

NATIVE LANGUAGE NETWORK

ILI, 560 Montezuma Ave., 201A, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

WINTER 2000

IPOLA Becomes The Indigenous Language Institute (ILI)

Report by Gerald L Hill (*Oneida*)
President, Board of Directors

After numerous and reflective discussions by the Board of Directors, we are pleased to announce our new name — Indigenous Language Institute (ILI) — as of August 2000.

The catchy and often musical “IPOLA” became identified with this organization’s nascent days as we began our efforts to collaborate with indigenous communities to facilitate language revitalization.

Over the past five or six years we have seen an evolution both in our organization and in the growing needs at the grassroots level.

Language revitalization work is being initiated at the grassroots, as it should, and at an unprecedented rate. Consequently, it is essential to network, communicate and share resources with each other more efficiently.

This organization, its mission and its organizational structure remain the same. The major shift within ILI is our emphasis on Revitalizing and Perpetuating the Use of Native American Languages (“RAPUNAL” coined in 1997 by our Scientific Advisor, Professor Murray Gell-Mann). “Preservation” of languages is a part of the larger mission.

We honor the Founder, Joanna Hess, and the founding Board mem-

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Last year’s “Those Who Make a Difference” honoree Estefanita Martinez (left) introduces Joel Frank of the Seminole Tribe who accepted the award of behalf of honoree Chief Jim Billie.



Geneva Navarro (seated at right) receives the ILI Honors Award from Maura Dhu Studi for her work as teacher of the Comanche language. (See Pages 4-5 for Honors Award report.)

Photos courtesy of Sibel Melik

New ILI Think Tank Seminars Target Grassroots Language Revitalization

ILI has launched a new series of interdisciplinary think tanks, called RELATE, which bring together academic professionals from diverse fields and grassroots language teachers and advocates to share information that is critical to the advancement of indigenous language revitalization.

The first of the series, dealing with “Heritage Language as a Second Language,” was held December 1-3, 2000 in Santa Fe at the Seminar House, School of American Research.

Designed as small-group working seminars, the RELATE think

tanks encourage in-depth and focused discussion on specific topics relevant to language acquisition.

The end result of each session will be a report or handbook which synthesizes the discussion into a format that has immediate and practical applications to grassroots language programs.

Participants in December’s RELATE think tank explored what native language teachers should know about first and second language learning and the function of the brain; and the sociological impact of language revitalization.

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***ILI’s Mission:** *To collaborate with indigenous communities to revitalize and perpetuate the languages and culture of the original inhabitants of the Americas. (*Formerly known as IPOLA)*

ILI Name Change

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bers who conceived the name IPOLA back in 1992. In March 1997 a multi-disciplinary group of 30 participants were invited to IPOLA's National Clearinghouse Planning Conference in Santa Fe.

At that conference, the consortium agreed upon establishing a national entity that would unify the isolated and fragmented efforts of indigenous language revitalization work.

IPOLA was charged with the work to actualize this entity. A Task Force of ten conference attendees created the blueprint for this national center, and called it the Indigenous Language Institute.

ILI functioned as a program of IPOLA for two years, overseen by some of the original participants of the ILI Task Force. The ILI program became the major focus of IPOLA over this period, and several ILI projects were implemented incrementally.

Among these on-going programs are the Field Survey Project, Interdisciplinary Think Tank (aka RELATE Working Seminar), annual honoring of Native American language scholars, honoring youth and children for language work in the annual Youth Language Fair, development of children-created language materials, and creation of an ILI web site for references and a widely-distributed newsletter.

The ILI Think Tank (RELATE Seminar) held at the School of American Research, December 1-3, 2000, drew ten scholars and grassroots Native language activists to address the practical needs and effects of language acquisition in Native communities. A report on this important event will appear in the next ILI newsletter.

Thank you to all of you for supporting the positive transition to the Indigenous Language Institute.



Gerald L. Hill, Oneida
President
Indigenous Language Institute

Executive Director's Message

Dear Friends,

Another year is ending, and we are at the threshold of the "real" beginning of a new millennium. Year 2000 has been a very productive, dynamic period of development for our Institute with abundant harvest to be thankful for. As an organization....

- We have matured to become a national center for information and referrals about indigenous language programs in the United States. Through our newsletters, web site and word of mouth, we have become a familiar entity among grassroots communities, media, and other language institutions.
- We have developed programs that bridge generations, connect academia and grassroots, honor those who tirelessly work for language revitalization, motivate children and youth to carry on their heritage and tradition, and connect people to people through better communication and open sharing.
- We have participated in wide-ranging language and culture conferences to share our work and services.
- We have increased the number of indigenous communities supporting our work.
- We have facilitated numerous media inquiries by networking them with the appropriate resources for information that has been published nationally and internationally.
- We have changed our name to reflect our organizational growth.
- We have started planning to build an endowment which will enable ILI to become more financially self-sustaining and to ensure our continued success.

