Language endangerment
Language endangerment

Numbers

• How many languages are spoken world-wide?
Language endangerment

Numbers

• How many languages are spoken world-wide?
• 6,000-7,000
Language endangerment

Numbers

• How many languages are spoken world-wide?
  • 6,000-7,000

• How many could be lost?
Language endangerment

Numbers

• How many languages are spoken world-wide?
  • 6,000-7,000

• How many could be lost?
  • estimates: 50-90% could cease being spoken by end of present century
Isn’t language change and loss normal?
Isn’t language change and loss normal?

Yes, but:

• pace has accelerated
• part of a larger process of loss of cultural and intellectual diversity
• parallel to the loss of diversity in species

(based on Hale 1992:1)
What can linguists do?
What can linguists do?
Can linguists “save” languages?
What can linguists do?
Can linguists “save” languages?

NO
What can linguists do?
Can linguists “save” languages?

NO

Communities can save languages
So, what can linguists do?
So, what can linguists do?

Collaborate, with

• tribes
• language programs
• language activists
• language teachers
• schools
Examples of collaboration with WI tribes

• Menominee
  • since 1998
  • 2 dictionaries, various teaching materials
• Potawatomi
  • since 2009
  • dictionary, in-progress narratives project

... and many other linguists working with many other Wisconsin tribes
Relevance to this summit?
There are currently 7,000 languages spoken in the world, and at least half are projected to disappear in this century.

The Endangered Language Fund is helping to stem the tide.
Our ability to connect to this knowledge system can positively affect our well-being as a community.”

- Daryl Baldwin

Click here to watch the video

OUR MISSION Promoting language revitalization as a path to community health and well-being.

Our Work

Health statistics in Native America are among the worst in the world. One tool for improving health has become apparent in recent years: language. Communities that maintain their Native language have lower suicide rates. Elders often find renewed vitality when called upon to help the younger generations recover a language. Youths in language programs graduate from high school at higher rates than those who take a mainstream language like Spanish. There are many other, as yet unmeasured benefits that have been claimed for the relatively simple yet powerful mechanism of language programs. Please help us extend the scope of that benefit by contributing to Healing Through Language.

Newsletter

Email Address:

subscribe
Healing through Language

- lots of anecdotal evidence
- very few studies so far
  - 2014 study from University of Alberta
  - conclusion: “First Nations that have been better able to preserve their culture may be relatively protected from diabetes.”
Healing through Language

our goals:

• emphasize that language revitalization programs are more than linguistic efforts – they foster healthier communities
• demonstrate this effect through conducting first-hand research
• support such projects through grant-making programs
Thank you!

- Monica Macaulay – mmacaula@wisc.edu
- ILPP – csumc.wisc.edu/node/110
- ELF – www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/
- HTL – www.healingthroughlanguage.org/

Reference: