

Fall 2013

# Breath of Life: Revitalizing California's Native Languages Through Archives

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.yfva-e77q>  
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BREATH OF LIFE:  
REVITALIZING CALIFORNIA'S NATIVE LANGUAGES  
THROUGH ARCHIVES

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Library and Information Science

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Library and Information Science

by

Susan Gehr

December 2013

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Susan Gehr

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approved the Thesis Titled

BREATH OF LIFE:  
REVITALIZING CALIFORNIA'S NATIVE LANGUAGES  
THROUGH ARCHIVES

by

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## ABSTRACT

### BREATH OF LIFE: REVITALIZING CALIFORNIA'S NATIVE LANGUAGES THROUGH ARCHIVES

by Susan Gehr

This thesis presents an oral history of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS) and its Breath of Life Workshop. Held every other year since 1996, the workshop is designed to meet the language revitalization needs of California Indian people whose languages have no living fluent speakers. Breath of Life Workshop organizers arrange visits to four archives on the University of California, Berkeley, campus and connect participants with linguistic mentors to read and interpret archival documents in their language for the purpose of bringing their language back into use.

Through interviews with AICLS founders, Breath of Life Workshop participants, and University of California, Berkeley, linguists and archivists, this study uncovers the role archivists play in the Breath of Life Workshops and in the care of Native language collections more generally. Topics addressed include the selection and use of archival documents in the program and the changes to archival practice and policies that have resulted from archivists' work with Breath of Life participants. The thesis also examines issues involved in the collection, arrangement, description, preservation, and access to the documentation of California Indian languages. The study concludes with recommendations for future language revitalization programs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am so grateful for all the support I received in the course of writing this thesis. I thank Debra Hansen for chairing my committee, for the gift of so much of her time spent reading and improving my thesis from beginning to end, for her steady encouragement, and for helping me grow as a writer. I thank committee members David de Lorenzo and Pat Franks for their commitment to my thesis, for their helpful ideas, and for their endorsement of my work.

I thank the Southwest Oral History Association, the Lynn Reyer Award in Tribal Community Development/SPAIC, and San José State University's Circle of Learning Project for their financial support and encouragement.

I thank the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival for granting me permission to do an oral history of their vital and effective organization. I thank the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages for agreeing to receive the oral history collection from which this thesis was written. I am grateful for San José State University's oral history instructor Nancy MacKay for preparing me so well for this thesis. I thank also Teresa Bergen for her excellent interview transcription services.

I thank oral history narrators L. Frank Manriquez, Leanne Hinton, Malcolm Margolin, Quirina L. Geary, Leah Mata, Lauren Lassleben, Lisa Conathan, and Andrew Garrett for taking the time to share their stories, knowledge, and experiences with me.

This thesis could not have been finished without the enthusiasm of my son Logan who supported my time management schemes wholeheartedly. A special thank you to my husband Greg, without whom I could not have dedicated so much time to this thesis.

Finally, I wish to thank my friends at PhiniseD.org for all their words of encouragement and their good advice. I am also very grateful to Stephen King for all the helpful ideas in his book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. And a scratch behind the ears goes out to my cat Honda, who was always a calm and adorable presence as I wrote.

#### DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my son Logan, my best taskmaster who informed me that I was not nervous about finishing my thesis, I was motivated.

NASALIZING, ORTHOGRAPHIZING, morphemizing, phoneticizing.  
Linguisticizing, glot'alizing, diphthonging, cognating. Retroflexing,  
affixing, fricativizing, aspirating... phew! What a week, but we wouldn't  
have missed it for the world! Thank you for your love, your generosity,  
your vitality... but now it's time to go. Breath of life...  
bagels no more!

from "Breath of Life—Silent No More"

by Linda Yamane (Rumsien Ohlone)

reproduced here courtesy of Heyday Books

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In an interview concerning the Native languages collections created by Humboldt State University's Center for Indian Community Development, Karuk artist and language scholar Julian Lang said, "In the end, Indians don't want to be mainstream; they want to be Indians."<sup>1</sup>

When the era of outright extermination of Native American peoples drew to a close in the late 19th century, cultural assimilation of Native Americans became the agenda of the U.S. government. In an 1880s report discussed in linguist Leanne Hinton's book chapter "Federal Language Policy and Indigenous Languages in the United States," J.D.C. Atkins, federal commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, wrote, "The first step to be taken toward civilization, toward teaching Indians the mischief and folly of continuing in their barbarous practices, is to teach them the English language."<sup>2</sup> Hinton went on to describe how the Indian boarding school system enforced English-only policies so harshly that some Native children gave up speaking their languages and swore they would protect their children by never teaching them. Other Native children resisted the pressure to give up their Native language. Frances Jack (Pomo) told her parents and her teachers that she did not want to quit speaking her language. Instead, she dropped out of the school partway through the fifth grade.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Lang (Karuk) language scholar, writer and artist, unpublished interview with the author, April 29, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Leanne Hinton, "Federal Language Policy and Indigenous Languages in the United States," in *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, eds. Leanne Hinton and Kenneth L. Hale (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2001), 41.

<sup>3</sup> Leanne Hinton, *Flutes of Fire: Essays on California Indian Languages* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1994), 179.

As Native American languages were experiencing precipitous drops in numbers of speakers due to loss of life and pressures to speak only English, anthropologists and linguists were traveling throughout the West to document the languages. From 1907 until his death in 1961, John Peabody Harrington took nearly a million pages of notes and made thousands of recordings of more than ninety languages.<sup>4</sup> Murray Emeneau and Mary Haas founded both the Department of Linguistics and the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages at the University of California at Berkeley in 1953. Haas and Emeneau sent many graduate students out to work on documenting California's diverse Indian languages, including Wiyot, Shasta and Chumash, whose last speakers have since passed away.

By the 1950s, a few individuals and families began to document, re-learn, and teach Native languages that had not been passed down to the children of those who were forced to go to boarding schools. For example, the Bommelyn family of the Tolowa people tried to develop a writing system for their language because the remaining elderly speakers were often reluctant to be recorded. They did not have the expertise to develop their own writing system and were unsuccessful in their efforts to attract a linguist to the Tolowa language.<sup>5</sup>

During the period of the civil rights movement in the United States, many cultural and political realities were changing in the 1960s and 1970s. Native American leaders worked together to make improvements in their social, political and educational

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<sup>4</sup> Jane MacLaren Walsh, *John Peabody Harrington: The Man and His California Indian Fieldnotes* (Ramona, CA: Ballena Press, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> Hinton, *Flutes of Fire*, 216-17.



situations. People like David Risling, Jr., (Hupa) brought together hundreds of Indian people to discuss the need to change the current educational system to include all aspects of Native cultures in the school's program.<sup>6</sup> One key cultural element in this revitalization was the study and use of Native American languages. On a national level, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 provided opportunities for Native American language instruction in the schools and greater tribal control over schools with Native American students.<sup>7</sup>

More organized efforts to revitalize California's Native languages came out of discussions that took place at the Tribal Scholars Language Conference convened in 1992. This conference brought together Native Californians from all over the state who, concerned that their languages would be lost, were working to learn a language or gather documentation or teach a language to others. It was at this conference that the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS, pronounced Ai-klz) was formed, and it was AICLS that organized the first Breath of Life Workshop in 1996.

The Breath of Life Workshop connects tribal participants with Native American language archival collections at the University of California at Berkeley. Using archival documents, AICLS mentors, usually linguistic professors and graduate students with expertise in reading and interpreting Native American languages, assist Native Americans in studying their tribal languages. The documents used in the program

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<sup>6</sup> Jack D. Forbes, *Native Americans of California and Nevada* (Healdsburg, CA: Naturegraph Publishers, 1969).

<sup>7</sup> Larisa Warhol, *Native American Language Policy in the United States* (Washington, DC: Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages, 2011).

include linguistic and ethnographic publications, unpublished field notebooks, file slips, and audio recordings.

### Literature Review

In the last forty years, many Native American tribes have been seeking to reverse the trend of cultural assimilation to revitalize their traditions and languages. A review of the literature revealed that scholarly research has been done on the topic of revitalizing Native American and other endangered languages. Some literature on libraries and archives in Native communities was also found. However, there is almost no literature that exists at the intersection of indigenous languages revitalization and library and information sciences. In a 2000 guest editorial in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Cheryl Metoyer expressed concern that while there was a great deal of description of the information needs of culturally diverse groups, there was very little research being done on Native Americans.<sup>8</sup> Ten years later, it was similarly reported in the *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences* that the lack of research concerning indigenous librarianship was an ongoing problem.<sup>9</sup>

This literature review will address three areas: works on Native American language revitalization efforts, library and information services for Native populations, and works that specifically discuss the role of libraries and archives in language revitalization. Reviewing these areas will give the needed background on indigenous

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<sup>8</sup> Cheryl A. Metoyer, "Missing Links in Reaching Culturally Diverse Students in Academic Libraries," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 26, no. 3 (May 2000): 157.

<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Burns et al., "Indigenous Librarianship," in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 2330-46.

language revitalization as well as discuss the unique issues in library and information services for indigenous populations. In particular, the role that archives and archivists can play in indigenous language revitalization will be discussed, including the pros and cons of linguists establishing their own language archives.

### *Native American Language Revitalization Efforts*

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, many Native American tribes were seeking to restore their cultures and languages. Sometimes independently, sometimes with the assistance of linguists, anthropologists and educators, they began to relearn their languages and make plans for their revitalization. From their work come the key writings in this area.

Jon Reyner, Professor of Bilingual Multicultural Education at Northern Arizona University, has long been interested in improving the education of Native American students and has been involved in the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposia since 1994. He has written and edited over fifty books and articles on Native language revitalization, including his 2009 book *Indigenous Language Revitalization: Encouragement, Guidance and Lessons Learned*, which discussed the history of indigenous language revitalization, the role of linguists, and writing and technology in language revitalization work.<sup>10</sup>

Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale's 2001 *Green Book of Language Revitalization* is regarded by both academic linguists and Native language advocates as a key work that

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<sup>10</sup> Jon Allan Reyhner and Louise Lockard, eds., *Indigenous Language Revitalization: Encouragement, Guidance & Lessons Learned* (Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University, 2009), <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/ILR/>.

documents principles and methods in language revitalization for both languages that have speakers and languages that have gone dormant.<sup>11</sup> Some of the case studies in Hinton and Hale's book are written by members of the language communities themselves, including Linda Yamane's reflections on her efforts to revitalize her language, Rumsien Ohlone, from archival documentation. In "New Life for a Lost Language," Yamane described in detail the difficulties she had in accessing John Peabody Harrington's microfilmed field notes on Rumsien at the King Library of San José State University, from a library assistant's unkept promise to uncataloged collections.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately, the library staff she met that day persisted in their effort to help, and eventually Yamane was connected with the language materials she was seeking.

Hinton's chapter on Breath of Life, "The Use of Linguistic Archives in Language Revitalization: The Native California Language Restoration Workshop" mentioned that archivists had provided generous assistance but did not describe the nature of the assistance. The chapter also mentioned that one of the goals of the workshop was to introduce participants to the archival materials available on their languages and to show them how they get access to archival materials both during and after the workshop. However, the process by which this goal is achieved was not described.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Leanne Hinton and Kenneth L. Hale, *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Linda Yamane, "New Life for a Lost Language," in *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, eds. Leanne Hinton and Kenneth L. Hale (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2001), 429-32.

<sup>13</sup> Leanne Hinton, "The Use of Linguistic Archives in Language Revitalization: The Native California Language Restoration Workshop," in *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice* 419-23.

In the section “What Happens After the Workshop?” one message Hinton wanted participants to receive from Breath of Life was that university archives are open to everyone. Hinton also stated that Native people are seeking access to materials on their languages at least as often as professional scholars and that the university has a role in Native language revitalization by caring for and providing access to language data archived there. Hinton also mentioned that the university could become the repository chosen by Native people creating new documentation of their languages and that the workshop could be the means by which relationships of trust could be built between the archives and Native people documenting their languages.

In the 2000 book *Warrabarna Kurna! Reclaiming an Australian Language* linguist Rob Amery documented the history of the Kurna language, the sources of Kurna language data, and the process of using that data to restore a language whose last fluent speaker died in 1929. The only references to the role of the archives, however, were two passages describing problems with translations provided by the archivists and Aboriginal resentment “at having to ‘buy back’ their linguistic heritage from archives in the same way that they are having to buy back artifacts from museums overseas.”<sup>14</sup> The concept of the archivists doing translation work is unusual, because archivists do not typically have linguistic or language documentation background. Also, the resentment Amery referred to is a sentiment that Breath of Life seeks to counteract by facilitating the visits of Native participants to archival institutions.

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<sup>14</sup> Rob Amery, *Warrabarna Kurna!: Reclaiming an Australian Language* (Lisse, Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger, 2000), 45; Amery, *Warrabarna Kurna!*, 110.

The 2006 textbook *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* was written for both scholars interested in language revitalization and for the language communities themselves to frame the issues, provide case studies that address key aspects of literacy and writing systems, and suggest models for establishing language revitalization programs.<sup>15</sup> Authors Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley borrow the term “language reclamation” from Amery and use many examples from Kaurna to explain language reclamation from documentation. The authors mention that for languages with no fluent speakers, documentation is needed and that most of that documentation was created and stored outside of the language community. Grenoble and Whaley point out that language materials require linguistic expertise for their assessment and interpretation. Knowledge of related languages, another domain of the linguist, is also needed to connect language communities with supplemental data when the data on their language is lacking. However, in the course of discussing all the roles needed for a language reclamation program, there is no mention of the role of the archives or the archivist.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Library and Information Science Services to Native American Populations*

It was in the 1970s that awareness rose to the national level of the need for improvement in library and information services for tribal communities. The American Indian Library Association formed in 1979 and writings on library and information

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<sup>15</sup> Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley, *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Amery, *Warrabarna Kaurna!*, ??.

services for indigenous populations, which cover both tribal libraries and archival activities, began to be published.

The most important source on tribal librarianship is the American Library Association's Office for Literacy and Outreach Services' 2005 publication *Library Services to Indigenous Populations: Viewpoints and Resources*. Written by some of the key leaders in tribal librarianship, this volume recommends learning about tribal librarianship through oral history, because many of the major visionaries in indigenous librarianship work in remote tribal libraries, rarely attending national conferences or participating in academia.<sup>17</sup> Other chapters consider the roles and models for tribal librarianship. For example, in the chapter "Indigenous People and Public Libraries," David Ongley discusses what some public libraries do for the indigenous populations in their libraries, such as consult with the tribal communities for Native language services and collection advice and collect tribally produced materials including audio and video.<sup>18</sup> Karen Alexander's chapter, "Tribal Libraries: Current Issues," points out that tribal librarians "also work as their tribe's equivalent to the Library of Congress, the National Archives and the Smithsonian National Museums of Natural History and American

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<sup>17</sup> Kelly Webster, *Library Services to Indigenous Populations: Viewpoints & Resources* (Chicago: Office for Literacy and Outreach Services, American Library Association, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> David Ongley, "Indigenous People and Public Libraries," in *Library Services to Indigenous Populations: Viewpoints & Resources*, ed. Kelly Webster (Chicago: Office for Literacy and Outreach Services, American Library Association, 2005), 6-10.

History all combined” and that tribal libraries must not only passively collect but proactively create.<sup>19</sup>

Lotsee Patterson (Comanche), founder of the American Indian Library Association and Professor Emeritus at the University of Oklahoma School of Library and Information Studies, directed and co-wrote *TRAILS: Tribal Library Procedures Manual*, an ALA-sponsored guide to establish and run tribal libraries. Echoing Karen Alexander’s statement that tribal libraries take on many more information-related functions than typical non-tribal public libraries, *TRAILS* also discusses the development and operation of tribal archives.<sup>20</sup>

The article “Indigenous Librarianship” in the 2010 edition of *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences* discusses the importance of providing culturally relevant collections, equitable access to library services and virtual repatriation, or the sharing of copies of library, museum and archival documents of importance to tribal communities in order to rebuild their local knowledge systems. The article also featured profiles of indigenous librarians and archivists, such as Gene Joseph, Wet’suwet’en Dakehl of Canada, who collaborated with linguists, translators and cartographers to identify, process, preserve and use traditional knowledge documentation as part of a land claims court trial.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Karen Alexander, “Tribal Libraries: Current Issues,” in *Library Services to Indigenous Populations*, 11-15.

<sup>20</sup> Lotsee Patterson, *TRAILS: Tribal Library Procedures Manual*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: American Library Association Office for Literacy and Outreach Services, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Burns et al., *Indigenous Librarianship*, 2330-46.



Writings that addressed tribal communities and the role of archives even more specifically also began to appear in the 1970s. One of the first publications was an article by historian William T. Hagan that documented two programs, one hosted by the Newberry Library's Center for the History of the American Indian and the other at the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives, that sought to connect Indian people with archival collections and foster the development of tribal archives.<sup>22</sup> Related to the idea of virtual repatriation discussed in the “Indigenous Librarianship” article, Hagan observed that the dependence of tribal communities on non-tribally held archives would persist in that the originals would sometimes remain in the custody of archives far away from the community. Hagan also called for archivists to cooperate with and be of good service to the Native people who would be coming to conduct research at their institutions.

John Fleckner's *Native American Archives: An Introduction*, published by the Society of American Archivists in 1984, was the first text to provide basic archives guidance while addressing the specific concerns of people working with tribal archives.<sup>23</sup> The book was written for the Native American Archives Project to promote the founding of archives programs by Native American groups. It was not meant to provide graduate-level training in issues of tribal archives but to provide some basic guidance to tribal librarians or to help a trained archivist work more successfully with Native American groups. Though Fleckner mentioned language and audio collections only briefly, this

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<sup>22</sup> William T. Hagan, “Archival Captive—The American Indian,” *American Archivist* 41, no. 2 (April 1978): 135-48.

<sup>23</sup> John Fleckner, *Native American Archives: An Introduction* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1984).

book is an essential guide for a tribal community establishing an archive, of which language collections might be a part.

In 2003, Loriene Roy (Minnesota Chippewa), professor at the School of Information, University of Texas, Austin, and then-student Daniel Alonzo wrote “Perspectives on Tribal Archives,” which complements and builds on Fleckner’s book, documenting what types of records are generally held by tribal archives and the special concerns that tribal archives face.<sup>24</sup> Roy and Alonzo discussed the need of tribal archives to seek relevant records held by institutions outside of the tribe and to be aware that tribal communities may be mistrustful of any bureaucratic institutions, including archives. Roy and Alonzo build on Fleckner by discussing contemporary technology use by tribal archives. In “A Different Kind of Archival Security: Three Cases,” Richard Cox and his co-authors discussed the need for archivists to take a pro-active stance by being willing to care for materials in consultation with the tribal community, especially where original archival materials are held by institutions far from the tribal communities.<sup>25</sup> Both of these articles mention the role of the archival materials in tribal federal recognition claims and in cultural revitalization but do not describe the process in any detail.

#### *Role of Libraries and Archives in Language Revitalization*

The literature at the intersection of language revitalization and library and information science is in its early stages. The role of the archivist and librarian is hardly mentioned in the articles about Breath of Life workshop, *The Green Book of Language*

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<sup>24</sup> Loriene Roy and Daniel L. Alonzo, “Perspectives on Tribal Archives,” *Electronic Library* 21, no. 5 (2003): 422-27.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Cox et al., “A Different Kind of Archival Security: Three Cases,” *Library & Archival Security* 22, no. 1 (2009): 33-60.

*Revitalization*, or other language revitalization literature. In some ways, this is appropriate, as the focus of the workshop is the reunion of the tribal participants with their dormant languages. But the role of library and information science does factor significantly in the success of Breath of Life, as the program requires substantial archival resources and expertise.

Most of the literature regarding the Breath of Life Workshop method specifically is limited to descriptive reports by organizers and participants, possibly confirming concerns about the lack of research in the field. Some of these reports mention the archives and archivists by name, but only one describes their work in any detail, an unpublished report from 2008 by Leanne Hinton which discussed the advance planning between Breath of Life organizers and archivists and how Bancroft archivist Lauren Lassleben made arrangements for the microfilm collection to be available in the main library while the Bancroft was closed for earthquake retrofitting.<sup>26</sup>

One of these reports was an article by Breath of Life participant Kate Hedges of the Konkow Maidu Indian Cultural Preservation Association.<sup>27</sup> Hedges discussed the types of documentation that was done on her language, both by linguists and by tribal members who were concerned about the decline of their language. Hedges described finding lots of materials on Konkow Maidu at her first Breath of Life Workshop, but some of the materials had access restrictions on them that prevented her from listening to the recordings. By the 2006 Breath of Life, the access restrictions on the recordings held

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<sup>26</sup> Leanne Hinton, “Breath of Life Language Workshop, 2008” (unpublished report, 2008), 2.

<sup>27</sup> Kate Hedges, “Baby Steps—Walk before You Run,” Alliance for California Traditional Arts, [http://216.92.187.150/archives/whats\\_new/2008/april.htm](http://216.92.187.150/archives/whats_new/2008/april.htm)

by the Berkeley Language Center had been lifted and the recordings had been digitized and put online.

There are just a few scholarly works discussing the role of archives and archivists in endangered language documentation. Two significant examples have come from the directors of ethnomusicology archives. Mary Bucknum was the Associate Director/Librarian of the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University, Bloomington, when she wrote “Cataloging Field Recordings of American Indian Languages.”<sup>28</sup> Published in *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* in 1993, the article addressed the unique issues when cataloging and describing Native American language materials at the level of detail and expertise required by professional librarians and archivists at academic institutions such as the University of California, Berkeley. In a similar vein, Laurel Sercombe, Archivist for the Ethnomusicology Archive at the University of Washington, wrote about her work with Vi Hilbert, an Upper Skagit speaker of Lushootseed who was very involved in the documentation revival of her language and culture. Sercombe’s 2003 article “Researching the Music of the First People of the Pacific Northwest: From the Academy to the Brain Room” focused on Hilbert’s ground-breaking work in ethnomusicology, describing all of the language, music, and cultural materials she made and collected over the years, and her gifting of these materials to the University of Washington towards the end of her life.<sup>29</sup> Sercombe

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<sup>28</sup> Mary Russell Bucknum, “Cataloging Field Recordings of American Indian Languages,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1993):15-28.

<sup>29</sup> Laurel Sercombe, “Researching the Music of the First People of the Pacific Northwest: From the Academy to the Brain Room,” *Fontes Artis Musicae* 50, no. 2-4 (April-December, 2003): 81-88.

closed with direct advice to archival institutions on the topic of improving research conditions for members of the Native communities covered in their collections.

Sercombe advised that archivists, as custodians of nearly all recordings made between the 1890s and the 1960s, have a unique responsibility to Native people. Those responsibilities include cultivating relationships with tribal archives and cultural centers, consulting with tribal leaders when making decisions about appropriate use of Native materials, facilitating copy requests and research by Native people, and developing cooperative relationships where copies of collections can be deposited in archives closer to Native communities.

Others interested in the work of archivists responsible for tribal language records have considered the challenges of preservation and formatting. Edward Hill wrote a case study of librarian Dana McFarland's work with the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group's papers.<sup>30</sup> Hill's 2007 article in *Feliciter*, the magazine of the Canadian Library Association, briefly mentioned the complexities of maintaining the integrity of records written in the Hul'qumi'num language while importing them into a digital information management system. Hill did not make any specific suggestions for archival practice, but many indigenous languages have non-Latin based writing systems, and work on the topic would have been beneficial.

An outcome of regional and national conferences devoted to tribal archives, libraries and museums, the 2011 book *Tribal Libraries, Archives and Museums: Preserving Our Language, Memory and Lifeways* discusses case studies; describes the

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<sup>30</sup> Edward Hill, "Creating Order in Ladysmith," *Feliciter* 53, no. 5 (2007): 264.

services, functions and collections of tribal information institutions; and offers advice on working at such institutions.<sup>31</sup> The book is written primarily for tribal information professionals, who generally do not have an MLS and yet are needed by their communities to fill the library, archives, and museum roles described previously by Karen Alexander and Lotsee Patterson. But the book is also meant to help with collaborations with non-tribal information institutions.

Gabriella Reznowski and Norma A. Joseph's chapter from *Tribal Libraries, Archives and Museums*, "Out of the Archives, Fostering Collaborative Environments for Language Revitalization," made four recommendations for collaborations between academic institutions and tribal libraries: collect language materials in a way that encourages accessibility to the community, establish relationships with tribal language managers while respecting tribal community protocols, assist with digitization and online engagement as requested by the community, and continue the work and the relationship as long as the tribe wishes.<sup>32</sup>

Another area where some work is being done on Native language archival collections is in the field of documentary linguistics. In these articles, archives and archivists are depicted as passive holders of language data, and in some cases, linguists discuss the development of their own archives to address specific needs. In the article "Digital Archives: Essential Elements in the Workflow for Endangered Languages

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<sup>31</sup> Lorie Roy, Anjali Bhasin, and Sarah K. Arriaga, *Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Preserving our Language, Memory, and Lifeways* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Gabriella Reznowski and Norma A. Joseph, "Out of the Archives: Fostering Collaborative Environments for Language Revitalization," in *Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums* 47-57.

Documentation”, for example, David Nathan, director of the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) at the University of London, discussed the establishment of endangered language archives for the purpose of preserving and providing access to materials collected by documentary linguists.<sup>33</sup> In a later article, Nathan described how ELAR provides online access to language data, but only as approved by researchers and language communities.<sup>34</sup>

Linguists Andrew Garrett, Leanne Hinton, and Mark Kaiser have also discussed archives and language preservation. In a presentation at the Linguistic Society of America’s 2008 annual meeting, they encouraged linguists to deposit their language data into archives and went on to describe the UC Berkeley archives and its role in the language revitalization projects there.<sup>35</sup> They also pointed out that up to 90 percent of users of language data in archives are community members and explained the benefit of linguists consulting with archivists early in their work. Arguing that a responsible language archive can help bring together the language data and the language community, they pointed out that linguists are taking on a great deal of responsibility if they decide to retain control of their language data. Many language documentation projects do, however, tend to handle the long-term storage of data in-house, establishing their own

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<sup>33</sup> David Nathan, “Digital Archives: Essential Elements in the Workflow for Endangered Languages Documentation,” *Language Documentation and Description* 5 (2008): 1-12.

<sup>34</sup> David Nathan, “Archives 2.0 for Endangered Languages: From Disk Space to MySpace,” *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 4, no. 1-2 (October, 2010): 111-24.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Garrett, Leanne Hinton and Mark Kaiser, “The Berkeley Language Archives: Archives as Community Resources” (Paper presented at the Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, January 2008).

archival repositories rather than coordinating with more established (but less savvy to linguistics-specific issues) archival institutions. At the 2009 annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Andrew Garrett and Lisa Conathan presented case studies of access negotiations between language communities, archives, and linguists in their panel “Archives, Communities, and Linguists: Negotiating Access to Language Documentation.”<sup>36</sup>

Two articles by Amah Mutsun language advocate Quirina Luna and linguists Lynnika Butler and Natasha Warner discuss the use of archival materials in connection with the Amah Mutsun language revitalization effort. The article “Ethics and Revitalization of Endangered Languages” brings up the concern that languages learned from archival materials are languages that can be only imperfectly learned, concluding that all languages change and imperfectly learned languages are one legitimate form of language change.<sup>37</sup> The other article discusses the issues of making a dictionary solely from archival materials, but does not say anything further about the effect that archives or archivists have on the process.<sup>38</sup>

The most recent and to date important publication dealing with Native language archival collections is the 2011 *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages* co-

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<sup>36</sup> Lisa Conathan and Andrew Garrett, “Archives, Communities, and Linguists: Negotiating Access to Language Documentation” (paper presented at the Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, January 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Natasha Warner, Quirina Luna and Lynnika Butler, “Ethics and Revitalization of Dormant Languages: The Mutsun Language,” *Language Documentation and Conservation* 1 (2007): 58-76.

<sup>38</sup> Natasha Warner, Lynnika Butler and Quirina Luna Costillas, “Making a Dictionary for Community use in Language Revitalization: The Case of Mutsun,” *International Journal of Lexicography* 19, no. 3 (2006): 257-85.



edited by Peter Austin and Julia Sallabank of the University of London's Department of Linguistics at the School of Oriental and African Studies.<sup>39</sup> Language documentation and archival essentials are addressed throughout this reference source, which advocates that the language communities need the raw language data more than they need the theoretical analysis of linguists. The editors also urge linguists to consult archives for existing data before embarking on a language documentation project, and if a new project is undertaken, linguists should identify and work with an archive to ensure long-term preservation of their data.

What is notable about *The Cambridge Handbook* is that the chapter "Archiving and Language Documentation" is written by someone who holds both a PhD in linguistics and an MLS with a specialization in archives, Lisa Conathan.<sup>40</sup> Conathan described the archival process that a collection of language documentation undergoes in an archives and the importance of archives to endangered language documentation so that academic linguists better understand the role of the archive in their work. The conclusion of this chapter touches on the uses for archival documentation of languages, briefly mentioning their role in language revitalization.

While less accessible than journal articles, books, and chapters, archivists have done some analysis of the role of archives and archivists with Native American language collections and the Breath of Life Workshops. There have been two sessions at annual

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<sup>39</sup> Peter K. Austin and Julia Sallabank, *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Lisa Conathan, "Archiving and Language Documentation," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*, eds. Peter Austin and Julia Sallabank (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 235-54.

meetings of the Society of American Archivists relevant to the topics of archives and language revitalization. In 2003, the session “Linguistic Diversity and Archives” featured an unpublished paper by Elizabeth Konzak (now Elizabeth Konzak-Phillips) on the AICLS Breath of Life Workshops. This groundbreaking paper featured interviews of Breath of Life participants Quirina Luna-Costillas (Mutsun Ohlone), Deborah Morillo (Northern Chumash), founders L. Frank Manriquez (Tongva/Ajachmem) and Leanne Hinton, and archivist Lauren Lassleben.<sup>41</sup> Brian Doyle, webmaster for the Society of American Archivists, wrote another one of the papers from the 2003 panel relevant to this thesis. His presentation on linguistic archival collections and technical standards for encoding non-Roman orthographies was later published as “Respect for Fonts: Linguistic Documentation and Lesser-Used Orthographies.”<sup>42</sup>

For the 2012 annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Lisa Conathan organized a panel on the national Breath of Life Institute held in Washington, DC.<sup>43</sup> Also presenting at that session were National Anthropological Archives archivist Leanda Gahegan and institute participant Donna Miranda-Begay, Tubatulabal tribal

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<sup>41</sup> Quirina Luna-Costillas is the former name of Quirina L. Geary, who was interviewed for this thesis. Deborah Morillo is a cousin of Leah Mata, who was interviewed for this thesis. Lauren Lassleben gave the author a copy of Konzak’s paper after her interview on January 10, 2013. Elizabeth Konzak, “Silent Voices Speak: The use of Archives in Language Revitalization” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Los Angeles, CA, August 2003).

<sup>42</sup> Brian Doyle, “Respect for Fonts: Linguistic Documentation and Lesser-used Orthographies,” *Comma*, no. 1 (2004): 77-86.

<sup>43</sup> Lisa Conathan, Leanda Gahegan and Donna Miranda-Begay, “*Archival Outreach through the Breath of Life Institute*” (Paper presented at the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, August 2012).

chairperson. While the recording of the 2003 session is no longer available, it will be possible to purchase the 2012 conference recordings for at least the next five years.

Documentary linguists have started to investigate their unique concerns for long-term preservation of endangered language data and the people most likely to access that data. A few specialists from the library and information sciences field have also started to write about the unique concerns for treatment of and access to language data of endangered and dormant Native American languages. But the role that archives and archival materials play in preserving and revitalizing Native American languages has not been fully explored. While archival records are used in the Breath of Life workshops study has just begun concerning how the documents are selected, made available, and used by the creators of the workshops or the workshop participants. Also not yet recorded is the perspective of the archivist as collections of Native American language materials undergo the archival process.

Using the Breath of Life Workshops as a case study, this thesis will add to the literature documenting the perspectives of archivists who process and provide access to the data and the language community members who work with the archival language data. Of particular importance, this thesis will document the twenty-year history and development of the Breath of Life Workshops through the perspectives of workshop organizers, archivists and participants, offering further insight into the role archives and archivists can play in the revitalization of Native American languages.

## Research Methodology

This thesis project uses oral history as its research methodology. In his book, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, Don Ritchie wrote, “Oral history collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews.”<sup>44</sup> Oral historian Nancy MacKay defines oral history as “the documentation of recent history through recorded interviews with people who have lived through the events they recount.” In her San José State University oral history course, Nancy MacKay emphasizes that oral histories address questions of historical interest and that the products of oral history should be available to future researchers. MacKay also discusses the importance of respecting the wishes of the interviewee and acknowledging the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee.<sup>45</sup> The Oral History Association affirms the above points in its introduction to “Principles and Best Practices for Oral History,” adding that the verbal document created through the oral history process is also called an oral history and that it is made publicly available in a variety of formats.<sup>46</sup>

### *Oral History as a Research Methodology*

In the 2002 book *The Oral History Manual*, Barbara Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan wrote that oral history can be a means to generate primary source materials on a

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<sup>44</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 19.

<sup>45</sup> Nancy MacKay, “FAQS: COMMUNITY ORAL HISTORY: What is Oral History?” <http://www.nancymackay.net/oral-history/resources/faqs-community-oral-history>.

<sup>46</sup> Oral History Association, “Principles and Best Practices,” <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices>.

topic where none exists.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in his 2009 book *Oral History and the Law*, John Neuenschwander described a project where oral history was the appropriate method because the only historical materials existed in the memories of the narrators.<sup>48</sup> Employing oral history as a research methodology seems appropriate because almost none of the literature on the revitalization of dormant languages documents the role of archives and archivists.

In the American Library Association's Office for Literacy and Outreach Services 2005 publication *Library Services to Indigenous Populations: Viewpoints and Resources*, Lorie Roy (Minnesota Chippewa) and A. Arro Smith wrote that research on tribal librarianship would be most likely to occur through oral history, because many of the major visionaries in indigenous librarianship work in remote tribal libraries, rarely attending national conferences, publishing, or participating in academia.<sup>49</sup> This is the case for several of the narrators in this project, and not exclusively the Breath of Life Workshop participants.

### *Oral History Process*

#### Preparation

One distinguishing characteristic of oral history is the substantial preparation required before interviews can be conducted. Best practices of the Oral History

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<sup>47</sup> Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 4.

<sup>48</sup> John A. Neuenschwander, *A Guide to Oral History and the Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>49</sup> Lorie Roy, Smith and A. Arro Smith, "Preface," in *Library Services to Indigenous Populations: Viewpoints & Resources* (Chicago: Office for Literacy and Outreach Services, American Library Association, 2005), vi.

Association dictate that interviewers have training in oral history.<sup>50</sup> The author/interviewer has taken the oral history course offered by San José State University's School of Library and Information Science, attended the 2011 Oral History Association Annual Meeting, and has taken oral history workshops on interviewing techniques, digital preservation, and legal issues.

#### Legalities and ethics

While there is disagreement in the oral history community with the concept of oral history being subject to Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, it is a required part of the San José State University thesis process before any research involving human subjects can be conducted. San José State University has not granted any blanket exemptions to oral history research. To the good, the IRB application process has served as an opportunity to plan this project out very carefully, to describe how the narrators' needs will be respected, and to document the approvals by organizations to be studied and agreements with repositories. The interview topics are part of the IRB application, so that has been prepared in advance. However, these preparations are all recommended in the Oral History Association's best practices guidelines, and some universities exempt oral history projects from IRB review in light of these established guidelines.

Following both IRB and OHA guidelines, this project's narrators were asked for their informed, written, voluntary consent to be interviewed and to gift the rights to their interviews to the Survey for California and Other Indian Languages. The Survey is the

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<sup>50</sup> Oral History Association, *Principles and Best Practices*.

research center of the Linguistics Department of the University of California at Berkeley, and one of four archives visited by Breath of Life Workshop participants.

Because this oral history project sought to study a program designed by and for the benefit of Native Americans, it was important to address ethical concerns that apply to doing research on Native American people. Taking into consideration the wishes of tribal people to decide what research takes place in their communities and who gets to conduct it, as discussed in *The American Indian Oral History Manual*, this project requested and received approval of the all-Native board of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival to conduct this oral history, asked for AICLS' recommendation concerning where the project materials would be deposited, and offered to provide copies of interviews and transcripts to interviewees.<sup>51</sup>

#### Choosing narrators

The Oral History Association's "Principles and Best Practices for Oral History," recommends choosing "potential narrators based on the relevance of their experiences to the subject at hand."<sup>52</sup> Sommer and Quinlan mention the importance of including narrators who represent all sides of the issues, so narrators who may no longer choose to be involved with Breath of Life might be included.<sup>53</sup> The overarching theme of this project, the role of archives and archivists in the Breath of Life Workshop and indigenous

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<sup>51</sup> Charles E. Trimble, Barbara W. Sommer, and Mary Kay Quinlan, *The American Indian Oral History Manual: Making Many Voices Heard* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008).

<sup>52</sup> Oral History Association, "Principles and Best Practices for Oral History."

<sup>53</sup> Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*.

language revitalization, lent itself to three categories of narrators: Breath of Life Workshop founders/organizers; archivists; and workshop participants.

#### Interview topics and questions

Interview topics are chosen based on the theme and overarching goals of the oral history project, with attention to the qualifications and experiences of the narrators.

Some experienced oral historians prefer to work from a list of topics because it differentiates oral history from a strictly regimented questionnaire/fixed answer format, freeing them to treat each narrator as a unique person. In the book *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, oral historian Valerie Raleigh Yow wrote that it is of great value to consider the specific wording of questions so that the interviewer asks them in the most effective way possible.<sup>54</sup> Yow discussed the importance of avoiding leading questions, closed-ended questions, and questions that use obscure jargon or suggest that the narrator is unintelligent.

I wrote a three-part interview topics outline consisting of questions starting with the narrators' backgrounds, moving to questions about their part in Breath of Life, and concluding with some wrap-up questions. The background and wrap-up topics were the same across all the narrators, but for the main part of the interview I wrote different interview topics for the founders/organizers, the archivists, and the workshop participants. Before each interview, I reviewed the list of topics and sometimes wrote in additional topics based on what I already knew about the narrator. For example, I asked

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<sup>54</sup> Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005), 71-72.



Lisa Conathan to talk about the article she wrote about her decision to seek a master's in library and information science after finishing her PhD in linguistics.

#### Effective interviewers

In *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, Don Ritchie described the qualities that make a good interviewer, using words like unobtrusive, straightforward, sympathetic, challenging, and relaxed.<sup>55</sup> Ritchie wrote that advance preparation helps greatly in fostering those qualities. A prepared interviewer is comfortable with the equipment, able to ask insightful questions, and can get the narrator to feel comfortable sharing recollections. However, there are some aspects of rapport that can not be overcome by preparation. As Sommer and Quinlan wrote, the oral history interview “is an intense interaction between two people. And those people can never stop being who they are—men or women, black or white, young or old.”<sup>56</sup>

I did research in advance for each interview so that my questions covered new ground and were relevant to the experience of the narrator. After I asked a question, I gave the narrator time to think about their answer, even if I felt like I had to bite my cheek to stay quiet. I am naturally a good listener and sympathetic to a fault to a wide variety of viewpoints, but I found it more challenging to think of follow-up questions while the interview was taking place. If a narrator started answering questions before I even asked them, I just listened and encouraged them to keep going. If I was aware of an overly terse response to a question, I asked a follow-up question. I practiced with my equipment and with interview formalities such as the release forms so that I appeared

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<sup>55</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 84.

<sup>56</sup> Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, 65.

comfortable with them. Because of my own role with AICLS and the Breath of Life Workshop, I found myself talking more about myself than I would normally as an oral history interviewer, but I tried not to let my remarks lead the interview.

#### Interview wrap-up

The end of the interview is a time to ask the narrators if there are topics they wanted to talk about that did not come up in the course of the interview. Another common wrap-up question could be one that asks narrators to reflect on their experience. After those last questions have been answered, it is time to turn off the recorder, remind the narrators about how the recordings will be processed, that they will receive draft transcripts for their review and approval, and how the interviews will be published in the thesis and deposited in UC Berkeley's Survey of California and Other Indian Languages.

#### Post interview

After the interviews were completed, the interview recordings were sent to a professional oral history transcriptionist for a first draft transcript. In her book *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive*, Nancy MacKay said that a quality oral history transcript is more of a recording of the intellectual content of the interview and not an exact reproduction of the interview on paper.<sup>57</sup> The Baylor University Institute for Oral History has published a style guide for oral history transcripts, and I used this style guide in consultation with the professional transcriptionist.<sup>58</sup> I reviewed the first draft

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<sup>57</sup> Nancy MacKay, *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), 50.

<sup>58</sup> Baylor University Institute for Oral History, "Style Guide: A Quick Reference for Editing Oral Memoirs," <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php?id=14142>.

transcripts and made corrections before sending the corrected drafts to their respective narrators, who then reviewed them both for mistakes and for passages they wished to have removed or information they wished to add. As recommended in the Baylor guide, added material was placed in brackets to distinguish it from the original recorded interview.

#### Deposit in an archival repository

Though deposit of the interviews and final transcripts will not occur until after the thesis is published, the Oral History Association's "Principles and Best Practices for Oral History," recommends that an appropriate repository, often a library or archive, be identified at the early stages of the project.<sup>59</sup> Factors to consider when choosing the repository are the project's subject matter and potential researchers. Andrew Garrett, director of the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, the Department of Linguistics' research center and language documentation archives, pointed out that most of the researchers who visit the Survey are members of the indigenous language communities who use the materials for their own language revitalization work. Given these factors and that Berkeley is the site for the Breath of Life Workshops, both AICLS and Survey director Andrew Garrett suggested the Survey as the repository for the transcripts, recordings, and related materials of this project.

In addition to the interviews and transcripts, the records relating to this oral history project will be deposited at the Survey after the thesis is published. These records include correspondence with narrators, release forms, research notes, and other source

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<sup>59</sup> Oral History Association, *Principles and Best Practices*.

materials. These records will also be available to researchers unless narrators apply restrictions to them.

### Research Questions

The Breath of Life Workshop was founded to meet the language revitalization needs for California Native people whose languages have no living fluent speakers. As discussed previously, the Breath of Life Workshop relies on archival documents to instruct individuals in dormant languages. Despite the best efforts of the Master-Apprentice program and other language revitalization efforts, more and more Native languages will be in the position of having no fluent living speakers. Studying the role of the archivist in Breath of Life Workshop could help tribes with speakers better document their languages and prepare their language materials for the day when they are forced to rely on the materials created on their languages.

However, no research has been done on the role of the archivist in the Breath of Life program. Most of what has been written to date has focused on helping as many tribal people as possible revitalize their languages. In reclaiming their languages and cultures, Native people have put their stories and their needs at the center of study. However, archivists are the ones who collect and preserve the documents, make them accessible through indexes and finding aids, and work with program participants in locating and using them. There are complex issues involved in archival care of Native language documentation. The goal of this study will be to determine the role that archivists play in the AICLS Breath of Life Workshops. The primary research questions are:

- What is the role of the archives in the revitalization of dormant Native languages?
- How do the roles played by linguists and archivists in the workshop differ?
- What role does the archivist play in identifying and selecting documents?  
What archival documents do participants use?
- What new procedures have archivists developed for working with Native American collections and the Breath of Life Workshop?

This oral history of the Breath of Life Workshop will tell the story of this language revitalization program and uncover the role the archival professional has in its efforts. Through presenting a variety of perspectives concerning the collection, arrangement, description, preservation, and access of the documentation of Native Californian languages, this study can improve the long-term prospects for the efforts of people who want to learn and speak their ancestral languages.

#### Organization of this Thesis

This oral history will document a history of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS) and its Breath of Life Workshop, with an emphasis on the role that archives and archivists can play in language revitalization. The thesis will have the following sections: an introduction, a history of AICLS and its Breath of Life Workshop, oral histories, a conclusion, appendices and a bibliography.

### *Chapter 1: Introduction*

This chapter opens with historical context leading to the formation of AICLS and the Breath of Life Workshop. There is a literature review covering library and information services for indigenous populations, the history of Native American language revitalization and the role of libraries and archives in Native American language revitalization efforts. This chapter also contains an explanation of and justification for the oral history methodology selected for this thesis.

### *Chapter 2: Overview of AICLS and the Breath of Life Workshop*

This chapter consists of a short history of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival and the Breath of Life Workshops. Briefly, this chapter describes several other workshops that have been held based on the AICLS/Berkeley Breath of Life model. This historical information and explanation of AICLS' mission and programs will contextualize the oral histories of chapters 1-12.

### *Chapters 3-13: Oral Histories*

The oral histories chapters have been divided into three parts: the founders and organizers, the participants, and the archivists. Each part has a general introduction plus edited transcripts of the relevant interviews. Each transcript is preceded by a brief biography of the narrator to give the reader a summary of his or her connection to AICLS and the Breath of Life Workshop.

These are the narrators interviewed for this thesis:

Part I. Organizers

1. L. Frank, (Tongva/Ajachmem), artist, illustrator, and photographer, and one of the founding board members of AICLS, and a co-founder of Breath of Life.
2. Leanne Hinton, professor emerita of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley and a co-founder of Breath of Life.
3. Malcolm Margolin, publisher of Heyday Books and *News From Native California*, co-convener of the 1992 Tribal Scholars Language Conference.

#### Part II. Participants

4. Quirina L. Geary (Mutsun Ohlone), participant at Breath of Life since its first year in 1996 and a leader in Mutsun Ohlone language and culture revitalization.
5. Leah Mata (yak tityu tityu, Northern Chumash), a participant at Breath of Life since early 2000s and an artist specializing in traditional Native regalia.

#### Part III. Archivists

6. Lauren Lasseben, an Appraisal and Preliminary Processing Archivist at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library and the Bancroft's lead Breath of Life archivist from 1996 to the present.
7. Lisa Conathan, consulting archivist for the Berkeley Department of Linguistics' Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, two-time linguist mentor at the Breath of Life Workshop, and the principal

investigator for the Breath of Life Archival Institute for Indigenous Languages held for the first time in 2011 in Washington DC.

8. Andrew Garrett, professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, current director of the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages and the California Language Archive.

#### *Chapter 14: Conclusion*

This chapter discusses the insights gained through the interviews. Starting with a discussion of what was learned about the role of archives and archivists in the Breath of Life Workshop, it also considers how working with Breath of Life participants has led archivists to modify their archival methods and access policies. This chapter also assessed the oral history methodology used for this project and how well it increased our understanding of the role of archives and archivists in language revitalization.

#### *Bibliography and Appendices*

Documentation of sources consulted for this thesis appears in the bibliography. Relevant documents, forms and other supplementary materials appear in the appendices.

#### Some Definitions and Explanations

##### *Dormant or Sleeping, Not Extinct*

To describe languages with no living fluent speakers, the terms used by documentary linguists and language revivalists are “dormant” or “sleeping”. The term “extinct” is thought to incorrectly suggest a complete impossibility of language revitalization or language reclamation.



### *Capitalization of the word Native*

In accordance with the *Chicago Manual of Style*, both the names and their associated adjectives of ethnic and national groups are capitalized.<sup>60</sup> When the word native appears uncapitalized, it may refer to the native speaker of a language, one who grew up speaking a language as their first language.

### *Language Consultant*

Language consultants are the native speakers who are hired by a linguist to provide language data. John Peabody Harrington worked with hundreds of language consultants over the course of his life, among them Ascension Solarsano (Mutsun Ohlone) and Rosario Cooper (Northern Chumash/Obispeño). The term language informant was used in the past to describe language consultants, but is no longer used because the term had an implied connotation of stool pigeon or spy.

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<sup>60</sup> *The Chicago Manual of Style* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 401.

## Chapter 2: Overview of AICLS and the Breath of Life Workshop

This chapter contains a short history of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS, pronounced AI-klz) and its Breath of Life Workshops. This historical information and explanation of AICLS' mission and programs will contextualize the oral histories in the following chapters. At the end of this chapter is a description of other workshops that have been held based on the AICLS/Berkeley Breath of Life model.

To explain the beginnings of AICLS it is necessary to take one step back and explain its parent organization, Native California Network (NCN). Marion Weber, daughter of Laurance Rockefeller and great-granddaughter of Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller, asked Malcolm Margolin, founder of Berkeley's Heyday Books, for help with establishing Native California Network in 1992. Weber's intent with NCN was to "encourage, preserve and promote the growth and knowledge of California Indian culture and lifeways."<sup>1</sup> Weber asked Margolin to identify Native Californian people to represent Northern, Central, and Southern California on the Native California Network board. With money from Marion Weber's Flow Fund, the board funded proposals from grassroots California Native groups and individuals with projects in the areas of family history, culture, and language.<sup>2</sup> The founding board members of Native California

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Bates Abbott, "Grants," *News from Native California* 6, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 30.

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Margolin, "Warmth from Other Fires," *Grantmakers in the Arts Reader* 22, no. 3 (Fall 2011). <http://www.giarts.org/article/warmth-other-fires>. Weber described flow funding as giving money to people who have never been philanthropists, who in turn fund projects meaningful to them. Chet Tchozewski, "Interview: Marion Rockefeller Weber," *Alliance* 15, no. 1 (March 2010): 40-2.

Network were Carole Lewis (Yurok), currently the director of the Yurok Language Program; Frank La Pena (Wintu), professor emeritus of ethnic studies and art at California State University, Sacramento; Paul Apodaca (Navajo/Mixton), professor, artist, entertainer and cultural consultant; and Robin Collier, grandson of Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner John Collier. After just a few funding cycles, NCN board members started to ask themselves what larger problem could the board address as an organization? Margolin said in his interview that as a group, they decided that the larger problem they would address was the decline of the Native languages of California.

The Native California Network hosted approximately fifty tribal language scholars and linguists at the Tribal Scholars Language Conference held on August 22 and 23, 1992, at Walker Creek Ranch in Marin County, California. The conference was a working retreat for discussing the current status of the tribal languages of California and the challenges Native groups faced in perpetuating them. Conference participants also considered possible solutions to these challenges, the available resources (both in terms of people and funding), and the ways in which NCN could offer support. There were reports from elders who were working to revive their languages and from their students who were learning their languages. There were reports from tribal people who were trying to revive sleeping languages. Linguist Leanne Hinton shared what she had learned about teaching and learning second languages.

By the close of the meeting, the conference participants put forward several key ideas that would eventually form the major programs of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival. Among these ideas were a program that would fund teams

of elder speakers to work with apprentices to immerse them in their language and culture (Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program), stipends for Native Californians researching their languages, workshops to find and study linguistic materials (precursors to Breath of Life), and the establishment of a California Language Committee to develop these ideas in coordination with the Native California Network. Founding members of this latter committee were chair Parris Butler (Mojave), Nancy Steele (Karuk), Darlene Franco (Wukchumne), Mark Macarro (Luiseño), Ray Baldy (Hupa), Brian Bibby, and L. Frank Manriquez (Tongva/Ajachmem).

Based on input from participants in the Tribal Language Scholars Conference, the California Language Committee wrote its statement of purpose: “To empower the diverse native population of California by creating a network that will support and provide necessary resources to maintain the native languages that are the vital link to our culture.”<sup>3</sup> Following the conference, the California Language Committee changed its name to the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival, wrote a grant proposal for the Master-Apprentice Program, and published its first newsletter, *The Advocate*, as part of the Winter 1992/93 issue of *News From Native California*.<sup>4</sup> In his interview for this thesis, Malcolm Margolin said that he published the first several years of AICLS newsletters in *News* because it was important to help the fledgling organization get started and to let others know about its efforts.

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<sup>3</sup> Leanne Hinton, “Keeping the Languages Alive: The Tribal Scholars Language Conference,” *News from Native California* 6, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 31.

<sup>4</sup> Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival, “The Advocate: Newsletter of Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival,” *News from Native California* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1992/93): 39-43.

AICLS first received funding for its Master-Apprentice Program in 1993. Six master-apprentice teams met at Walker Creek Ranch in Marin County for two days of training on techniques used for learning and teaching a second language. The six trainers were linguists and experts in second language learning and teaching. After the weekend of training, the master-apprentice teams returned home and with the assignment to speak to each other in their language for up to twenty hours per week over a four-month period. The teams found that the best way to immerse themselves in the language was by using it to discuss activities they are doing together, such as shopping for groceries, baking a cake, playing a card game, or when engaged in more traditional activities such as gathering acorns.

The Master-Apprentice Program most closely approximated the immersion experience of traveling to another country where a different language is spoken in order to learn that language as quickly as possible. Apprentices going through the program developed enough conversational to have long conversations with their master speakers, to dream in the language, to teach community classes with the support of their elders, and to create stories, books and media in their languages. The Master-Apprentice Program has expanded over the years from six teams to sometimes as many as twenty-five teams statewide.<sup>5</sup>

While the Master-Apprentice Program was experiencing early success, AICLS board member L. Frank continued to request that the board develop a parallel program

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<sup>5</sup> Leanne Hinton, "Language: Preserving the Future. A Progress Report on the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program," *News from Native California* 8, no. 3 (Winter 1994-95): 14-19; Kim Hogeland, "Election Results in!" *News from Native California* 22, no. 3 (Spring 2009): 39-41.

for the languages with no living speakers. In her interview, L. Frank described the meeting at which the board decided to proceed with developing this additional workshop. No date was given, but it is likely that meeting took place in 1994 or 1995. The board announced that the new workshop would be held in spring 1996, referring to it as the “Lonely Hearts Language Club.”<sup>6</sup> However, a report appearing in the fall 1996 issue of *News From Native California* gave the workshop a new name: “Breath of Life/Silent No More.”<sup>7</sup>

By 1999, AICLS and Native California Network ended their partnership. The funding from Marion Weber’s Flow Fund had come to a close, and rather than continue as a committee of NCN, AICLS partnered with the Seventh Generation Fund of Arcata, California, before eventually seeking its own non-profit organization status.<sup>8</sup> Currently, AICLS has an all-Native board of directors, one consulting board member (Leanne Hinton), and an administrator, Marina Drummer. Major funding for AICLS and its programs comes from private and tribal foundations, non-profit granting organizations, and government grants. AICLS hires an accountant to manage its finances and prepare the budget reporting for its grants.

Over the years, AICLS modified its mission statement so that it currently reads: “To foster the restoration and revival of indigenous California languages so that they may

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<sup>6</sup> “The Advocate: Announcements—the Lonely Hearts Club June 16-22, 1996.” *News from Native California* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 50.

<sup>7</sup> Leanne Hinton, “LANGUAGE; Breath of Life/Silent no More,” *News from Native California*, 10, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 13-16.

<sup>8</sup> Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, Inc., “Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, Inc.” <http://www.7genfund.org>.

be retained as a permanent part of the living cultures of native California.”<sup>9</sup> AICLS continues to follow this mission through its Master-Apprentice Program which pairs speakers and learners together for up to twenty hours per week. Master-Apprentice teams receive training in language immersion methods and are encouraged to teach what they have learned to family members and others in their communities. Participants also receive modest stipends to help compensate for the time they must take from other responsibilities.

AICLS has sponsored other workshops to preserve Native cultures. Circle of Voices, for example, was a series of workshops held in the mid-1990s for teaching California Indians to document the knowledge of their elders through video. The Seeds of Language Mini-Grant program has helped more than fifty California Indians since 2005 purchase recording equipment, attend relevant conferences, conduct research, or cover other language-related expenses with grants of up to five hundred dollars.

AICLS also holds a Language is Life Conference every other year which is attended by hundreds of people. There are three days of workshops on language teaching and learning practices, new language technologies, funding, and family language and cultural practices. The 2013 theme was “Coming of Age,” and some of the results of this thesis study were presented there.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival, “Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival,” <http://www.aicls.org>.

<sup>10</sup> Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival, “Language is Life,” <http://www.aicls.org/pages/LILC/13/LILC13agenda.html>.

## Breath of Life Workshop

The first Breath of Life/Silent No More California Language Revitalization Workshop was held in 1996 at the University of California, Berkeley. The purpose for this workshop was to provide California Native people whose languages had no living fluent speakers with access to archival materials on their languages and linguists for the purpose of language revitalization. Held every other year since 1996, the tenth Breath of Life Workshop occurred in 2012, and arrangements for the 2014 workshop are already in progress. These workshops are organized by the AICLS board, linguist and consulting board member Leanne Hinton, a graduate student from Berkeley's Linguistics Department, and AICLS administrator Marina Drummer.

AICLS receives applications from individuals interested in attending the Breath of Life Workshop. In deciding who will attend, AICLS tries to balance the need to limit participants to a manageable number with the desire to serve as many language groups as possible. In the weeks before Breath of Life, Leanne Hinton sends information to participants and their linguistic mentors to prepare them for the week's events. Hinton also encourages participants with specific research requests to contact the archivists so that materials will be ready for them upon their arrival. The schedule of the week's events that Hinton sent to the 2012 workshop participants explained things so clearly that the same headings are used for the following sections of this chapter.



TIME	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8-8:40		Breakfast (370 DW), announcements Archives	Breakfast (370 DW), announcements Archives	Breakfast (370 DW), announcements Archives	Breakfast (370 DW), announcements Archives	Breakfast (370 DW), announcements Archives	Breakfast (370 DW), announcements Participant presentations
9-12							
12-1							
1-4	3 p.m. check-in at Unit I Dorms	Lunch (370 DW) 1. Zeke Zahir: Motivation (1 hr) 2. Andrew Garrett Archives and archival research (45 min) break 3. Phonetics (how to read and pronounce your language) (Leanne Hinton) (1 hr)	Lunch (370 DW) 1. homework presentations (45 min) 2. Maryrose Barrios & Carl Haber the wax cylinder restoration project (45 min) break	Lunch (370 DW) 3. homework presentations (45min) 1. Wes Leonard: language and politics (1 hour) break 2. Grammar without tears II (Pat Shaw) (1 hour) OR Advanced grammar workshop	Lunch (370 DW) 1. homework presentations (45 min) 2. Zeke: How to learn your language (1 hour) break 3. Panel – some examples of language revitalization in progress: Yocha Dehe, Santa Ynez Chumash, and workshop participants (1 ½ hours)	Lunch (370 DW) 1. homework presentations 2. Making learning materials, dictionaries and other products (Staff and participants) 3. Zeke: Language nests and Language revitalization	Lunch (370 DW) Checkout from dorms by 2
4-7	6 p.m. Light dinner and Orientation at Freeborn Hall lounge	Study and Homework on phonetics; Supper on your own	Study and Homework on grammar; Supper on your own	5 p.m. Tour of the Hearst Basketry collection, Marchant Building	5 p.m. Barbecue dinner at Ishi Courtyard, in Dwinelle Hall & cultural sharing	Supper on your own, Final preparation of your project	
7-9		7-8: A discussion with AICLS Freeborn Hall lounge	7 p.m.: Movie: "We still Live Here", Freeborn Hall Lounge 8:30 p.m. "As Nutanuyean"	Dinner on your own and homework on grammar (if you are not already done), and/or project			

Figure 1. Agenda, 2012 Breath of Life California Indian Language Restoration Workshop. Reprinted with permission from the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival.