We are so honored to be an interac-



tive part of a larger global effort to revitalize endangered indigenous languages. We strive to be the catalyst and connective force in that global movement to ensure that our beautiful diversity of expressions and worldviews are preserved for the future generations.

None of this could have been possible without the financial, intellectual, and hands-on support from our network of Friends like you.

As we stand at the threshold of the new millennium and another phase of growth for the Institute, we invite you to continue this dynamic partnership so we can implement even more programs that will make a difference in reversing the language crisis.

Your support will be the main fuel for this Institute's growth and ability to provide services. We are grateful for your generosity and commitment to success!

With warmest wishes for a Great New Year!



Inée Yang Slaughter
Executive Director

ILI E-mail and Web Site Changes

Please make a note of our Email & web site address changes:

Email: ili@indigenous-language.org

Website: <http://www.indigenous-language.org>

The “Re-Awakening” of the Wôpanâak Language

by jessie little doe

“We are here”, They said to me. This is the sacred message i was gifted with many years ago. This is a sacred message because it was given to me in Wôpanâak (Wampanoag).

i knew nothing of my People’s language at that time. For that matter, none of my People remembered the way in which we spoke about our lives and our ways, the good old ways. This is what i am saying to you now. We are here.

We are the Wampanoag Nation. Yes, we were here when the boat landed in Patuqsut (Plymouth). Yes, we were 69 tribes strong. Yes, 66 of our tribes were wiped out because we trusted. But no, we did not vanish. We are not extinct. We are still here on our ancestral lands.

If you still have speakers of your language, please hear me. Do not neglect your privilege.

We have survived and gained enough strength once again to not only assert ourselves as a strong Wampanoag nation, but more importantly, to reclaim what is ours by sacred privilege and right. my place in the Circle is language reclamation help for my People.

The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project began in 1993. We began to hold classes in 1997. It took us a full four years of ground work and training in order to begin our classes. We had to sort through everything from primary source documentation and training in linguistics-to read the documents-to tribal politics and protocol.

We are fortunate in that our families adopted a written form of Wampanoag which gives us hundreds of native written documents from which to work-including the entire King James version



Photo courtesy of Sheilah Nicholas

jessie little doe picking wild tea in Mashpee, Massachusetts

of the Bible translated into Wampanoag (1663).

It is one thing to read a history book and to look at the proposed facts about my People. It is an entirely different experience to hear my People through their own voices and not the interpretation of a historian or a missionary.

We as Indian people have reached the point in our journey when it is time to put away the injured Indian. This is not to forget our struggles or pretend that we are not still struggling, because struggle makes us stronger. But to put away the injured Indian is to remember and honor our own selves, the self that is given to us by Neekanahuchek, ‘those who were born before’, ‘the Ancestors’. We must remember who and what we are if we are to survive and prosper.

If you still have speakers of your language, please hear me. Do not neglect your privilege. Don’t take the position that someone else will take care of language preservation because everyone else is thinking the same thing and you will end up like us, with no speakers at all. Pray about this and take the responsibility yourself. You may be lucky enough to be one of the people chosen to do this work by Neekanahuchek. If this happens, i tell you, you will have all the help you need.

Note: It has been 100 years since the Wampanoag language has been spoken, but through the commitment of one woman, Jessie Little Doe Fermino, it is a language that is being roused from a long silence. Such an endeavor compelled the ILI Language Survey Team to arrange a recent visit of the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project located in the community of Mashpee, Massachusetts on Cape Cod. The “re-awakening” of the Wôpanâak language is an inspiring story of cultural survival, reaffirmation of identity, and reunification of a people through their ancestral language. It is a story of cultural continuity. — Sheilah Nicholas

Once a language is lost, it is gone forever

- Of the 300 original Native languages in North America, only 175 exist today.
- 125 of these are no longer learned by children.
- 55 are spoken by 1 to 6 elders; when they die, their language will disappear.
- Without action, only 20 languages will survive the next 50 years.

ILI Honoring Event Recognizes Two Indigenous Language Warriors

The Indigenous Language Institute's annual honoring event recognized two very distinguished Native Americans who have dedicated their lives to the preservation and perpetuation of their native tongues.

