

## LSA-SSILA Session Title: From Language Documentation to Language Revitalization

### Organizers:

Patricia A. Shaw, University of British Columbia <patricia.a.shaw@ubc.ca>

President, Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas (SSILA)

Carol Genetti, University of California at Santa Barbara <cgenetti@linguistics.ucsb.edu>

Chair, LSA Committee on Endangered Languages and their Preservation (CELP)

The theme of this session is on the role of Linguistics in endangered language revitalization. While there has been a growing focus within the field of Linguistics on “best practice” methodologies for endangered language documentation, there are many challenges - for linguists, for educators, for indigenous community members - in how to move from the "documentation" (past or present) of a language which is no longer actively spoken within families and communities to its effective "revitalization". Our goal is to illustrate through six case studies - representing diverse languages, contexts, and approaches - how linguists can contribute to language reclamation initiatives, and of how these efforts can, in turn, contribute to documentary linguistic practice so that it can better serve endangered language revitalization.

The challenges are multi-faceted and range across a broad array of transdisciplinary issues that are often subdivided into independent academic departments, disciplines, and faculties. Among the many challenges are: how to breathe life into archived manuscripts that have lain dormant for generations; how to interpret and use the formal categories of linguistic analysis that characteristically underlie the organizational structure of “dictionaries” and “grammars” for the development of curriculum materials that can effectively engage - rather than obfuscate or simplify - the underlying essence and complexities of a language; how to confront the realities of linguistic diversity and of language change as they impact on language revitalization; how to recognize and respect deep-seated psychological factors related to language prohibition, degradation, and loss, and their residual impact on indigenous community members’ attitudes about the value and future of their linguistic heritage; how to address the interface of literacy and oral traditions, the sometimes conflicted attitudes to “documentation” and archiving, the honoring of traditional heritage within the cultural worlds of the present; how to move beyond the teaching/learning of individual “words” and phrases into issues of thought and cognition, into ways of knowing and traditional knowledge systems as embedded in and/or reflected through linguistic structure.

Many linguists are eager to assist communities with revitalization efforts, but often are unaware of the diverse complexities, or feel daunted by the time commitment, or confront a lack of training in “applied” skills. There are many possible strategies and models for addressing these issues. In presenting these case studies of communities that are actively engaged in revitalization programs, our aim is to provide not only a diversity of approaches based on the collective experience of various leaders in the revitalization movement, but also a platform for discussing the complexity of these challenges. Our over-arching goal is to explore how the insights and dedicated efforts of those working in language “documentation” and those working in language “revitalization” can most effectively contribute to each other and to the continued vitality of the world’s linguistic diversity for generations to come.

Short Abstracts:

**1. From Our Ancestors Hands to Ours**

Jessie Little Doe Baird (Wampanoag, MA) <littledoe@comcast.net>

Hundreds of years ago it was prophesized that our language would be lost, and that the children of those who had a hand in breadking that circle of language will have to work very hard, together, to welcome the language home again. For the Wampanoag, the loss of all speakers has provided the greatest opportunities for instruction, productive work, and solidarity with the contemporary generation as well as with those Ancestors that have been long on the other side. There is a great awakening to our responsibilities to the privilege of language. Indigenous nations caught on the continuum of speaker loss grapple with the same questions: whether and how to write the language, how to use dormant documents for language and cultural reclamation, and be put toward meaningful contemporary expressions in our Languages. We will discuss strategies employed by the Wampanoag People in response to these questions and others.

**2. Mutual Guidance: The Klallam Language Program after Twenty Years**

Tim Montler (University of North Texas) <montler@unt.edu>

Jamie Valdez (Elwha Klallam Tribe, WA) <Jamie.Valadez@elwha.nsn.us>

Wendy Sampson (Elwha Klallam Tribe) <Wendy.Sampson@elwha.nsn.us>

Georgianne Charles (Elwha Klallam Tribe) <Georgianne.Charles@elwha.nsn.us>

This describes a twenty-year collaboration between a linguist and a native community on the documentation, description, analysis and revitalization of the Klallam language. The linguist collected and analyzed language data. Then with the teachers packaged this information into culturally appropriate learning tools through a process of mutual guidance. The linguist provides material on grammar in formats suggested by the community. It is then modified based on feedback from the community. Klallam is taught from pre-school through high school and adult classes. In the high school program, begun in 1998, hundreds of students, some now teachers of Klallam themselves, have had deep exposure to the language. The Klallam language program demonstrates that language documentation and revitalization are not mutually exclusive; in fact, through a process of mutual guidance, they support and enhance each other. This paper presents, in summary, the perspectives of the linguist and three key teachers in the program.

**3. Breathing new life into Tohono O'odham documentation: The Mathiot Dictionary Project**

Colleen Fitzgerald (University of Texas, Arlington) <cmfitz@uta.edu>

Phillip Miguel (Tohono O'odham Community College, AZ)

In this talk, we address how existing language documentation serves revitalization purposes, using a case study from Tohono O'odham, a Uto-Aztecan language spoken in southern Arizona. The focus is on breathing new life into an out-of-print dictionary published by Madeleine Mathiot in 1973. An electronic version converted to the official orthography is being edited. Via a collaboration in parallel with Dr. Mathiot and O'odham teachers and tribal linguists, the dictionary is morphing into something with

potential for new life and more uses. One way to enrich the electronic dictionary is to link the entries with the texts that provide out-of-context sentences or the audio. Another might be to add a 'lite' version (with fewer sentences) to increase its accessibility for learners. The rich documentation presented by the Mathiot dictionary offers valuable lessons for those engaged in documentation and revitalization projects in terms of anticipating limitations and future community needs.