Explanations given refer to the 2012 operations of the Breath of Life program as well unless discontinued activities are specified. The details of how the workshop is organized and conducted come from the emails sent to participants and linguist mentors in advance of the workshop as well as the information packets handed out during the workshop. Contained in those documents are the schedule for the week, the group schedules for archive visits, information sheets about each of the archives to be visited during the week, the phonetics and grammar homework assignments, and the final project assignment.<sup>11</sup> In 2012, the author of this thesis attended the Breath of Life workshop as a linguist mentor for two Karuk language participants.

### *Opening Reception*

Breath of Life participants arrive at the Berkeley campus on a Sunday. Most participants and non-local volunteer linguists stay in the dorms, and everyone meets in the lounge for a welcoming dinner and orientation. At the reception, participants are given a nametag sticker, and, with the help of the linguistic mentors, they write their names as they would be written in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). This is a non-threatening introduction to one of the writing systems that the participants are likely to encounter as they work on their languages over the week.

### *Mentors*

The linguistic mentors are either linguistics graduate students or faculty. If they aren't already specialists in their participant's language, they will study it in the weeks before Breath of Life. The mentors ask their participants what their goals are for the

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<sup>11</sup> Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival, (Breath of Life Workshop conference packet, Berkeley, 2012).

week. During the week, mentors are expected to be attuned to the language learning goals of their participants. How much do they want to learn? What is their project? What are their feelings and beliefs about their languages? How do they feel about their language sounding different than when there was a community of fluent speakers? In an email to the mentors on May 28, 2012, Hinton asked the mentors to read two articles about linguists and language communities working together.<sup>12</sup>

The mentors and participants meet at the opening reception, visit the archives together, work on the homework and final project together in the evenings. The mentors use general information given during the phonetics and grammar lessons as the basis for teaching the participants some specifics about their language. Frequently, the participants and mentors work late into the evening together. Sometimes the mentorship continues beyond the week of the Breath of Life Workshop.

*Mornings in the Archives, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.*

Participants spend each morning doing research in a different archive on the Berkeley campus. As of 2012, they visit the Bancroft Library, the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, and the Berkeley Language Center. Each of these archives will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

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<sup>12</sup> Gary Holton, "Relearning Athabascan Languages in Alaska: Creating Sustainable Language Communities through Creolization," in *Speaking of Endangered Languages: Issues in Revitalization*, ed. Anne Marie Goodfellow (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) 238-65; Keren Rice, "Must there be Two Solitudes? Language Activists and Linguists Working Together," in *Indigenous Language Revitalization: Encouragement, Guidance & Lessons Learned*, eds. Jon Allan Reyhner and Louise Lockard (Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University, 2009), <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/ILR/>.

Over breakfast, everyone meets in 370 Dwinelle Hall for announcements.

Around 8:45 a.m. participants walk with their assigned group to their designated archive of the day. Elders and others with mobility issues ride in the electric cart to the archives.

Some of the archives have no materials on certain languages, so participants from those language groups are not required to visit every archive. For example, the Hearst Museum has no Chumash recordings, so in 2012 Breath of Life organizers arranged a special program for the Chumash participants in place of a visit to the Hearst. But for the archives that do contain pertinent materials, participants are required to visit it on their assigned day because the archivists have the language records available that day. If participants feel that they need to return to any of the archives for additional research, they are able to return on Friday.

#### Bancroft Library

The Bancroft Library began as the personal library of Hubert Howe Bancroft, who used the materials to write a thirty-nine-volume history of western North and Central America. The University of California purchased Bancroft's library in 1905 and promised that it would be maintained as a separate library and be added to over time. Now one of the largest special collections libraries in the United States, its holdings include 60 million manuscript items, 600,000 volumes, and 8 million photographs.<sup>13</sup> Linguist Andrew Garrett tells participants in a Monday afternoon presentation that for their purposes, the Bancroft's key holdings are its paper records from 1800 to the

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<sup>13</sup> "Brief History," <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/info/history.html>.

1950s.<sup>14</sup> Some of the collections most frequently used by Breath of Life participants include the Ethnological Documents Collection of the Department and Museum of Anthropology (Ethnological Documents), the C. Hart Merriam Papers, and the Robert Heizer Papers. Ethnological Documents is a collection of 216 collections of linguistic and ethnological field notes about California and other Native peoples of North and Central America. C. Hart Merriam was a zoologist, ornithologist and ethnographer whose documentation of languages all over the state of California and elsewhere spans 142 microfilm reels and 43 linear feet.<sup>15</sup> Robert Heizer was a professor of anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, and his papers contain archaeological, anthropological and linguistic research from all over the Americas.<sup>16</sup>

Upon arrival at the Bancroft Library, all participants who have not visited the Bancroft Library within the last two years are required to submit a Reader Registration Access Application Form. Bancroft archivist Lauren Lassleben helps individuals fill out the forms, and then she explains that she has already some material, usually published material, available on carts. Lassleben also lets people know that the personal camera fee, normally \$10 per day, has been waived for Breath of Life participants. Lassleben gives a short introduction to the most commonly used catalogs and finding aids: Oskicat (the online catalog for most UC Berkeley libraries), the Ethnological Documents

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Garrett, "Language Archives: An Introduction," <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~garrett/archives-talk-bol.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> "Guide to the C. Hart Merriam Papers, Volume 1: Papers Relating to Work with California Indians, 1850-1974 (Bulk 1898-1938)." Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf8c6006rv>.

<sup>16</sup> "Guide to the Robert Fleming Heizer Papers, Ca. 1851-1980." Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt4t1nb26p>.

collection of the Department and Museum of Anthropology, and the Online Archive of California. Lassleben explains how to request materials found in the catalogs. Most of the items stored offsite in a facility in Richmond, California, have already been brought over, and are ready to be paged from a staff only area.

There is always a great deal of activity around the microfilm readers: groups scanning through materials, taking digital photographs of pages of notes, and transcribing a page that pertains to their language. Participants are allowed to place holds on materials if they know they are returning in the afternoon or on Friday morning. Having the archives visits in the morning allows Breath of Life participants and their mentors to take over the Bancroft's entire reading room because the Bancroft Library is closed in the mornings during the week between the spring and summer academic terms. Conversations can take place more easily, and there is less competition for catalogs and microfilm readers. In her interview, archivist Lauren Lassleben also describes balancing security for the irreplaceable, historic collections with the creation of a welcoming atmosphere for researchers who have never visited an archive before.

#### Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology

The Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology (Hearst Museum) was founded in 1901 for the collections of Berkeley anthropologists and ethnologists. Now holding nearly four million objects from cultures around the world, the Hearst Museum's California collection is one of its largest. Until the 1960s, the Hearst Museum was also the home of the Ethnological Documents and other paper collections until it was decided that the paper materials needed to be in the Bancroft where archivists could care for them

properly. In her interview for this thesis, Bancroft archivist Lauren Lasseben said this was good for the collections, as they got the best care, but more difficult for a researcher interested in both the California Native baskets collected by Samuel A. Barrett and housed in the Hearst Museum and his notes about the baskets, now housed in the Bancroft.

The Hearst Museum has digitized versions of wax cylinder recordings that are available for listening. These hollow wax cylinders have grooves that hold just a few minutes of audio, and they were used for making recordings up until 1929. Because the cylinders can only be played a few times, they have been transferred to other media, never to be played again. Not all California Indian Languages are represented. Those languages that do have recordings are listed in the California Language Archives online catalog and on the Hearst Museum website.<sup>17</sup> Initially, the listening stations were portable stereo cassette players on tables in the basement. In the 2004 documentary titled *The Linguists*, Karuk participant Crystal Richardson and linguist mentor Susan Gehr are shown straining to hear Ira Stevens' (Karuk) songs recorded in 1926 and 1927 by D. N. Lehmer over the hiss and scratch of the wax cylinder recordings.<sup>18</sup> Leanne Hinton reported that more listening stations have been set up in the following years. These recordings are now digitized, but they are only available for listening onsite.

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<sup>17</sup> "California Language Archive," <http://cla.berkeley.edu>; Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, "Resources for Researchers," <http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/research/resources>

<sup>18</sup> *The Linguists*, directed by Seth Kramer et al. (Garrison, NY: Ironbound Films, 2008)

## Berkeley Language Center: California Language Archive

The Berkeley Language Center (BLC) “supports the learning and teaching of heritage and foreign languages on the Berkeley campus” and is the home for over two hundred collections of audio recordings representing over one hundred languages worldwide.<sup>19</sup> The California Language Archive, once known as the Audio Archive of Linguistic Field Work, is one of the BLCs major collections.<sup>20</sup> The California Language Archive is an online catalog of the California Native language collections of the Berkeley Language Center, the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology. The Berkeley Language Center holds most audio recordings made after 1950. The older recordings are housed at the Hearst Museum. The Berkeley Language Center manages the audio recordings, while the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages is a manuscript archive. Many of the recordings are digitized and accessible online. Some of the recordings are local access only, requiring a trip to Berkeley, among them the Guy Tyler collection of Cahuilla sound recordings, made between 1967-1977.<sup>21</sup>

Participants visiting the Berkeley Language Center initially meet in the computer center in Dwinelle Hall to learn how to use the online catalog of the California Language Archive, which describes the audio holdings of the Hearst Museum, the Berkeley

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<sup>19</sup> Berkeley Language Center, “About the BLC: Our Mission,” <http://blc.berkeley.edu/index.php/blc/pages/about>.

<sup>20</sup> Archivist Lisa Conathan, who was interviewed for this thesis, digitized and created descriptions for the Audio Archive of Linguistic Field Work as a graduate student assistant.

<sup>21</sup> Berkeley Language Center, “The Guy Tyler Collection of Cahuilla Sound Recordings,” <http://cla.berkeley.edu/collection/10198>



Language Center, and the field notes deposited at the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages. The catalog has digitized copies of these records, most of which can be accessed from people's homes after registering with the website. Linguist and director of the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, Andrew Garrett, gives the orientation on how to use the online catalog. He tries to structure the catalog "tours" in such a way that participants learn how to use the catalog at every stage of their research, from locating relevant documents to reading through the materials found on their languages. He hopes to give participants a complete picture of the catalog's holdings on their languages, because in most cases they will be able to access the recordings from their homes. He hasn't yet found that ideal tour structure, but his determination to find it reflects his concern for the research success of the participants and the usability of the catalogs for which he is responsible.

#### Survey of California and Other Indian Languages

A research center of Berkeley's Linguistics Department, the Survey mainly houses the notes of linguists from 1950 to the present. The Survey includes materials on 130 endangered and dormant languages of the western United States. Of those 130 languages, fifty are California Native languages. For the Wappo language of Alexander, Napa and Sonoma Valleys, the Survey is home to the papers of Jesse Sawyer, who documented the language from 1956 to 1980. The Gladys Reichard Collection is a major resource on the Wiyot language, whose last speaker passed in 1962. The Survey also has the notebooks of William Bright, which contains a section with Karuk language consultant Julia Starritt's responses to a series of pictures, traditional stories, vocabulary

and phrases. One important thing to know about the language consultants' responses to a series of pictures is that the pictures are not included, nor does Bright note the source of the pictures in his notebook. Fortunately, someone at the Survey figured out that the drawings Bright used to elicit the responses had also been published in Hansjakob Seiler's 1970 book on the Cahuilla language.<sup>22</sup> Putting the two documents together gave the Karuk team more information about the grammar and vocabulary of the Karuk language.<sup>23</sup>

Andrew Garrett is the Survey's director, Ronald Sprouse is the staff programmer, and two graduate students are also employed by the Survey. The Survey is open for research visits by appointment only. While the Survey gets occasional use by academic scholars, their primary researchers are members of the language communities represented in their collections. Though Andrew Garrett is the Survey's director, in 2012 he was already obligated to do the tours of the Berkeley Language Center, so he delegated the Survey tours to research assistants Justin Spence and Nico Baier.

In the weeks before the tours, Garrett and the research assistants consult the list of language groups of participants coming to Breath of Life and devise lists of the Survey's holdings on each of these languages. For the Karuk team, all four field notebooks of William Bright, Mary Haas' 1950 and 1960 work on Karuk, George Grekoff's 1998-1999 analysis of Karuk phonology and morphology, and a copy of the 1932 Karuk language field notes of Ursula McConnell, found and identified by the South Australia Museum in

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<sup>22</sup> William Bright, *The Karok Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

<sup>23</sup> Hansjakob Seiler, *Cahuilla Texts with an Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1970), 161-181.

2009. When participants discover collections that have been mislabeled, the mistakes are reported to Survey staff for correction.

The night before the archives' visit, Garrett and his assistants set out the next day's materials. When the participants come with their linguistic mentor, a brief tour is given and then language groups find a spot to sit down and start going through the boxes. They pore over materials, copying language into their notebooks, taking digital photographs, and collecting data for their homework or their final project. The research assistants are available to answer questions, pull additional materials, and accept requests for duplication. And after the current day's tour is over, they set out the materials for the next day's tour. The reading area of the Survey is quite small, so the departmental library and the William Bright Seminar Room are used as additional reading areas. Garrett reported that the most Breath of Life work for the Survey happens after the week is over as his assistants fulfill up to sixty-five peoples' duplication requests.

*Afternoon Workshops, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.*

After lunch, which is provided by Breath of Life organizers, participants attend presentations and workshops on linguistics, language learning, language revitalization, or the archives. During the first workshop of the week, Andrew Garrett opened with a presentation about each of the archives at Berkeley that participants would be visiting.<sup>24</sup> He also alerted participants to the locations of divided collections. For example, the pre-1950s audio recordings can be found at the Hearst Museum, while post-1950s audio recordings are at the Berkeley Language Center. A similar division has been made with

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<sup>24</sup> Garrett, "Language Archives: An Introduction."

the documents. Pre-1950 paper materials are generally at the Bancroft Library, and post-1950 paper materials are held at the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages. On the second afternoon of the 2012 workshop, Maryrose Barrios and Carl Haber of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory also presented their work on restoring the wax cylinder recordings held by the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology.<sup>25</sup> One of the pilot projects of this effort was the restoration of sixty California Indian language recordings made by anthropologist Alfred Kroeber in the early 1900s. For this work Haber was named a 2013 MacArthur Fellow.<sup>26</sup>

In 2012, there were also linguistics workshops that taught participants the basics of pronunciation, writing systems, and grammar. On Monday, Leanne Hinton gave a workshop on reading and pronouncing Native languages. On Tuesday and Wednesday, two levels of grammar workshops were offered. First-time Breath of Life attendees generally went to Wes Leonard and Pat Shaw's "Grammar Without Tears" class where the basics of reading grammatical descriptions of California Native languages would be covered. As Leanne Hinton recommended in her interview, participants learned to focus on the examples of language constructions in between the technical linguistic descriptions. At Line Mikkelsen's "Advanced Grammar Workshop," returning attendees brought their language's grammatical problems to discuss with the group. By the end of

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<sup>25</sup> Maryrose Barrios, Earl Cornell and Carl Haber, "Imaging the Past: New Technologies for Audio Restoration" (presentation given at Breath of Life California Indian Language Restoration Workshop, June 5, 2012). Details about the project described in their presentation can be found at <http://irene.lbl.gov>.

<sup>26</sup> MacArthur Foundation, "Carl Haber," <http://www.macfound.org/fellows/892>.

the week, the advanced participants had created one or more sentence templates for their languages so that they could more easily produce complete sentences.

Based on the data collected from the archives in the mornings and the grammar workshops in the afternoons, participants are given an assignment to describe the grammar of one or more sentence types in their language. For example, how would one ask a yes or no question, how would one give a command, or how would one talk about something that happened yesterday. In a presentation made to the entire group, each participant gives several examples of those sentence types and talks about the cultural, politeness, or sociolinguistic information that might affect when that sentence type is used.<sup>27</sup> This exercise helps participants get more practice constructing original sentences in their language and a better sense of when particular sentence type can be used with children, peers, or elders.

*Early Evening, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.*

This time is mostly free for homework, dinner, and breaks, except for Wednesday, when the Hearst Museum gives an optional, private tour of the basketry collections, and Thursday, when AICLS hosts a barbecue dinner and cultural sharing in the Dwinelle Courtyard. This dinner is the Breath of Life event Malcolm Margolin usually attends to see friends.

*Evening, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.*

In the evenings, there are sometimes open discussions or movie screenings scheduled. In 2012, there was a showing of *We Still Live Here: Âs Nutayuneân*, a

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<sup>27</sup> Leanne Hinton, “Breath of Life 2012: Grammar Homework” (worksheet from participant packet, 2012).

documentary of the language revival of the Wampanoag of Massachusetts.<sup>28</sup> Otherwise this time and further on into the evening is used by linguists and participants staying in the dorms for homework assignments and the final project.

### *Final Projects*

In addition to attending lectures and doing research in the archives, each participant also spends the week working on a final project. The only requirement for the project is that it be based on the documents gathered and lessons learned during the week. For instance, at the 2010 workshop, the Obispeño Chumash group sang a gathering pine nuts song that they composed during the week, and at the 2012 workshop Quirina L. Geary premiered “Obama Yo Mamma Debate,” an animation depicting an exchange of insults in Mutsun Ohlone between President Obama and presidential candidate Mitt Romney.<sup>29</sup> Other projects done over the years include:

- Central Pomo: A PowerPoint slide show depicting a journey to the coast and kelp collection.
- Konkow Maidu: A telling of the story of the origin of mosquitoes.
- Southeastern Pomo: A reading of Pomo descriptions of Pomo beauty and a recitation of a Pomo love soliloquy.
- Cahuilla: A long recitation in Cahuilla followed by the singing of “Here Comes Santa Claus” in Cahuilla.

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<sup>28</sup> *We Still Live Here: Âs Nutayuneân*, directed by Jessie Little Doe Baird et al. (Oley, PA: Bullfrog Films, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> Quirina Luna Geary, “Mutsun Ohlone Obama Yo Momma Debate,” video clip, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPwVanPJ6uY>.

- Northern Pomo: The participants sang a stick game song and a children’s song. During the children’s song, their linguist mentors did an interpretive dance.<sup>30</sup>

At the end of the week, participants present their project to the entire group as the culminating experience of the workshop.

### Replications of the Breath of Life Model

Since the first Breath of Life Workshop in 1996, several institutions across the United States have replicated the AICLS/Berkeley Breath of Life Model. Brief descriptions and some innovations of each workshop are described in this section.

The University of Washington held one of the first workshops to replicate the AICLS model. Linguist Alice Taff organized Breath of Life Workshops in 2003 and 2005 for Pacific Northwest tribes. Thirty-six participants studying thirteen Native languages of the Pacific Northwest attended the 2003 workshop.<sup>31</sup> The 2005 workshop was held in the Allen Auditorium of the university’s Allen Library. On the first day, participants toured the library, the special collections, and the ethnomusicology archives, where the presenter was Laurel Sercombe, ethnomusicologist and author of “Researching the Music of the First People of the Pacific Northwest: From the Academy to the Brain

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<sup>30</sup> Mark Anquoe and Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival, “Final Project Assignment: Examples of Final Projects: 2010 BOL (Breath of Life)” (worksheet from participant packet, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Joel Schwarz, “Workshop Designed to Give ‘Sleeping’ Indian Languages a Breath of Life,” *UW Today* (September 2, 2003), <http://www.washington.edu/news/2003/09/02/workshop-designed-to-give-sleeping-indian-languages-a-breath-of-life>.

Room.”<sup>32</sup> In the afternoon of the first day, teams studied the writing system or systems of their languages, developed their group project topics, and considered the possible language names and alternate spellings that might be found in the archives. On the second day, University of Washington interdisciplinary arts and sciences professor Bill Seaburg gave a talk on the history of the Melville Jacobs Collection. Seaburg’s presentation covered both the papers of Melville Jacobs, who documented over a dozen Native languages of the Pacific Northwest, and the linguistic documentation that was created with his support through the Jacobs Research Fund.<sup>33</sup> Visual materials curator Nicolette Bromberg also gave a tour of the university’s film archives. On the following day, there was a roundtable discussion among participants, archives staff, and the Jacobs Research Fund Board of Trustees of materials that had access restrictions and the possibilities of changing these policies for tribal members wishing to use restricted materials in their own languages.<sup>34</sup> On another day, there were presentations on how to clean up one’s own old recordings and on what other institutions have Pacific Northwest tribal language recordings.

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<sup>32</sup> Laurel Sercombe, “Researching the Music of the First People of the Pacific Northwest: From the Academy to the Brain Room,” *Fontes Artis Musicae* 50, no. 2-4 (April-December 2003): 81-88.

<sup>33</sup> “Guide to the Melville Jacobs Papers: 1918-1974.” University of Washington Libraries, <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv95437#dscID>. The Jacobs Research Fund has sponsored linguistic and anthropological research with Native Americans since 1974, and the products of that research were deposited at the Special Collections of the University of Washington. “The Jacobs Research Funds,” <http://depts.washington.edu/jacobsf/index.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Many of the Jacobs Research Funds collections were closed unless specific permission from the donor was granted.



The Oklahoma Breath of Life was started in 2010 by Mary Linn, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Oklahoma and associate curator of Native American languages at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History and Colleen Fitzgerald, professor of linguistics at the University of Texas, Arlington. In their 2012 workshop, greater emphasis was put on developing language materials, surveying holdings in the university's archives, developing access tools, and training graduate students to more collaboratively work with language communities.<sup>35</sup> For example, workshop organizers set up databases for each language represented at the workshop using FieldWorks Language Explorer (FLEX), a language and culture data management database application developed by SIL.<sup>36</sup> During the workshop participants are given database training so that they can more easily locate information pertaining to their language in the archives' databases as well as manage their data. The 2012 workshop hosted sixteen participants representing nine different languages: Wichita, Natchez, Alabama, Cheyenne, Fort Sill Apache, Miamian and three Shawnee languages.

The Ahtna Heritage Foundation of Alaska sponsored its first Breath of Life Workshop in August 2013 with funding from the National Science Foundation. Ahtna, which is spoken in the Copper River area of south central Alaska, has approximately one hundred elderly speakers and written documentation of their language. The Ahtna Heritage Foundation wanted to bring speakers and learners together to read and critique existing documentation of their language. The long-term goal of this Breath of Life

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<sup>35</sup> Colleen Fitzgerald and Mary S. Linn, "Training Communities, Training Graduate Students: The 2012 Oklahoma Breath of Life Workshop," <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/26075>.

<sup>36</sup> SIL International, "SIL FieldWorks," <http://fieldworks.sil.org>.

Workshop is to revitalize the Ahtna language and, as a group, determine how to improve existing documentation and the development of additional resources.<sup>37</sup>

Though not exactly a Breath of Life Workshop, the “Building Partnerships Between Archives and Indian Communities” Conference was held at the American Philosophical Society (APS) in Philadelphia on May 20-21<sup>st</sup>, 2010. The conference brought representatives from ten Native communities to the APS for the purpose of improving access to their library’s Native American collections. Conference organizers also sought to develop protocols for care and access to Native American collections in conjunction with representatives of the tribes whose languages are found in the APS’ collections. Tribal representatives provided the APS with additional information about their collections to improve their catalogs, and the APS provided the tribal representatives with copies of the recordings.<sup>38</sup>

The Breath of Life Archival Institute for Indigenous Languages held in 2011 and 2013 was founded by Leanne Hinton and Lisa Conathan, who were both interviewed for this thesis. According to Hinton, the main differences between this program and the AICLS Workshop are that the national workshop is two weeks long instead of one and is open to tribal people from all across the United States, not just California. One thing that the archivists did for each participant at the national Breath of Life was to provide electronic versions of the archival materials of their languages on a thumb drive. During

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<sup>37</sup> Ahtna Heritage Foundation, “Ahtna Language Infrastructure and Training (A-LIT),” [http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD\\_ID=1207511](http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1207511).

<sup>38</sup> Timothy B. Powell, “Building Bridges between Archives and Indian Communities,” *News from Philosophical Hall* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 2010): 2-3. [http://www.amphilsoc.org/sites/default/files/news-from-phil-hall/APS\\_News\\_Autumn\\_10.pdf](http://www.amphilsoc.org/sites/default/files/news-from-phil-hall/APS_News_Autumn_10.pdf).

the two-week period, participants visit the National Anthropological Archives, the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, and the National Museum of the American Indian.<sup>39</sup> The National Anthropological Archives has the originals of the John Peabody Harrington Papers 1907-1959, all 683 linear feet, including some unidentified materials. The American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress has Harrington's audio recordings, among them recordings of Chochenyo, Karuk, Chumash, Salinan, and Luiseño.

### Conclusion

The history of AICLS and descriptions of its programs and Breath of Life Workshops provided in this chapter explain the concepts, documents, and collections mentioned by the people interviewed for this thesis. The other workshops held around the country replicating the AICLS Breath of Life Workshop model are a testament to the value of Breath of Life as a means of studying sleeping languages to bring them back into use. The other workshops also illustrate some adaptations made to the model in terms of the role of the archives and the archivist. Namely, the meeting at the American Philosophical Society was entirely about improving the relationships between archives and Native communities, and the Oklahoma Breath of Life Workshop provided instruction on the topic of Native peoples donating materials to an archive.

Each of the interviews presented in the following chapters will consider various topics covered in this chapter. AICLS and Breath of Life founders and organizers will

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<sup>39</sup> Endangered Languages Fund, "Frequently Asked Questions: Breath of Life Archival Institute for Indigenous Languages," [http://endangeredlanguagefund.org/BOL\\_faqs.php](http://endangeredlanguagefund.org/BOL_faqs.php).

discuss in more detail the early years and changes to the organization and the workshop over the years. Two Breath of Life Workshop participants will talk about their experiences with their languages and with Breath of Life. Three archivists will talk about their collections and the work that they do in support of Breath of Life and their Native language collections.

### Chapter 3: Founders and Organizers Introduction

I see language revitalization in the future in California as being a combination of what the archives can give in the way of language knowledge and processes such as language pods that create language use. I'm most excited by people that are using their languages at home with their kids. And I hope that will go on. I see the future as being more and more apprentices from the Master-Apprentice Program starting to use the archives more.

—Leanne Hinton

This section of the thesis contains the interviews of three of the founders of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS) and the Breath of Life Workshops. In different ways, each of them is a leader in the revitalization of California Native languages and cultures. L. Frank (Tongva/Ajachmem) is an artist, a carver and an illustrator who conducted archival research to study her languages long before there was a Breath of Life. Leanne Hinton's lifetime of experience in ethnomusicology, linguistics, and language teaching shaped the programs of AICLS and the field of endangered language revitalization. Malcolm Margolin, who founded the publishing house Heyday Books in 1974, has given many Native Californian authors and organizations a means of communication through book publications and his magazine, *News From Native California*.

#### Getting Started

Margolin and Hinton met shortly after Hinton joined the linguistics faculty at University of California, Berkeley, in 1978. That same year, Margolin published his first book with a Native topic, *The Ohlone Way: Indian Life in the San Francisco-Monterey*

*Bay Area*.<sup>1</sup> As Margolin started up publication of *News From Native California* in 1987, he invited Hinton to write a language column for the magazine. When Margolin was selecting tribal community language scholars for the 1992 Tribal Scholars Language Conference, he personally invited L. Frank to attend. That same year, Margolin began featuring L. Frank's cartoon series "Acorn Soup" in *News From Native California*.

#### Founding Native California Network and AICLS

With Heyday Books approaching its twentieth year of operation in 1992, Malcolm Margolin had come to know many people, including people with enough money to make a big difference in Native language and culture revitalization. Among these individuals was Marion Weber of the Rockefeller family who asked Margolin to find the Native people to serve on the board of the Native California Network. With an annual budget of \$100,000 per year for several years,<sup>2</sup> the NCN started by funding individual language and cultural revitalization projects, but board members wondered if there was a larger need that the NCN could address. The NCN decided that the decline of Native languages was the foremost difficulty in culture revitalization, and that they needed to call a meeting of language experts to discuss the problems and the possible solutions. That meeting was the 1992 Tribal Scholars Language Conference, held at Walker Creek Ranch in Marin County, California.

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Margolin, *The Ohlone Way: Indian Life in the San Francisco-Monterey Bay Area* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> The founding board members of Native California Network were Carole Korb (now Lewis), currently the director of the Yurok Language Program, Frank La Pena (Wintu) professor emeritus of ethnic studies and art at California State University, Sacramento, and Paul Apodaca (Navajo/Mixton), a professor, artist, entertainer and cultural consultant.

In her Fall 1992 column for *News From Native California*, Leanne Hinton wrote a report on the Tribal Scholars Language Conference.<sup>3</sup> Conference participants reported several common problems, such as children not learning their tribal languages in the home, criticism for imperfect speech or for seeming unpatriotic, problems with in-school language efforts, and problems with writing systems. Sometimes the language had never been written by anyone, others had been written down only by linguists, while still others had multiple writing systems.

When the conference participants discussed the solutions and efforts that were taking place in their communities, L. Frank described the research she had been doing on her languages through the unpublished field notes of people such as linguist John Peabody Harrington because she had no speakers of her language to go to.

At the conference, Leanne Hinton shared her understandings of the limitations of formal language instruction she had developed while working in the Havasupai bilingual education program. She also shared with the conference attendees examples of successful language transmission that focused on conversational competence and the language teaching methods she had learned while at the University of California, San Diego.

When the conversation turned to the question of what should be done in the future, L. Frank joined the California language committee that would become the board of the Advocates for Indigenous Language Survival and Hinton took an advisory position with that board.

