

# From Babine to Yakima: Academic Libraries and Endangered Language Preservation

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## Introduction

In his book, *When Languages Die: the Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge*, linguist K. David Harrison states the following: "You do not need to go to Amazonia or Siberia to observe language death; it is going on all around us."<sup>1</sup> For librarians working in the Northwest Pacific Coast and Western Plateau, this statement rings especially true. The area has been identified as a region of high language endangerment, where "Every language in the American part of the hotspot is either endangered or moribund."<sup>2</sup> Linguists Harrison and Anderson have identified twelve genetic units in the area, referring to the twelve distinct language families present in the region. We can understand a genetic unit as a group of languages belonging to the same language family, having developed from an earlier common language. For example Romance languages, such as French, Italian and Spanish, all having developed from Latin, belong to a different genetic unit than do Russian, Ukrainian and Czech, all belonging to the Balto-Slavic language family. Languages belonging to the same genetic unit, or language family are closely related to each other and share similar charac-

teristics. Within the twelve genetic language units of the Pacific Northwest, there are fifty-four languages, alphabetically from Babine to Yakima, spoken in the region.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these twelve units, there are also nine identified extinct genetic units, meaning that the languages have no known living speakers. The Pacific Northwest therefore represents an area of high linguistic diversity; however it also represents an area of extreme language endangerment. The current situation is the equivalent of a linguistic crisis; but aside from the occasional newspaper article, the languages of this region are disappearing quietly into the night. Harrison estimates that a last speaker dies every ten days, and this scenario is expected to continue "for the foreseeable future."<sup>4</sup> A paper on endangered languages and libraries written thirty years from now will therefore be describing a situation that is drastically different from the current one. As Harrison states, "Languages in our own backyard and in remote corners of the globe vanish apace."<sup>5</sup>

For languages to survive, linguists agree that they need to be passed down to a new generation of speakers. In order to foster language revitalization, linguists and endangered language communities recognize

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that collaborative relationships must be forged, and libraries have been occasionally referred to in the linguistics literature. Harrison refers briefly to “library knowledge” as knowledge that is “catalogued, indexed, orderly, and it can be searched.”<sup>6</sup> Harrison makes a distinction between the knowledge collected in libraries, and “traditional knowledge”, which he states seems “much more diffuse, folksy, messy, and prone to being forgotten.”<sup>7</sup> Because much of the body of traditional knowledge that exists in the world today has yet to be written down, we might be inclined to view the relationship between libraries and endangered languages as mutually exclusive. However, as levels of language endangerment become more severe, the role of the library becomes increasingly important. Libraries should strive to meet a two-fold responsibility: that of building endangered language collections that will support the learning goals of speakers and revitalization efforts, and that of assisting in the preservation of a vanishing cultural record for future generations. As institutions that have been charged with protecting, preserving and making accessible the cultural record, libraries should feel an intimate relationship with communities seeking to preserve the knowledge embedded in their languages. As Harrison reminds us, “Language disappearance is an erosion or extinction of ideas, of ways of knowing, and of ways of talking about the world and human experience.”<sup>8</sup> While libraries are seldom mentioned as collaborative partners in language preservation efforts, language revitalization advocates have occasionally referred to the role of the library. As Ida Bear, a professor and developer of instructional materials for the Cree language states: “There are still some oral traditionalists in the communities who have the knowledge and expertise in acimowina and acanohkana (oral history and myths) who should be recorded, and their collections should be in all major university libraries for students to use in their studies.”<sup>9</sup>

If we define language preservation as the collecting of linguistic materials for posterity, it is possible to argue that libraries have been involved in endangered language preservation for many years. McCarty however makes a distinction between ‘preserving’ and ‘saving’ endangered languages.<sup>10</sup> Just as linguists engaged in language preservation record grammars, lexicons and typologies, archivists and librarians collect and provide safe storage for these materials. According to McCarty, saving a language involves more than the

mere warehousing of recorded language materials. In order for a language to survive, new speakers must be recruited and their skills fostered. Within this role, school based language programs can make significant contributions to revitalization efforts. McCarty concedes that while the role of schools is important, they will have little impact without collaborative efforts. If one were to similarly ponder the role of academic libraries in saving endangered languages, it is likely that they would feel that such institutions are on the periphery of revitalization efforts. However, community, immersion, after school, summer, academic and school-based language programs, when coupled with the work of linguists, Elders, and anthropologists, can have a significant impact. The most successful language revitalization programs appear to be collaborative efforts that engage expertise from a variety of disciplines and foster full community involvement. Therefore, libraries should not underestimate their role in supporting endangered language programs.

### **Fostering Collaborative Environments for Language Revitalization**

While many archives hold Native American language materials, many of the collections within these repositories may not necessarily be known to the language community they serve. To provide further guidance in managing language materials, the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) has developed a guide to assist tribal administrators. According to *Native Language Preservation: a Reference Guide for Establishing Archives and Repositories*, “even those who are fluent heritage language speakers and those who are actively engaged in language preservation efforts”<sup>11</sup> may not be aware that certain collections exist. To help bring these collections to light, the University of Washington has held two workshops modeled on conferences developed at UC Berkeley involving the collaboration of linguists, language communities, and campus libraries. Both the University of Washington and the UC Berkeley “Breath of Life” workshops incorporate the use of library and archival collections in developing language revitalization materials. Linguists, Lianne Hinton of the University of California Berkeley, and Alice Taff of the University of Washington, both active in revitalization efforts, coordinated the workshops at their respective institutions. Held every two years, the UC Berkeley workshops incorporate the use of archival collections which include field notes,

journals and sound recordings.<sup>12</sup> The workshops provide an excellent collaborative model for libraries and archives seeking to play a supportive role in revitalization efforts.

Organized by holding institution, the ANA Guide was developed to identify and describe significant Native language collections available at academic, federal, private and international repositories. The guide provides descriptions of significant collections of Native American language materials; however there is currently not one single resource to identify research institutions with significant collections, organized by language. Currently, such information does not exist on a single website, nor is there one guidebook that lists archives, libraries and museums in the Pacific Northwest with endangered language materials, organized according to each endangered language. The Yinka Déné Language Institute and the University of British Columbia have developed an excellent report entitled *The Status of Documentation for British Columbia Native Languages*, providing information organized by language family. The report includes information on the scope and depth of documentation for each language, the names of linguists who have worked on a given language, and a list of published language materials. The guide recognizes that grammars, dictionaries, and textbooks written at the university level are central to ensuring the ongoing health of a language. Such collaborative efforts between academic institutions and tribal language programs are excellent; however more such projects are needed. Collaboration between linguists and academic libraries in the region would facilitate a broader report, to include all of the languages of the hotspot.

### **Cultural Ownership of Language Materials**

Many libraries and archives contain language materials that were recorded during an earlier era and may therefore not be accompanied by formal tribal documentation governing their use. As language materials migrate to the online environment, it is particularly important for libraries to ensure that tribal permissions are obtained and respected. Each tribe may have their own philosophy and protocols for the migration of tribal materials to an online environment. As materials migrate out of the archives and into an online environment, language communities should be consulted in determining whether the Internet is an appropriate venue for certain cultural materials. Many

Native communities have policies to address the collecting and housing of language materials, and it is the responsibility of librarians and researchers to educate themselves on such policies. With regards to the language materials made available online as a result of their research, linguists Harrison and Anderson explicitly state the following: "Community ownership of intellectual property is a primary consideration. Digital recordings remain under the auspices of the endangered language community itself, which grants permission (individually and collectively) for their scholarly use and dissemination."<sup>13</sup> Many materials found within archives and repositories may likewise be governed by a similar statement. Libraries should work with their local tribal governments to ensure that the materials are being used appropriately, and according to the wishes of the people whom they represent.