Chief Jim Billie, Chief of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and Geneva Navarro, Comanche Language Scholar, were the recipients of the "Those Who Make a Difference" Honors Award on September 16, 2000 at a festive celebration at the Eldorado Hotel in Santa Fe.

Chief Billie, who has held his elective office for the past twenty years, is also a musician and storyteller, performing songs in his native language and sharing Seminole stories and legends with peoples around the world.

Due to a severe Florida hurricane, Chief Billie could not attend the celebration. On his behalf, Joel Frank from the Seminole Tribe flew in from Los Angeles to accept the honors award.

In his speech, Mr. Frank mentioned Chief Billie's lifetime commitment to promoting the language and culture of his People. During an earlier radio interview, Chief Billie stated, "To lose our language is a sin. I will do whatever is in my power to ensure that our languages are preserved for our children."

Geneva Navarro, a retired Public Health Service nurse and grandmother who began a second career as a teacher of the Comanche language, now teaches classes for mostly adult Comanche speakers in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. She also serves on the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee in Oklahoma.

Her joyful tears touched the hearts of the audience of over 170 people as she began her acceptance remarks. "I am speechless. I feel I don't deserve this beautiful award, but I am very, very happy today."

Her grandchildren, Matthew and Autumn Gomez, recited the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation motto in their language, fluently and

with great pride in their grandmother's accomplishments. The Comanche Nation Chairman sent an official Proclamation for Geneva.

The heartwarming festivities surrounding the honoring ceremony highlighted last year's honorees, Estefanita Blue Water Martinez (age 88) and Wes Studi.

Mrs. Martinez commented "I was looking forward to introducing Chief Jim Billie tonight. I hope I will get to meet him some day," as she presented Joel Frank with the "Those Who Make a Difference" pendant on behalf of Chief Jim. Wes Studi introduced Geneva Navarro via video, as he had to be in Germany that evening.

The honorees were awarded the sterling silver and scrimshaw statuette (which can be worn as a pendant) designed by Denise Wallace (jewelry artist, Sugpiak, Alaska).

The statuette in the form of a mother with three children's faces within her embrace is titled "My Children They Sing Many Songs," symbolizing the beauty of unity in diversity.

The Indigenous Language Institute also bestowed its Corporate Appreciation Award on two businesses who have provided assistance to ILI's language revitalization programs: IBM Corporation for intellectual contribution and Natural American Spirit Foundation to multi-year grants.

There to accept the Award for IBM was Larry Gutstein, Native American Indian Diversity Task Force of IBM; and for Natural American Spirit Foundation were Chris Webster and Leigh Parks, NASF Board members.

The Master of Ceremonies, the renowned poet and author Simon Ortiz of Acoma Pueblo, graciously offered his poetry and beautiful oratory to honor these amazing "language warriors."

The evening was filled with great food, a lively auction, and warm camaraderie, ending with a dynamic intertribal youth drum group, Long Road Singers.

Thanks to All Who Helped "Make a Difference"

Countless businesses and individuals contributed items and services for the ILI Honoring event and auction. Thanks to all who helped make the difference!

The organizing committee consisted of: LaDonna Harris (Comanche, Honorary Chair), Teri Ellis (Co-Chair), Maura Dhu Studi (Co-Chair) and Tessie Naranjo (Santa Clara Pueblo).

Numerous volunteers were involved in creating a magical and successful evening.

Table Sponsors

Fairfield Language Technologies, Gold Table
San Felipe Casino Hollywood, Silver Table
Joanna Hess, Silver Table

Services and In-kind Contributions

Simon Ortiz, MC
Cedric Chavez, Opening Blessing
Gerald L. Hill, Welcoming
Denise Wallace, Awards Pendants
Esther Martinez, Honors Presentation
Tessie Naranjo, Honors Presentation
Wes Studi, Honors Presentation
Maura Dhu Studie, Honors Presentation
Lou Ann Sherbet, Auctioneer
Carney Saupitty, Honoring flute playing
Long Road Singers, closing drumming
Jon Ghahate, stage management and video
Sibel Melik, photography
Santa Fe Audio Visual, PA system and services
Cheryl Barry, invitation design
Todos Santos Chocolates, alligator chocolates
Vines, centerpiece flowers
Robert Craig Wine Cellars, wine
Niebaum-Coppola Estate Winery, wine
Grgich Hills Cellar, wine
Robert Mondavi, wine
Inn of the Anasazi, rooms for guests

Donations of Auction Items

Jeri Ah-Be-Hill
Carol Anthony
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Doug Coffin
Bobby Jo Coleman/The Cos Bar
Robert Craig Wine Cellars
Jamie Davies/Schramsberg Vineyards

