

## SSILA BULLETIN NUMBER 277: FEBRUARY 2012

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The SSILA Bulletin is an Information Service for SSILA Members.

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### **277.0 SSILA BUSINESS – ELECTION RESULTS AND MEETING AWARDS**

Election results: Fernando Zúñiga (University of Zürich) is the new Member-at-Large of the Executive Committee; Colleen Fitzgerald (University of Texas at Arlington) is the newest member of the Nominating Committee. Both will serve from 2012 through 2014 and we welcome you.

Retiring members of these committees are Frank Trechsel of the Executive Committee and the Travel Award Committee; and Doris Payne of the Nominating Committee: Our generous thanks to both for their dedicated service.

### **277.1 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS – AWARD AND PRIZES**

#### **The Mary R. Haas Book Award**

The Mary R. Haas Book Award is presented to a junior scholar for an unpublished manuscript that makes a significant substantive contribution to our knowledge of Native American languages. Although the award carries no financial stipend, the winning manuscript is eligible for publication under the Society's auspices in the University of Nebraska Press series *Studies in the Native Languages of the Americas*.

For more information on Mary Haas and the Haas Award, please go to [www.ssila.org](http://www.ssila.org).

To submit a manuscript for the Haas Award, send it in PDF format by email or on a CD by post to the SSILA Executive Secretary, so as to arrive no later than May 1st.

Manuscripts may be submitted in English, French, German, Portuguese or Spanish. Winning manuscripts in English will have priority consideration at the University of Nebraska Press. For winning manuscripts in languages other than English, the Society will provide letters requesting special consideration by any potential publisher(s) in light of the manuscript's award-winning status.

Email: [ssila2@gmail.com](mailto:ssila2@gmail.com)

Mail: Haas Award  
SSILA  
PO Box 1295  
Denton, TX 76202-1295

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### **The Ken Hale Prize**

The Ken Hale Prize is presented in recognition of outstanding community language work and a deep commitment to the documentation, maintenance, promotion, and revitalization of indigenous languages in the Americas. The prize, which usually carries a \$500 stipend, honors those who strive to link the academic and community spheres in the spirit of Ken Hale. Recipients can range from native speakers and community-based linguists to academic specialists, and may include groups or organizations. No academic affiliation is necessary.

**Nominations** for the prize may be made by anyone, and should include a letter of nomination stating the current position and affiliation, if appropriate, of the nominee or nominated group (tribal, organizational, or academic), and a summary of the nominee's background and contributions to specific language communities. The nominator should also submit a brief portfolio of supporting materials, such as the nominee's curriculum vitae, a description of completed or on-going activities of the nominee, letters from those who are most familiar with the work of the nominee (e.g. language program staff, community people, academic associates), and any other material that would support the nomination. Submission of manuscript-length work is discouraged. The deadline for receipt of nominations is May 1st.

The award is presented at the annual winter meeting. Nominations will be kept active for two subsequent years for prize consideration and nominators are invited to update their nomination packets if so desired.

For more information on Ken Hale and the Hale Prize, please go to [www.ssila.org](http://www.ssila.org).

Please send inquiries and nominations to the SSILA Executive Secretary.

Email: [ssila2@gmail.com](mailto:ssila2@gmail.com)

Mail: Hale Prize  
SSILA  
PO Box 1295  
Denton, TX 76202-1295

## **Victor Golla Prize**

To honor the scholarship and community service of Victor Golla, SSILA founding Secretary-Treasurer, the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas has established the Victor Golla Prize.

This prize is presented in recognition of those who, like Victor Golla, show a significant history of both linguistic scholarship and service to the scholarly community. The linguistic scholarship can take the form of either the documentation or philology of one or more indigenous languages of the Americas, such that the scholarly community knows significantly more about the language or languages of study as a result of that work. The service to the scholarly community can take the form of providing opportunities for others to communicate their work on indigenous languages, primarily through editorial work, conference organization, or responsibility for a major archive. The Prize, which bestows a life membership in SSILA on the recipient, seeks especially to honor those who strive to carry out interdisciplinary scholarship in the spirit of Victor Golla, combining excellent linguistic documentation or philology with scholarship in one or more other allied fields, such as anthropology, education, history, or literature.