A Native nation may in fact hold the cultural rights to the language materials, and their express consent should be obtained if the institution is considering uploading language materials to the Internet. Tribal scholars have written extensively on the issue of tribal stewardship with regards to cultural materials. The wisdom of linguist Phil Cash is applicable to the collaboration between libraries and tribes in managing language resources, as he advocates collaboration with the Native Community through "active consultation, mutual decision-making, and the adoption of cooperative agreements for the promotion of long-term resource protection strategies."<sup>14</sup>

To provide further guidance in managing language materials, the ANA Guide states that tribal governments may develop a "procedure whereby materials are submitted to the Native nation for endorsement or approval. Such approval or the lack of it may be communicated to publishers, libraries, professional associations and other purchasers of materials."<sup>15</sup> The Guide also encourages Native groups to develop a licensing program for granting permission to researchers who wish to develop materials that incorporate an aspect of their culture. Licensing may include an ordinance to "provide for registration, payment of a fee to the tribe and that a copy of the final product is delivered to the tribe or a tribal program before publication and after publication."<sup>16</sup> The use of materials recorded or written in Native American languages may likewise be governed by formal declarations regarding the rights of a particular group over the materials,

which may present complex issues for libraries with endangered language collections. Where materials are considered to be of central importance to a particular Native nation, individual tribal members may not have the right to grant permission for their public use.<sup>17</sup> The ANA Guide cites a recent court decision in which the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians “won such a case against a person who recorded ceremonies with the approval of a member, but without Tribal approval.”<sup>18</sup>

It is likely that many libraries and archives with endangered language materials may not have explicit agreements and collaborative relationships with tribal governments to facilitate the management of language materials in their collections. A series of ethnomusicological recordings produced in the 1970s at Washington State University in accompanied by the following statement: “The music within this collection is used with permission of certain Native American, Canadian and Alaskan people, and it is not to be duplicated without their express consent.”<sup>19</sup> At the time this statement was written, it may have been sufficient in guiding archivists and librarians in the appropriate use and dissemination of the materials therein. However, with preservation and dissemination possibilities presented by digital media, such statements may no longer provide adequate guidance. As language revitalization programs develop and become more robust, librarians and archivists may receive requests from students and instructors for copies of language materials, including video and audio recordings. When an item is not accompanied by formal documentation, librarians should consult the tribe connected to, or represented within the materials. Regarding cultural property rights, the ANA Guide states the following:

To protect its rights to this cultural property, the Native government should declare that it is the rightful owner of the songs, dances, ceremonies or other activities that it believes the Tribe or Nation has ownership of. The Native government should issue a formal declaration of cultural property, asserting rights over a single cultural property or many or all cultural properties. The declaration should assert that the claimed rights are prior and paramount rights extending from a time certain, if the date is known, or from time immemorial.<sup>20</sup>

Each language community is distinct and may have a different set of developed protocols regarding the use of their language materials. It is therefore imperative that librarians educate themselves on the individual policies of the communities that are linked to their library collections. The ANA Guide encourages active communication between collecting institutions and tribal administration, as demonstrated in the following statement:

When materials are received, all relevant tribal governments (other than the one that sent the material, if applicable) should be notified of the receipt of material on their language. At the discretion of the director, such a notice may also be sent to an organization involved in teaching or preserving that language or to a tribal government agency.<sup>21</sup>

The Guide contains examples of forms to assist Native groups in ensuring that tribal rights are protected with regard to language materials. Sample documentation, such as the *Consent to the Use of Language Information* and the *Consent to Restrictions* both protect tribal rights, and guide libraries in the appropriate use of language materials. The Guide identifies the American Library Association as an organization which can assist Native communities in protesting the unauthorized publication of culturally sensitive materials.<sup>22</sup> Libraries, therefore, should be proactive in engaging collaborative dialog with tribal governments. There are significant advantages to working with Native groups having cultural ownership of language materials in providing a rich and well-informed environment for their dissemination. Outsiders, acting on their own, run the risk of incorporating their own values and perspectives in devising an environment for online materials, rather than reflecting the knowledge and philosophy of the tribe.<sup>23</sup> In informing a “broader definition of the concept”<sup>24</sup> of cultural resources, tribal perspectives can be invaluable. The Native American definition of cultural resources is defined broadly as a “system of knowledge, skills, abilities and practices, and the landscape with which they are interconnected.”<sup>25</sup> The interconnectedness of the land, language, ceremonies, foodways, and traditional knowledge reflects a common philosophy among Native communities.