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<sup>3</sup> Leanne Hinton, "Keeping the Languages Alive: The Tribal Scholars Language Conference," *News from Native California* 6, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 25-31.

Margolin described his role in the Tribal Scholars Language Conference as that of Rolodex. He knew the people that needed to be there, or as he put it, “I think I assembled the ingredients. I think Leanne put it together.” L. Frank had already been doing the work of going to libraries, archives, and museums in order to learn her language and culture. Also at the conference were Cindy Alvitre (Tongva), Ernestine McGovran (Chumash), and Linda Yamane (Rumsien Ohlone) who were also trying to learn their languages from archival materials.

#### About Archives

From the very beginning in *News From Native California*, Margolin published many and even wrote some of the articles on archives, libraries, and their use for language and cultural revitalization.<sup>4</sup> In the interview, Margolin discussed how he used archives, and he said that he would go in, look at something and dwell on it. He talked about the importance on thinking deeply about less, and not just becoming deluged with information. This is similar to the curriculum of *Breath of Life*; participants are encouraged to develop a project and focus on it.

L. Frank noted that at the first *Breath of Life* the archivists knew that they were meeting a different type of researcher, not a student writing a paper for a grade, but people whose information needs were personal, cultural, and spiritual in nature.

Archivists were anxious at the very start, but quickly realized that *Breath of Life* was the

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<sup>4</sup> Malcolm Margolin, “California Indian Library Collections,” *News from Native California* 3, no. 3 (July/August 1989): 7-8; Kenneth Bicknell, “The Southwest Museum’s Braun Research Library,” *News from Native California* 3, no. 1 (March/April 1989): 23-24.



most satisfying use of archival materials they had seen in their careers. The archivists were excited for the participants' excitement.

L. Frank commented that the archivists try not to charge participants for duplicating documents if at all possible, realizing that Native people might resent being charged for copies of their own languages' data. When discussing materials with access restrictions, L. Frank explained that archivists are hamstrung by access restrictions placed on collections by the researcher who donated them. In one case, certain family members were not allowed to listen to recordings that other branches of the family could listen to. Archivists can request that the donor consider lifting the restrictions, but they can not break the agreements their archive made with the donor without causing problems for themselves and the archives.

L. Frank also felt that the affection between the archivists and the participants was mutual. A few participants have resented the archivists for possessing documents about their languages and culture, but L. Frank thought that that resentment was misplaced. What they really resented was the damage to their culture and language that had been done earlier, and not that the archives now held some of the information that had been lost to the community.

Leanne Hinton discussed the importance of conveying to the archivists the research needs of the participants. Especially in the early years of Breath of Life, most of the participants had never visited a university, so making them feel welcome was important. She also asked the archivists to streamline the search process for participants. She explained the Breath of Life's homework assignments and the role of archivists in

providing participants with research support. Most of all, she asked the archivists to teach participants to use the archives so that they feel able to come back on their own after Breath of Life. Hinton also explained that she provided the archivists with a list of the languages participants would be researching as soon as she knew them herself. Hinton praised the archivists for making accommodations for the Breath of Life participants. For example, the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology did not have many listening stations for participants in the beginning, but the archivists added more stations over the years.

Other issues related to creating a welcoming environment for Breath of Life participants emerged from the interviews. L. Frank mentioned that she has learning disabilities, including dyslexia. How is language learning and language revitalization through archival materials different for her? It is already difficult enough for a graduate student in linguistics with no disabilities to make meaning out of J.P. Harrington's handwritten field notes. What are the strategies she needs to employ and what kinds of accommodations would enable her to make meaning out of the handwriting and the highly technical writing system? Breath of Life organizers also need to make accommodations for the physical limitations of some participants by providing door-to-door transportation for those who are unable to walk more than a short distance.

L. Frank said that even though Breath of Life happens on the Berkeley campus, it becomes an environment of Native cultures, and the logistics of selecting participants, food, lodging, and care for the elderly participants have to reflect Native values or they will be criticized by the participants. On a modest budget and with the bureaucracy that

comes with a university event, Breath of Life organizers have to provide food for the participants. Leanne Hinton explained that in the first year, the meal plan offered bagels at every meal. By the end of the week, Linda Yamane had written and shared her poem “Breath of Life—Silent No More” which everyone remembered as “Bagels No More” because of its witty closing line.<sup>5</sup>

In response to a question about the possibility of the *News From Native California* archives going to the Bancroft, Margolin seemed a bit startled at first. In part to reassure the interviewer, Margolin said that he just did not yet know for certain what his plans were for the materials. He understood the human value of his collections. He delighted in people coming to the offices of Heyday Books to see photographs of their ancestors and of their ancestral villages. Letting go of his collections would mean letting go of those experiences, confronting his mortality, and contending with the uncertain future of Heyday Books. Collection donations in progress are delicate matters that can change directions many times before they are done. Whether or not it was a wise question to ask for the historical record could be a topic for discussion among oral historians and archivists. However, the question did uncover the emotional and relational aspects of donors and archives. Geoff Wexler and Linda Long wrote about the interpersonal aspects of donor relations and the supporting role archivists play in assisting

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<sup>5</sup> Linda Yamane, “Breath of Life—Silent no More,” *News from Native California*, (Fall 1996): 17.

people through major life transitions such as retirement, the completion of a project, or even death in their 2009 article.<sup>6</sup>

Margolin's response to the question about the future of the *News From Native California* materials might reassure Breath of Life participants that feelings of reluctance to part with their collections are valid. It might be helpful to arrange for an open discussion during Breath of Life about donating a collection to an archive. Seeking an archive that would be interested in receiving the materials ideally happens well in advance of actually transferring the materials. It is important to plan for the day that the donor can no longer use the notes, recordings, photographs and other documentation, so that the actual transfer can happen in accordance with the donor's wishes.

All three narrators spoke about language learning and Native languages in particular. L. Frank talked about why she needed to learn her Native languages, and why others have needed to learn their Native languages. "They're not working this hard just to communicate, because we have English," she explained. "When I get to the land of the dead, I need words to get to where I need to go all the way." Hinton emphasized the influence that her training as a teaching assistant at University of California, San Diego in oral immersion and conversational fluency had on the development of the Master-Apprentice Program and the Breath of Life Workshop.

Even Margolin, who admitted that his specialty was not language teaching or the specifics of language revitalization, had opinions about language learning. He compared

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<sup>6</sup> Geoff Wexler and Linda Long, "Lifetimes and Legacies: Mortality, Immortality and the Needs of Aging and Dying Donors," *American Archivist* 72, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009): 478-95.

his school-based foreign language education at Boston Latin School and Harvard University to the communication-based work of AICLS and felt that language learning that involved living people was vastly superior. He loves to be around the wonderful people assembled at Breath of Life who are made even better by revitalizing their languages.

When asked about the future, Margolin was not sure what the future would hold, but that he would do what he could to support the revitalization of Native languages and cultures. He quoted his friend John Mohawk, publisher of *Akwesasne Notes*, who was asked why he worked so hard when the Iroquois prophesized the world's end. "Maybe the world will be destroyed, but there's one thing I have to do and make sure it's not on my watch." According to Margolin, the period of genocide and cultural assimilation had not only devastated Native communities, but Margolin felt that it also diminished the people who participated in it, as well as their descendants, for they often felt so guilty that they could not face the surviving people and cultures. Margolin said there was "such a loss to Indians and such a loss to humanity, that the more you can bring back and the more you can keep, the better it is for everybody."

L. Frank said that her hopes were the same as they have been, even since leaving the AICLS board in 2011. Just the weekend before Breath of Life 2012, she hosted a conference called "Shadow of the Whale", at which linguists and Native people learning their languages discussed their interests and interactions in order to improve collaborations. L. Frank also hopes to start a program called "Second Breath" at which

Breath of Life Workshop participants would learn more about using what they have learned at Breath of Life in everyday communication situations.

Leanne Hinton hopes that Breath of Life will continue and that she can pass the work on to other linguists at Berkeley, just as Lauren Lassleben hopes that she can pass on the archivists' work to the next generation of archivists. Given that the remaining speakers of California languages are mostly elders, and will eventually pass on, Hinton thought that it would be through two avenues that California languages would continue on: through the use of "language pods" which consist of facilitated groups of up to six learners of a language who would meet regularly to immerse in the language. She also hopes that the archives will continue to be used to increase knowledge of the language.<sup>7</sup>

#### Founders and Organizers' Impact on Archives and Native Language Revitalization

AICLS' Breath of Life has spawned similar workshops across the United States. Heyday Books published several books related to Breath of Life and the Master-Apprentice Program. *News From Native California* preserved the record of Breath of Life and of AICLS through its publication of the AICLS newsletter and many event reports in its pages. Breath of Life influenced the educations and/or careers of many people including Lisa Conathan and Andrew Garrett, whose interviews are part of this volume.

The narrators in this section offered glimpses into the circumstances through which the Breath of Life Workshop could come into existence. They gave the reader a

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<sup>7</sup> Yurok Tribe Community Language Project, "Teacher Intern Position / Pod Facilitator," [http://www.yuroktribe.org/departments/education/Yurok\\_Tribe\\_Language\\_Program/documents/facilitator2011.pdf](http://www.yuroktribe.org/departments/education/Yurok_Tribe_Language_Program/documents/facilitator2011.pdf).

sense of the process, of who needed to be involved to get things started and what kinds of language and archival expertise were needed. The narrators described the organizational collaborations between the organizers and the archivists, and gave a glimpse into the uncertainty that is part of deciding when and where to donate one's collections to an archive.

## Chapter 4: L. Frank

I don't think that any one organization or any one program is any one end all be all. I think everything has to be continuously adjusted, made better. More allies sought out. There aren't enough people helping. There aren't enough people learning. I'm very dissatisfied. (laughs)

Someone said to me, "You are never satisfied." And I was kind of hurt by that. And I thought well, I must be just an awful person. I'm never satisfied.

And I said this to another friend of mine. She looked at me like I was crazy. And she said, "Well, you're an activist. If you were satisfied, you wouldn't be an activist."

L. Frank is an artist and activist from the Tongva and Ajachmem peoples indigenous to Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego counties. L. Frank published a collection of her cartoons featuring the comic adventures of Coyote, *Acorn Soup*, and co-authored *First Families: A Photographic History of California Indians*.<sup>1</sup>

It was important to interview L. Frank because she is the founding member of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS) who spoke up for the people like herself who could not make use of AICLS' first endeavor, the Master-Apprentice Program, which pairs a fluent speaker with an apprentice learner. She co-organized and supported the Breath of Life Workshops from 1996 to 2010. Feeling out of sync with the direction of the board and dissatisfied with the board's decision-making process, L. Frank resigned from the AICLS board in 2011.<sup>2</sup> This makes L. Frank's interview especially important as oral historians interview people who represent a variety

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<sup>1</sup> L. Frank, *Acorn Soup* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1999); L. Frank and Kim Hogeland, *First Families: A Photographic History of California Indians* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> L. Frank, e-mail message to author, July 2, 2013.



of perspectives, including people who disagree with each other or leave a movement because of disagreements.

L. Frank grew up in her Tongva homeland, now overgrown with the metropolis of Los Angeles. While she knew no living fluent speakers, she recalled hearing one of her ancestral languages spoken when she played not far from her home on a hill that was the gravesite of over four hundred Tongva people. As she grew up, she practiced traditional weaving, developed her art, and began a lifetime of studying art and visiting museums and archives. In search of ethnographic materials on her people, L. Frank met with curators, anthropologists, and archivists and began doing the activities that would become key components of the Breath of Life Workshop. She was breaking down some barriers, but finding more along the way. She hoped for support in her efforts.

Although L. Frank resigned from the AICLS board in 2011, she has not given up her involvement in Native languages revitalization. With the support of The Endangered Language Fund, Heyday Books and Pepperwood Preserve, L. Frank hosted *Shadow of the Whale*, a weekend workshop held in 2012 at which the power dynamics and the working relationships between linguists and Native language communities were discussed.

L. Frank was one of the founding members of the committee that was to eventually become the board of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival. On that board, L. Frank voiced the concerns of California tribes whose languages had no living fluent speakers. Through her persistence, the first Breath of Life Workshop was scheduled for June of 1996. Advertised in the Spring 1996 issue of *News*

*From Native California* as the “Lonely Hearts Language Club,” the workshop had become the “Breath of Life–Silent No More Native California Language Restoration Workshop” by the time a report on the event was written for the Fall 1996 issue of *News*.

L. Frank had two reasons for preferring the name Breath of Life. In the course of a conversation about language, Frank Lobo, an elder from her tribe, told her, “Every breath has consequence.” L. Frank also wanted to honor the Hawaiian language art and culture bearers, especially Carolyn Kualii, who had supported California Indian language revitalization efforts since their beginning.<sup>3</sup> The –ha of ‘aloha’ refers to the breath of life.

One of L. Frank’s functions during the Breath of Life Workshops was the resolution of difficulties that arose between participants and linguists, or sometimes between linguists and other linguists. She understood both the emotional difficulties of trying to learn a language that one’s parents or grandparents were punished for using and of the pressures that academics face in the tenure process. She stayed in the dorms and fostered the work of Breath of Life through encouragement and pressure.

In this interview, L. Frank recounts her first experiences with art and language, including the Tribal Scholars Language Conference of 1992 and the founding of the Native California Network, the organization from which the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival would spring. She recalled the board meeting at which AICLS decided to address the needs of California Indian languages whose languages had

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<sup>3</sup> Leanne Hinton, “Keeping the Languages Alive: Language Action in California,” in *Flutes of Fire: Essays on California Indian Languages*, ed. Leanne Hinton (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1994), 228.

no living fluent speakers by having a workshop that would connect people with archival materials on their languages. She described her role in the Breath of Life Workshops as a counselor, helping participants through emotional breakthroughs and breakdowns. She talked about the archivists, the work they did, and the happiness they felt when they saw Breath of Life participants benefit from the collections they cared for. She talked about the hard things, too, including the conflicts that arose between people.

The interview took place at L. Frank's home in Santa Rosa, California, on January 10, 2013. From the street, the house structure looked like one of many suburban houses, except for the huge cacti in the front yard. Before sitting down for the interview, L. Frank took the time to give a full tour of her gardens, her art studios, and canoe-making efforts. Afterwards, we settled for the interview in the front room of her house. Her very quiet dog sat next to her and slept for most of the interview. Occasionally the clinking of a collar or the sounds of a dog licking can be heard on the recording. The audio was recorded open air using the TASCAM DR-100mkII digital audio recorder.

Interview with L. Frank

Interviewed by Susan Gehr  
January 10, 2013  
Santa Rosa, California  
78 minutes

Susan Gehr:

And I'll say today is Thursday, January 10, 2013. This is an interview for the oral history project Breath of Life: Revitalizing California's Native Languages Through Archives. I am interviewing L. Frank. And my name is Susan Gehr. This interview is taking place at L. Frank's home in Santa Rosa, California.

And so, oh, I guess the first thing I should do is do you go by L. Frank or L. Frank Manriquez?

L. Frank:

L. Frank is just fine.

SG: So I have some like kind of background information questions first. Tell me a little bit about when and where you grew up.

LF: I grew up in Southern California in the '50s. Born in '52. Moved around a bit in really poor areas. Venice, California. Or really rich area, Palos Verdes, California. Yeah.

SG: And maybe a little bit about your family and the communities they came from.

LF: Grew up with my mother's side of the family, which was the non California Native side, but grew up in my homeland. So pretty much left to my own devices for a lot of years, until seven other kids came along. But until that time, I was pretty much immersed in my culture just by living on the land and listening to it. So the family was just around, thinking I was a weirdo because I could hear and see things.

But it was a Hispanic German, my stepfather was German, so we lived in a house where there were a lot of people who had escaped communist countries or come from just, come from other countries. So there was a wide range of languages spoken in the house.

SG: Where did you go to school?

LF: Well I had to drop out of kindergarten. Mumps. Went to school in Southern Cal at Playa del Rey Elementary. And then, like I said, my stepdad moved around. Went to several high schools. Westchester High School. Graduated from. Went to Rolling Hills High School. Attended a lot of, on my own, junior colleges, because they had art equipment I could use. So I'm real close but I don't have any degrees. But if I went to, for a semester, I could get a degree in art, and AA, or I could get one in recreation or I could get one in counseling, or I forget the other one. Oh, I forgot what it was. But I could get, which I'm not interested in, obviously. But went to a million schools. Immaculate Heart College in Hollywood. I worked with students of Sister Corita Kent, did silkscreening. So I totally dig school. Been to a lot of them.

SG: When did art sort of, I know some people, they just have to do art. But when did art sort of come to you? Or creativity.

LF: Well I first noticed color and shape when I was two, two-and-a-half years old. I remember vague things before that. But most distinctly, and it's funny, I wanted to do a book and ask artists their first memories of art. And this was mine. I remember my little chubby baby fingers playing with three little balls in front of me. And I was seated in a stroller. And there was a little wire bent (across the balls and it had three little, a red, you know, primary color balls. And suddenly within my vision rolls a ball that's the same color and shape as one of these. And I can remember being a child, being orgasmically just turned on by this. And then another rolls into sight the same as the other color till there were three balls. But they were so much larger than the two, three little, my mother and stepfather were at a miniature golf, and they noticed me playing with those balls, and they rolled golf balls into my line of sight.

But I can remember thinking always about shape, function and form, you know. Even when hideous things happened to me as a child. When I was five, there was an attempted murder, and a this and a that, and a finger went flying from a hand, and I can remember it landing and thinking wow, look how it fits between the boards. (laughs) So I've always been totally—yeah, but I can remember that very distinctly, those. It's very clearly I was two-and-a-half, maybe.

SG: And language, when did you first hear of—

LF: Well, my grandmother would sing me a song. I'm also Rarámuri. And I think, I know, because she told me later, that this was some song from

Rarámuri or Apachesque. And it was just a little, a baby song that was more, what do they call it? Vocables? Vocatives? Just the sounds. But it had come from those people.

And then my grandfather only spoke Spanish, but he spoke a particular type of Spanish. He had the “dulce” (lisp) instead of “dulce.” And my grandmother spoke Spanish, but she worked in the sweatshops of L.A. She was often the only legal. And so she brought home quite a vocabulary of “huevos blanquitos,” you know, just in Hispanic. But then there was German spoken in the household. Was *dü Huete nacht de Schüle?* (What are you doing after school?) You know, so.

But then, as I said, there were many other people who came into the house, and they spoke many other languages. Czechoslovakians, Hungarians, Bulgarians. And then I, yeah.

SG: Where is, what is Rarámuri or what—

LF: Rarámuri? Chihuahua, in the mountains.

SG: Oh, in Mexico? Okay.

LF: Mm hmm. Tarahumara

SG: What’s that?

LF: Tarahumara is the Spanish, but it’s Rarámuri.

SG: Let me make sure, I have a little bit of grant money to do transcription. I’m trying to help them out with the spellings and stuff.

LF: Yeah. R-a-r-a-m-u-r-i.

SG: Oh, good. Let’s see here—

LF: My mother would put up when we were kids, at the table, she’d always put language up. She always insisted we try and speak other languages.

SG: And let’s see. Your California Indian languages are—

LF: Well, that came way later.

SG: Okay.

LF: Well, actually, no. I heard them when I was a child. But there was no one around. It turns out my father, my aunts, my uncles, all the Indians lived

about two miles away. But I didn't meet them because of the finger flying thing until I was twenty-one. And I really, I went searching for them. And I could figure out which language was mine.

But I had heard languages, because one of the places I played when I was four years old or so, it was about a mile from our house, below what is now Loyola Marymount. But it was then just Loyola University. I thought God lived there because my family was Catholic and it had a big L on the side of the hill. I thought it was the house of the lord. But anyway, right down the hill below that—and I never took to Christianity, even as a child—I would play there. And I would quite often just lay there and look at the sky. And I could hear people talking, and they were nice. Turns out it's the gravesite of over 400 people, mostly women, of my peeps, you know. So I heard language, you know. I didn't know what to do with it then. It had to have been our language.

So language has always, always been a part of my life.

SG: How did you first get connected with the Tribal Scholars Language Conference that was back in '92? I guess it was the one that—

LF: That preceded, that AICLS [Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival] came out of?

SG: Yeah. Yeah.

LF: Uh huh. I was seated with my Hawaiian Apache sister, Carolyn Kualii and Malcolm Margolin down in my homeland of San Juan Capistrano. And we were eating lunch and he turned to us and said, "Are either of you interested in language?"

And yes she was, from the Hawaiian immersion, and yes I was, because I had been working by myself on language because I had since then found out which languages to work on, by myself, which then I had run into, you know, I'd never tried to learn a language from words. And being dyslexic/autistic and finding all this diacritical stuff, you know, so I said yes I was and yes she was.

So we were invited to the Walker Creek Ranch for the first meeting. Where we learned a great many things, mostly from the old women who had gone to school with the old men when they were all children. And I watched the old women harass the old men mercilessly. Poking them with umbrellas in the butt when they were speaking and nobody else could see it happening. You know, it was, I learned a great many things.

SG: What were your first solo language efforts like, you know, you said you tried to learn language—

LF: Oh, for my California languages. Well, because I had heard things, I tried to, I looked endlessly to try and find somebody who could tell me what those words meant. Because the very first time I started to really weave a basket, I heard language real strongly. Real strongly. And that's a whole other longer story.

So I always was trying to find out where this fit. And nobody seemed to know. Well, because we're extinct and nobody speaks it. But I didn't know, you know, I was asking in the wrong places. I was asking people who kept telling me everything was dead. But it couldn't be dead, because I kept hearing it.

So I started working with it. I found, I found *Encounter with an Angry God*, John Peabody Harrington.<sup>4</sup> That led me to then *Chinigchinich* by Boscana, which is a rare piece of ethnography.<sup>5</sup> Rare in that it was a rare occurrence that this was, that everything he wrote down was written down.

So Harrington and he annotated Boscana's book. And my copy of Boscana has been to Europe more times than most people I know. Because I take it with me everywhere. It's pretty worn and torn now.

But I worked for, this was before AICLS was ever about, I worked with these.

And I was also quite the museum geek in that I paid a nickel to go to a Shaker museum back east. You know, I'll go to any museum. But I began, as an artist, looking at the material cultures that were in museums. And I began going into the basements of these places. And so that, you know, everything begged for language.

And I had language, I found some, but I had no idea what to do with it. Because I didn't know what any of those marks meant. It frustrated the hell out of me.

SG: I bet. So back to the conference and the founding of AICLS. What, yeah, tell me about that time.

LF: How did that go down?

SG: How did that go down?

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<sup>4</sup> Carobeth Laird, *Encounter with an Angry God: Recollections of My Life with John Peabody Harrington* (Banning, CA: Malki Museum Press, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> Gerónimo Boscana et al., *Chinigchinich (Chi-Ñích-Ñich)* (Santa Ana, CA: Fine Arts Press, 1933).



LF: Well, the assessments had been made. I made all the beds. I learned about that elders can't have their heads to the land of the dead, and they made me remake all of their beds. They were not happy. So after this long weekend of talking about language, seeing where language was, seeing where it wasn't, did anyone want to do anything about it?

And of course people said, I mean, well, not of course, there are a lot of people you meet who think it should die out. But everyone who attended felt that something needed to be done. And so they created a board.

And I remember I was seated there and they were talking about a board. And I was just kind of daydreaming. And then they turned around and they said, "Well, we need more Southern Californians on the board." Because they decided that they needed a board, or a group of people, and they called it a board at that time, that were from throughout the state and understood, were grassroots people who understood the communities. And it would be a Native-run board—here's what gets me in trouble twenty years later—it would be a Native-run board, and decisions would come from the Natives.

Okay. And so they said they needed someone else from Southern Cal. Then Darlene Franco turns around and looks at me and says, "L. Frank. You need to be on this board."

And I looked at her and everyone looked at me. And I said, "Well, I don't know what a board is, but I always have opinions." So I said yes. Oh my god, you know? So I said yes. And that's how I got on the board. But the board was chosen there by elders. Really. And there were, I'm sure you had the list of the attendees who were there otherwise. But it, yeah, that's how those days of meetings ended. That something had to be done.

SG: When did the idea of Breath of Life—

LF: Well Breath of Life was something I had been doing anyway. I had been doing it, like I say, before there was an AICLS, before I knew any of this. Before, when I was just stumbling around museum basements and trying, and you know, archives and all kinds of microfiche and all that stuff. The more problems I had, the more solutions I needed.

And so when AICLS was made, I said, "Great, let's do this."

And what I got was, "Well, no, we have to make sure that the Master Apprentice people are helped."

It's funny, because the story, the way that I've heard it explained even in public was that all I did was beg for this to be made and then poof, other people made it. But in reality, I was begging, "Come on, I just need a little help here." And I'm not sure the exact year, but it was several, several years into, I think we've been around twenty-one years. It was

around ten years, all right, so seven or eight years into it, I'm thinking, into AICLS, maybe a little longer, we were seated at Seventh Generation office, because they let us have meeting space up there in what is that, Eureka? It's their other office, it was, we were meeting upstairs in this room. It was a board meeting.

And I said something and Leanne said, "Okay, now it's time."

And she always writes in these notebooks. The little salt and pepper notebooks. She perpetually writes in those everything. So she had that out.

And then Nancy Richardson Steele, I don't know what her name, we can look back at that time and see exactly what name she had. But she says, which really surprised me because I was highly supportive of Master Apprentice and learning all about it and working with and you know, giving, you know, my energy to it. She announced that, "Well, this is nothing we know about so you guys just do that." And then they didn't pay any attention.

Which is what happened for the rest of Breath of Life history, which was always pretty aggravating to me, because it made it hard for me to do things with Breath of Life if nobody understood it.

So I said, okay. So I started saying to Leanne, and she just kept writing. Now she had in mind something like this before. But her and mine was more linguistics. Which a lot of the ideas that she had first put in in the first linguistic were let go and it was changed. You know, things have to be adjusted.

So I started saying, listing all of the problems that I was having. That I, you know, I don't know what these are, I don't know what this is, I don't know what that is, I don't know what this is. Now when I go in there, the objects tell me something different than these pieces of paper tell me, you know. And I know that there's something here. And when I look at these baskets and then I look at this. So she, I just remember her scribbling away, scribbling away, maybe an hour. Because it had been inside me for so long.

And then she wrote this wonderful poem called the Lonely Hearts Language Club. Because she had come across Ernestine McGovran, Linda Yamane, Cindy Alvitre and myself, and seen the commonality that we had found our languages but found no one else was interested or paid attention. We were alone. And her poem captures it. That at night we would just say these words, you know, and try and say these words and try and put this together.

Cindy Alvitre had a slight hand up because her father spoke a little bit of the language left. But still, we had very little.

And so she wanted to call this conference Lonely Hearts Language Club. But I (gags) I pretty much threw up all over that. Because it just didn't, it just didn't fit. I thought it just didn't fit us.

And I'm really glad you're asking these questions, because there are people who think, "Oh, L. Frank, how much recognition do you want?" they say to me. But it's not about me. It's about a California Native did something that other California Natives needed and benefited, you know.

But the name Breath of Life was very important to me, because it comes from, it's honoring two people and two cultures. The "ha" of "aloha" is breath of life. And the Hawaiians have given it so much support, especially in the beginning. They gave us so much support by what they were doing. Encouragement. Just, they were just there, have been there from the beginning. Are there now.

So I wanted to honor the Hawaiians and their "ha." So Breath of Life: Silent No More is the real name of the conference. And Breath of Life because my mentor—he's more than that, he's like my spiritual advisor—he's an old dude from my tribe. He's the one who's told me old stories and things that no one else was really interested in. That kind of situation.

But he told me once, when we were talking about language. Something simple. He said, "Every breath has consequence." And so that struck me so hard, you know. So that's what the Breath of Life: Silent No More, so Breath of Life got its name from, he's Ajachmem, and she's Hawaiian and Apache. He's my tribe. And she's my sister.

You know, it just couldn't be Lonely Hearts Language Club. That was too despondent. Because you know, we weren't the only ones working on language. And it just seemed that people were awfully hopeful about language, even if they were the only ones working on it for fifty years. There's still this enormous hope and pride and all these things that you know, Silent No More.

SG: What was the planning, and kind of the process before the day everybody arrived at Berkeley?

LF: Oh, wow. Well that was pretty exciting. It always is. It really always is. It hasn't lost, it's changed over the years, but it's, you know, the planning, Leanne having to work with the school and getting all that, and access to everything. And the libraries weren't sure what to do with us, you know. And okay, we're coming, you know. They had students before, and, "All right this, and all right that." You know, the school was ready for it. But emotionally, they weren't ready for it, you know. What happened to them. Because they came afterwards and told us what happened to them.

So it was pretty exciting that A, we got money for this. They worked hard, got the grant for that, you know. And what are we going to feed people? We've got to give them something. So Leanne worked it out. We were going to get bagels, which at the end of that week, Linda

Yamane wrote a song called “Bagels No More.” But it was pretty exciting, you know. The way that I, that personally I always try to do things in community is that I try real hard to listen, you know. And then I try to coalesce, you know, what is reasonable, what insurance will cover, you know, whatever the parameters are. But you never know who’s going to attend. You never think anyone wants to attend. You think yeah, well, it’s just a cockamamie idea.

Well we had, I think it was like eighty, I think we had room for forty, fifty people, and we had like eighty or ninety applications. You know, it was, it was good. It was good. I wasn’t sure how it would form. You’re never sure when you’re giving birth, unless you use ultrasound, what’s going to, what kind of child you’re going to have here. And it formed itself, it shaped pretty quickly when people came.