### **Nomination:**

To make a nomination for the Victor Golla Prize, please send a letter of nomination; a version of the nominee's CV; and two letters of support reflecting the nominee's scholarship and service to the SSILA Executive Secretary. Nominees need not know of their nomination. The prize will be awarded when a worthy scholar is selected, and will be announced at the Annual Meeting. The deadline for receipt of nominations is May 1st.

Please send inquiries and nominations to the SSILA Executive Secretary.

Email: [ssila2@gmail.com](mailto:ssila2@gmail.com)

Mail: Golla Prize  
SSILA  
PO Box 1295  
Denton, TX 76202-1295

## **277.2 WORKSHOP & WEBCAST PREVIEW: THE YENISEIAN – DENE CONNECTION**

Interested scholars are invited to participate in the **Dene-Yeniseian Workshop**, scheduled for Saturday March 24, 2012 at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. For those attending, the Workshop will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Brooks Bldg. Gathering Room.

A live webcast, hosted by Yahdii Media, will include roundtable discussions (with questions taken from listeners by email). Watch for instructions for the webcast at <http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/dy/>

Suggested pre-conference readings will be posted at: [www.uaf.edu/anlc/dy/](http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/dy/)

The preliminary schedule for March 24 is as follows (!!Alaska Standard Time!!):

**9:00** Welcome and Overview of the Day

**9:15** *Geography, demography, and time depth: explaining how Dene-Yeniseian is possible*  
Edward Vajda (WWU)

**9:45** *Archaeological Inquiries into Na-Dene and Yeniseian Prehistory*  
Ben Potter (Dept. of Anthropology, UAF)

**10:15** *Environmental Correlates of Expansion of Pastoralist Groups in Eastern Siberia and the Dene-Yeniseian Wedge*  
David R. Yesner (Dept. of Anthropology, UAA)

**10:30** *The Current State of Genetic and Biological Anthropology: Evidence for the Dene-Yeniseian Connection*  
Allie Dewey and Michael Kenyhercz (Dept. of Anthropology, UAF)

**11:00** *Resources for Yeniseian Studies at the Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks*  
Katherine L. Arndt (Alaska and Polar Regions Bibliographer, Rasmuson Library, UAF)

**11:15** *Tasks of field linguistics on modern language: linguistic fieldwork in areas of compact Ket populations* [discussion of pre-conference reading]  
Elena Kryukova (Tomsk State Pedagogical University)

**11:30** **Webcast - Open Discussion of Morning Papers**

**12 noon – Break for Lunch**

**1 pm** *Applying computational phylogenetic methods in evaluation of the Dene-Yeniseian Hypothesis*  
Gary Holton (ANLC) and Mark Sicoli (Dept. of Anthropology, UAF)

**1:30** *Two Topics for Dene-Yeniseian Comparison: Geographic Lexicon and the Incorporate Slot*  
James Kari (ANLC, UAF) and Sharon Hargus (University of Washington)

**2:00** *Is Aleut Syntax a Result of Language Internal or External Change?*  
Anna Berge (ANLC, UAF)

**2:30 - Break**

**2:45** *Dene-Yeniseian linguistics: a progress report*  
Edward Vajda (WWU)

**3:00-4:00** **Round table discussion:** participant discussion; selected questions sent in as live webcast email messages

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## **277.3 MEDIA**

### **Cherokee Translators: Translation specialist set on preserving Cherokee language**

This article appeared on January 31, 2012 in the *Cherokee Phoenix*, authored by Will Chavez. It is

reprinted with permission. You can follow this series by going to: [cherokeephoenix.org](http://cherokeephoenix.org) online.

Translation specialist John Ross translates a document from English to Cherokee. Ross and five other translation specialists translate documents and create materials for the tribe's immersion school.

*Cherokee Phoenix* editor's note: The Cherokee Phoenix is running a six-part series on the Cherokee Nation Translation Specialists. Cherokee Nation translation specialists are Dennis Sixkiller, Anna Sixkiller, David Pettit, Durbin Feeling, John Ross and Phyllis Edwards. The stories will run every other day.