### Collections at Academic Institutions in the Pacific Northwest

In searching OCLC for endangered language materials, several challenges present themselves. Language names that are used in ethnographic and linguistic literature are not often the “names used in or preferred by the communities in question.”<sup>26</sup> For this reason, materials published using an alternate language name may be missed in an OCLC search. While materials published through academic outlets are not likely to be overlooked, small press ventures and materials published by language communities may easily be missed due to alternate language names and spellings.

The names of linguists and native speakers who have contributed materials related to a particular language tend to become readily recognizable. In the case of most endangered languages, persons conducting extensive research on any one language are still relatively few.<sup>27</sup> For example, in the case of the Lushootseed language, Thom Hess (linguist), Vi Hilbert (scholar, teacher and native speaker), are commonly mentioned. For librarians and endangered language activists in the Pacific Northwest, Vi Hilbert is truly a hero within our midst. She has worked tirelessly to transcribe language materials and engage communities; her legacy is the perfect response to the question, “What can one person do to save a language?” Grammars and dictionaries could not be produced without the willing assistance of speakers, such as Vi Hilbert, who provide guidance, insight, encouragement, time and inspiration to linguists.<sup>28</sup> Endangered language revitalization is a community effort, and given that time is of the essence, collaborative relationships should be developed and forged. Libraries may choose to participate in an active way, by developing a dialogue with linguists and tribal authorities, or in a passive way, through the mere purchasing of the grammars and dictionaries that are produced.

Academic institutions in the Pacific Northwest with significant collections include Evergreen State College, the University of Washington, the University of British Columbia and the University of Oregon. A comprehensive report detailing the depth and scope of endangered language collections, organized by each language of the Pacific Northwest Coast is still needed in order to foster collaboration among librarians in ensuring that our collections serve the needs of Native language communities.

Some of the most progressive and innovative language revitalization materials are produced by the language communities themselves. It is common for individual speakers to produce dual language books and teaching materials through small press ventures. In many cases, the producers of these materials may not have considered a wider distribution other than their own immediate language communities. It is unlikely that collections librarians will find practical revitalization materials through traditional outlets, such as YBP Library Services. Materials that can be used in classroom settings and by beginning learners are not likely to be published by the academic press, and may include self-produced materials. Revitalization materials are often published in small distribution, and yet they represent linguistic gold to the language community. A search in OCLC reveals several small independent publishers, such as Lushootseed Press and the Yinka Déné Language Institute, that have been expressly created for the purpose of publishing, promoting and disseminating language materials. There are many cases in which only one institution owns a particular guidebook, sound recording, dictionary, textbook or thesis, making digitization of these materials even more urgent. Collaborative efforts among librarians are needed to ensure a wider dissemination of endangered language materials. Given that there are many languages on the brink of extinction in the hotspot, it would be ideal if each academic library in the region committed to developing collections related to one, or more, endangered languages. Dialog and collaboration among librarians and language communities is needed to facilitate this goal.

In general, the endangered language materials available through academic libraries in the region appear in the following genres:

**Grammars, dictionaries and endangered language texts:** Often the result of formal linguistics research and published through academic presses, but may include locally produced materials. Those published by university and academic presses enjoy the widest distribution among libraries. Linguists who have made significant contributions in the region include Melville Jacobs, Pliny Earle Goddard, and Sharon Hargus.

**Storybooks, textbooks and materials for use in language learning:** These include items produced through tribal revitalization efforts, materials created by individual speakers and textbooks published by both academic and small press publishers.