The first thing that started it was we were given our nametags and it occurred to me that, because of my learning disabilities, I always worked from that denominator up. Because people who can catch on quickly, they’re going to catch on quickly. You know, but there’s a lot of people, and as it turned out, a lot of the attendees who came the first couple of years are people who had barely made it out of school. I didn’t know this until they showed up and all. But I always go from that denominator, my denominator.

And so I asked, “Well, can you put my name in those marks?” I didn’t know, you know, what is it, IPA [International Phonetic Alphabet]?

SG: Yeah, IPA.

LF: See. Once I learn it, I don’t care. You know, use it, get it over with. But in IPA, because we know what our name sounds like. And sure enough, you know, you get people just walking around, bumping into walls, staring at their nametags. Because Ethan, you know, he’s never written an oval with a cross through it, you know, a line through it. But now that’s his nametag. So he’s trying to see how that—so it started forming them because it kind of bonded them all at once. You know, they were all given something that totally confused them, yet they understood it.

Which also makes things possible, you know. You know you can learn something, because you just have.

SG: Did you, were you in the planning process, did you have interactions with the archivists, or the museum people?

LF: I didn’t so much that first year. Leanne really worked hard on that. I did afterwards. Well, and during.

SG: What were those experiences like?

LF: Well, there's the usual, it's like when I worked for Camarillo State Mental Hospital, and we drove up with a bus full of adult mentally retarded people with behavioral problems, you know, they could see us coming at the fast food place and they looked a little bit worried, you know, their eyes got kind of big. And they moved extra fast. And they tried to be very efficient. And I had that same sort of, (laughs) I got that same sort of impression in a few of the libraries. Because you know, we came at them and we weren't the usual student. And the archivist knew that. And so they had to follow rules and they had to do what they had to do. But they realized that this was something different. We didn't need this for an A, B, C or a D. We needed this—it was personal. And that, you could tell, made a difference in each of the places.

And I had been on my own. See, this is it. It's based, you know, it's based on everything I was doing. And I'd been haunting museums for a long time. And so I had haunted this Berkeley museum and all around it. And you know, I could see—(to her dog) sit, there you go. Good girl. All right, there's one tired dog. Go to sleep.

I'd been in these archives and well received and all. But to see the exchange between the archivists that, you know, I was somewhat familiar with, and these groups of people, it was really, well, that was another you know, big formation. It was a bonding sort of, the archivists at the end of that first year, they've been embracing ever since. Because of this, they came and told us that never had the archives been so useful. And as a real, you know, archival geek myself, proudly, I understood that. Because they get a lot of people through there. A lot of people. And they have people come through there and to relate and make the archives come alive. You know, "My great-great grandmother made that." "My great-great-grandfather said that." The people who house the tapes, they saw the generations connecting. How could you not?

And it all happened simply and quietly. But you could see it. It was just, it was really, really nice. It was, it was good for everybody.

It was good because all those people who collected that information in whatever format, you know, now this is why they did it. Or this is why their informants, consultants, gave them the information. So you know, time was coming around for things to be right. In a real simple way.

SG: How would you describe how Breath of Life works? How the participants and linguists and archivists work?

LF: It depends if you're your first time there or your third time there. But you come and you, you're assigned a linguist who hopefully talks to you before you get there. Doesn't always work out. But that's being worked

on in other ways. That relationship is ever evolving. But you go with this linguist who hopefully knows your language. If they don't, hopefully they've worked with Native languages. If they haven't, hopefully they're easy to communicate with. So there's a lot of hoping at first. And usually people work out. And when they don't, ooh, well, there's fireworks.

But you get together with your linguist. And hopefully they talk over what they would like to get done. And if it's your first year, you spend a lot of time looking at archives. And maybe you've never been to the archives. And it's your first year. And maybe you've never been, like the very first Breath of Life, well, I don't know if Gordon Bussell came to the first or the second Breath of Life. But he came pretty early on.

And years later, I was at a basket gathering. And this woman walks up to me, pretty intense, and she tells me, right when she gets to me, she breaks into smiles, so that was pretty good, because I was a little nervous until that point. And she comes up and she says she wanted to meet the person who made Gordon leave the, you know, the rez [the reservation]. And leave the town and come into the city for a whole week and stay in town and not, you know, and to travel. Because he wouldn't leave before that. Yet this was a good thing, because it gave him information. It gave him, you know, it was changing him. So she was telling me, "Thank you for all that."

So some people have never been to a university. And so that's a real new thing right there. Some people have never stayed in a dorm. So there's all these new things that happen aside from language. And then when you get there, if it's your first year, you're pretty much overwhelmed. I see a lot of mouths sort of, jaws sort of drop slowly and eyes sort of rock around in their heads. The pens try to take notes, but they don't know quite where to, so eventually they lay down on the paper. Yeah. Because it's overwhelming. You don't think you can do it.

And then by the end of the week you can do it. Because you've had a linguist, you've had people in different archives, each helping you with whatever is in their holdings. And then you've got little bits of, you've got teaching during the day from the linguists and about the mechanics of linguistics. And then you've got work with your instructor, your linguist, on how your language works, the sounds, the shapes, the thought of your language.

And then you have bits of homework and you find now that you're staying up until two in the morning trying to figure out what you're going to do. And then, you know, it's the next morning and you're there at eight o'clock and you've got your piece of toast, you know, and your orange juice, and you're still going over your homework. And oh, I can't pronounce this, I'm going to forget in front of everybody! You know, because you have to say it in front of everyone. Because part of this is that you're giving back to your community that which you learn.

So we asked people, and these are people who would much rather never say a word, and sit in a corner. But here they are being asked to speak, and to speak like babies. They know it's babies, and not even good babies, in front of everybody. And then it comes out really good.

And then you're so overwhelmed. And that's where I, I'm standing there listening to them. And my part is not to, what do they call it, the time bitch? That's not what I'm doing. Some of these people have just spoken the first bit of conversation from these archives, from these pieces of paper they've made alive, in one hundred years. And they're so overcome with the emotion of that, that it's so weighty, that this is no longer this penciled in phrase. It's words that you can use with your family. It's words that you can use to pray. It's a child's silly little song. You know, it's counting to ten. But it's so enormous, because who the heck has done this lately?

So in that moment, almost everybody, first year, second year, third year, I don't care, they're overcome. And for a moment, they're not quite sure. I can read it in their eyes. They're not quite sure where they are.

And then, you know, quite often you'll touch them and they'll move, and they'll become unstuck. It's just, it all happens kind of fast. But there's so much power in what they've just accomplished.

And so by the end of the week, after they've had homework and they've presented their homework and had homework and presented their homework, they've now, well on Wednesday nights there's usually a cultural, and so they're sharing, if there's any songs or stories or just feelings. Because quite often, what happens to our people is that no one, you know, they're so invisible that they don't expect anyone ever wants to hear from them. So there's a moment of just hearing from you where nothing is expected from you.

And then so by the end of the week, when your final project is due, you're actually ready for it. And there's a confidence and a trust these people are all on your side. They all understand. You don't have to explain to anybody historical trauma, or my peoples' that unless you need to get it out of you.

But by the Saturday morning, people are ready for their presentations, and they're ready to go home and continue working. At least that's my observation.

SG: After Breath of Life, do you notice that participants have, how does it change their visits to archives?

LF: Well, what it does is they go home and they tell people about Breath of Life, and then somebody hears it who has the constitution to get in their car and drive six hours, ten hours, an hour and a half, and they make their own appointments at the archives. Maybe they hear about oh, the baskets

are here. Or maybe they heard there are tapes here. Or maybe there's this here. You know, because those things, like a basket. What is it, the provenance, however it's pronounced, sometimes there's words to that that lead you to something else. And it doesn't matter which of the archives you're in, be the artifacts or papers, they all lead to language. Even if everything you're reading is in English at the moment, it all leads to language. Language understanding. Grasping of culture. Because that's really what it is. And we are not just learning language. We are, some of us, because of how little we have, we get glimpses of our culture. Pre-contamination time. And who we might be now. And others who have more material, they learn to, point to your right, you use this hand, this way. If you point to your left, you use this hand that way. So everybody has different degrees of information.

Still, there are a lot of people who are afraid once they leave Breath of Life. Because they have never done well with education. And if they don't have enough support at home, they become afraid of grammar and failure. At something that seems close to getting—

SG: What are some of the changes, things that are added to or taken out of the Breath of Life program over the years?

LF: Well, that's where I became an enemy of the state. One of the places. Because from the very first one, I thought oh, my, this needs to be changed. Or, oh, my, that needs to be changed. Because I live in the dorms. Plus I creep around the halls. I don't mean to, but it seems like I'm creeping around the halls. And I catch people doing things to each other. Things like, "Your family really isn't this, is it? You really aren't that, are you?" When those very same people stood up that morning and said, "We are all one, these are our family."

So I've crept around, you know, and I've seen people treat people poorly. And I've seen where we could expand in the education part instead of it being the same thing all the time, we need to expand this idea. One year, it's the year before last, the Breath before last, I really pushed hard. Again, the enemy of the state, where I really pushed the linguists. I was told, "The linguists are already working hard."

Well, if they're already working them hard, because I said they need to work the Indians harder. Because if we're going to be there for a whole dang week, it's not a vacation.

And I was told, "The linguists are working as hard as they can."

I said, "Well, if they're working hard, I mean, the Indians with the linguists, then why do I see all the Indians wandering around Berkeley buying bracelets and jewelry?" Hour upon hour. You know, I look out there and there they are.



And so I really pushed. I said to all of the linguists, “You must work us harder. You must. Because we’re capable of it. And we must expect more out of ourselves, because we’re not expecting enough.”

And that, I got a lot of heat over that. But I saw it as more effective. People then were staying up, the next one, when I was talking to the linguists, that Breath of Life, those poor linguists couldn’t get out of the dorm. You know, two o’clock, they’re walking down the hallway and another group grabbed them. The people, you know, rose to the occasion. We don’t have any time to waste.

So a lot of things, things needed changing. Plus, I think the most important thing that needed changing is the reason that I created that workshop called the Shadow of the Whale. It’s because to address, with no contention, but to address the relationship between linguists and learner. And one of the things that we’re struggling with at Breath of Life is do we want mentor/mentee? Because that puts it in a different position of “I know more than you do.” Where there are things I know about my language even if I don’t know anything linguistically about it. There just are.

And so that’s one of the big places of bumping is one thing that’s unfair, we throw a linguist who’s twenty years old, twenty-something years old, and throw them into this, sure, we’re at Berkeley, but it’s a Native culture that you become immersed in, without any preparation for the linguists that you are going to be immersed in a different culture. You’re going to have expectations from that culture placed upon you.

And we never say to the Native, or we hadn’t, or to the learner, which I now say to people at the beginning of any kind of program with them, “This linguist is,” I get the linguist to say things, what they’re doing, what their interests are. Their own personal. And I say, “You see what their interests are?” To the Native learner. “These are their interests. These are your needs. So now you’re going to need to find middle ground so you’re both satisfied.”

And so it was wrongly applied at Breath of Life, this last one, because everyone came back and told me, it wasn’t supposed to be a grieving and growling. We don’t need that at Breath of Life. It’s a different relationship we had going. (background noise)

SG: It’s picking up on the tape but it’s not anything horrible.

LF: Wow. So that’s, to me that was a really important need for Breath of Life, was to really address the relationship between linguist and learner.

SG: Was the term “linguist buddy” part of the misapplication? Or?

LF: The mentor/mentee? Well, we don't know what names to use. We're trying to find them now. Trying to figure out something that's equitable. You know, that's just not easy because other words are more clear and easy to use. We're just trying to change the dynamic of that.

So in my opinion, not enough has changed in Breath. I still see other areas where it could be changed. But I'm not there to institute or ask or push or shove or be the bad guy again in that. But I have in mind, I've created a second conference in my head that I'm going to get out there, called Second Breath. And let Breath of Life be what it is.

And it's taken a life of its own. They've copied it in other places.

SG: What are some of the ideas for Second Breath?

LF: Well, Breath of Life is on how to learn your language. In my opinion it's, I thought it would be something different, but how to learn is an awful lot, so I'm happy with that. Second Breath is learning to use your language. And that's really, it's going to be a series of synapse-building, you know, exercises. More Master-Apprentice type things. Methods on how to get there, you know, how to make a nest of what you're doing. Get a language established, language nest, whoever it's going to be. Say it's thirteen people who are massively interested in language, like up in Tuolumne, but they all want to play softball. Okay. So making language fit your life. Learning how to disseminate language. Using technologies. Creating language, new language learning, I don't know what you'd call them, with technology. Like I'm making some animations for vowels. So again, going back to documenting it in different ways, then learning how to disseminate the documentation and encouraging others to do the same. From the very beginning, every program was supposed to create teachers that then made more teachers.

SG: So there are dynamics between linguists and participants that need improving. Were there any similar dynamics, or problematic dynamics, between, say, participants and archivists?

LF: No. Really the only thing that comes up between is touching things without gloves. Which not all archivists make you do. But I mean, sure, you're not going to touch something with arsenic on it with your bare hands. But otherwise, the relationship—

There are a few Indians who resent the archivists. But that's misplaced, in my opinion. What they're really resenting is the loss of their culture, and that their culture, pieces of it are sitting here in this place. It has nothing to do with the archivists. You hear them saying, you hear occasionally, "How can they do that? How can they keep that there? How can they this?"

You know, and yet everyone else sees how, that these things are, understands more the history of things from the written word to sound to the artifacts, that there's a history of these. And that these people now are caring for these things.

So it's very few that feel that way. When they do, I personally think it's misplaced. They're just, they're just sad. And they have to take it out on somebody. You know, because they take it out on the linguists. They take it out on, they'll take out their sadness and their frustration and their loss on the other. So I think it's more of that.

I was down there before this last Breath of Life. And I was in the archives. And they just stand around glowing. Because they look at us and we're bent over things, and we're looking so intently, and we're so mystified, we're so, we're in our own little heavens of what we're looking at. "Oh, that answers so many questions!" And then you look up and you see the faces of the archivists, and they're grinning from ear to ear. Because yeah, they take care of this stuff, they catalog this stuff. They know where it's all at. They close the drawers. They dust the drawers. Whatever. All the things they have to do, the paperwork they have to do. But, you know, again, it's, they could feel the life in these things. So they've got big grins. They've got grins as big as we do. So there's more of that than there is of the other.

SG: Do you get time to do a project, have you gotten time to do a project during, say, some of the weeks there? Or are you more organizing?

LF: I'm, I guess it's organizing. It's making sure there's toilet paper in the bathrooms and this and that. But there are all kinds of little mini-breakdowns that happen throughout the week. And they happen to people at different points. There's always something that's happening and somebody needs something. So I have never actually been able to be a participant at Breath of Life.

I tried it one year, but I couldn't stand it. Because after people would, like somebody said something was gut-wrenching and tears were in their eyes and they were frozen in a spot. And then I heard the person leading go, "That's good. Who's next?"

I thought, argh! Give that person something. Give them something! Just something.

So I couldn't stand it. I got up and I—I was an anarchist. Well, I was a bit of a, I crashed Breath of Life this year and I participated. I didn't do it in a political way. I did it totally language. Because that's what I'm about, you know. I don't really know politics. Except to get chewed up by them. But yeah, no, personally I never have gotten to. I've never got the help that I need for so long. (laughter)

And one year even, two of my tribemates came. And every time we were going to meet, they said, “Okay, we’ve got to do something.” One of them said, “We should do a little play about cats.”

I said, “Oh, cats. We have to feed them again! I just fed you yesterday.” So I basically wrote the play in English.

And then we were going to meet. And it was going to be the first time I was going to get to work. And they weren’t there. And I thought well, I must have misunderstood. Because I really, I can’t tell time, you know.

And then, “Oh, sorry I missed you.” And they didn’t say anything. Whatever.

They said, “Okay, we’ll meet over here at this time.”

I went, they weren’t there. I thought, that’s really weird.

And then I went walking back. I thought well, I’ve got to go check something up on this other floor. And there they were. It turns out they had been hiding from me because of my learning disabilities. I learn slowly. And so they just wanted it to be done. And they had the hassle of linguistics, let alone the hassle of some slow learner. So they had ditched me.

And the next morning I told Leanne that I might go home. And I just started crying, then I started laughing at the same time. And I said, “I feel like a two year-old. They won’t let me play with them.” You know? (laughs) And so that was the closest I got. But—

SG: That must have been tough.

LF: It still is! I’m used to being the retarded person, but, god, you hit fifty-six, fifty-seven, you hope it doesn’t happen again. But there you are, you know. You hit sixty. Oh, well. (laughs) So, no, I haven’t been able to. I’ve got mad skills, but I haven’t applied them. I mean, I do my own work, but it’s the same way I’ve been doing since before *Breath*, since before language. It’s still, it’s all archival-based. You know, I create my own archives. I have a closet, it’s nothing but archives. Because people leave me language. Their language, my language. I’d come home and there would be language on my doors. Yeah, I don’t know who left me half the stuff I have.

SG: Wow.

LF: Yeah. So I’ve done a hell of a lot of reading.

SG: Oh, shoot. Let’s see here.

- LF: It's funny. No one's ever asked me if I got to participate. No, I haven't. (laughs)
- SG: Wow. So some of the, and I might have repeated these before, or asked them in different ways. But I'll just—
- LF: As long as you're not the government trying to trick me.
- SG: Nah.
- LF: Because they do that. Ask you questions in different forms.
- SG: Yeah. So one of the reasons for doing this study is to talk about the role of the archivist. Do you notice like do they select the documents? Or do people select the documents? Or how does that—
- LF: Yeah, it's done by your tribe. And so your linguist, the archives are given a list of the tribes. And as, you know, as I learned early on, and I told them, if you need to look all around, at the tribes all around your tribes, which really haven't been able to cover all of that. But they do it a little bit. So that you, because if you have marital exogamy and you've married seven villages out, well then your people are spread out all over. So there's bound to be something somewhere else. And there always is. So the archivists just are pretty much just given lists of what to get out.
- When I went the other, before this last Breath, they got out stuff that I've been going to that place there for almost thirty years and I never saw before what they had. They were very pleased with themselves. They could tell that I was happy, so they were very pleased.
- But no, they pretty much just open the drawers for you. Because that's the way that I learned.
- Jan Timbrook was one of them at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Real early on, years, thirty or forty years ago, whatever, I went over to the museum. And she was so happy to have a Native in there that she actually was skipping through these very tight spaces, opening things, going, "Your people did this and this and this and this and this and this." And it wasn't my people's stuff, but my people did this stuff, you know. And so I just stood there going wow, this is a trip. Because all these drawers were flying open, all these things were being exposed.
- So they're very happy to open more than, and if you have interests, they'll open it more while you're there. And then make special trips to go down to the other warehouse to see things that are no longer housed right there on campus. And the sound people, you know, they always feel really bad that they don't have any money to give you tapes. And they try to make, they try to, with their no budget, try to help you out, not charge

you. Everybody is so sorry that they have to charge you. You know, they understand, they more than anyone understand that these words, these sounds, these things, come from us. And to be charged for our own is like one more colonization slap in the face, you know. But they get it. They can't help it, though, and they wish they had more people.

That's what they, you know, if anything, they always are lamenting that they have no one else to do what we need. I hear that a lot. They're very good with their time with us. I love all the archivists.  
(laughs)

SG: That's why I got into it.

LF: Because, yeah, it's kind of like what is the overall thing you learn in school, general studies, you know, or liberal studies, whatever. It's kind of that. It's real specific, but it encompasses so much.

SG: What are your future hopes for California languages? For Native languages?

LF: Well, the same hopes I've always had. I always think people feel like I feel. It turns out I have a funny brain and they don't, really. But on language, you know, that I have this need, this desire, this want, this expectation, of language, for language, you know. And everything is because of language. And everything is wrapped in language. When I get to the land of the dead, I need words to get to where I need to go all the way.

So I always figure that's what others do. They're not working this hard just to communicate, because we have English. And so it's—everybody who cares, what their needs, whatever their needs are have been addressed, then I'll be happy. And that's furthest corner, on the rez, in the city, on the rancheria, out of state, in prison, I don't care. If people have the same sort of burning desire, need—like I can't not paint. My hand screams for the paintbrush. I can't not take my camera and photograph. And I can't not think about language. And I think others feel that very same way. I see it.

I was looking at my niece. She's had, he's fourteen months now. But I was watching her holding him. She's Pomo and the baby's dad is Yurok. And I looked at her and I said, "You need to be speaking to that baby in language." So again, I made something else, which we're trying to get a little bit of funding to pay an elder here in town. Because she deserves a little funding, you know? She's raising grandkids. The usual stories. So that we can come up with the phrases of, "Are you cold? Are you hungry? You want to go outside?" Just things you say to teeny little kids, to babies. You know, going to hold classes for that.

And then I found out that the Cree have a little baby book with those phrases. The Navajo have some similar. So I want to get that book and disseminate it to everybody, to all the tribes. And make, record sound with that. And see if we can't get that out to the corners, to the edges of where people are. because every generation without fail, I don't care if our blood is, you know, people say, "Well, you can't be much left of this, you can't be much left of that, because historically these people have—"

Okay. Well whatever it is in us that still cries out for it, when that gets addressed, then I'll be satisfied.

[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]

LF: Till then I'm not. And I don't think that any one organization or any one program is any one end all be all. I think everything has to be continuously adjusted, made better. More allies sought out. There aren't enough people helping. There aren't enough people learning. I'm very dissatisfied. (laughs)

Someone said to me, "You are never satisfied." And I was kind of hurt by that. And I thought well, I must be just an awful person. I'm never satisfied.

And I said this to another friend of mine. She looked at me like I was crazy. And she said, "Well, you're an activist. If you were satisfied, you wouldn't be an activist."

So my, I will be satisfied when those who—Like the California Basketweavers Association, I was on that board for fifteen years. And they wanted to go international, which we sort of did, but I fought it tooth and nail. Because I kept going onto reservations and rancherias, or just corners of the city, finding Indians who'd never heard about it. And so I feel that same way about California languages. That there are those people who have never heard that they can get some help.

I've got another program that's getting accidentally started, I didn't mean to, it's a Skype program. I don't know how that's going to work, but we're going to try to make it work, you know. I've got to find some linguists for that. So we'll use linguists in archives via Skype and try to figure it out. So my hope for language is, for California peoples, is that anyone who needs language for their children, for their funerals, for their births, for their funerals, happy times, talk to the trees, it doesn't matter to me. If they, if we can get it to them, then that's it.

SG: Are there any topics that you wanted to cover that I didn't ask you about?

LF: No. I mean, there's a lot of stuff to talk about.

SG: But in the areas that I asked you about, AICLS or Breath of Life or archives, or—

LF: Well, no. There was something that happened with Breath of Life that, it was one of the things I wanted to talk about at Shadow of the Whale, but it ended up I couldn't talk at Shadow of the Whale because Leanne came. And there's no way in hell, I have way too much respect for her, even though she has none for me, I have way too much respect for her, so I couldn't say anything. I wouldn't. You know. I just wouldn't. Once again, I didn't really get to participate in my own conference. (laughs)

But we being, there were three board members of AICLS and myself, being one of them, who had pretty much created most of what Breath of Life has become. And we were in DC for a big language symposium, something, you know. We were going to attack all of our lawmakers about language-supported, we were just shuffled off into hallways, really. But I was getting into a bus because they were making us go to some damn war museum. Now, I'm a veteran, so it's nothing against war museums, but you know, I didn't want to go to a war museum because I'm a peacenik of a veteran.

And Leanne was getting in a car. A taxi. And I said, "Where are you going?" Like why the hell don't you have to come to this damn war museum?

And she said, "Well, some of us are thinking of starting a national Breath of Life." Then she got in the car and drove off.

And I was so crushed. Because here were four board members—none of them actually knew about Breath of Life, because they didn't attend, except for me and three or four of us—but there was the person, the Native, who had created it. And once again, the Native had been left out.

We were invited about three or four meetings later. But it made me feel—and when I told other Natives, they went (grimacing sound). Usually generous Natives. But they didn't like it, because at this stage, many of our people need to see that we don't need a great white mother, a great white father, as much as we did before. We just don't. We've learned for ourselves many, many things. We are, we consider ourselves equals now. Whether or not we have degrees. We've done the work side by side.

And so to me it was, and I'm going to talk to them at the end of Breath of Life. I don't want to talk to them before it. And it's just the fact that natives need to see other Natives achieving. I've been in black community. Blacks need to see other blacks achieving. Irish need to see other Irish achieving. There's nothing unusual about this. And look what we can do. Look what we have done. Because that's what's going to lift us. That's that overused thing of empowerment. But it is. We can



empower ourselves now. And we can work with our allies. But we don't need to be led by our allies, as if we don't know anything.

So that's why I find, the thing that I'm finding the hardest, is telling people that I really care about, these linguists, who are not really interested in conversation, just esoteric orthographies, for the most part. (laughs) They're beautiful, but, you know, that sometimes we have to say really sensitive things. And I don't want to say it to offend you. But we stay perpetually offended then. You know? And so what if we gain all this information from all these things if we're never going to be seen as competent? But that's just me being the bad guy again. (laughs)

But it's important to me because, because younger Natives look at us. And I'm not going to let them down. Not on my watch. I'm the type that joined the military to do everything I could for my state. I joined the Guard, little knowing that they could send me to Korea. (laughs) I'm not the brightest person in the world. But you know, it's all about service. And it's not, and I really think, believe, that our people could do more for themselves if they could see that they are capable. That they have access to the more.

And I think it's something for them to see a person with no degrees, you know, be able to do things. If I can do it, then you can do it. It's real simple. It's not about accolades for me. It's about who I can reach my hand out to so we can become—really, everything I do in service, language is a big part of it—is very selfish reasons. I want to have a tribe. And you can't just have one tribe. You've got to have many tribes. So there's nothing prestigious, or accolades worthy, or kudos. It's just do the dang work, you know?

And in Indian time, we'd dance around the fire at the end of the day going, "And then I did this, and then I did that." And nowadays, people see it as, they see it out of context, out of cultural context. But it is another piece of our culture to understand who does what, where and when. We all know what each other's business is, and that's reason, there's reason for that. We can take care of each other better that way.

SG: A question I just remembered to ask was one last one. Like I've gone to some of the archives conferences and they talk about some information is culturally sensitive.

LF: Right.

SG: Did you run across any of that or—

LF: Absolutely.

SG: —know of any situations?

LF: Absolutely. Absolutely. And I was for many years, and Martha Macri, I don't know if, I think it might have been she and I were the Natives representing all Natives at UC Berkeley as two, we would have discussion with Leanne and several other people in the department about cultural sensitivity and materials. And if new materials were coming, how would that be dealt with.

So from that organizational point that I was in on that, but from working with the people, I was seated next to Julia Parker. And she was seated next to a man who was her cousin. And so the materials that could be listened to were pertinent to Julia. They were her people, it was her language, it was her tribe, was her relative. But the paperwork was signed and it said that only this part of the family could hear this.

And so I sat there and I watched her watch him listen to this and refuse to let her listen to this. And I've seen this several times throughout Breath of Life. And this is where people will get mad at the archivist, but they can do nothing about it. It's there on the paper.

Just like when Judy at DC make me erase something I was recording. But there was no other way to get access to the recording. You know, and I did erase it. I told her I would, and I did, because she's my friend. I should have just snuck better. (knock on door)

SG: That's okay. I'll pause it or I can stop or whatever. (pause) There we go.

LF: That's really sensitive. So I'd seen this played out before with written things, with sound. I've seen, it's just been awful. It's just been awful to witness people—it's as if, it's as if there's a famine and there are people in a restaurant eating, you know, and eating. And there are people on the outside of the window famished, staring at them. I don't know if that's the question you were asking.

SG: It was. But you know, I think the way they, you know, I've heard other people say it is things get played that, you know, are very, may be super ceremonial in nature. Shouldn't be used for commercial use.

LF: Oh, well there's that aspect, too.

SG: Yeah, but I'd forgotten about that aspect of it. I'm glad you brought that up.

LF: Yeah. But there is that, also. As a matter of fact, it really makes me angry. Because there's a guy in this tribe and he gave, this boy in my tribe gives me one of these songs. I go, "Where did you get this?"

He goes, "Well, Jacob gave it to me."

I said, “Jacob, why can’t I have these songs?”

He says, “I’m not supposed to give them to anybody. I was told don’t give them to anybody, so I couldn’t give it to you.”

I didn’t point out that he gave it to that boy, who then gave it to me, you know. And my problem is even with some of, it doesn’t even have to be, there’s a lot of culturally sensitive stuff just stuck out in the open raw that, out of context, you know, that linguists like my linguist try to put a word in, put a phrase in there in the Hokey Pokey, you know, in our language. And myself, I’d read several times this phrase in several different places. It’s real obscure. And this woman who had never read it before was in my tribe. She and I both had feeling like no, don’t do this, don’t tell us, we can do this, and use these words. So she reluctantly was mad at us because she knows and we don’t. And so she took it out.

But then the other guy in our tribe, he just uses it at the end of every sentence. Ha, ha, ha! And he says it! You can say it, you can say it any time. But really, it’s when ravens fly over the village and they’re cawing at you, you are giving them, because they’re the mouthpiece to our gods, you must give them a different type of a welcome into the village. And so you don’t use this just randomly, you know.

And so it’s really hard to suck that back in after it’s out. But then there’s the songs that we can hear, say, from my tribe, on the wax cylinders, you know, that Harrington or his nephew or his neighbors, the boy, Jack or whatever his name was, their recordings, those are songs that only, we can hear them but we shouldn’t be singing them. They’re seasonal songs that change the world and do stuff. Oh, no, we should not be singing those. But because we have access to them, you know, and I’m really stuck on that. Those are the only recordings we have to hear how we sounded. Yet people shouldn’t have, you know, it’s the ownership song thing. And it’s the importance, the relevance and all this stuff. So it’s a real quandary at times. And all you can say is well, you know, spirit is much stronger than any of us know or can grasp. And so, and intention has to pay for something. So cross our fingers.

