

2013 Awards for the NSF/NEH Documenting Endangered Languages Program

The National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) announce \$3.7 million in awards as a part of the Documenting Endangered Languages (DEL) program.

The 2013 awards support the digital documentation of over 38 endangered languages spread across 19 language families spoken in South, Central, and northern Asia, Africa, Papua New Guinea, and the Americas.

All awarded projects involve invaluable community input, vision, and collaboration. Projects balance the needs of the community with the scientific goals of the project. Most projects include fieldwork on languages with few remaining speakers and little to no extant documentation so that documentary products become instrumental in making community language maintenance and revival programs possible.

Fifteen institutional grants, three fellowships, nine doctoral dissertation research improvement awards (DDRIGs), and four training and workshop projects received funding.

Institutional Grants

Endangered language data is crucial in reconstructing the linguistic histories of large and small communities. **Doris Payne** and Co-PI **Alejandra Vidal** will look at how languages change under intense long term contact by comparing the structures of two languages of Northern Argentina, Nivacle and Pilagá.

In North America, **Monica Macaulay** and Co-PI **Laura Welcher** will significantly increase our knowledge of Potawatomi, an Algonquian language of North America. Under the direction of **Pauleena MacDougall** and Co-PIs **James Francis**, and **Conor Quinn**, a digital dictionary of another Algonquian language, Penobscot, will be created as a resource for comparative research both in historical reconstruction of the Algonquian family and in its typologically distinctive morphosyntactic systems.

Colleen Fitzgerald and **Joshua Hinson** will create a compendium of analyzed Chickasaw verbs ensuring that the details of the complex verb system of this Muskogean language will not be lost to science and to the Chickasaw community. **Mizuki Miyashita** will investigate prosody—that is, stress, pitch, and intonation -- in Blackfoot, an Algonquian language spoken in southern Alberta and northern Montana. Her work will result in an analysis of the interaction of morphology, phonology, and prosody in this highly endangered language.

Seth Cable will undertake an in-depth investigation of mood, aspect, and tense in Tlingit, an indigenous endangered language spoken in Alaska and in British Columbia and the Yukon, in Canada. The grammatical properties of Tlingit to be investigated in this research project will inform the current formal theoretic debate on tense, aspect, and mood, as these properties appear to challenge current theories. **James Rementer** will enhance an online Talking Dictionary of Lenape, an Algonquian language that was once spoken in southeastern New York state, all of New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, and the northern part of the state of Delaware. Many place names in the eastern United States originate from this language,

e.g. Manhattan. In this sense, the Lenape language is part of the heritage of Lenape people but also of the wider US English-speaking community.

Mark Sicoli will curate existing materials on Zapotec and Chatino, indigenous language groups of southern Mexico, to create an online etymological database which can be used for cross language comparisons to answer questions about language prehistory and development.

In West Africa, **Frank Seidel** and Co-PI **James Essegbey** will create a dictionary of Baga Mandori, a Niger-Congo language spoken in the Basse-Cote region of Guinea-Conakry. Baga Mandori is one of seven Baga languages, all which are under-documented. The project will result in a dictionary, a grammatical outline, and annotated and transcribed audiovisual material. **Jeffrey Heath's** project, also conducted in West Africa, will study the Dogon languages of Mali and Burkina Faso, providing documentation on typologically interesting characteristics such as the interplay of tone and syntax in noun phrases, intonation patterns that behave like grammatical categories, and other unusual process of grammatical change in the creation of verbal morphology.

In the Russian Far East, **Jonathan Bobaljik** and **David Koester** will create a comprehensive dictionary of the highly endangered Itelmen language. Itelmen data will help answer difficult questions about the complex historical relationships between Paleo-Siberian languages.

In South Asia, **Gregory Anderson** and Co-PI **K. David Harrison** will document a critically endangered language of India, Hill Gta, a Munda language. They will use the data they collect to advance typological and historical research of the understudied Munda language family. **James Matisoff** will use field data collected over the past 50 years to create an annotated text collection of Lahu, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in parts of China, Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Massive and rapid societal changes have led to accelerated evolution of the language. The Lahu text collection will be a key resource for the study of language development under such social conditions and for comparative research on the history of the Tibeto-Burman family.

Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants

This year's round of awards includes nine doctoral dissertation research improvement grants. Five of these deal with languages of the Americas. **Lewis C Lawyer** will use existing archival materials to make the northern Californian language Patwin accessible to researchers and heritage communities. **Yuki Tanaka**, will investigate how the Mayan language Mopan has changed due to contact with English in Belize as opposed to Spanish in neighboring Guatemala. **Alexandra K. Trueman**, will document Hiaki (also known as Yaqui), an endangered Uto-Aztecan language spoken in Sonora, Mexico, and in Arizona, to explore the theoretical and typological implications of unusual verb structures in the language. **Randi E. Tucker** will conduct an in-depth study of landscape features of Diidxa za (also known as Isthmus Zapotec) spoken in Oaxaca, Mexico, to explore the relationship of cognition, experience, and the abstract encoding of experience in language by comparing the lexical representation of landscape to the terrain occupied by speakers. **Carolina Aragon**, will document Akuntsu, a language spoken by one of the remaining isolated groups of Brazil to investigate the typological and historical relationships between Akuntsu and

other languages of the vast Tupian family. This project comes at a critical time as there are less than 10 remaining speakers of this language; Aragon's work may be our last chance to learn more about this language.

Three DDRIGs investigate languages from Papua New Guinea, largely uncharted but extraordinarily heterogeneous and linguistically diverse linguistic area of the world. Many speakers of critically endangered languages from Papua New Guinea are switching at an alarming rate from their traditional languages to the lingua franca, Tok Pisin. The DEL projects awarded this year will serve to document and analyze the unusual features of these languages before they are lost to science and to the communities for which they are heritage languages. **So-Yeon Jenny Lee** will investigate how and why Blafe, a language with only 1,200 remaining speakers, has acquired characteristics unexpected for a Papua New Guinean language. **Adam Hatfield** will produce a detailed grammatical description of Mehek, a language in the Tama family spoken in several villages in northwest Papua New Guinea. An initial survey of Mehek reveals interesting properties such as a weak distinction between nouns and verbs and unusual personal naming system. **Don Daniels** will work on six of the nine Sogeram languages of the Madang family to systematically compare words and morphemes in these languages to reconstruct a postulated parent Sogeram language. The results of the project will inform our understanding of how language change is brought about even in situations where there is no majority language or institution pushing change.

Finally, **Samuel Beer**, will create an annotated corpus and descriptive grammar for Nyang'l a language of northern Uganda.

A complete listing of this year's awards follows. Note that ISO-639 language codes, the new international standard for referring to any of the world's languages, are typically included in the title in parentheses after the language name.

Institutional Grants (awarded by NSF or NEH, as indicated):

Gregory Anderson, Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, and Co-PI K. David Anderson, Swarthmore College, "[Documentation of Hill Gta \[gaq\] a seriously endangered Munda language](#)," \$246,516 (NEH).

Jonathan Bobaljik, University of Connecticut, and David Koester, University of Alaska Fairbanks, "[Collaborative Research: Comprehensive Itelmen \[itl\] Dictionary](#)," \$300,000 (NSF, BCS-1263535/BCS-1263668)

Seth Cable, University of Massachusetts Amherst, "[The Verbal Morpho-semantics and Clausal Architecture of Tlingit](#)," \$339,861 (NSF, BCS-1322770).

Colleen Fitzgerald, University of Texas at Arlington and Joshua Hinson, The Chickasaw Nation, "[Documentation and Analysis of the Chickasaw Verb \[cic\]](#)," \$100,000 (NSF, BCS-1263699/BCS - 1263698).

Jeffrey Heath, University of Michigan, "[Investigating the interaction of tone and syntax in the Bagime and the Dogon languages of Mali and Burkina Faso](#)," \$300,000 (NSF, BCS - 1263150).