**Sound recordings of Elders:** Researchers, including Leon Metcalf, and storytellers, such as Johnny Moses, have recorded hours of materials documenting language, folktales, and oral traditions.

**Sound recording produced expressly for language learning:** The intervention of linguists and tribal members has contributed to a body of talking dictionaries, oral storytelling, translations of commonly known English language stories, but also includes traditional stories, myths and legends

**Ethnomusicology collections:** Significant collections, such as the Melville Jacobs Collection at the University of Washington and the Loran Olsen Collection at Washington State University, provide both audio and visual materials which incorporate language through ceremonies and music.

**Religious materials:** Missionary organizations, both past and present have produced hymnals, translations of the books of the Gospel, and prayer books. Examples include works produced by such groups as the Jesuit Society of Jesus, the United Bible Societies, and the American Bible Society.

### Supporting Language Learners

Learning an endangered language poses unique challenges to the students as they operate in a language learning scenario that is distinctly different from more commonly taught languages. Conventional language learning materials may not be available, and new methods for practicing the language may not be accessible to endangered language students. Modern methods for incorporating language into daily life, such as ICT, the Internet, and audio books,<sup>29</sup> may not be available or feasible to students studying an endangered language. While there are guides to advise students on incorporating real life experiences into their language learning, using “the world as a classroom,” many of the methods used in commonly taught language learning scenarios may not be applicable. In the case of some endangered languages there are few written materials and even fewer, if any, sound recordings. Therefore, many of the strategies employed by mainstream language students in developing language skills and creating an environment of language immersion cannot be employed.

For the student of an endangered language, sound recordings housed in library archives may represent their only link to the audible language. Audio collections give life to the grammars, dictionaries and locally

produced texts that teachers of endangered languages so heavily depend on. Such collections often represent a language learner’s link to both traditional knowledge and the oral tradition. Students studying the language at the university level may be isolated from authentic opportunities to practice the language with native speakers and advanced learners. In many cases, audio recordings in archival collections are the truest surviving representation of the correct accent, cadence, and personality of the language. Librarians and archivists, therefore, should not underestimate the value of these collections to language learners. As archaic as some of these sound recordings may be, depending on whether more recently produced materials for language learning are available, they may be the equivalent of an endangered language student’s “Berlitz®”, or “Rosetta Stone®” program. Furthermore, sound recordings of Native speakers may incorporate storytelling and oral histories, representing the culture and traditions of the language. In referring to recordings of the Lushootseed language, Vi Hilbert writes: “To each of the elders who allowed themselves to be tape-recorded that future generations might benefit from their knowledge” and thanks those who have “provided safe storage space for the archival treasures of Lushootseed Research.”<sup>30</sup>

The Nez Perce language is taught at Washington State University, however classes are currently delivered at Lewis and Clark State College through video conferencing and enrollment at WSU has been traditionally low. This scenario presents significant challenges to language students, including a sense of isolation and the lack of opportunities for language use. Washington State University’s current management of the Nez Perce language program privileges more commonly taught languages, and places Nez Perce on the periphery. In the Spring 2009 semester, WSU Nez Perce language students will participate in the Lewis and Clark State College based class using iChat software. Due to low enrollment figures, payment of the video conferencing fee to the host institution is not economically feasible, especially in light of looming budget woes. While university administrations depend heavily on enrollment figures in judging the importance of an academic program, the significance of even a single student in an endangered language course should not be underestimated. Librarians should respond to the information needs of these students and seek ways to support language learners through the promotion and provision of revi-

talization materials, including grammars, dictionaries, sound recordings and texts. Some institutions, such as the University of Washington, have made significant gains in the migration of such materials to an online environment, while others are still in the process of planning how to provide for wider dissemination. Librarians and archivists need to come to grips with the fact that only the most dedicated language student is likely to regularly visit an archival collection, don cotton research gloves and examine a delicate dictionary produced over one hundred years ago. As endangered language materials represent unique and important collections to language students, academic institutions should consider migrating sound recordings to an online environment, if tribal permission is granted.

Native communities face significant obstacles in envisioning revitalization programs, as “Indigenous language publishing is limited almost entirely to primary school textbooks.”<sup>31</sup> The library literature has discussed the challenges and controversies inherent in supporting heritage language communities, for example Spanish language communities in the United States.<sup>32</sup> Like Hispanic communities attempting to maintain their heritage language, Native American communities are often “overwhelmed by a strong majority culture.”<sup>33</sup> However, obstacles faced by Native American communities are even greater, as these communities have access to a much narrower range of print language materials, and virtually no media materials. While it is possible for Spanish language learners to access authentic language materials, such as songs, films, websites, and even Facebook settings, such materials often do not exist for endangered language learners. While some companies, such as Rosetta Stone®,<sup>34</sup> have partnered with language communities to produce contemporary learning materials, such projects are few, not widely disseminated, and limited to a handful of language groups. Endangered language students must have a high level of commitment, and the role of a supportive community is therefore paramount. Without opportunities to listen to the language through common media, including the Internet, radio, television, film, and mp3s, endangered language students are faced with challenges that set their learning experience back to a different era. With regard to the availability of modern media, Zepeda states the following: “Among indigenous languages, only Navajo and Yupik are regularly broadcast; other languages, if heard at all, are restricted to half-hour

segments in the weekend-morning ‘ethnic ghettos’ of American broadcasting.”<sup>35</sup> As with other language communities in the United States struggling to preserve and maintain their heritage languages, Native American language groups face the obstacle of overcoming constant exposure to an Anglophone media that “thus constantly reinforces the message of the prestige and dominance of English, to which young people are particularly susceptible.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Thinking inside the Maple Leaf: Our Neighbors to the North**

In general, Canada has been a leader in supporting progressive revitalization programs, developing resources and fostering collaborations. Canada’s success in developing and promoting endangered language programs may in part be due to the country’s predisposed orientation toward linguistic diversity. At the government level, the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures was developed and is mandated to make recommendations to the Minister on Canadian Heritage regarding the preservation, revitalization, and promotion of Canada’s native languages. The Task Force includes linguists, technical experts, Elders, First Nations government officials, advisors, cultural and heritage center administrators, and an impressive array of experts in First Nation language revitalization and preservation. This represents an impressive example of collaboration across languages and disciplines in envisioning revitalization and preservation efforts. In line with the ANA Guide, the Task Force report calls for “cultural awareness guidelines for researchers and program officers.”<sup>37</sup> Librarians and archivists need to be aware of these guidelines, and where they do not exist, actively pursue their development. The Task Force also advocates “lifestyles that foster language retention”<sup>38</sup> and an infrastructure to preserve and strengthen languages.

The Xwi7xwa (pronounced whei-wha) Library, a branch of the University of British Columbia Library, is an example of an academic library actively engaged in revitalization efforts. Progressive concepts driven by the library include the application of the Brian Deer Classification system, which was developed in the 1970s by Kahnawahke Librarian, Brian Deer, and incorporates Aboriginal subject headings. The library has also developed a First Nations House of Learning Indigenous Thesaurus, authorized by the Library of Congress. As described on the Library’s Home

Page, the Xwi7xwa Library also uses the subject heading “First Nations” in place of the Library of Congress standard, “Indians of North America,” to reflect the preferred term for describing the Aboriginal people of Canada. In addition, the library maintains a First Nations authority list which employs the tribal names preferred by the respective First Nations communities. The Library has maximized collaborative opportunities, as Friends of the Library include First Nations Elders, tribal members, and academic departments, including the Department of Maori Studies at the University of Auckland. The Library’s First Nations Language collections are impressive, covering oral traditions, revitalization materials, grammars, dictionaries, workbooks, and materials for First Nations teacher education programs in First Nations language and culture. First Nations Language teacher education present a progressive step in ensuring that schools have access to highly trained endangered language professionals. Other Canadian institutions having First Nations language programs include the University of Northern British Columbia and the University of Victoria.