But yeah, there is that. There are all kinds of things around, sensitivities around who can see them, who can’t, what you can hear, what you can say. Yeah.

SG: Well thank you so much. *Yóotva* (thank you) for all your time—

LF: Okay. Good luck with your schoolwork.

SG: Thank you. I’m going to turn off the—

[End of Interview]

## Chapter 5: Leanne Hinton

I see language revitalization in the future in California as being a combination of what the archives can give in the way of language knowledge and processes such as language pods that create language use. I'm most excited by people that are using their languages at home with their kids. And I hope that will go on. I see the future as being more and more apprentices from the Master-Apprentice Program starting to use the archives more.

But since language revitalization, in my mind, is defined as people using the language again, rather than just learning about it, I hope that people will be able to use Breath of Life and archival materials to bring them back into oral use.

Leanne Hinton is a co-founder of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS). She was a professor of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley from 1978 to 2007. She has served as a consulting member to the AICLS board since its beginning in 1992. She developed the concept of AICLS' first program, the Master-Apprentice Program, which pairs a native speaker of a California Native language with an apprentice for the purpose of immersing in the Native language for up to twenty hours per week. With the AICLS board and AICLS administrator, Marina Drummer, Hinton organizes the biennial Breath of Life—Silent No More California Native Language Revitalization Workshop. Hinton is AICLS' point of contact to the linguists and the archivists who assist with Breath of Life. Hinton is also a co-organizer of the national Breath of Life Institute in Washington, DC with archivist Lisa Conathan, who was also interviewed for this thesis.

Born in 1941, Leanne Hinton grew up mainly in La Jolla, California. Her father, a folk singer born in Texas, was the curator of the aquarium museum at Scripps Institute of Oceanography. Hinton attributed her love of music and travel to her father, who was a member of one of 1930s radio host Major Bowes' travelling vaudeville show units. Her

mother, from Canada, was also a musician. As an undergraduate, Hinton majored in anthropology at University of California, Berkeley. A course with renowned folklorist Alan Dundes put Hinton solidly on the path of studying ethnomusicology. When Hinton asked Dundes if he could recommend a nearby community whose music she could study, his answer, the Havasupai Tribe of north-central Arizona, was the beginning of a lifelong connection. After a year of graduate school, she left anthropology over her discomfort with issues of whether tribal people were willing or unwilling to work with anthropologists and the conflicts between anthropologists and the peoples they studied. She continued to work with the Havasupai bilingual education program, as they had invited her to help them develop a writing system for their language and to train teachers in the use of that writing system. In 1971, she returned to graduate studies, this time in linguistics at the University of California, San Diego. As a teaching assistant in the Linguistics Department's foreign languages program, Hinton learned the oral immersion and conversational fluency language teaching methodologies that would guide her development of AICLS' Master-Apprentice and Breath of Life programs. She received her PhD in 1975, for her dissertation "Havasupai Songs: A Linguistic Perspective."

In 1978, Hinton, John Rouillard (Santee Dakota Sioux), and Lucille Watahomigie (Hualapai) founded what would come to be known as the American Indian Language Development Institute, a month-long intensive program with courses on language teaching, documentation, and revitalization. That same year, Hinton was hired at University of California, Berkeley. One of her first experiences with California Indian people was with someone who would later become a board member of AICLS, Nancy

Steele. Steele had invited Hinton to give a workshop at the Center for Indian Community Development at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. Then Malcolm Margolin asked her to write a regular language column for the magazine *News From Native California*.

Hinton said that the big change came in 1992, when Malcolm Margolin and Mary Bates Abbott of Native California Network organized the Tribal Scholars Language Conference. It was at that conference that AICLS and its Master-Apprentice Program came into existence. Hinton has published several books, including *Flutes of Fire: Essays on California Indian Languages*, *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, and *How to Keep Your Language Alive: A Commonsense Approach to One-on-one Language Learning*.

The interview covers the circumstances and the career path that enabled Hinton to propose AICLS' language revitalization programs so quickly after AICLS' founding in 1992. Hinton went into detail about the logistics involved, especially food, housing, and transportation, in running a successful Breath of Life Workshop.

Hinton explained that it is the unpublished materials, the field notebooks and the file slips that tend to get the most use by participants. It is the raw language documentation, not the linguistic interpretations, out of which participants get the most information about their language. Hinton explained the logic behind the Breath of Life format. Hinton described two of the other workshops that have been styled after AICLS' Breath of Life, one held at the University of Washington, the other at the University of Oklahoma.

Hinton discussed the intense schedule of Breath of Life, with participants and their linguists working from breakfast until late in the evening, going over the structure of their languages, helping them with their homework and their final projects. Hinton explained that the homework gives participants practice with the sounds, the orthographies, and some points of grammar in the Native languages. The final project teaches participants how archives are used for answering the specific research questions of the participants, and the project helps prevent participants from getting overwhelmed by the amount of information on their language or by their goal to learn everything about their language.

Hinton discussed the expectations that Breath of Life participants have on the archivists. At Breath of Life, the archivists will be doing more work bringing the materials out. Participants tend to frown upon overly long tutorials on how to find materials or how to use the catalog. They want materials waiting for them when they arrive at the archives and they want to get to work on their language.

Hinton explained how she got her start in Native language revitalization, how she grew disenchanted with the lack of speakers being produced by bilingual education programs, and how, as a teaching assistant at the University of California, San Diego, she learned the language learning methods that she would recommend in her work with AICLS.

Hinton recalled the founding of AICLS and its first program, the Master-Apprentice program. No language program before Breath of Life had tried to work with

tribes whose languages had no living speakers because it seemed hopeless.<sup>1</sup> In fact, L. Frank rejected Hinton's suggestion that the first workshop for languages with no living speakers be called the Lonely Hearts Language Club because it sounded too sad. Hinton observed that as the remaining fluent speakers of the eldest generations pass on, more tribes will need Breath of Life, and eventually the Master-Apprentice Program and the Breath of Life Workshop may be merged.

The timeline of the Berkeley Breath of Life Workshop is not so important in Hinton's retelling, as the only two changes of note she reported were the deletion of the main library visits from the Breath of Life schedule and the shifting of the archives visits from the afternoons to the mornings at the recommendation of the Bancroft Library.

Rather, Hinton's interview focused on the coordination that takes place between AICLS and the archivists and linguists. When Hinton meets with the archivists, these are the main topics of discussion: which languages will participants be working on, how many people are coming to Breath of Life in general and how many participants each repository can handle at one time? Other issues included the lack of listening stations and of a person responsible for following through with duplication requests at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology. Hinton gets very involved with the logistics of Breath of Life, and seeks help from the graduate students who are also talented

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Parsons, former director of the Center for Indian Community Development, Humboldt State University, Arcata, California, said that their Native language revitalization program started with the Hupa language. While the Center was in Wiyot territory, the last native speaker of Wiyot had died in 1962, and at the time it was thought that nothing could be done. (Tom Parsons, personal communication, June 16, 2009).



organizers. Hinton concludes her interview by discussing the ways that Breath of Life has shaped peoples' careers, languages, cultures, and even families.

This interview took place on the morning of January 9, 2013 at Leanne Hinton's home in Berkeley, California. There were some breaks in the recording: once when the doorbell rang, and another time when the telephone rang. There was some construction noise late in the interview. The audio was recorded open air using the TASCAM DR-100mkII digital audio recorder. The recorder was set to automatically create a new track when a recording reached two gigabytes in size, and this interview consists of two tracks.

The interviewee edited extensively the transcript for this interview. Hinton added information to enhance the original interview. She also deleted passages from the transcript that she wished to omit, in keeping with the agreements made at the beginning of the project and at the time of her approval of the transcript.

Interview with Leanne Hinton

Interviewed by Susan Gehr  
January 9, 2013  
Berkeley, California  
120 minutes

Susan Gehr:

Today is Wednesday, January 9, 2013. This is an interview for the thesis oral history project Breath of Life: Revitalizing California's Native Languages Through Archives. I am interviewing Leanne Hinton, and my name is Susan Gehr. This interview is taking place at Leanne Hinton's home in Berkeley, California. And I'll go ahead and start with the background questions. Tell me a little bit about when and where you, when and where you grew up.

Leanne Hinton:

Okay. Oh, way back.

SG: Way back! (laughs)

LH: I mostly grew up in La Jolla, California, where my dad was the curator of the aquarium museum at Scripps Institute of Oceanography. We lived on the campus, which was kind of a nice place to live, right by the ocean. We moved to a house that my parents built that was just up the hill from Scripps when I was a senior in high school. So that was where I grew up.

Oh, and when. (laughs) I was born in '41. And we were in, let's see, we moved, when I was just a baby, to Palm Springs for a couple of years where my dad was running the Desert Museum of Palm Springs. Then when I was three, we moved to San Diego, where he was, this was during the war and he was working for the [University of California Division of War Research]. And he was a really good illustrator. So he was doing cartoon illustrations during the war for submarine manuals. (laughs) And those illustrations are still used. At least they were when my brother went into the Coast Guard. They were still being used in training people for submarines. And they were top secret, which is really funny, because there's these cute little submarines with a face and a broomstick instead of a telescope. (laughs)

SG: Oh, wow.

LH: They were released to the public some years back.

And then he got the job at Scripps. And we moved then to the Scripps campus. We had been in Pacific Beach, which is a few miles away, first. And then we moved to the Scripps campus, where I stayed all through my childhood.

SG: And where were your parents from originally?

LH: My dad was from Texas. The Hinton family had been Southerners forever. And the Civil War uprooted them from their North Carolina and Mississippi homes. So they were moving around in the South. And then my dad was a folk singer. And he joined the Major Bowes Traveling Unit one year. And meanwhile, his parents had moved to California because it was the Depression and they were having a hard time making ends meet, and they finally got a job in California. And so he came out here after, after the Major Bowes Unit and went to college at UCLA. So that was how the Hintons became Californians. (laughs) Liberal Californians, instead of conservative Southerners.

And then my mom was from Canada. She was actually born in the U.S., but the family was from Canada. Her sister and her brother had already been born in Canada, but they moved down before she was born to Southern California. And she also went to UCLA, where my parents met.

SG: Was it through your dad's music that you got interested in ethnomusicology?

LH: Yeah. Yeah. It was that. I think I really got from my dad, too, a love of travel and adventure. (laughs) And when I was eleven, we had a trip to Baja California, that really, really got to me. We had gone down for the weekend along with several other people to get fish for the aquarium, around Punta Banda. And it rained really hard that weekend. Our cars all got stuck. And we were there for two weeks.

And so I got to know this little girl from the fishing village. This was a poor fishing village, but everybody there was so generous and fun to be with. And she was really great. And I saw her gathering firewood wherever we would go, even though she was just eight years old. It was like she was already a really responsible person. And it just kind of got me interested in different cultures. And really admiring of them. And so the idea of different cultures and the music of my family—my mother was also a musician—just led me toward ethnomusicology.

SG: Right on. I remember when we were talking at the Breath of Life introduction last time, I said I know I want to remember to ask Leanne

about ethnomusicology and how that was—was that the first thing you studied in college?

LH: Yeah. I was majoring in anthropology. And it wasn't absolutely certain, even before I started majoring in anthropology, I wasn't sure whether I was going to be in anthropology, psychology or sociology. And I remember taking three courses here at Berkeley. Introductory courses in each of those three topics to help me decide. And psychology was really boring course about rats mostly, and about Freud, who I didn't like. (laughs) And then the sociology was really dry and not very human. And the anthropology was this great course about human beings.

So I ended up in anthropology. And I wasn't immediately necessarily doing ethnomusicology. But by the time I'd been in anthro for a year or so, that was my main goal.

I had taken a course in folklore from Alan Dundes. And I guess by the time I'd finished that course, I was pretty much on the path toward ethnomusicology. And I asked him one time about doing fieldwork. I said, "Well, I'd like to do some fieldwork, and I think I'd like to study the music of some group. And it needs to be someplace that I could drive to. And it needs to be close enough so I could spend the first summer earning money to go, and then the second half of the summer there. And what do you suggest?"

And he said, "Well, the Havasupais have never really had their music studied." (laughs)

And so I went to Supai. Supai has been, ever since, a really big part of my life.

SG: What was that first visit like? Or what are some of your recollections?

LH: Well, it was an amazing odyssey just to get there. I was with another girl who was also interested in doing fieldwork. And we drove out together. And you may know that you get off Highway 66 a little past Peach Springs. And at the time, the road was completely unpaved. And you'd go sixty miles on this dirt road where you park and then you have to walk for ten miles to get there.

And so there had been a storm, so people were warning us that the road had been washed out part of the way. You could go around it, but there had been a couple of nurses just the day before who didn't know the road was washed out and had actually gone into the ditch that had been formed and had to be taken to the hospital.

And so we stayed, we were really green. We stayed in a hotel nearby, nearby the turnoff at Dinosaur Caverns. And then we went and we were able to go around this ditch in the morning, and go that sixty miles to the place where we parked.

We were told to go in the morning because of this washout. Otherwise, we might have gone the night before. But in the middle of the summer, you should never start going down to Supai at ten or eleven a.m., like we did, because it is really hot.

And by the time we got to the river, which is eight miles away, we'd used up all our water. And in fact I remember my traveling companion about halfway down got so overheated she just emptied the rest of our water over her head. (laughs) I said, "Wait, wait, we don't have enough water!"

And so we didn't get to the village until after dark. Because once we got down to the river, we were so exhausted and hot that we just sort of laid around for a while and swam.

There's a camping area about two miles beyond the village. We got down after dark and there were these kids yelling to us. And I finally realized that at that time, most children didn't speak English. But the children that lived by the main path all learned how to speak a little bit of English from the tourists going by. And so it was an interesting geographic difference between people who lived far from the path and close to the path.

And so they were talking to us. And we talked to an older man that we saw and said, "How do we get to the campground?"

And they said, "Well you know, the path has been washed out by the falls, too. And so you really shouldn't be going there after dark."

And we said, "Well, where would we stay, then?"

He said, "Well, Alfred Hanna is the director of the tourist industry. And you could go and find him and see if he has a space for you in the small lodge."

So then that was another adventure. Because he lived about a mile away. And to get there, you would have to go through a bunch of fences and cross the river. And past barking dogs. And people would come out when their dogs would bark and say, "Who are you? Who are you?"

And we'd say, "Where's Alfred Hanna's house?"

And Alfred had already gone to bed. But he was such a sweet man. And he actually got up and took us back into the village [by a better way, without the barbed wire] and said, "You can use this room for tonight." So we did. And Alfred turned out to be one of my best friends down there. And the following year, I actually stayed with that family when I went down.

So [after that night] we camped out [down by the falls]. And everything was so intense, because it was so new. It was such a beautiful, beautiful place. But there was a lot of intensity around whether people would work with me or not.

I had written a letter first to the tribal council asking if I could work with them [to learn about their music]. And they said, they wrote

back, the chairman, who was Lee Marshall, wrote back and said, “We can’t give you permission to study the music with people. It’s the individual that decides.” That’s changed a lot since then. (laughs)

So it was up to each individual whether they would teach me something about music or not. And a lot of people said yes. And some people said no. And some people were telling other people they shouldn’t be working with us.

And there was one guy who really didn’t think it was a good idea. And he was telling another guy this, that it was not a good idea to work with these outsiders. And that it wasn’t a good idea to record the songs. Songs should only be heard in person.

And the other guy said, well, and I learned all this later, the other guy said, “Well, I think I’ll do it anyway.” And that night he found a snake in his bed. (laughs) You can decide for yourself whether the guy who warned him put the snake in the bed, or whether it was a warning from the spirit world, as some people believed.

But anyway, I got lots of recordings. And some people were wondering whether I would make money off of them. At the time, I was an undergraduate, I didn’t even know what I was going to be doing with my life. But I certainly knew I wasn’t going to make any money off the recordings. Directly. Although in the end, you become a professor and earn a good living because of those recordings. So in the end, I benefited greatly from it.

And all of these issues around yes or no working with anthropologists, and anthropologists versus, versus the people they were studying and so on, was actually really distressing to me. [In fact, after a year of graduate school, I actually quit school over it, and did not return to my schooling for five years. I kept going to Supai, though.] And I think that’s the main reason why when somebody a couple of years later invited me to start working on a writing system with the tribe and start doing some things that were of interest to the tribe about this that I kind of went into that because of all this stress and difficulty over being the outside anthropologist working with a community.

So around, let’s see, I started in 1964. By 1968, the Bilingual Education Act, the first Bilingual Education Act, went into effect. And I forget what year they started the bilingual education program, but they invited me to be the, well, they invited me first of all to write, help them develop a formal writing system for the schools, and to train the teachers in writing the language. And to start doing some curriculum.

And I didn’t know all that much at the time about all of this, except about writing systems. But I learned a lot. (laughs)

And so I, even before [I returned to school, and long before] my dissertation on Havasupai songs was finished, I was working with them on bilingual education and language. At the time, it was called language

maintenance, rather than language revitalization. Because people weren't realizing, nobody was realizing how endangered the language was. Or all of the languages were.

So at the time, they were just seeing that their kids were using a lot of English words while they were speaking Havasupai. And that there were things like the numbering system that the kids didn't learn in Havasupai. And some of the terms for relatives they weren't learning, and some of the color terms, things like that. [They were embedding lots of English words for all these things in their speech, which was otherwise in the Havasupai language.] And so they were just thinking, okay, our bilingual education is going to include, it's really going to be about getting their vocabulary straight in Havasupai.

So I'm going ahead of your questions here.

SG: That's okay. These are all things I would be asking about. I think my next one is going to be about the transition from ethnomusicology to linguistics. And I think you kind of moved there.

LH: So we're sort of heading in that direction.

SG: Naturally.

LH: Yeah. And also I'd gotten interested in linguistics right away. Because what was the most interesting thing about Havasupai songs was the song text. So there were all these different kinds of song text. There were the songs without any real words. Some of those genres. There's some genres of songs that had some real words but a lot of vocables. And then there were some songs which I'd never heard in American Indian music before that were just like ballads. They were stories in song.

SG: Oh, wow.

LH: And then, whenever you tell a story in Havasupai, there are songs in the story, too. So one fascinating thing was that the stories were all in third person. But the songs were expressing the feelings of people, so the songs were all in first person. (laughs) It was just so amazing. I just had to learn more about language. I'd already taken a couple of courses that at the time were required by the anthropology department to take a couple of courses in linguistics. And so I knew how to write all this down and so forth. But I became so interested in linguistics that when I went back to school, [I decided to go into linguistics.] I had quit graduate school in anthropology and done other things for like five years. And I was still going down to Supai all during this time, but I wasn't in school. And maybe, wasn't sure I wanted to be an academic. And I finally gave up and

said, “Okay, I guess there’s really nothing else I can do now. I’m thirty years old, I better go back to school and get my career in shape.”

And so when I went back, I went back in linguistics, [at the University of California, San Diego, just a mile from where I grew up]. And wrote my dissertation, and called it “Havasupai Songs: A Linguistic Perspective.” And so I was really involved with the text of the songs and also how melody and meter interact with linguistic stress, and [what and how songs mean.]

But by this time, I was deeply involved in bilingual education [and using linguistics for the community].

[I am forever grateful for two important things about my education at UCSD. One was my faculty advisor Margaret Langdon who was my dear friend and the finest mentor one could hope for—she herself did not know anything about ethnomusicology, but I received a fine education in linguistics of the sort I needed from her. The second is that the Linguistics Department at UCSD ran the foreign language program. By being a teaching assistant, I learned about language teaching methods, which was probably the most important practical education I received to prepare me for what became my primary career focus, language revitalization. Luckily, the department focused on oral immersion and developing conversational fluency, rather than the more traditional literature and grammar focus. This is very important in language revitalization of endangered languages that have no written tradition.]

Oh, I had been working also with Lucille Watahomigie. And we had founded AILDI [the American Indian Language Development Institute] together. And the first year it was called the All Yuman Language Workshop. And it was just for Yuman languages. And it was at San Diego State University.

And then she and I also, I think I was still a graduate student when we were working on our book together, *Spirit Mountain*, which was Yuman story and song.<sup>2</sup> And I was working with bilingual education.

And then when I got my first job at the University of Texas at Dallas, I was going back to Supai every two weeks. I’d have a Tuesday/Thursday teaching schedule. And then Thursday afternoon I’d hop on a plane to Phoenix and rent a car and drive up to Supai, to the place you leave your car, and walk down to Supai and stay there for four days, and walk back out and fly back to Texas.

That’s where I met Gary, too.<sup>3</sup> But I hated the place. I hated Texas. Even though my dad was from there. But he wasn’t from Dallas. And he wasn’t from this horrible university that was so politicized. Oh, it

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<sup>2</sup> Leanne Hinton and Lucille Watahomigie, eds., *Spirit Mountain: An Anthology of Yuman Story and Song* (Tucson: Sun Tracks and the University of Arizona Press, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Gary Scott, Leanne’s husband.



was awful. And I don't know if the University of Texas wants to hear that. (laughter) I'm sure they're better now. (laughs) It was really just the growing pains of an undergraduate university. Because this had, University of Texas had been a technical and science graduate school and research center. They had decided to become a full scale university instead. So Gary had gotten his PhD there when it was just a graduate school and research center. And it was wonderful for science. It was really great.

But then when they opened up, they hired 150 faculty members the same year, the year I went there. And it was real administration-heavy. They were running everything. They didn't have departments; they just had programs. And so it meant that it was like the higher level administration would decide who came, who went. You know, they would, the first year, or was it the second year, they fired like twenty or thirty faculty members, decided they weren't the right ones to have chosen after all. They wanted to structure things differently. Two people committed suicide. I mean, it was just, it was awful. I was going to quit academia if I couldn't leave. It was really, really, Berkeley was where I wanted to be, anyway [after being there for my undergraduate education]. So it was wonderful to get that job at Berkeley.

And, I'll just continue, if you don't mind, saying that once I got to Berkeley, then the issue was getting involved with California Indian languages. And—

SG: When were you starting at Berkeley?

LH: '78. By then, by the way, I was disenchanted with bilingual education because it wasn't saving languages. It wasn't making new speakers. And the languages were going downhill. And I had seen that bilingual education, because of insufficient training, and because of internal politics in a lot of tribes, you just didn't have adequately trained personnel. And the internal politics was really about people having, a few people having these good jobs at the schools while other people didn't have work, or didn't have enough work. So usually they'd get, there would be a big turnover, because the people with the jobs would get harassed or [burned out]. The stress would be too much. And they'd leave, and then somebody else would come in and say, "It's my turn." There might have been some initial training, like we did at Supai, where we had an entire summer of training of the teachers. But then once they turned over, we didn't really have the mechanism for continuing this intensive summer training. And so people just wouldn't have the training.

This happened in many places. What it meant was that people who were doing bilingual education would not use very much of the language. They'd speak in English. English would be the, sort of like a language

teaching, like you see in language teaching all over, where you'd speak in English and you'd teach people words. And so it means you'd hear twenty words of English, or a thousand words of English for every Indian word that you hear.

And so I was observing all of this and feeling like there's got to be something better. And so I was getting involved with the notion of language immersion, [as I had learned it at UCSD.]

And I think one of the very first experiences I had with California Indians was when Nancy Richardson invited me to come and give a workshop up in, where did I give it? It was a workshop for, I think for the community center up at Arcata.

SG: The Center for Indian Community Development?

LH: Uh huh. Yeah. Yeah. So I gave a workshop up there, a year or so after getting to Berkeley. So Nancy has been a colleague and friend right from the beginning of my work in California. And then Malcolm, I met Malcolm when I arrived. He was just starting up *News From Native California*. And then after a while he asked if I would do a language column. So I started doing a language column. And that really got me started on researching California Indian languages. And it also got me more involved with California Indians.

But the big change came when Malcolm and Mary Bates Abbott had that—

SG: Tribal Scholars Language Conference?

LH: Yes.

SG: 1992.

LH: Yes. She'd already formed [Native California Network]. And then out of this conference, we got this great input about what people wanted in the way of assistance in order to revitalize their languages. So that was when we formed AICLS [the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival]. And AICLS was just a committee under Native California Network until Native California Network folded, and AICLS just stayed and became itself. (laughs)

So this was really where I felt like, things started out for me in California.

SG: So that was—

LH: That was '92.

SG: Yeah, that was '92.

LH: And we started the Master Apprentice Program. And then a couple of years later, we started Breath of Life.

SG: (shows Leanne a photograph of Vina Smith and Nancy Richardson Steele taken at the Tribal Scholars Language Conference) There's a younger Vina and Nancy.

LH: (laughs) Oh, that's so great.

SG: Yeah.

LH: And the Native American Languages Act had been passed in 1990 and 1992. And that was really important, also.

Bilingual education was still going on a little bit in California when I came here in '78. But within a year or two, again my notion of time is a little lacking here. But when Reagan was president and he got a new education cabinet member [William J. Bennett] who was trying to axe as much bilingual education as he could, and he axed a lot of California. (beeping noise)

SG: Is that me?

LH: What?

SG: That beeping noise. Oh, it's the coffee maker.

LH: It's the coffee saying, "We're turning off now, so you better get your cup if you want any more hot coffee." (laughs) Or you can put it in the microwave later.

And so there were some bilingual education programs in California that were axed because the kids were not fluent in their languages. And they were saying, "No, bilingual education is for teaching English. You don't have kids that don't speak their language learning their language as part of bilingual education." This was the Republican view of it all.

So bilingual education was being axed all over. And California, the few people that really had bilingual education programs, almost all of them were terminated at that time.

SG: So what do you remember about the founding or the coming together of the Advocates [for Indigenous California Language Survival] at that conference?

LH: Well, we met [soon after, and after a few meetings we named ourselves]. And I do remember that within a few days after that conference, she called me and said we've got to get together a grant proposal right away for the Master-Apprentice Program. And so she and I worked together a lot on the Master-Apprentice, on the proposal, and got it in. And we worked as a whole group in terms of how to design it.

And we got it going right away. So Nancy [Richardson Steele] and I were the trainers. And we would, we trained six teams. And then that summer, it must have been '93, I'm not sure, we made a trip around the state and visited all the teams. And those teams also just gave us a lot of [additional] ideas about how it should work and how the training should work, what to tell people as to how they could spend their time together and so on. We went up to Hupa and saw Ray Baldy, who was working with, who was—

SG: Danny Ammon?

LH: Not yet. It was his granddaughter?

SG: Melodie [George-Moore]?

LH: Yes, Melodie. Thank you. (laughs) You can see how I am with names, too. So he was working with Melodie. And we went outside and it was a nice day. And we were just listening to them work together. And we went down south. I mean, the people that I remember the most from that trip are Ray and Melodie and then Agnes Vera and Matt Vera. And then we went down to the Chemehuevis and saw what they were doing. and some teams were doing better than others. I think Agnes and Matt were the absolute champions. Oh, and went to Mojave. Parker, I guess it was, where the team there, one of whom was one of the early board members. Parris Butler.

And so we could see some, some of the good things and some of the bad things that people were doing, and really got a feel for how to train better. Agnes was the champion, because she was absolutely refusing to speak any English. (laughs)

SG: Right.

LH: Parris' (doorbell rings)

SG: I'll pause it.

LH: Excuse me.

SG: That's okay. (pause) There we go. Parris.

LH: Whoa. (laughter) His teacher was an example of how we really had to improve the training. Because they were saying that they were making a bow and arrow together. I said, "Oh, that's a great activity for immersion!" And then we would ask them to demonstrate it.

And so the teacher, the master, started telling Parris in English how to make the bow and arrow. And we said, "How come you're not doing it in Mojave?"

He said, "Well, I have to teach him first." (laughs) So we talked about how you can teach him while you're speaking the language.

SG: And where in the early years of AICLS did the—I'm going to check and see how that—I can hear it a little in the background. Not really enough to, to—it will stop the interview over it, it's not really worth it. I could, and I notice we're close to peaking. I could turn it down a little bit. Let's see. We're at nine. Let's go to eight. And let's, say something.

LH: Okay. So are we still doing fine?

SG: That's actually better. Ramping it back a little bit—

LH: Oh, good.

SG: We sound good and the faraway—of course it stopped. (laughs) I might wear the [headphones] for a little while.

LH: So right from the beginning, of course, I was not on the board, I was an advisory board member. But anyway, so you know, I can't remember for sure which year. It was somewhere around '94 or '95 that we started Breath of Life. We'd been planning it for a while.

So, L. Frank was instrumental in always saying right from the very beginning, master apprentice program is fine, but what are you going to do for people that don't have speakers? And so we designed this program to be primarily for people that didn't have speakers. Although it's very useful, I think, for everybody in language revitalization to be able to access the old materials. And it gets more and more useful as, as our California Native speakers decline in number.

And to a large extent now, we're dealing with semi-speakers for our masters. And we've lost so many native speakers since the Master-Apprentice program started. So many native speakers. It's really sad.

So Master-Apprentice and Breath of Life will eventually kind of have to combine.

SG: I remember some of like when I was getting ready for this thesis I read through like all the *News From Native Californias*. And the first Breath of Life I could find mentioned was in '96.

LH: [Yes, that's when it started].

SG: And the announcement called it, the announcement to get people to come, mentioned the Lonely Hearts. (laughs)

LH: Yeah, that's what I called it to begin with. I wanted it to have that name, the Lonely Heart Language Club. (laughs) But L. Frank and Mary thought it was too sad. And so it became the, it was L. Frank that named it. But [the full name is] "Breath of Life, Silent No More California Indian Language Restoration Workshop."