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Honoring Event
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Erica Eckerstrand
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Bea Duran Tioux
Felix Vigil
Randall G. West, Expressions
Photography
Mark & Lerin Winter, Toadlena
Trading Post
The Yarrow Collection
Zen World Cuisine

Helping Hands

Camel Rock Suites
Jeffrey Hewitt
IAIA Museum
Silver Sun Gallery

Event Committee

LaDonna Harris, Honorary Chair
Teri Ellis, Co-Chair
Maura Dhu Studie, Co-Chair
Tessie Naranjo
Layli Himes
Inée Slaughter

Volunteers

Cheryl Barry
Cedric Chavez
Sheila Gershen
Darius Himes
Povi Naranjo
Barbara Niggeman
Chuck Niggeman
Kate Nilsson
Doug Patinka
Rosie Simpson
Tatiana Lomahaftewa Slock
Shirlee Winder



Photos courtesy of Sibel Meilik

Language Field Survey Tracks Successful Tribal Language Programs

by Tessie Naranjo

One year ago, ILI initiated a language survey of 40 tribal communities to determine which teaching methods are successful in teaching Native American languages.

These teaching methods will serve as the basis for the production of "how-to" brochures, which will be disseminated to a wide range of tribal communities and individuals with established tribal language programs, as well as tribes that are planning new language programs.

To date, the ILI language survey team has collected data from nearly thirty tribal language programs and the three team members have visited tribal communities in Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona.

Drastic tribal language loss is now changing the attitude from "I can't because ..." to "It is my responsibility to teach my language" and "It is my responsibility to learn."

Mary S. Linn, Ph.D. candidate in linguistics at the University of Kansas, has collected language information from several tribes in Oklahoma.

Sheilah Nicholas, Hopi, Ph.D. candidate in Native American Studies at the University of Arizona, has gathered community and language profiles from communities in Arizona. Additionally, in October, Sheilah flew to the eastern United States to visit the Wampanoag Language Program near Boston and meet with members of the St. Regis Mohawk community in New York.

Tessie Naranjo, Tewa, has assembled language data from selected pueblo communities in New Mexico. In late August and early fall, Tessie traveled to

Nevada and Northern California to collect language data from the Washoe, Hupa, Yurok and Karuk communities.

What makes for a successful tribal language program?

The field survey members found that "team-teaching" yields a high rate of success. A language team may consist of elders, community language teachers, and outside resource people such as linguists and curriculum developers.

It was also observed that classes and language camps, which encourage parent and extended family involvement, are more successful.

Thirdly, an attitude of individual responsibility is key to preservation of tribal languages. More and more, the attitude of "I can't because..." is changing.

Previous generations of individuals who attended Indian boarding schools were discouraged from speaking their languages and therefore did not teach their children.

Drastic tribal language loss is now changing the attitude from "I can't because ..." to "It is my responsibility to teach my language" and "It is my responsibility to learn."

The language data gathered so far has allowed the language survey team to deliver its preliminary findings at two major conferences.

All of the team members traveled to Toronto in April to make a presentation based on findings from 15 field visits. In early October, two members introduced language loss statistics as well as additional findings at the ATLATL Arts Conference in New York City.

The language field workers also discussed their findings at the Sovereignty Symposium in Tulsa, Oklahoma in June and at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe, New Mexico in October.

For the next several months, the team will continue to visit various



Tessie Naranjo, ILI field language survey project coordinator, presented initial findings at the 7th Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Language Conference in Toronto, Canada. Also participating was Robert St. Clair of the University of Louisville.

tribal language programs throughout the country, including Alaska.

Field visits will end in late Spring 2001. After that time, the language field workers will work with two additional language survey team members to analyze the data in preparation for production of the "how-to" brochures.

From the beginning, the language field team members' efforts have been guided principally by two individuals, Akira Yamamoto and Ofelia Zepeda.

Professor Yamamoto is Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of Kansas. Professor Zepeda is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Arizona.

Both are active in tribal language revitalization efforts, locally, nationally and globally. They have been influential in providing the framework for this project.

The project concept blossomed during the ILI's intensive three-day symposium in 1997 when a multi-disciplinary group of Native American educators, language specialists, and linguists came together in Santa Fe to plan for a national clearinghouse of indigenous language programs.

The language field team will continue to give an update on the progress of the project in later issues of the ILI newsletter.

Editor's note: Tessie Naranjo is Vice President of the Board of Directors of ILI. This two-year project is funded by the Educational Foundation of America.

