



language legacies

NATIVE VOICES ENDOWMENT: A LEWIS & CLARK LEGACY LAUNCHES WITH FIVE AWARDS

The Native Voices Endowment: A Lewis & Clark Expedition Bicentennial Legacy is a \$1.6 million endowment fund, established to advance education and revitalization of endangered Native languages for tribes along the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail. The National Council of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial, the Circle of Tribal Advisors (COTA), and the Missouri Historical Society (MHS) established a partnership between the Endangered Language Fund and the Oregon Community Foundation to manage a \$1.6 million endowment for the continuance of Native American languages along the Expedition route. The endowment was funded with surcharge proceeds received by the National Council and MHS on sales of the U.S. Mint's 2004 Lewis & Clark Commemorative Coin, including a limited edition coin and Indian handmade pouch set.

Advisory committee member and ELF board member Darrell Kipp noted, "Of all the arts and sciences created by humankind, none equals a language, for only a language in its living entirety can describe a unique and irreplaceable world. American Indian languages are libraries of ancient knowledge. When a language dies, that wisdom is lost forever."

Chairman of COTA, Allen V. Pinkham, Sr., Nez Perce, echoed those thoughts, "Tribal languages present a whole different world view than English. They contain time tested ways of looking at things that can hold answers for everybody's future."

During the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commemoration, one of COTA's most important goals was to raise public awareness of the crisis facing Native languages today. George Heavy Runner, National Council board member, Blackfeet representative to COTA and member of the COTA Leadership Committee, felt that the endowment gives

tribes the ability to go beyond raising awareness, "After two hundred years, the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial has given back to Native Peoples along the trail an opportunity to preserve more than just memories of the past, but opportunities for the future."

According to Dr. Robert R. Archibald, president of the National Council of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial and the Missouri Historical Society, "Extinction of Indigenous languages impacts everyone. The Mandan language—whose speakers imparted such a wealth of information to Lewis & Clark—is now spoken only by five or six elderly speakers. Think of the information about ecosystems, diplomacy, agriculture, trade and much more that could be lost forever if

strong language perpetuation programs are not funded before those speakers are gone. The Native Voices Endowment gives us a chance to make a difference far beyond the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial."

ELF is proud to announce the five projects selected for the inaugural year of this competition. Four are for research projects, while one is a scholarship. Choosing among the 30 applications was a difficult task, but the resulting awards have great promise for expanding the use of these Native languages.

Next year's competition is almost upon us. The deadline for applications is October 15th,

2008. The request for proposals can be found at:

http://www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/native_voices_RFP.html.

Lewis and Clark encountered a wide array of Native languages, about 57 in all, from nine different language families.

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Proposals will continue to be restricted to applications from tribal members of designated tribes or tribal colleges associated with those tribes. (See http://www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/eligible_tribes.html for a list of eligible tribes.) The major change from last year is that the limit on each year’s expenses is \$10,000. It became clear that greater use would be made of the funds if a larger number of languages were served. All awards are matched 1:1 by the applicants. These funds will enable projects that would have been unlikely to succeed otherwise. We hope to reach the point where the work proposed will expand the use of the Native languages for a new generation of speakers.

Here are descriptions of the five projects that were funded this year:

Debbie Martin, Quinault Indian Nation: Quinault Language Community Immersion Project.

This three-year plan will further immerse the Native peoples of the Quinault Indian Nation in the culture, language and history of their elders. The Quinault language is a language within the Tsamosan branch of the Salishan Family of the Northwest Coastal Native American Languages. A significant feature of this project is the participation of native speakers in the execution of material development, community mobilization and linguistic instruction. The intention is to focus Quinault language revitalization efforts on the native community at large within the reservation boundaries of the Quinault Indian Nation. This project will be based in the village of Taholah, the center of the Quinault peoples, tribe and culture.

This project’s outcomes will be many. For the Quinault Community: 1. An enhanced collection of literacy materials both for children and adults to be used in the schools, by community literacy and immersion programs, and cultural programming as appropriate. 2. The exercise of trained Quinault speakers in the development of literacy materials, and facilitation of native-language literacy classes for community members For the Language Community: Access

to a complete set of English to Quinault Adult Basic Education materials, including alphabet, phonetic guide, grammar, vocabulary, and traditional stories of cultural significance to the native community in a format conducive to research and analysis. This plan highlights the intrinsic wisdom of the elder population and affirms the Quinault core value of stewardship practices.

[ISO 639 language code: qun]

Justin T. McBride, Kaw Nation: Wajiphanyin Material Support Project.

In the Kaw language, Wajiphanyin is the Camp Crier, and the Kaw Nation hopes that there can be new ones. The last native speakers passed away in the 1970’s, but their descendants, who now live in Oklahoma, have begun reviving their language. They recently made use of an Administration for Native Americans grant to produce an interactive CD for language learning. Included in this package is a language-learning game. The present project will make that tool more accessible to the tribe by creating a board game

version. The 500 copies of this game will be distributed to interested tribal members and sold through the tribal gift shop, with proceeds going to the Language Department.