SG: What was the organizing of that first one like?

LH: [L. Frank, Linda Yamane, and I planned it together, and Malcolm Margolin and Jeannine Gendar of Heyday Books helped a good deal.] I went around to all the archives and started talking to them about, about this. And I also had to figure out who to talk to for dorms and there was, and food. (laughs) And the archivists were, as they are, just totally generous and excited about it, saying, "This is really what archives are for. It would be wonderful to have people come in groups and use it."

So it, it worked out that first year just exactly like it's always been since. I don't think there was really any modification until last year when we switched the time of the lectures versus the visits to the archives. And Lauren [Lassleben] was there right from the beginning, right from the very first one. And I think the staff at the Hearst [Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology] just changed a whole lot. And then the Survey [the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, a unit within Berkeley's Linguistics Department], of course I was running the Survey at the time.

And the very first one, we also went to the main library, and to the anthro library. But that just was too much. We decided after the first one we didn't go to any libraries. A couple of times we've gone to an ethnic studies library.

So the first one had, I think, only about forty people. And it started growing right away because it was fun and well received and people got a lot out of it. Sixty was about all we could handle, sixty to sixty-five. And there's more that want to come, but we just try to keep it as small as possible because you lose some of the real intimate interaction.

- SG: Without going into anybody's specifics, what are some of the general things that might, like say when you're trying to keep it down to that size, might say well I, you know, maybe this group shouldn't come, or—
- LH: We have a hard time saying no to anybody, actually. (laughs) So we tried once or twice to say if people have come several times before, then it's the new people that will have priority. And once, one year we refused a few people on that basis. But it was horrible to refuse them and it caused a lot of anger on their part. So we also just try to have a deadline and to say no to people who apply after the deadline. But there's always exceptions to that, too.
- So what it really comes down to is that I think we've sometimes accepted as many as seventy with the idea that some won't come. And it keeps it down to sixty-five or sixty. (laughs)
- When it gets too late, you just can't even add anybody to the dorms.
- SG: Yes.
- LH: So occasionally we'll say, "Yes, you can come if you stay someplace else. Make your own housing arrangements." And then we say, "No, you can't bring family." So we try to have things like that. Sometimes that discourages families, for example, from coming.
- Or we'll say, "We're trying to accept only four for each language, and you guys want six or eight. Just choose four."
- SG: I was listening to a recording of Lisa's presentation at SAA [Society of American Archivists]. And she said that, or the archivist said that one of the issues was space. Fitting people into the research room.
- LH: Yeah. Well actually, they could take fewer, Washington can't take quite as many people as we can.
- SG: Oh, wow.
- LH: Some of their reading rooms are small, way small. (laughs) The National Anthropological Archives has a really small reading room.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the equivalent of the Bancroft Library, which has a very large one.
- So we have to try to keep it at fifteen people per day per archive. For the sake of the archivists. And that's fifteen, thirty, forty-five, that's sixty right there. And we actually send more because of mentors.

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<sup>4</sup> For the 2013 Breath of Life, the National Anthropological Archives figured out how to accommodate more people by dividing them up into different reading rooms.

- SG: What were, did you also talk to Bill Roberts, some of the early Breath of Life?
- LH: Yeah, yeah. And he's, I think he's the one that turned me on to Lauren. He was interested. He kind of gave Lauren the go ahead to [work with us].  
So I talked to Bill Roberts. I can't remember who was the director of the museum, of the Hearst Museum, that year. It just changed a lot over time. But the staff of the museum was pretty independent, anyway, from the directorship. It's like they were the ones that had to figure out things.  
Let's see. Oh, then, also, until just less than two years ago, the Berkeley Language Center, which used to be called the Language Lab, had their own, had a different collection, were in charge of the linguistic recordings. So I talked to them. And everybody just set things up so nicely. It was really great.
- SG: There wasn't, so everything, I mean, there wasn't any like big challenges or things you had to work through or—
- LH: No. [Everyone was so accommodating, so willing to go out of their way to make this happen.] It was really just, well, by then I knew a couple of people that, like Daryl Baldwin, who had learned their language from material, as opposed to from people. So Daryl has come frequently as an invited speaker. And he brought his family, because his family was, you know, he could model his family, right? His kids really helped to, they would actually come and give language lessons and be part of the whole thing, because they were native speakers, right? Daryl is just such a great model of how you can revitalize a language and create new native speakers all within a generation.
- SG: Did Jessie Little Doe ever come out?
- LH: Yeah, she came out one year. [She and Daryl have very similar histories of answering their passion for their languages by getting graduate degrees in linguistics and the carrying it into their family and community. Both learned from documentation, but had the goal of making it a spoken language again.]
- SG: Nice. What kind of, what kind of guidance or advice did you and AICLS give to the archivists, if any, about working with the participants?
- LH: Let's see. We talked mainly about what the participants were here for. And of course we discussed the fact that a lot of the participants had never



been to a university before. Or this university. There are more and more Native people going to universities now. And more and more, we see people coming to Breath of Life who are actually quite accustomed to being at universities. But that first year, most of them were not. We talked about how they, in particular, were going to have to learn a lot about how to find materials. And that's really what the archivists had to do was show them what's there and show them how to find it and show them the process of ordering copies.

And I think that was really the main approach we had. It wasn't really, just letting them know who they were and that they were there for purposes of language revitalization. And that they were going to, a lot of them were not computer savvy at the time. And just so I didn't even know exactly what the archivists were going to have to do in order to bring them up to speed, or in order to help them feel at home.

And that was the other thing that we talked about a lot, and always do, that our goal is to get them to understand how to do these things well enough so that they can come back any time. And to help them understand that they're welcome at a public university any time that they want to come.

SG: Did the archivists have any requests of AICLS or of the linguistics department?

LH: AICLS. Well, of me, or of us that were planning it.

SG: Yeah, yeah.

LH: Really, the main thing has always been get a list of languages to the archivists as soon as possible. (laughs) And of course we had to talk about how many could they take at a time. And with the, you know, where were they going to meet. And what, let's see, like with the museum, the Hearst Museum, there was, there was the issue of they primarily have recordings. And there was the issue of how could they listen to the recordings. (telephone interruption)

SG: Turning back on the recorder. And let's see. Things that Breath of Life organizers—

LH: Oh, yeah. What was going on with the archivist. So the problem at the, there was a problem at the museum, which was that they didn't have much in the way of listening capability for the tapes. And I think that first year they might have only had one, one listening station. And so that was, I can't remember for sure how they handled it. But it was kind of difficult.

And they've been getting more listening stations as the years go by. There are still not tremendously many listening stations. But they had, they would have to arrange things so that some people, some people could listen while they were going over things with other people in a separate place. I think they have two or three different places now that people can be listening. So they just decided to take turns with the different kinds of things.

And they were also showing them material goods as well, so they could keep people busy in different ways. So they had the greatest challenge, I think, of any of the archives.

The language lab had a lot of listening stations. And so it was easy for them to just be setting up different, different things for different languages at the same time. And the paper archives, of course, could get out all their stuff at the same time and everybody could make use of them.

And then one problem was getting, people would order things and not receive them. They'd order tapes and the tapes wouldn't arrive. I'd hear like a year later or something, "Hey, I never got my tape!" (laughs) And part of that, it was especially true of the museum because they didn't have, really, a set-up for making copies. They'd have to send the copies over to the language lab to make copies. And there was nobody who really had the duty to do this. So at the outset, they just weren't really set up. And I think now things are getting better about ordering copies and getting them.

So there was sort of an evolutionary process that some of the archives had to go through just to, just to be able to accommodate the needs of Breath of Life.

SG: One of my questions I had written down was about, the topic of changes to Breath of Life over the years. and one of them was any activities that were either added to or deleted from the program. You mentioned the library visits.

LH: Yeah, the library visits were one of those. Partly because, or mostly because there just wasn't time. And we wanted to have a day when people could go back to any archive they chose. And of course that's another challenge, I guess, for the archives, is who's coming on Friday. (laughs) And because the printed, the published materials are also very worthwhile. But it's really the unpublished materials, I think, the raw materials, that in some ways had the most use. First of all, there was just no other way to get a hold of them. And secondly, raw materials have some advantages over published materials. They—

[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]

LH: There's more data. And in some ways, it's more honest data. (laughs) Less organized. But the published materials are usually very technical. And for the published materials, I would often give advice to people to just ignore the descriptions and go for the examples. And sometimes there are just not enough examples in the published materials compared to the raw materials. So we figured that those unpublished materials are the most important part of the week.

The other thing is that you don't really have easy access to the main library if you're not a member of the campus. So that's the one thing that's harder to visit. [We could make arrangements for them to go in as part of Breath of Life, but without a university identification card, it is not possible to visit the main library without special arrangements in advance.] It may be that you could get special permission fairly easy to visit the archives on your own. But at the time, it wasn't someplace they could easily go back to, whereas the archives were much easier to go back to.

SG: Were there any other—

LH: What changes. Hmm. Well, for me, the organization was exhausting. And so at one point, I started trying to, trying to help, trying to get more help in organizing. So whenever a student would be a good organizer, (laughs) I started trying to see if I could figure out how to get them more involved in the organizing.

And Wes Leonard was a great organizer. Is a great organizer. Another great organizer is John Sylak. And another great organizer is Justin Spence. And all of them have been very important in helping with the organization.

And the food was always the biggest challenge. Just getting the food there, getting the food set up. Organizing, ordering the food, trying to keep track of details. The first year we had bagels all the time because I was, I just didn't know enough about diabetes and I thought well, it's not sugar, so we'll have bagels instead of, instead of sweet stuff. But of course they're still carbs. (laughs) And so it wasn't such a great idea to have bagels.

And then there was a poem at the end that Linda Yamane wrote called "Bagels No More."<sup>5</sup> (laughter)

So I got into hardboiled eggs. So every night—I still do this—then every night I would boil up like three dozen eggs and take them in in the morning. So food is always, it's still always kind of a challenge.

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<sup>5</sup> Linda Yamane, "Breath of Life—Silent no More," *News from Native California*, Fall, 1996, 17.

And it's a challenge in the Washington, DC one, too. Even more so, really, because we don't, I don't, because we just don't know what's around so well in Washington, DC.

But the, so, oh, and this last year, you saw that the food was completely taken over by Jeanine Antoine.

We had a committee of students, we had a planning committee. This is something I've been doing the last few years is getting a planning committee of students together. And we run the training of the mentors together. We did a really good job a few times of just being the main trainer of mentors. And we, and then this year I had John Sylak and Justin Spence be in charge of a number of things. Getting the golf cart for taking people around. And figuring out where we were going to order our lunches from and our breakfasts from.

And then Jeanine came along, and she was the one that just handled everything in the way of food. That she would handle the calling the places that we had decided on and making sure that they were going to be delivered, and doing the specifics of the ordering. And then she would make salads and everything. Bring them in. She was just in charge of the whole thing. And she was completely exhausted by the end.

For a couple of years, Gary [Scott] was in charge of food. And he would go every day to Berkeley Bowl and get all the fruits and vegetables and sandwich making materials and everything. And he would help set up for breakfast. And then he'd go shopping and then come back and help set up lunch along with a few volunteers. He did this for two years, and he was so exhausted that he now makes sure that he is not in town for Breath of Life. (laughs) So you can see, food is really, really tough. (laughter)

And at the beginning, I was just so busy I couldn't quite participate. I would give my lectures. And then I could never go to any of the archives with anybody or anything. And I still have a hard time finding the time to do that. But as I learn to give more duties to people and figure out how to organize things so that other people can take over, it gets better.

So the other big challenge is always getting the mentors trained. And that's probably a question of yours. (laughs)

SG: Yeah. Yeah. Why don't you—

LH: So actually one of the best things about the mentors is that the ones from out of town stay in the dorms, too. And people are always so involved in what they're doing and these homework assignments we give them and so on. So the mentors will often be working with them deep into the night every night. And it's really great. Some of the mentors come, even if they live in the area, they'll come to the dorms in the evening to help out.

But some mentors are more sensitive than other mentors. Every once in a while there's a problem where the mentor and the participant don't get along. It's actually very rare compared to what people think it's going to be. But sometimes a mentor just tries to be too technical or tries to use the participant as a subject and you know, those kinds of things. It's really very rare.

You know, and there's, it almost is nonexistent anymore. But there's always this fear that a linguist is going to, or this thought that a linguist is going to set himself above the person he's mentoring. And sometimes I think the participants feel intimidated by a linguist. Regardless of what the personality of the linguist is. And sometimes the linguist *is* intimidating.

So part of the training of mentors has always been to make sure they're not using too much in the way of technical language. And so how to help people figure out things themselves, rather than just doing it for them or telling them how it is or something like that. Being, and just being sensitive and understanding the depth of emotion that people have toward their language, and toward what they find.

That was one thing that we really discovered the first year is how emotional the whole thing is for the participants. They find materials that their own grandmothers or great-grandmothers wrote down. They find information about their communities and about their families that they didn't know. They find photographs of relatives. And just sort of sometimes being in touch with their language for the first time is just so emotional. And I think that's one of the great things that the mentors get out of this is the humanity of the language, as opposed to the formal aspects of the language. And how it means on a really different level. What it really means to people.

And so we always tell the mentors in advance that this is not as much an intellectual experience as an emotional experience for people.

So L. Frank has in recent times especially been especially anxious that the mentors get a different kind of training. And she has lately been feeling that linguists and, that linguists need a special kind of training. So this year she created the Shadow of the Whale workshop. As a way of trying to get a new kind of approach between mentors who she doesn't even really want to call mentors anymore. I think it was Justin who suggested at Shadow of the Whale, suggested they be called language buddies. (laughs) And that name may stick. Not so much in writing, but maybe during the workshops.

So changing terminology is one thing she's interested in. And she may also tell you about a follow-up workshop that she'd like to have, which is, let's see, I think it was Matthew Vestuto who came up with the name of Second Breath. (laughs) So that would be great if she gets that workshop going.

- SG: I'll have to ask her about that one.
- LH: Yeah. (laughs) Yeah, there were a couple, I think there were a couple of incidents at the Washington Breath of Life that especially got to her about mentors and participants. We had, there have been cases where the mentors and participants just don't get along. And it goes both ways, you know. There have been cases where the, I think one case in Washington was the participant didn't want anything to do with having a mentor. And so the mentor that was there was just sort of left high and dry and nobody to work with. And then other cases where the mentor maybe did too much or was too technical in his language or whatever. Or maybe seeming like he was saying, "I'm right and you're wrong." And so you never know whether somebody's going to be this way, or how the participant will respond.
- And there have been cases here in Berkeley where we don't invite somebody back because of some issue between them and the participant. We don't invite the mentor back if there's been a problem like that. And one or two cases where we haven't invited the participant back. (laughs)
- SG: So kind of ideally the mentor kind of brings out or helps interpret or, you know, brings to the participant knowledge that isn't obvious from the material? Or helps them interpret it? Or?
- LH: Well, okay, I think that, we have various topics that we're trying to help the participants gain knowledge of. One of them is how to read the materials. So how to read phonetic writing. And how to accept, or learn to deal with the fact that there's many ways that phonetic writing takes place.
- SG: Throw the recorder back on. So we were talking about—(laughs) Oh, ideally what mentors do for the—
- LH: Oh, yeah. So they're helping the participant with all these aspects of linguistics. How to, how to read the materials. How to figure out the grammar of the language. Which you can't get too far with in a week, but just the beginning of how to do it. And here's where they can, they might actually help the participant by telling him something about the structure of the language. Not just how to figure it out, but a little bit of basic stuff about word order and some of the most important prefixes and suffixes and so on. And that's where the relationship has to, I mean, that's where they could get too technical. And then they can also help the participant at the archives with finding materials and so on.

And then we hope our training in advance will prepare them to also be learning something from the participant about the language. We want them, part of it is we want them to make sure that they are finding out from the participant what the participant wants to know and wants to do, and what the participant's plans are. But they also have a chance this way to learn about the meaning of the language, the emotion of the language, and something about the participant's culture and knowledge and so on as well. So that's, that's our goal.

And there's no specific way to help—well, there is a little bit, but how is it best to help the participant learn about the structure of the language? A lot of it just depends on how the participant handles it, too. I felt like one thing we always, I like to tell is how Quirina's mentor helped her at the beginning. Because the second year that Quirina came, that was the year that she and her fellow participants in Mutsun translated *Green Eggs and Ham* into Mutsun. Oh, no, it wasn't that. That was later. No, what she did was she translated a story into Mutsun. And I think it was a traditional story. But at the time, she knew a lot more about just what the words were than she did about the grammar.

And so her mentor, who's now at University of Arizona, Natasha Warner, went through the translation with her and just took something like ten points of grammar. Like what, if you're trying, for example, to do a plural, what is the plural marker that you would use? What would you use for a person marker? How do you form a negative sentence?

And so these ten points of grammar they went through together, and then turned that set of words into more of a grammatical story. And it really helped Quirina learn about the morphology and syntax, about the grammar of the language.

So I always like to tell that story, because I think it's a really good way to be learning. And she wasn't taking, they weren't taking every sentence and pulling it apart and saying, "Well this is wrong and this is wrong" and so forth. But rather just, in fact, it probably was by no means a [perfectly grammatical result], even after the ten points of grammar. But it made her learn about those ten points of grammar.

And we also try to talk a lot about form, sentence forms. So if you have a sentence like, in some language, like, "The dog is running," what is going on in that sentence grammatically?

[In English, the template that would fit that sentence is "The (NOUN) is (VERB)-ing." In, say, Havasupai, it would be a different template, something like "(NOUN)-haj (VERB)-gyu." This would work for a lot of Havasupai verbs, though later on they would find complexities.]

And then can you plug in other words so that you're now making novel sentences. So if you have to have a subject marker and you have to have a certain verb suffix, can you find other nouns and other verbs and so

on that can go into that sentence template, so that you're now to the point that you can create your own sentences. Those are ways that we try to train the mentor and the participant during the workshops.

SG: Very good. Hmm. So coming back to something we brought up before, before we started the interview, comparing the Berkeley Breath of Life to Oklahoma and some of the other ones, and DC. I don't know what you know about the APS [American Philosophical Society]. There was an event at APS that was—

LH: Was it called Breath of Life?

SG: It wasn't called Breath of Life, but it was sort of a similar concept that—

LH: Did APS run it?

SG: Probably.

LH: Huh. I didn't know about it.

SG: I'll get you the article if I've kept track of it.

LH: I thought I heard of one [that will be happening in Alaska], too, just recently, [specifically for the Ahtna language]. And it was called Breath of Life. NSF [National Science Foundation] funded it. So I've got to get NSF to fund ours sometime. I never did it before, partly out of laziness, I guess, because Marina [Drummer, the AICLS administrator] and everybody always were able to get the funding for it. But also because AICLS can't handle the reporting function and all of the accounting and everything, and everything that's needed for these NSF grants.

We [AICLS] actually ran the pilot grant for the Washington, DC Breath of Life. And that pilot grant was just for planning. And the accountant said she'd quit if we ever did it again. (laughs) It's just way too much work for a tiny group. But there's no reason why I couldn't run it through the University of California.

So what's different about the ones I know about.

So I mentioned Oklahoma to you before you turned on the tape recorder. I think that Oklahoma is an archive in process of being built. And a lot of what they probably do, but you really should talk to Mary Linn, is more in helping people learn how to archive, or how to, or why, or the benefits of archiving. And that probably there is a lot of recording going on, either there or afterwards. And the archive is being built in the process.

So although they have [a lot of] materials that are really useful to people, it's also involved with getting people to make materials, and



getting people to record and archive their languages, [and bring their own old recordings in to be digitized and archived.

These venerable archives, like we have in Washington, DC and [Berkeley] and APS are more about old materials. So the importance of documenting and archiving is probably a bigger part of the Oklahoma Breath of Life.

And it's something that probably should be a part of our Breath of Life more than it is.

And then in Washington, DC, one of the differences is that it's a national Breath of Life. So it's not just for California languages. Although certainly last time California was a large part of the representation. Because California Indians are really, really involved now in searching archives. They really know what Breath of Life is all about, so a lot of them applied. And it's open to people whether or not there are speakers. And so we actually had more native speakers than we've had usually at Berkeley.

[The 2013 national Breath of Life had about 250 applicants, and the applications committee made having few or no speakers a priority as one of our criteria for acceptance, so there were very few fluent speakers this year.]

The local transportation and the local planning is a bigger job than it is at Berkeley. Because the archives are so far apart. And the dorms, we stay at George Washington University. And that's a big walk to the Metro. And then a big Metro ride to get to the [National] Museum of the American Indian [NMAI], where we then have our lectures in the morning. [Some of us walk sometimes—it's about three miles.]

And then there's a bus that comes and picks people up. And they take them, first they take the group that's going that day to the Library of Congress there. Which is not too far away. It's a mile and a half or so from the [National] Museum of the American Indian. And so then when those people are finished, they have to make their way back home to the dorms.

And then it takes the group that's doing the National Anthropological Archives out to Maryland. (laughs) And then it takes them back to the dorms afterwards.

So it's really a very involved process, just the transportation itself. And finding your way from the Metro station to where you're going is at first really hard. And we want to give everybody Metro tickets. And that turned into a nightmare! (laughs)

So the day we all got there, just before the program began, the day that Lisa and I got there, Lisa went to buy the Metro tickets along with the person that was helping organize locally. And they had to buy them from the machine. She had tried before to do some online buying, and they wouldn't let her. But it turns out you can only buy so many tickets per

credit card. And so they had to use up all their credit cards and all their cash. And then I think they had to go get more cash at an ATM because they didn't have any more credit cards they could use in order to get those tickets. It was just horrible!

SG: Oh, wow.

LH: And then there's the difficulty, there's such strong security at NMAI for getting in. And so everybody had to sign in when they come in. So that takes a long time. And if you came, those of us that came early to receive the food, we had to have prior permission. And there was always something going on at the security desk where they wouldn't let somebody in, or they wouldn't let the food person in. They would say, "Okay, the food person has to be," I remember one day I was there receiving the food, and they said, "The food person has to be accompanied by a staff member of the museum to get in."

And I was there saying, "But we've been doing this all week, where it's one of us that comes and accompanies—"

She said, "No, we have to call a staff member to come."

Sometimes that would take another ten minutes before you could get the food up there. (laughs)

But like here, the archivists have just been wonderful. And they did this thing that we didn't even ask about, which was to make a thumb drive of a whole lot of the materials. And give that—for each language. And then they would give that thumb drive out to every participant. It was really a great help.

[All the logistics went much more smoothly at the 2013 national Breath of Life.]

SG: Oh, wow. I'll have to track down the article about the APS one.

LH: Please do.

SG: And if you think of where the northern one happened, that would be great. Let's see here.

LH: [The first Breath of Life held outside of Berkeley was in 2005, at the University of Washington in Seattle, run independently but with the same name. That was organized by University of Alaska Southeast's professor of Alaska Native Languages Alice Taff, who also attended the 2011 Washington, DC Breath of Life Institute as a linguistic mentor for the Kootenai participant.]

- SG: Very good. You mentioned that sometimes with the linguists, they had to be encouraged not to use so much jargon, or to follow—
- LH: Follow the lead of the participant.
- SG: Yeah.
- LH: That's a really good way to put it.
- SG: Yeah. Was there any sort of similar dynamics with archivists?
- LH: I don't think so. I don't think so. I think, I think sometimes people learned more than they wanted to learn about the process of finding materials at the Bancroft Library. It's pretty complicated. They've got all these different finding aids and nothing very succinct. And I think sometimes there was just too much of the prior stuff of here's how you would find this. And people would be sitting there thinking, let me see the materials! (laughs) So that, I think, has been one issue.
- SG: I wonder if there, in some ways the participants know more about the materials than the archivists. I wonder if any of the information gets back.
- LH: Yeah. The participants will sometimes have information to add to what the archives already hold. So like who somebody was, the name of somebody, a remembrance of the event, you know, sometimes, somebody who was a child present when an anthropologist was there and can say something about that.
- And I think sometimes with the physical materials at the Hearst Museum, people will know something about the, like what a particular design of basket meant or something like that.
- And, oh, a lot of the problems at the museum is the fact that there's human remains present. And that's disturbed a number of people. And so they, we take care of warning people that there are human remains. And unfortunately the human remains—well, fortunately for the remains, the human remains are being moved right now into Kroeber Hall from where they were in a different building. They were in the Hearst Gymnasium, which was a building that's not very earthquake safe. And it has a swimming pool above the location of all the human remains. (laughs) So it could just collapse one day and thousands of tons of water would come down and ruin the whole place.
- And so right now, the human remains are being moved to Kroeber Hall. And that means they're going to be closer to the people coming to listen to tapes. Sometimes there've been, people do prayers and they'll do prayers over the baskets, too, when they go see the baskets.

That was something that was added, by the way. I believe, I really can't remember whether it happened the first time or not, but I think it did, that people were requesting access to the baskets when they came. And the baskets are now off-site. They're, did you go to the basketry exhibit last summer?

SG: Not last summer. But my first Breath of Life, in 2004, I did.

LH: Uh huh. Yeah. And they were off-site.

SG: Yeah.

LH: And so we now have a tradition of going there. And so that was something that was added later as a result of the great desire of the participants to see the baskets. And the desire of the—

Oh, yeah, I know. What was happening the first year or two was that people would say, "Can I see the baskets?" And they would make a specific appointment. And the poor staff at the museum was going down like every day to take people to see the baskets. (laughs)

And so they finally said, "Well, how about if we just have a regular time when everybody can see the baskets? And it would be a lot easier for the staff."

But they do, I mean, that's a bit voluntary thing for them, because you're supposed to clock out at five. Instead, most of the staff comes down to help with seeing the baskets.

So anyway, sometimes the baskets are disturbing to people, too, because the people that made them are dead, or they feel like the baskets themselves are not where they belong. Or there's also the issue of some of the poisonous stuff that gets used for conservation.

And so all these things are what people, you know, the participants really want to be there and do these things. But at the same time, they're pretty disturbing.

SG: What are some of your future hopes for Breath of Life?

LH: I hope it will go on. (laughs) I hope someday it will go on without me. I keep trying to get other faculty more involved so that at some point they could take over.

I hope that Breath of Life helps people get started toward learning enough about linguistics to really make use of those materials. Some people have. Some participants go on in linguistics as a result of Breath of Life. Or in archiving. (laughs) [Even more wonderful, some people take what they learn into their families and communities.]

SG: Yeah. Yeah.

LH: Both mentors, like Lisa Conathan is a good example of somebody who, where Breath of Life, I think was one of the strong factors in making her go on after her PhD in linguistics to get a degree in library science. And she's now an archivist herself. So I hope Breath of Life will continue to be inspirational to certain individuals to take their own careers in various directions.

I hope we can find a way for California to really continue in language revitalization when there are no native speakers left. I see two ways for this. And one of them is the Yurok Language Pod approach to language learning and teaching, where people are just getting together and using their language as much as they can, and learning from each other through the process. I don't care whether language revitalization results in languages that are the same as what they were. But I hope that if people who are doing language revitalization care about it, then these archives are going to be critical, because they represent the old language.

I see language revitalization in the future in California as being a combination of what the archives can give in the way of language knowledge and processes such as language pods that create language use. I'm most excited by people that are using their languages at home with their kids. And I hope that will go on. I see the future as being more and more apprentices from the Master-Apprentice Program starting to use the archives more.

But since language revitalization, in my mind, is defined as people using the language again, rather than just learning about it, I hope that people will be able to use Breath of Life and archival materials to bring them back into oral use.

I mean, I don't disregard writing as an important part of language, of the future of California Indian languages. I think writing will be a more important part of it. But partly because people can converse with each other on the internet and things like that using the written medium, probably writing will be, people can use writing in creative ways as new genres of language, and translating books and things like that. So all of that is also potentially a part of language revitalization. But the oral component, I think, is the most important part of language revitalization. I just want, the written materials and recorded materials to help people develop the oral component of language again.

SG: So [written materials] as a back-up, not as the primary means.

LH: Yeah.

SG: We've covered a lot of ground. But are there any questions still, or topics still that I didn't ask you about?

LH: Well just on the oral component of things. One of the things that I think is really important about Breath of Life is the weekly, is the project. That we initiated having a project right from the beginning, because we felt that it helped people focus. That otherwise you just see these materials and you get overwhelmed. And people do get overwhelmed with the materials, just in the best case scenario, they're overwhelmed with the amount of it. And they're overwhelmed with the learning process sometimes of just a lot to learn in order to be able to make use of these materials.

And so we have homework so that people can focus in on their language when we're teaching them, say, here's what the phonetic alphabet is like, and here's how things sound when you see them written down. And then they practice on it in their own language for their homework. And when we get into grammar, we give them grammar assignments for their own language. So they're, so they're focusing in on certain aspects of the language.

But then, the big thing is the project. And we want the project to be related in some, in some way to language revitalization. But I mean, almost by definition, it is. And it could be a project that just focuses on the sounds of the language or something like that. But my favorite projects are when people actually have conversations together in the language, or when they, oh, projects where they make a song in the language or that they sing. So those are the oral projects which I love.

Or where they're doing things like, I think last year or the year before, that the Obispeños did a project of the family tree, so that all of their family members would find out what their kinship term is. So they would start calling each other by their Chumash kinship terms instead of by whatever English term they would be using, or their name, or something like that. So things that actually really help in creating language use is what I like most of all.

So the homework is important. And the project is really important. And maybe I didn't say enough yet about how intense the week is. It's just an incredibly intense week. And people are working with things deep into the night. And they right, you know, they start at maybe 7:30 with breakfast. And then from then on they're on the job all the way until midnight or something. Not everybody. (laughs)

In fact, some people get a little, some people are not focused in and just don't get as much out of the week. But most people really are intensely engaged. It's wonderful to see.