Conferences Spotlight The Challenge and Promise of Language Revitalization

by Akira Yamamoto

Foundation for Endangered Languages Annual Meeting

Ofelia Zepeda was the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the Foundation for Endangered Languages held this Fall in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Her presentation focused on this year's conference theme of "Literacy in Endangered Language Communities," emphasizing the importance of developing literacy in indigenous languages.

She and other speakers pointed out that literacy has an impact on the language community in several significant ways, but often has positive and negative sides.

It can be a unifying force in that "literacy" works toward standardizing the language (pulling together various dialectal differences and writing systems), thus allowing the preparation of uniform teaching materials.

On the other hand, literacy may cause differences within a community to become even more magnified. Therefore, careful preparation for literacy work is crucially important.

Literacy is a result of and also leads to more focused and intense efforts in documenting an endangered language. This process is often facilitated by formation of a language team to strengthen the revitalization effort within the community.

While some people may oppose writing an oral tradition because it "reduces the language to writing," conference speakers emphasized that the language is not "reduced" but, in fact, is expanded when written. Establishing a written as well as oral tradition provides additional means for the language to be perpetuated.

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3rd Annual ILI Language Fair To Honor Young Native American Creativity

WANTED!

ENTRIES for the 3RD ANNUAL NATIVE YOUTH LANGUAGE FAIR, POSTER CONTEST & POW WOW

Saturday, April 7th, 2001
Santa Fe Indian School

SEEKING:
POSTERS
POETRY,
SONGS,
STORIES,
DANCE AND
DRAMA
IN NATIVE
LANGUAGES
FROM YOUTH
AGES:
PRESCHOOL
THROUGH 19 YRS
PRIZES FOR ALL!!



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INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

FORMERLY IPOLA

telephone 505.820.0311 fax 505.820.0316

email ili@indigenous-language.com

The Third Annual Native American Youth Language Fair, Poster Contest and Pow Wow, scheduled for next April, will showcase young Native Americans who use their heritage languages creatively in today's context. Participants work with teachers, parents and others in their communities to develop their presentations. The Fair is a place where all the participants are honored for their efforts and contribution to the important work of reinvigorating the heritage languages. For entry forms and information, contact ILI.

Relate Working Seminar

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Research information on cognitive functions and language teaching for educators could be helpful in developing more effective teaching methods, curricula, and teacher-training materials.

Many other factors that affect the process of heritage language retention and acquisition were discussed, including how language revitalization affects indigenous communities, politically, emotionally, and financially; what elements within and from outside the communities hinder language revitalization; and how language revitalization strengthens indigenous sovereignty and how that affects society at large.

Seminar participants presented a panel discussion for the public at Hotel Santa Fe on December 2 to share the ideas that evolved during this unique coming together of great minds.

An in-depth report on the first RELATE Working Seminar and its results will be featured in our next issue of the Native Language Network. Look for us in early 2001!

Seminar participants were:

Gerald Hill (Oneida), Attorney at Law, community language scholar;

Maya Honda, Professor of Human Development, Wheelock College;

Endangered Language Conferences

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International Conference on Endangered Languages, Kyoto, Japan

A global perspective on the critical issues of language endangerment was presented at a unique conference in Kyoto, Japan, November 23-25, 2000.

Coordinators of the conference were Japanese linguists, Professors Osahito Miyaoka and Osamu Sakiyama. Professor Miyaoka has been instrumental in obtaining a major grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education for a large-scale project to document endangered languages in the Pacific Rim area (including the Americas).

The project's mission is to document as many endangered languages as possible, as thoroughly as possible. In doing so, the issues and concerns of professional linguists working in endangered language communities have become highlighted. As an added dimension to this project, participating linguists will be responsible for recruiting language community individuals and training them to do language research.

In addition to Japanese linguistics experts, speakers were featured from the United States, Germany, France, The Netherlands, Australia and Chile.

Editor's Note: Professor Yamamoto is Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of Kansas.

Tessie Naranjo (Santa Clara Pueblo), Sociologist, community language scholar;

Wayne O'Neil, Professor of Linguistics, cognition development scholar, MIT;

Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), Writer/Poet;

Mary Eunice Romero (Cochiti Pueblo), Doctoral Candidate, UC Berkeley and community language scholar;

William Pila Wilson, Professor of Linguistics, University of Hawaii at Hilo;

Lily Wong Fillmore, Professor of Early Childhood Education & Second Language Learning, UC Berkeley;

Akira Yamamoto, Professor of Linguistics, University of Kansas;

Ofelia Zepeda (Tohono O'odham), Professor of Linguistics, University of Arizona.

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