#### **4. Using documentation in Yurok language revitalization**

Carole Lewis (Yurok Tribe, CA) <clewis@yuroktribe.nsn.us>

Andrew Garrett (University of California, Berkeley) <garrett@berkeley.edu>

The Yurok language (northwestern California) has several first-language speakers, and very active education and revitalization programs sponsored by the tribe and community groups. Our focus is on the use of language documentation in revitalization. The long history of Yurok documentation includes vocabulary and sentences recorded since the 1880s, text and grammatical documentation by academic researchers since 1901, a rich body of material recorded within the community, and a significant archive of audiovisual documentation created by the Yurok Tribe. To ensure that learners are directly exposed to the speech of fluent elders (not just advanced learners), we have made the corpus of recordings used for academic research available in the community and have created online tools for access. For practical language education and revitalization purposes it has been necessary to reorient research in two ways. First, grammatical topics are described in "etic" and not "emic" terms. Second, text-based grammatical research is pedagogically driven.

#### **5. Linguistics and language revitalization: community capacity-building.**

Patricia A. Shaw (University of British Columbia) <patricia.a.shaw@ubc.ca>

Jill Campbell (Musqueam Indian Band, BC) <jill.campbell@musqueam.bc.ca>

Larry Grant (Musqueam Indian Band, BC) <musqueamlmag@yahoo.com>

Marny Point (Musqueam Indian Band, BC) <marny.point@ubc.ca>

Fern Gabriel (Kwantlen First Nation, BC) <sesmelot@hotmail.com>

In this presentation we draw on some of the complex challenges of language documentation, analysis, and revitalization that we have faced over a 15 year collaboration between a university-based linguist and the adjacent hən̓qəm̓iṇ̓əm̓ (Coast Salish) community. Our approach is grounded in a commitment to capacity-building not only in "language learning", but also in training community members in the linguistic principles, analytical methodologies, and perspectives that will give them the skills to be active research participants and to better assess many issues that impact on the future of their language - like evaluating competing orthographies, mastering complex morphophonemic variation, debating what's dialect difference vs. language attrition, asking how linguistic knowledge about diachronic language change might contribute to notions about 'purism'? Although initiated for the exchange of complementary systems of knowledge, the unanticipated co-construction of knowledge process that has evolved is leading to better documentation, better linguistic understandings, and better foundations for revitalization.

## 6. **neetawaapantamaanki iilinwiaanki: Searching for our Talk**

Daryl Baldwin (Miami University, Oxford, OH) <baldwidw@muohio.edu>

The story of Myaamia (Miami-Illinois) language loss over 100 years ago and its reclamation today is relevant to other tribes experiencing language loss. There are four pillars at the base of our reclamation efforts: as a tribal member, I had to get a linguistics degree; community elders had to support my desire for education and my efforts to revive Myaamia; the community had to develop interest, over time; and tribal leadership support was critical. Each of these foundational pillars depends on the ability of all involved parties - including linguists - to form healthy working relationships. We work hard to break down the us (native) and them (researcher) barrier. We very much believe in home-grown talent and the role of non-tribal linguists is to help us accomplish that. I think there is a place within our tribal communities for quality non-tribal linguists and our experience provides a good example of that.

### **Schedule:**

Thursday January 5, 2012. 7:00 pm documentary film screening

#### **WE STILL LIVE HERE** Âs Nutayuneân

tells a remarkable story of cultural revival by the Wampanoag of Southeastern Massachusetts. Their ancestors ensured the survival of the first English settlers in America, and lived to regret it. Now they are bringing their language home again. The story begins in 1994 when Jessie Little Doe, an intrepid, thirty-something Wampanoag social worker, began having recurring dreams: familiar-looking people from another time addressing her in an incomprehensible language. Jessie was perplexed and a little annoyed— why couldn't they speak English? Later, she realized they were speaking Wampanoag, a language no one had used for more than a century. These events sent her and members of the Aquinnah and Mashpee Wampanoag communities on an odyssey that would uncover hundreds of documents written in their language, lead Jessie to a Masters in Linguistics at MIT, and result in something that had never been done before – bringing a language alive again in an American Indian community after many generations with no Native speakers.

Friday January 6, 2012.

Session Co-Chairs: Patricia A. Shaw & Carol Genetti

- 9:00 Brief welcome and introductory remarks
- 9:00- 9:30. Baird, Jessie Little Doe. From Our Ancestors Hands to Ours.
- 9:30-10:00. Montler, Tim, Jamie Valdez, Wendy Sampson, Georgianne Charles. Mutual Guidance: The Klallam Language Program after Twenty Years
- 10:00-10:30. Fitzgerald, Colleen & Phillip Miguel. Breathing new life into Tohono O'odham documentation: The Mathiot Dictionary Project.
- 10:30-11:00. Lewis, Carole & Andrew Garrett. Using documentation in Yurok language revitalization.
- 11:00-11:30. Shaw, Patricia A., Jill Campbell, Larry Grant, Marny Point, Fern Gabriel. Linguistics and language revitalization: community capacity-building.
- 11:30-12:00. Baldwin, Daryl. neetawaapantamaanki iilinwiaanki: Searching for our Talk.