

LIVING TONGUES

Institute for Endangered Languages

**Bringing
Voices to
the Future**

Indiana Jones' spirit certainly infects the intrepid heroes of The Linguists. These are bold academics who plunge into the jungles and backwater villages of the world to rescue living tongues about to go extinct.... The film should perform marvelously on television once it completes a festival run that begins at Sundance.

[The Linguists](#)
[Reuters:](#)
["Linguists" the](#)
[talk of the town](#)
[at Sundance](#)

'THE LINGUISTS' Film

We are pleased to announce that the film *"The Linguists"* by Ironbound Films, starring Dr. Greg Anderson and Dr. David Harrison, was selected to play at the Spectrum: Spotlight Documentary section at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. We are hopeful this renewed round of media attention will significantly increase support for our work, as we cannot pursue our mission of maintaining and revitalizing global linguistic diversity without support of concerned members of the public.



Harrison and Anderson with Opino Gomango, Sora consultant,

PBS is airing *"The Linguists"* on Thursday, February 28, 2008 at 10PM. UNESCO is planning to premiere our film in Paris

on February 21, 2008. We'll also be screening the film in select theaters in the U.S. and Canada during that week.

GLOBAL LANGUAGE HOTSPOTS LIST

September 2007 was an exciting month for Living Tongues Institute. On the 18th we announced at a joint press conference with National Geographic the launch of both the *Enduring Voices Project* (see above), and the *Global Language Hotspots List*. Both of these were widely reported around the globe. In addition to major American news sources like the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, etc., through press coverage of the story by Reuters, AP, etc., articles were also found in such international sources as *The Inde-*

pendent (UK), *The Standard* (Hong Kong), major news outlets in China, Japan, Iran, Germany, Italy, Taiwan, and Korea, and Australia as well.

Press coverage was mainly about the Top 5 Language Hotspots. The October, 2007 edition of *National Geographic Magazine* includes in its front 'Geography' section a map of 13 Hotspots done by Living Tongues. The current list of hotspots is found at the *Enduring Voices* (www.languagehotspots.org) website. For more

on the science behind the list, consult our white paper at the Lan-



guage Hotspots page at www.livingtongues.org. Dr. Anderson will announce the revised list of language hotspots at the end of February.

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Special points of interest:

- The Linguists on PBS February 26, 2008
- International Mother Language Day February 21
- Check us out on the web at www.livingtongues.org

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ENDURING VOICES PROJECT WITH NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Our long-term strategic partnership with National Geographic Society's Mission Programs, *Enduring Voices* was formally

launched in 2007.

The first expedition took place in July-August 2007. We visited several Aboriginal communities in Australia to learn about community efforts at language revitalization of several of the numerous vanishing Australian Aboriginal languages and their current use and status. The team consisted of Greg Anderson, David Harrison and Chris Rainier, National Geographic Fellow and internationally renowned photographer.

In Northern Territory, Australia, we were invited to visit several communities where grassroots activists have been hard at work on language revitalization issues. It is the work of organizations such as the *Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education* that inspire our work at the Living Tongues Institute. In addition to providing expert guidance to communities in need of professional assistance in their language programs in Northern Australia, with high-quality community-driven publications, the Batchelor Institute

for Indigenous Tertiary Education is also the only accredited organization in Australia that can train degree-holding indigenous linguists themselves, instructed only or mainly by indigenous teachers. Our visit to communities in Northern Territory included the community of Wadeye where Murrinh Patha thrives with the aid of local community participants and assistance from the Batchelor Institute. Apart from the healthy 1000-strong community of Murrinh Patha speakers, several other indigenous languages barely cling to existence in Wadeye, such as Magati Ke. Batchelor Institute's Maree Klesch is working together with Aloysius Kungul who is a trained linguist as well as a com-

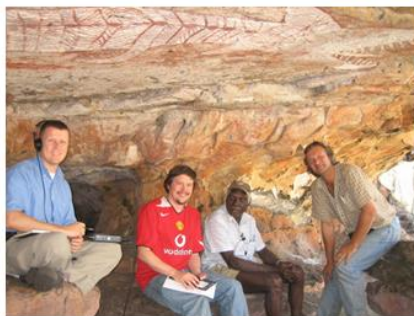
munity member, in addition to local language activist/scholar Mark Crocombe, to help preserve the dreaming stories such as the one depicted above, and other parts of Magati Ke for future generations. Note that

while the children and younger adult generations all speak Murrinh Patha, the dominant local Aboriginal language, it is extremely different from Magati Ke.

Revitalization is one of the toughest challenges facing any language that has begun to lose speakers. It takes the dedication of numerous individuals for years to even begin to make a difference. The Yawuru people have been fighting back, but lack the equipment and operational expertise to record what is possible while there are still 2 or 3 fluent speakers left. Funding targeted for this purpose is *urgently needed*.

We were also greeted warmly by speakers of Walmajarri in the service of Kimberley Interpreting Services in Broome (Annette Kogolo and Clifton Bieundurry pictured with Dr. Anderson and Dr. Harrison below left).

Walmajarri is a desert language belonging to the far-flung Pama-Nyungan family of Australian languages and is one of the few that can be said to be thriving in the northern part of Western Australia.



The Enduring Voices Team (Dr. David Harrison, Dr. Greg Anderson and Chris Rainier) with Charlie Mangulda, speaker of Anurdag and Iwaidja, Australia.

BRINGING VOICES TO THE FUTURE . . .

Assisting indigenous communities in their struggles for cultural linguistic survival.

Minority languages are being increasingly replaced by various politically, economically, or socio-culturally dominant ones. Every two weeks the last fluent speaker of a language passes on and with him/her goes literally hundreds of generations of

traditional knowledge encoded in these ancestral tongues. Nearly half of the world's languages are likely to vanish in the next 100 years.

The mission of the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages is to pro-

mote the documentation, maintenance, preservation, and revitalization of endangered languages worldwide through linguist-aided, community-driven multi-media language documentation projects.

"Revitalization is one of the toughest challenges facing any language that has begun to lose speakers."

The global threat of language endangerment stands among the most important and pressing socio-cultural issues of the twenty-first century.