Several academic institutions within Canada have taken an active role in supporting language communities. For example, the University of Alberta and the Miyo Wahkohtowin Community Education Authority are collaborating to develop a web-based interactive First Nations language portal that includes a dictionary and curriculum-based resources to support the maintenance of the Cree language in Canada. The project includes the ability to download Cree keyboard settings, and the dictionary allows for the incorporation of regional dialects. The portal promotes community involvement, as it includes a link for speakers to propose words that may not yet be included in the Cree dictionary. The website also provides users with the ability to download language flashcards, learning games, and lesson plans.<sup>39</sup> Professor Arok Wolvengrey of the University of Alberta granted permission for the data from his two volume Cree-English bilingual dictionary to be used in the project.

Canada’s language revitalization programs have been documented in Mushkeg Media’s *Finding Our Talk* series. The company is in production of its third season of documentaries that examine revitalization efforts, which currently includes 26 episodes. The series demystifies language revitalization programs, and provides a rich and varied view of current efforts. The episode on the Inuktitut language documents the Avataq

Cultural Institute’s annual conference where Elders and translators meet to develop “Inuktitut words to describe the new world that has grown up around them.”<sup>40</sup>

### Travelling in a Different Canoe

Due to the fact that time is of the essence, it is important that libraries and archives engage in collaborative efforts to promote, disseminate and, where culturally acceptable, digitize endangered language materials. When Susie Sampson Peter, a speaker of Lushootseed, was introduced to recording technologies, she referred to them as a “different canoe” that would carry the language and traditions forward into the future. As Vi Hilbert relates: “These elders quickly realized the special gift that the recorder provided for themselves and their treasured knowledge, placing on tape much of this information, knowing it could continue to be passed on in this new format.”<sup>41</sup> Today, the canoe has taken on another form; from analog sound recordings housed in archival collections on wax cylinders, to digital media available across the Internet. Digital materials have many advantages, including preservation, availability, and accessibility.

Language communities are working “against enormous odds”<sup>42</sup> to preserve, revitalize and maintain their languages. With limited opportunity for authentic language interaction, collaborative efforts are vital to supporting language learners. Academic libraries can play an active, supportive role, while keeping in mind that “The ideal role of the academic is one of consultant and facilitator, as determined by the community and its needs.”<sup>43</sup> Since current state and federal preservation laws “do more to promote the norms and values of the dominant society than they of indigenous culture,”<sup>44</sup> librarians should actively pursue collaborative dialogs with tribal governments in planning for the dissemination of endangered language materials. Academic libraries in the Pacific Northwest have impressive collections of dictionaries, grammars and texts written by linguists who have been recording Native languages in the region for decades. However, when these materials are merely collected in libraries and preserved in archives, our institutions run the risk of becoming mausoleums for extinct languages. As Harrison cautions:

An extinct dodo bird can be stuffed by taxidermists and displayed in a museum after all

its kind are dead and gone. But a stuffed dodo is no substitute for a thriving dodo population. Languages, too, have adapted over time to serve the needs of a particular population in their environment. They have been shaped by people to serve as repositories for cultural knowledge, efficiently packaged and readily transmittable across generations. Like dodo birds in museums, languages may be preserved in dictionaries and books after they are no longer spoken. But a grammar book or dictionary is but a dim reflection of the richness of a spoken tongue in its native social setting.<sup>45</sup>

Wider involvement among academic libraries is needed to ensure that, collaboratively, our collections include both academic and community revitalization materials to reflect each of the languages in the hotspot. Libraries should remain responsive to the needs and challenges inherent in language revitalization efforts through endeavors that engage scholars and communities, such as the “Breath of Life” workshops. The Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures emphasizes the fact that while recordings and grammars are important components of language revitalization, they alone are not adequate, as “languages must be kept alive by daily use.”<sup>46</sup> Through collaboration within the library profession, with language communities and across university departments, academic libraries can be active supporters of endangered language revitalization.

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### Notes

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