TAHLEQUAH, Okla. – Cherokee speaker and translator John Ross is focused and determined to do his part in preserving the Cherokee language.

Ross, 56, originally of the Greasy Community in Adair County, is one of six translation specialists in the Cherokee Nation's translation department where documents, signs, books and other printed items are translated from English into Cherokee.

Ross said his main task is translating three books a month for Cherokee Immersion School students. "That's our priority. Then we work with all the departments in the Cherokee Nation. We translate words and phrases, and we do about 30 translations a month."

The department also translates three to four articles from English into Cherokee for the Cherokee Phoenix each month, and coordinates the Cherokee language proficiency test for employees wanting to be recognized for their language knowledge. He said about 100 employees have taken the proficiency test.

"It makes you feel good about our language. As a Cherokee speaker, I like to see more people learning the language and also come in here and talk to us. That's what we are here for, to try to promote the language," he said.

Ross said during a busy week 30 or more people, employees and community members will come to the translation department needing help with a word or reading a document written in Cherokee. The translators also get phone calls from people out of state wanting help with translating phrases, words and even prayers.

"There's stories that they have that have been passed down, and they want it translated," Ross said. "It makes you feel good when you help people like that." Translating for people and programs keeps him "on his toes" and his translation skills sharp.

"It sharpens your language and writing skills. It just helps you all around to be able to translate," he said. "Like we say here, 'not everybody that speaks the language can be a translator.' It's a gift, I believe. If they work at it, I think they become translators too, but it's not easy."

The translation staff is also part of the Cherokee Speakers Bureau – a group of about 50 Cherokee speakers from area communities that meet once a month in Tahlequah to discuss Cherokee words, translate English words into Cherokee and fellowship. The bureau is also part of a larger group consisting of Cherokee speakers from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Ross said the most rewarding experience he's had is translating historic documents written in Cherokee.

Some are located at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa. And sometimes while translating historic documents, he finds Cherokee words that are no longer used. Ross said the translation department is beginning to use those “lost” words again, and a found word may be one less word the translation group and Cherokee Speakers Bureau has to create.

“We’re finding a lot of names or towns or communities. They (ancestors) used these words, and now they are all coming back,” he said.

Ross handles historic documents perhaps hundreds of years old while embracing the latest technology that helps him do his job. The translators use Apple iPhones and iPads and computers with the Cherokee syllabary. He said the staff uses iPads to send emails in the syllabary to other Cherokee language users.

“That’s pretty neat. This is going to be the future I believe,” he said.

Despite the efforts being put toward preserving the Cherokee language, the language’s survival still seems uncertain. Ross said his generation is the last generation that speaks the language in everyday conversations. He said his generation learned Cherokee from their parents. Cherokee after his generation did not for various reasons, and most of the next generation of speakers will likely come from the Immersion School.

“We have over 100 children learning the Cherokee language. It’s so wonderful when we go visit them, and we do that a lot. To converse with our kids in our own language is a wonderful thing,” he said.

He said five years ago that was not possible because only his generation spoke the language. He said he believes more parents today are interested in their children learning the language.

“Our culture is better off if we speak the language,” he said. “If we continue our immersion school the way it is now, then I don’t think we have to worry about our language dying out. A lot of people say our language is dying out, but here’s an example of our kids showing us, if we teach them, they will learn.”

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### **Guatemalan Mayans take fight to the airwaves**

Published in the *Tico Times*, San José, Costa Rica, January 27, 2012, authored by James Fredrick. Excerpted here, to read the complete article, please to to:

[http://www.ticotimes.net/Current-Edition/Top-Story/News/Guatemalan-Mayans-take-fight-to-the-airwaves\\_Friday-January-27-2012](http://www.ticotimes.net/Current-Edition/Top-Story/News/Guatemalan-Mayans-take-fight-to-the-airwaves_Friday-January-27-2012)

SUMPANGO, Guatemala – The dial is tuned to Radio Ixchel, 102.3 FM. Rosario Sul González is signing off her show: “I just want to remind all of you today to keep smiling, because a smile is the key that can open any door, even the door of hate. Let’s not forget that.” Turn the dial to 99.7 Kiss FM, and they’re on commercial. A spot features two men speaking: “Juancho, what’s up man?” asks one of the men. “Well, I’m worried, ... they’re shutting down all the pirate radio stations,” Juancho replies.