Monica Macaulay, University of Wisconsin, Madison, "[Expanding Potawatomi Language Description with Documentation of Natural Speech \(POT\)](#)," \$300,000 (NSF, BCS - 1263888).

Pauleena MacDougall, University of Maine, "Penobscot Dictionary," \$339,411 (NEH).

James Matisoff, University of California-Berkeley, "[Window onto a Vanished World: Preservation and Analysis of Lahu Texts from the 1960's](#)" (NSF, BCS- 1252226).

Mizuki Miyashita, University of Montana, "[Documentation and Analysis of Stress and Prosody in Blackfoot \(Algonquian\) \[bla\]](#)," \$142,927 (NSF, BCS-1251684).

Doris Payne, University of Oregon, "[Documentation and Comparative Lexicon and Morphosyntax of Nivacle and Pilagá of northern Argentina](#)," \$184,265 (NSF, BCS-1263817).

James Rementer, The Delaware Tribe, "Lenape Language Online Dictionary Project", 24,879 (NSF, BCS-1263820).

Frank Seidel, University of Florida, "Documentation of Baga Mandori (Atlantic, Niger-Congo) (ISO 639-3: bmd)," \$247,873 (NEH).

Mark Sicoli, Georgetown University, "[Preserving and Enhancing Access to the Survey of Zapotec and Chatino Languages](#)," \$118,702 (NSF, BCS - 1263671).

Fellowships (awarded by NEH, \$50,400 each):

Simeon Floyd, "A grammar of Cha'palaa (cbi), with an archival corpus."

Pedro Mateo-Pedro, "Acquisition of an Endangered Mayan Language: A Corpus of Child Chuj."

Bruce Nevin, "Building an Achumawi (Pit River) linguistic Database (acv)"

Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants (awarded by NSF)

Carolina Aragon, under the direction of Lyle Campbell, University of Hawaii at Manoa, "[Descriptive and Comparative Study of Akuntsu](#)" (BCS-1262088).

Don Daniels, under the direction of Marianne Mithun, University of California, Santa Barbara, "[The History of the Sogeram Language Family](#)" (BCS-1264157).

Adam S. Hatfield, under the direction of Matthew S Dryer, University at Buffalo, "[Doctoral Dissertation Research: Documentation of Mehek \(NUX\)](#)" (BCS-1263554).

Lewis C Lawyer, under the direction of Patrick M. Farrell and Martha J. Macri, University of California, Davis, "[A description of the Patwin language](#)" (BCS-1264305).

So-Yeon Jenny Lee, under the direction of Maria Polinsky, Harvard University, "[Blafe Documentation and Description](#)" (BCS-1263754).

Yuki Tanaka, under the direction of Charles A. Hofling, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, "[Belizean Mopan Documentation \(MOP\)](#)" (BCS-1264199).

Alexandra K. Trueman, under the direction of Heidi B. Harley, University of Arizona, "[The morphosyntax of motion in Hiaki](#)" (BCS-1252163).

Randi E. Tucker, under the direction of Juergen Bohnemeyer and David M. Mark, SUNY at Buffalo, "[Documentation of Diidxa za \(ZAI\) spatial language](#)" (BCS – 1264064).

Samuel J. Beer, under the direction of Zygmunt Frajzyngier, University of Colorado at Boulder, "[A Grammar of Nyang'i with Historical-Comparative Notes](#)" (BCS-1324475).

Conferences and Workshops (awarded by NSF)

Colleen Fitzgerald, University of Texas at Arlington, "[2014 Institute on Collaborative Language Research \(CoLang/InField\)](#)," \$169,177 (BCS-1263939).

David A Peterson, Dartmouth College, "[Workshop on Kuki-Chin Languages](#)," \$19,142 (BCS-1322400).

Ofelia Zepeda, University of Arizona, "[The State of Indigenous Languages Conference](#)," \$19,652 (BCS-1316698).

The NEH awards are also listed on the NEH [Preservation](#) and [Fellowship](#) pages.