[ISO 639 language code: ksk]

Archie Beauvais, Rosebud Sioux Tribe: Lakota Language Preservation Project.

Lakota, like most of the languages encountered by the Expedition, is currently being spoken by a small percentage of tribal members, with especially few at the younger ages. In this project, teachers of the language will be trained both in speaking and teaching the language. Dr. Archie Beauvais, project director, has secured the commitment of four expert teachers of the Lakota language who will serve as advisory board members and initial language teachers. They will recruit 20 tribal members, ideally from the 20 communities, who will then

Several projects incorporate games and summer camps as ways to involve youth in the active use of traditional language for modern activities—traditional languages are not just about old times.

teach members of their household. This “ripple effect” is geared toward increasing the number of speakers. The goal of increasing that number by 10% per year can be met with the sustained effort of these language learners and teachers.

[ISO 639 language code: lak]

Joyce McFarland, Nez Perce Tribe: Nez Perce Language Preservation Project: Bridging the Gap Between Elders and Youth.

Nimipuutímt, the Nez Perce Language, is a Sahaptian language spoken on the tribal lands in Idaho and neighboring areas. There has been a steep decline in the number of speakers over the past decade; the ranks of the most fluent speakers, in particular, are dwindling. In just a six year span (1999-2005), almost half of the speakers with “fair” to “very high” fluency passed away. With assistance from the Endangered Language Fund, Joyce McFarland and her colleagues from the tribal Education Department will make the language more accessible to younger speakers. The Students for Success program is already fighting drug and alcohol abuse by strengthening the understanding and appreciation for traditional Nez Perce culture. Using the Nez Perce Cultural Camp as a springboard, McFarland and her team will extend that program into an after school club for 7th-12th graders. A youth-oriented curriculum will help bring greater fluency to these students, who have been using the language in some ways for years. The four month program will occur after basketball season, when schedules free up. Students and their parents will make a commitment to finish the program. Younger students will also participate in a Youth Culture Fair, to be held at the end of the program. Included in that venue will be a “Nez Perce Language Bowl,” with teams from the language program competing to see which group made the most progress. As part of this effort, new material will be recorded and made available on DVDs. Fluent elders will be recorded discussing such cultural issues as art forms, fishing, string storytelling, and the relevance of various historical sites to tribal history. Modern media are important to the youth and will be important tools in helping them maintain their traditions.

[ISO 639 language code: nez]

LaRae Wiley, (Lakes band of the Colville Confederated Tribes of Washington State): Scholarship to study Nselxcin with fluent Elder.

“Sarah and I share a dream-- that someday soon, Nselxcin will be a living, dynamic language that is once again passed naturally from parents to children.”
—LaRae Wiley

The Native Voices Endowment supports not only systematic language projects like the ones just described, but also scholarships for those tribal members who want to extend their knowledge of their language. Scholarships can be for work in language or linguistics at universities or, as with the present case, for Master-Apprentice programs. In these, an elder and a younger learner meet regularly to engage in everyday activities, with the condition that only the Native language is spoken. Such programs have proven to be quite effective in improving the speaking skills of those with a basic understanding of the language, in

this case, Nselxcin (Colville-Okanagan Salish). Wiley has been teaching Nselxcin at Eastern Washington University since 2005, and she plans to use some of her time improving the curriculum that she uses in those classes. The materials include not just print but videos and computer programs. She has also been training other teachers, allowing a greater spread of knowledge of the language and the culture. Wiley hopes “that someday soon, Nselxcin will be a living, dynamic language that is once again passed naturally from parents to children.”

[ISO 639 language code: oka]

FIELDING ELECTED TO MOHEGAN COUNCIL OF ELDERS

The Endangered Language Fund congratulates Stephanie Fielding, member of the ELF Board of Directors, on her election to the Council of Elders of the Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut. A preliminary vote, with a field of 22 for four positions, yielded a group of eight. To further clarify positions, the Election Committee decided to have all candidates answer the same set of questions. The session was videotaped and copies sent to all tribal members. At the end of this process, not only were the winners evident, but Fielding had garnered the most votes of anyone, even one incumbent.

We have been lucky to have a board member who is so active in language revitalization and now has been honored by her tribe with a position of leadership.

LANGUAGE LEGACIES:

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

The 40th Algonquian Conference

University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in
Minneapolis 24-26 October 2008

This is an international meeting for researchers working in the area of Algonquian studies. Papers are presented on all topics in Algonquian studies, including anthropology, archaeology, art, biography, education, ethnography, ethnobotany, folklore, geography, history, language education, linguistics, literature, music, politics, psychology, religion and sociology.

For details, go to <http://amin.umn.edu/algonquian/index.html>.

IEEE e-Humanities Workshop.

University of Utah, Indianapolis, Indiana.
December 7-12, 2008.

The availability of new digital technology and increasing amounts of digitized data has triggered the development of several novel research methods that are important for language documentation. However, to reap the full benefit of "e-Science" approaches, a number of issues that are specific for language and related materials must be addressed. It is the aim of this workshop to do just this.

See:

<http://www.clarin.eu/events/ieee-e-humanities-workshop>.



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