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**For Immediate Release:**

## **Endangered Language Fund supports languages of the Lewis and Clark Expedition**

When Lewis and Clark explored the territory from the Mississippi to the Pacific two hundred years ago, they encountered speakers of dozens of languages. Now, those tribes are fighting to keep their languages alive. The Endangered Language Fund, thanks to an endowment created by the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, has made five awards to help with those efforts. The Native Voices Endowment: A Lewis & Clark Expedition Bicentennial Legacy provides support for tribal members or tribal colleges to work to maintain their languages. 2008 marks the first year of these awards, and the following five projects were selected to share the \$80,000 available:

**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. Quinault is a language within the Tsamosan branch of the Salishan Family of the Northwest Coastal Native American Languages. This project's outcomes will include an enhanced collection of literacy materials both for children and adults, with the production of the material serving as training for tribal members. This project recognizes the intrinsic wisdom of the elder population and affirms the Quinault core value of stewardship practices in the effort to protect human, natural and cultural resources for the present and future of the Quinault Nation.

**Justin T. McBride, Kaw Nation:** *Wajípha<sup>n</sup>yi<sup>n</sup>* Material Support Project. In the Kaw language, *Wajípha<sup>n</sup>yi<sup>n</sup>* 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.

**Archie Beauvais, Rosebud Sioux Tribe:** Lakota Language Preservation Project. Lakota, like most of the languages encountered by the Expedition, is currently being spoken by smaller percentages of tribal members, especially at the younger ages. In this project, teachers of the language will be trained in the language as well as a way of teaching it. 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 teach members of their household. This "ripple effect" is hoped to ensure that the goal of increasing the number of speakers by 10% per year can be met.

**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, especially among the most fluent. With assistance from the Endangered Language Fund, Joyce McFarland and her team from the tribal Education Department will make the language more accessible to younger speakers. Using the Nez Perce Cultural Camp as a springboard, they will extend that program into an after school club. New material will be recorded and made available on DVDs. Modern media are important to the youth and will be an important tool in helping them maintain their traditions.

**LaRae Wiley, (Lakes band of the Colville Confederated Tribes of Washington State):** Scholarship to study Nselxcin with fluent Elder. 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, like 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 hopes “that someday soon, Nselxcin will be a living, dynamic language that is once again passed naturally from parents to children.”

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