began in 2008 with intensive teacher-training sessions, this project will foster a sustainable structure: elder Masters working with Apprentices; the Apprentices then becoming Advanced Apprentices, allowing them to be community language teachers; the youth interns will be the new round of Apprentices. With this model, the Advanced Apprentices will be able to replace the Masters, creating a cycle of learning, teaching, and passing on Sauk.

Mike Dolson (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation)

“The People Talk - Project to Preserve and Advance the Conversational Use of Our Indigenous Languages”

With fewer than 100 fluent speakers, all of whom are elders, it is critical to act quickly to ensure the continuation of Salish and Kootenai. Mike Dolson stresses that this goal has two parts: the preservation of the languages and its integration into everyday conversational use. The Flathead Reservation has already established an elementary immersion school, Nkwusum; the Salish Kootenai College has basic native language courses. The hope is to bridge the two learning environments to ensure language continuity.

The project will take video recordings of elders conducting both everyday routines and traditional activities, such as hide-tanning, in their languages to provide examples of language use outside the classroom. In addition, there will be footage of elders commentating on aerial footage of various sites on the reservation. These recordings have a dual benefit of showing traditional places and activities while demonstrating conversational usage. The recordings will be available on the SKC intranet and will also be used for supplemental teaching materials.

Michael Turcotte (Fort Peck Reservation, Montana)

“Nakona and Dakota Summer Immersion Project - 2012”

Building on a well-established history of teaching language courses since 1981, the Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation have accomplished many successful projects to save the Nakona and Dakota languages in the past two years. They began radio programs, created media and teaching materials, and hosted various language conventions to showcase Nakona and Dakota. Last year, the first two summer language programs were launched on the reservation, one for each language. The two eight-week long programs provided an immersion setting for youth who had limited language exposure.

Funding from the ELF grant will enable the second year of the language summer programs. Activities during each session will include collecting and cooking native foods, learning traditional songs, documenting the language, and assisting with creating language teaching materials. As part of the overarching goal to keep the language relevant to youth, the students will come up with vocabulary related to texting and cell phones. In addition, their valuable skills with technology will be utilized to document elders speaking the languages. By the end of each summer program, the tribes hope to have increased students’ vocabulary, recorded 10 hours of video and audio recordings, hosted four cultural events, and created two instructional aides. Long-term goals for the community include creating a degree program for teaching nakona and Dakota using the materials from the summer programs.
In the past several months, the Endangered Language Fund’s Board of Directors welcomed two new Board members, including a new Vice President. The Board provides overall guidance to our efforts, as well as financial oversight. We are honored to have had a range of dedicated and talented Board members since the ELF’s inception. We are especially grateful to Lenore Grenoble for being the first Vice President that ELF had. Her help was essential in accommodating the massive increase in grant applications ELF has seen in recent years.

Monica Macaulay inducted to the Board as Vice President

Monica has been a professor of linguistics at the University of Wisconsin - Madison since 1996. Her current work is centered on Potawatomi, by helping with their dictionary, and Menominee, where she is assisting with their revitalization efforts, including writing a dictionary. She received her PhD at UC Berkeley in linguistics before becoming a professor in the English Department at Purdue University. Her previous experience with endangered languages include Chalcatongo Mixtec (Otomanguean), Ojitlán Chinantec (Otomanguean), and Karuk (Hokan; Northern California).

Tony Johnson joins as Board Member

Tony Johnson is a member of the Chinook Nation in Willapa Bay, Washington who learned Chinuk Wawa as a second language. An alumnus of University of Washington and Central Washington University, Tony holds a degree in Silversmithing with a minor in Anthropology.

Having been the director of the Language Program for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde from 1997 to 2010, his background is rooted in a commitment to language revitalization. Currently, he is the Education Program Manager of the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe. Tony has been instrumental in leading annual Canoe trips, which have proven to be a successful way for youth to reconnect with their culture.