“Well, of course, Juancho, those are against the law,” Juancho’s friend says. “Don’t tell me you have one! But you seem so respectable. Hurry up and close it. Or would you rather I come visit you in jail?” The figurative Juancho in the fictional conversation is a radio pirate. Rosario, an energetic 28-year-old Mayan communications student, is a real one. In Guatemala, where there are 15 murders per day and only 2 percent of them are solved, constant warnings about radio piracy seem amiss.

Rosario broadcasts for her local Radio Ixchel in her free time. She sits in a bare nine-square-meter room with two small tables, a mixing board, one computer and two microphones. The main door is unmarked. The radio's founder, Anselmo Xunic, joins Rosario as the station switches from a children's program to a youth program. Radio Ixchel programming includes a women's-issues hour, a marimba music program, and a Kaqchikel language program. Kaqchikel is one of Guatemala's 23 Mayan languages, and this type of program is typical of a community radio station.

Xunic, a Maya Kaqchikel farmer, became a radio pirate in 2003 when he and two partners invested almost \$1,400 of their own money, no small feat in a country where 75 percent of the indigenous population lives on less than a dollar a day.

When he started his radio station, he could not afford a license. According to the 1996 Telecommunications Law, the only way Xunic could get one was by bidding at a public auction where licenses can go for more than \$100,000 to big players. Without a license, broadcasting is illegal, says Eduardo Mendoza, secretary of Guatemala's Chamber of Broadcasting.

Mendoza explains that there are at least 800 pirate radio stations in Guatemala. While many of these do profit from broadcasting or serve a political or religious group, community-run stations like Xunic's Radio Ixchel are deemed to be as menacing as the others.

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The Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples says the state is responsible for promoting "reforms of the existing Act on radio communications that are required to make frequencies available for indigenous projects, and to ensure respect for the principle of non-discrimination in the use of the communications media."

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights also supports community radio. It holds that radio frequencies must be allocated using "democratic criteria that guarantee equal opportunity for all." The U.N. Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples says that establishing media is a right. Community radio stations claim that the current law fails to meet any of these standards. There is no category for community radio in the Telecommunications Law, and distributing frequencies through auction is not democratic, argues Danielle DeLuca, program associate for the U.S.-based organization Cultural Survival. "The current Telecommunications Law completely ignores [community radio]."

In 2009, with the support of Cultural Survival, community radios proposed the Community Media Bill to Congress's Committee on Indigenous Groups. The bill would recognize nonprofit community media as a new category separate from the current law's commercial-, public- and ham-radio designations. The bill would allow each of Guatemala's 333 municipalities to have its own community radio station.

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This fight for community radio fits in to a bigger picture of the indigenous struggle for equality in Guatemala. Even though the Central American country is 60 percent indigenous, Mayan Congressman Amilcar Pop says this is a norm. "Historically, it's typical for Congress to exclude indigenous groups. They accept bills but never adopt them."

The proposed Community Media Bill is one of more than 10 bills dealing with indigenous rights that have been accepted by Congress and shelved indefinitely.

Although radio may seem insignificant to many, the Community Media Bill is crucial for indigenous people to stay informed. Without community radio stations broadcasting in each of the local languages, the many indigenous Guatemalans who can't speak Spanish or read could be cut off from news. Xunic worries that indigenous communities could "fall backwards into the past" without their own radio.

#### **277.4 CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Our next Quarterly will be published in March. Please send your information about conferences and your organization, correspondence, offers for a book review, or interest in writing an obituary to the editor at: [ssila\\_editor@hotmail.com](mailto:ssila_editor@hotmail.com).

Thank you, *The Editor*