SG: It really is. I guess, you know, most people going in to use archives, they'll have a project in mind when they go to the archives. And so

Breath of Life is one way of sort of passing along that learning method as well.

LH: Yeah. And even though it opens up the idea of coming back whenever they want to, a lot of people say, “Well, it’s just not the same.” That there’s something about the week together, the intensity of it, and meeting each other, getting ideas from each other, seeing what other people are doing, the networking process, the gaining of friends. I credit Breath of Life with several couplehoods. (laughter)

SG: Oh!

LH: That is perhaps more valuable to them than just the materials themselves.

SG: Uh huh. Very good. Look at my questions one last time. Future hopes. Follow-up questions. We did them along the way.

LH: L. Frank, of course, when she’s at Breath of Life is often the emcee. And creates a lot of the emotional intensity, too.

SG: Has Breath of Life, I mean, changed like when you do research for your own work, did it change how you did research over the years, or how you used archives?

LH: Well maybe more than me personally, I think it changes graduate students and faculty members who might not have been involved before in language revitalization processes, or interaction with community needs. [Not to mention that it trains them in how to use archives, and in the importance of them making sure their own field notes get archived.] And I think it brings, I mean, we don’t even require our mentors to be people that study American Indian languages. When people, for Washington, DC, we see that as a plus. For Berkeley, we don’t even choose mentors. We just get whoever can come. So we don’t even require people to be specialists in American Indian languages. But it can lead them in that direction. And we do give them their language two to four weeks before Breath of Life so that they can study up on the language. Find out what’s available in terms of publications to get ready for their participants by checking out some of these books from the library that are, that have information in it. And to have them, if they have not studied the language before, to have them study it themselves before the meeting starts.

So it helps them become more used to the, just become more knowledgeable about the language. And it helps them learn about the archives. I mean, they may never even have visited the archives before. And most importantly, it helps them learn about participating in projects

that are community-based and community-oriented, toward the interests and needs of the community. And I think, I think it's been a very important part of the training of the new generation of linguists in that regard.

So ethics have become, I mean, I think it really gets them involved in the ethics of linguistics, ethical issues in linguistics.

And sometimes people develop, sometimes the linguists and the participants develop long-term relationships with each other, too. So I see it, in my life it hasn't, my whole career has been so oriented toward language revitalization issues and community issues that most of my writing has been about things like *Breath of Life* and so forth. So it certainly has been a part of my research and been influential on my research. But it hasn't changed my direction, right? It's been there right from the beginning. But for the young people first coming up, I think it's potentially a life changer.

SG: Well thank you so much. I think we'll stop there.

LH: Okay.

SG: And if there's any other things, we can add it later.

LH: Great. Yeah.

SG: Thank you. *Yôotva*.

[End of Interview]



## Chapter 6: Malcolm Margolin

“There was a wonderful friend of mine, John Mohawk. He ran *Akwesasne Notes*. And somebody once asked him about these prophecies that the Iroquois had about the destruction of the world.

And somebody said, “Hey, listen, the world is going to be destroyed. Why are you doing all this stuff? Keeping all these languages alive and doing all of this?”

He said, “Hey, listen,” he says. “Maybe the world will be destroyed, but there’s one thing that I have to do and make sure it’s not on my watch.”

I have no idea what the future brings. I have no idea whether there will be languages around in a hundred years. What you know is not on my watch.”

It should be said first that Malcolm Margolin loves people, humor, and a good party. He loves *Breath of Life* because it is “this experience where people are learning and they're excited and it's personal.”

Malcolm Margolin is the founder and executive director of Heyday Books, who has been publishing the magazine *News From Native California* since 1986. In 1992, because of his publishing business and his involvement in California's Native American community, Marion Weber, daughter of Laurance Rockefeller, asked Margolin to recruit board members for Native California Network, a foundation that would give money to support cultural revitalization work.

Margolin supported the work of the Advocates of Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS) by publishing their newsletter and many feature articles in the pages of *News From Native California*, giving the work of AICLS an audience and a permanence greater than it might have had on its own. He also is a fixture at *Breath of Life's* midweek dinner and cultural gathering. As publisher of Heyday Books, he published

several books related to language and cultural revitalization by several Breath of Life regulars: Leanne Hinton, L. Frank, Deborah Miranda, and Linda Yamane. More often focused on publishing the stories of others, part of Margolin's success has come from understanding the importance of being a good guest in the cultures of Native people.<sup>1</sup>

Margolin was born in Boston in 1940 to Russian Jewish parents and grew up in a Yiddish-speaking neighborhood. He attended Boston Latin School and Harvard University. He regarded the community in which he grew up as both “wonderful and terrible”. He and his wife lived a countercultural and nomadic life, eventually settling down in Berkeley with the birth of their first child in 1970. What prepared him for a life’s work that would include California Indian people dedicated to bringing back their languages and cultures? Love of warmth, humanity and family are certainly elements of many cultures, but his work in the East Bay Regional Park District led him to reflect on the Ohlone, the first peoples of the San Francisco Bay Area. Margolin wrote and published books on the East Bay parks, the outdoors, leading to his founding of Heyday Books in 1974. Since then, Margolin has grown Heyday into a California institution.

In this interview, Margolin recounted the stories of many language and culture bearers, many of whom he's published in *News* or elsewhere. Margolin discussed the founding of Native California Network, which spawned AICLS. Margolin also explained the beginnings of and Leanne Hinton’s contributions to AICLS’ Master-Apprentice Program.

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<sup>1</sup> Annie Nakao, “Heyday Founder is Booked for Life/For 30 Years, Indie Publisher Malcolm Margolin has Mined California’s Golden Stories,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 29, 2004.

Margolin relayed his concerns for the future of Heyday Books' manuscripts, correspondence, and research materials. He then turned the tables and asked the interviewer some of the questions she had asked him. Ordinarily, an oral history interviewer would not give his or her opinion in the interview. In this case, however, it seemed relevant and appropriate to answer the questions.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the interview, Margolin brought up the idea of convening a meeting concerning matters of physical and intellectual property in Native California. In terms of language and cultural information, participants at such a meeting could sort out how traditional laws concerning song, story, and language ownership work with non-Native understandings of intellectual property rights. Conversations of this nature could foster the contributions to archives by Breath of Life participants and other Native language community scholars.

As the bearer of many peoples' stories, Margolin explained why Breath of Life and AICLS matter to all people of California. Margolin's interview conveyed the importance of partnerships, people, and even money in language and cultural revitalization. Margolin's willingness to meet Kashaya speaker Bun Lucas at his home in Berkeley, discuss crop circles, and escort Bun to Leanne Hinton's field methods class made possible important contributions to the audio and field note collections on Kashaya Pomo. Margolin's connection to a wealthy patron brought several years of funding to Native California Network, which enabled AICLS to establish a track record that would inspire other funders with belief in their work. In the stories of people and their

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to having been an apprentice to fluent Karuk speaker Violet Super in AICLS' Master-Apprentice Program, from 1997 to 1999, interviewer Susan Gehr served as a linguist mentor/buddy at the 2004 and 2012 Breath of Life Workshops.

relationships, both happy and contentious, Margolin discussed how language revitalization work is both improved by the people involved and has improved the people involved.

This interview took place on the morning of February 28, 2013, at the offices of Heyday Books, 1633 University Avenue, Berkeley, California. The interview was conducted in a meeting area just outside of Margolin's office that was open to the archives and to other office doorways on the second floor. On the recording, some traffic noise was audible because the windows of the meeting area faced University Avenue, a major thoroughfare of Berkeley. Towards the end of the interview, when Margolin was reading "In the Water over Stones," an office doorway opened and conversations can be heard. There were some breaks in the interview: first when Margolin introduced Lindsie Bear, Director of Heyday Books' California Indian Publishing; second, when Margolin searched for the last name of Larry Reed, artistic director of Shadowlight Productions; and third when Margolin went in search of the book *Releasing the Days* by Stephen Meadows. The audio was recorded open air using the TASCAM DR-100mkII digital audio recorder.

Interview with Malcolm Margolin

Interviewed by Susan Gehr  
February 28, 2013  
Berkeley, California  
85 minutes

Susan Gehr:

Today is Thursday, February 28, 2013. And this is an interview for *Breath of Life: Revitalizing California's Native Languages Through Archives*. I am talking to Malcolm Margolin, publisher at Heyday Books. And this is Susan Gehr. And I am at the offices of Heyday Books in Berkeley, California.

Malcolm Margolin:

Can I make an official statement?

SG: Sure. Absolutely.

MM: I absolutely adore you.

SG: Oh! (laughter) Thank you.

MM: Okay. As long that's in the record.

SG: Yes. That is on the record. On the recording. So my very first question, let's see, I read an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, it said you grew up in Boston. So tell me about growing up there and your family.<sup>3</sup>

MM: Well I grew up in, I was born in 1940. I grew up in Boston. It was a Jewish neighborhood. It was in Dorchester, along Blue Hill Avenue, which was called Jew Hill Avenue by others. And it was so heavily ghettoized. My grandparents lived in the United States for fifty years and never spoke a word of English. My mother was born in Russia. Yiddish was the language of the house when I was growing up. And it was a neighborhood of old world, old world customs. Religious.

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<sup>3</sup> Annie Nakao, "Heyday Founder is Booked for Life/for 30 Years, Indie Publisher Malcolm Margolin has Mined California's Golden Stories," *San Francisco Chronicle* August 29, 2004, <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Heyday-founder-is-booked-for-life-For-30-years-2729692.php>.

I could hardly wait to get away. I just hated it. I just could hardly wait to get off into the bigger world and see what it had to offer me. And it felt so restrictive and it felt so mean in some ways. And it felt so xenophobic. And I kept feeling that there was this other world out there that I wanted to see. But I loved, it was a great place to grow up. It had warmth, it had humanity, it had family. I was taken care of well. That it was utterly—it was both wonderful and terrible.

SG: And you went to school in, you went to school close by. So you—

MM: I went to, in Boston there was a public school, a public high school, Boston Latin School, that was, it was the oldest public school in America. It was founded in the early, in the 1630s. It was founded a year before Harvard, to train boys for Harvard. And it was an all-boys public school. And I went there. I studied a lot of Latin, which is worthless. And learned French and German. It was college preparatory.

And then I went from there to Harvard. And was screwed up for many years there. But it was a good place to be screwed up. It had great libraries, it had interesting people.

And then I ended up traveling around, and lived in the Caribbean and lived in New York and traveled places. And came to California in the late '60s in a VW bus. And wandered up and down the coast, and lived with my wife on beaches in Canada and beaches in Mexico. And I was a fairly decent hippie.

And in 1970, my first kid was born. And we settled into Berkeley and raised kids and started writing books. And now I'm talking to Susan.

SG: Yes. And so when you came up to me at last year's Breath of Life and asked if I would interview you, what stories did you want to make sure to tell?

MM: There were several stories that were just absolutely poignant to me. And I tell them to various people. I believe they're true. I believe that I remember them. Sometimes stories take off on their own.

But a couple of the stories that I thought about, when I think about language, one of the stories was about Mabel McKay. So did you know who Mabel McKay was?

SG: Yes.

MM: So Mabel McKay was this fiercely intelligent, sharp-eyed, great person of magnificent intelligence and keenness. And when she was, when she died, she wanted to be buried with Essie Parrish up at the Kashaya reservation. And the day of the funeral was this wretched day. It was rainy, it was

cold, it was miserable. It was Essie's grave, and then they had the hole dug out where Mabel would be. And Mabel was in the casket, and everybody's standing around. And it was kind of disorganized. Christians were praying, and old believers were keening. There was keening and there was prayers, and things were going around. And the whole thing was kind of rainy and dismal. And nobody seemed to be in charge.

And then at one point, there was a pause. And Frank LaPena was there. And he had a boom box. And he turned on the boom box. It was Mabel singing her own funeral song. She was the last person around that could sing herself to the other world. And there was something about that that was so dramatic. Such finality. Such closure to a language and to a culture. It was one of the most touching and beautiful things that I've ever seen.

The other kinds of things that I've seen, there was Matt Vera was from Yokuts, I think he was Yowlumne.

MM: When he was learning the language, the elders came to him and said, "Why you doing this? The language is dead. There's nobody going to be speaking it in a few years. You'll have nobody to talk to. There's nothing written in it. Why do you want to learn it? Why don't you spend your time learning law or medicine or something that will help us? Why you just spending all your time with this language?"

And he said, "When World Maker made this world, he made it in our language. And as long as there's things around, our language will still be alive. There will still be things to talk to."

I thought that was just great.

I was with, another wonderful story was with Glen Villa. And Glen Villa is a speaker of the Miwok language. He lives off in Ione. Gentle and lovely man. And Glen was teaching, was creating songs that he could teach his kids. And he had this song that he wanted to teach them. He was translating American and English songs. And one of them was "Ten little monkeys, jumping on a bed, one fell down and broke his head. Mama called the doctor, the doctor said, 'No more monkeys jumping on a bed.' Nine little monkeys, jumping on a bed..."

There's no word for "monkeys" in the Miwok language. He used raccoons. (laughs) And I always thought that was wonderful.

When Carole Lewis was apprenticing with Georgiana Trull, my memory of this, and you might want to check this out, but my memory of it is that Georgiana spoke a high class Yurok. It was an aristocratic Yurok. It was not the Yurok of the common people. It was an elevated Yurok. It was the Yurok that the ruling class spoke.

To get her an apprentice, we had to get her somebody of a good family. She didn't want somebody of the lower classes. She wanted a good family. So we got Carole, her name was Carole Korb at that time.

And she later on became Carole Lewis. We got Carole to go up with her. I guess Carole comes from a good family.

And they were together, and I finally meet Carole after a couple of months. And I say, “How’s it going?”

And Carole says, “It’s the most horribly degrading experience of my life.”

I said, “What is it?”

She said, “I’ve been with her for two months and I’m still learning how to count.”

I said, “Learning how to count?”

She said, “Yes,” she said, “There are eighteen different ways of counting in the Yurok language, depending upon what is being counted. And Georgiana will say something like, ‘How do you say three bowls of salad?’ And I’ll give the word ‘three’ and Georgiana will say, ‘Oh, no. You can’t say it that way. If you say it that way, bad things will happen.’” (laughs)

Then there’s the story, Linda Yamane used to tell this story of when she was learning her Rumsien language she would have these wax cylinder recordings. And she would listen to these wax cylinder recordings. She’d put her kid Robbie to bed at night and she’d listen to the wax cylinder recordings. And she’d hear this scratchy little voice coming through all these wax cylinders. And she’d pick out words. And then she finally would go off to dictionaries that had been done at the turn of the century. And she would match the words up and she’d find a word that she could recognize.

And she talked about the tremendous tension she felt before bringing this word out. That this word had been asleep for these seventy-five or eighty years, and she was going to bring it to life once again. And this tension that she felt, this drama that she felt. And finally saying the word and bringing it back to life and sharing it with others and watching that language come alive. That’s a good story that I think should be told.

What are some of these other stories? When Kroeber wrote *The Handbook of California Indians*, which was published in 1923, it declared the Esselen Indians extinct. The opening sentence, that the Esselens are extinct and nothing is known of them. Today there are four factions that hate each other and the language is coming back alive. (laughs) This is great. This is absolutely wonderful.

I think one of, were you at Happy Camp, I think it was, when they did that shadow, when, what was his name?

SG: Jul—no. The shadow play?

MM: Yeah. That shadow puppet—



SG: I know Charlie Thom was—

MM: Charlie Thom was part of it.

SG: Yeah.

MM: But there was the—I'm blocking out the guy's name that runs it over in San Francisco.

SG: Larry something.

MM: That's right. Larry Reed.

SG: Shadowlight Productions.

MM: And I thought the thing that was marvelous was they had some of those Karuk speakers off on the platform to the side. And I thought that I'd heard the language before. But this was the language that had been taken out for a run. It was, when you usually hear language, it's old people. And it's religious and it's in prayers. But here there was drama. There was emotion. The old lady was angry. Her lover was escaping. It was rage. You heard that language brought out again in its fullness. It was no longer just for religious ceremony, just for didactic exercise. There was something in it, it was expressing passion and stuff. It was so grand.

And I remember it was Bill Bright's description of the Karuk language as sonorous and rich in new combination. And I always thought that, I always thought your language was the language, this is how Cicero must have sounded in the Roman Senate. There's an oratorical quality to it. There's those big open vowels. There's that bigness of sound that it has. I mean, this is, this is grand eloquence. This is grand oratory. This is made for great speeches. And it was, listening to these, this language out there was just one of the most thrilling things that I'd ever heard.

There was a story, it's not exactly a language story, but it's a good story. I was down in Fremont, around Mission San Jose, the Galvan family. And there was this old guy. It wasn't Phil Galvan, it was somebody else, was talking about how during the Depression he'd go and hunt seals in Mowry Slough. And he would drag those seals back through the streets of Fremont to his house. And he told me this story because he was proud of his rope tying abilities. How you get a rope around the seal and tie it out.

But he was telling the story, he was talking about how he would go out and he was always trying to avoid the police and the game wardens and stuff like that. So he was always looking for ways in which he could use side streets and old parts of the marsh.

And one day he was in a part of the marsh where he hadn't been before. And he was hauling the seal and the seal fell into a groove. And it suddenly just slid along that groove with great ease. And he realizes he'd found the groove that his ancestors had been hauling seals up for thousands of years.

And there's something about that that was the most wonderful metaphor. It's like with language, like this whole cultural revitalization, that the grooves are still in the human consciousness, the grooves are still in the land. Once you start finding it, things slide along. And the language brings other things with it. It brings feelings with it, it brings memories with it. And those grooves are still there to be reenergized by the language and by culture.

SG: I like that. Finding your groove. Finding the groove.

MM: Yeah. Groovy. (Gehr laughs) This is hippie speak. This is the language of my culture.

SG: There you go. (laughs) Let's see. What were the circumstances that led up to the Tribal Scholars Language Conference, where AICLS was founded?

MM: The, so there's a wealthy woman that lives off in Stinson Beach. Marion Weber. Does her name come up?

SG: No!

MM: Marion Weber. M-a-r-i-o-n, W-e-b-e-r. It was Laurance Rockefeller's daughter. And she had fair amounts of money. And I'd known her for years. And she was interested in Indian stuff. And she decided to put in \$100,000 a year to create a foundation that would give money to California Indians. And she called me to help create the board. And she got her friend Mary Abbott, Mary Bates Abbott, to come in.

And I don't know how to get into this one in public. But Mary Bates Abbott was not the best person to do this thing. She came with the money. And it was like some sort of horrible irony that this great gift had attached to it this person that would make certain that the gift couldn't be used to its fullest. That she was just difficult. She was charming, it meant a whole lot to her. She just didn't quite understand things. She was domineering. She was, there was something about her, there was a combination, we all have combinations of virtues and failings. But she just came with the money.

So I set up a board. I got, on the first board I got Frank LaPena. I got Carole Korb, I think, was on the first board. And I got, was it Paul

Apodaca that I got? I think it was Paul Apodaca. And we created, from down South. And Cindy LaMarr, no, Cindy LaMarr came in afterwards.

But I created this board of Indians that would run it. Oh, I got, Mark Macarro was on the first board. Mark was a dear. I just loved Mark. I haven't seen him in years.

SG: Is this the, what would become the AICLS board? Or was this another?

MM: This was California, Native California Network, so Native California Network that was created.

And we ended up having one hundred thousand bucks. Mary took, I think, twenty thousand for expenses. We had eighty thousand to give out. And we gave them out in small grants. And I got all of these board members to recommend people that we'd give the money to. Including their own family members. I felt this is the way this Indian community works. If you want to give money to your family, go ahead and give it. This is good. You're a good person, you've got a good family, give them money.

So it didn't run like any other foundation. And then the question came up, what bigger project could we do? What was the foremost difficulty? What, in terms of all these endangered traditions. And it was pretty obvious to me that it was language. And that we had been working with Leanne Hinton on, she started a language column.

And then I had working for me this willowy young woman. She was part Chemehuevi. Yolanda Montijo. And Yolanda was there. And Leanne was running the language column. And we decided to do a survey of California Indian languages to find out which languages were alive. And I think it came before that language, that language conference. But I'm not sure. I'd have to check the dates.

SG: I think I have the—oh, I think that's it. Is that the one?

MM: No.

SG: Oh.

MM: No, this was—

SG: Later.

MM: This was later on. There was an early one.

SG: Okay. Then I don't have that one.

MM: Oh, it was wonderful. Do you have that, it was reproduced in *Flutes of Fire*.

SG: Yes! I have the book.

MM: And that article, we called all the Indian communities to find out who was speaking these languages. And Susan, it was the most amazingly complicated and incomprehensible thing. We called a community and they'd say, "Who's speaking Karuk?"  
And they'd say, "Oh, there are about ten elders."  
And we'd call somebody else, and they'd say, "Oh, there are about ten elders."  
Well, how many people are speaking Karuk? Is it ten elders or twenty elders? I mean, do they all know the same elders? And what do you mean by speaking Karuk? How full comprehension do you have to have?  
Languages don't just die. They just kind of wither. And each generation knows less. And when is a language dead and when is a language alive? And it was just so complicated.  
And finally we decided that we would have a gathering together of people.  
Is this what you're talking about, is that convocation up in Marin County? That was my Rolodex. That was, I got in touch with all these people. We rented this place up there. They had vegetarian food. And these old Indians were complaining. They'd come in, the whole bunch of them just complaining that there was no meat. They'd come in for breakfast and they'd wonder where the bacon was.  
And there was this group of astonishing people that were there. And the conversation was so deeply thoughtful and so sad. I mean, there was a sadness. Mary Jones was the last speaker of the Konkow language.  
And Mary Jones, when I introduced her as the last speaker of the Konkow language, she looked at me and she said, "No, Malcolm. It's not Konkow. It's Konkuuy. We're not cows."  
And I'm thinking this is the last speaker of this language. I mean, nobody's around, she wants me to get it right. Who are you getting it right for? The language is about to be—but it was insistence that it be right.  
And then there was, Katherine Saubel was there. And Katherine Saubel was—did you ever meet her?

SG: I think I did. I think I met her down in Santa Cruz. There was an indigenous women's conference.

MM: Yeah. She would have been there. She was scary. She was so smart. And what Lowell Bean once said about her that was, he was talking about

how sad he would be when Kathy died. And it was not because she was the last speaker of the Cahuilla language. It was because she was the last person to have something to say in it. And it's not as demeaning as it sounds. She was the last person that understood the language with its nuance. With its fluidity. With its breadth of vocabulary and grammatical distinctions. That she, she was a master linguist at this sort of thing. And she was there.

And there were all these last, there were people that were just hanging, their languages hanging onto a shred.

I want to interrupt with a funny story.

SG: Okay. Should I pause that?

MM: No, no, no, no. This was a story that Gary Snyder used to tell. The poet up in Nevada City? And he lived up on San Juan Ridge. And there was this old guy, Louis Kelly, who was a Nisenan. And, oh, you'll, did I ever tell you this story?

SG: No.

MM: Oh, you'll love this story.

So Louis Kelly was a Nisenan. He was the last speaker of the Nisenan language. And Snyder was so appalled, so hurt, so moved by what it was to be the last speaker of a language. And he'd come up and he talked to Louis Kelly and he learned a few words and he'd think about Nisenan. And he thought of the loneliness of the end, that there was nobody left to talk to, there was nobody left to listen to. That the language was locked up in this old man and how sad it was.

So one day he's down in Sacramento and he meets Lizzie Enos. Lizzie Enos was a Nisenan speaker. So he comes back to the ridge. And the way he described it was Louis had this old Indian house. Instead of a door, he had a blanket. And he threw the blanket aside and Louis is standing by the wood-burning stove. He's got a pan of beans and he's stirring the beans.

And Snyder comes in and says, "Guess what?"

Louis says, "What?"

He says, "I found another speaker of Nisenan."

And Louis goes, "Nah. Ain't none. I'm the last."

Snyder says, "No, no, no, no. There's somebody else."

Louis goes, "No, no, no, no." He says, "Nobody else speaks it. I'm the last."

And Snyder says, "Yes, yes, yes. I found this woman down there in Sacramento. I asked her some words. She knows the vocabulary. Louis, she really speaks the language."

He goes, "Yeah, what's her name?"

Snyder goes, "Lizzie Enos."

And he pauses for a minute and he goes back to stirring the beans.

And he says, "My family and her family didn't get along." (laughter)

Isn't that a perfect story?

SG: Oh, man! (laughs) Oh, that's terrific.

MM: Isn't it—

SG: It's just so—

MM: That's the perfect Indian story.

SG: Yes. Yes. It's like, it's not enough just to both be speaking the same languages. It's relationships is everything.

MM: Yeah, it's what's important, it's what's important, it's what's important in your life. And this is what's important. My family and her family didn't get along. And that's—

SG: We're not talking to each other now just because we happen to speak the same language.

MM: So everybody got together. (Looks at a photograph taken at the Tribal Scholars Language Conference) And what a crowd of lovely people. What a crowd of lovely people. Let's see who, this is Mary Bates Abbott. And Jean Perry was a linguist. She was married to Merkie Oliver. And then there's Eric Elliott who was a linguist and worked with various people in the Cahuilla language and the Serrano language. Katherine Saubel. Martha Tapleras was Yokuts. Mary Jones was the last speaker of Konkow. Vina Smith, do you know who Vina Smith?

SG: Vina Smith.

MM: Vina Smith. She's Karuk?

SG: Yeah. She's Karuk. And she's still around.

MM: Hey, I heard that Ada Charles died.

SG: Yes, she did.

MM: You know, I was so shocked. I mean, I was so shocked she was still alive. I thought that generation had passed entirely.

SG: No, she was, yeah, she was 103, 104.

MM: 103, yeah. I was so sorry to hear, I was so shocked that she was still alive. And then Berneice Humphrey was Tolowa. And then Bun Lucas was Kashaya Pomo. Ray Baldy, I loved Ray Baldy. Did you know Ray?

SG: I didn't know him.

MM: Oh, Ray Baldy was so wonderful. He was Hupa. And Bryan Bibby is a white guy. And Betty and Mark Macarro from Pechanga. Maynard Gary, I don't remember Maynard Gary. Nancy Riley is now Nancy Steele.

SG: Yes.

MM: Leanne Hinton. Susan Weese. Is she—

SG: She's Wukchumne.

MM: She's Wukchumne?

SG: Yeah.

MM: Oh that's, I know who she is. (continues looking at photograph) Malcolm Margolin. He's a Jew from Boston. Linda Yamane. Cindy Alvitre was, is a Tongva from Los Angeles. L. Frank Manriquez. Laura Buszard-Welcher is a linguist. Jeannine Gendar worked for us at the time. Robin Collier was a friend of Mary Bates Abbott. And he was John Collier, Junior's, his father was the photographer John Collier. And his grandfather was the head of the BIA.

SG: Oh, wow.

MM: John Collier, Junior. And then Sandra Camarena, I don't know who that is. Parris Butler was Mojave. Ernestine McGovran changed her name back to Ernestine De Soto. She's Chumash.

And then you have Darryl's kid. Boss Wilson is up on a tree somewhere. Preston Arrow-weed is Quechan. Darryl Wilson is Achumawi/Atsugewi. Carolyn Kualii is part Hawaiian, part Apache. Darlene and Kowonash Franco are Yokuts. Hoss Wilson is another kid of Darryl's.

It was from all over the state. We got together. And out of it all, it was Leanne that created the Master Apprentice Program from that meeting. And to give her absolute credit, she was so concerned that her work, writing for *News*,<sup>4</sup> and her work dealing with Indians, was not going to get her academic advancement. This was not scholarly work. This was work, community work. And community work would not be rewarded. Scholarly, she could have written something about glottal stops in Proto-Penutian and gotten a promotion. The fact that she was working to keep these glottal stops alive in current languages, it had no meaning to the academic community whatever. And she took a tremendous risk in doing that work that she did, a tremendous professional risk. And she was rewarded in the end. I mean, she was. But it was risky.

And I think we got people together and launched it. But it was Leanne that took it over. And it was Leanne's heart and soul and bigness and beauty and kindness. She was one of the loveliest people that I ever met.

And she took it over. There was a board for a long time that was good people but kind of dysfunctional. And it was, it was just a miracle that it lasted. It was just a miracle that it lasted. It was a constant soap opera. It was a constant soap opera of difficulties and controversies, people hating each other. It's Indian country but it's also, if you want to see real viciousness and dysfunction, look at the anthropology department at Cal. Indians don't even have no concept as to how to be really mean.

SG: (laughs) Oh, shoot.

MM: So that was the start of it all. I think I assembled the ingredients. I think Leanne put it together. And I couldn't have done that.

And I had no concept about master apprentice, but this individual learning. The whole thing around that time was schools, immersion schools, and getting people to teach it in the first grade. And there was always something in me that felt that this wasn't going to work. I went to Boston Latin School. I don't know Latin well enough to speak it. I don't know French well enough to speak it. I don't know German well enough to speak it. The stuff that you learn in schools is not the same stuff that you learn in family.

And, but Leanne developed the Master Apprentice Program. There was something that Darryl Wilson once talked about that was so interesting. He talked about in learning a language, you have to have the word in its full context.

That for example, in Achumawi, the word *dósi* looks like it means "deer." But one day he was out with his father hunting. And it was early

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<sup>4</sup> Heyday Books' magazine *News From Native California*.



in the morning. And they were shivering. They were waiting at the side of the trail and they were cold. They never had enough clothes. They were poor. And they were waiting for the deer to come. And the deer, and suddenly his father stopped and said, “Dósi.” And he realized that dósi didn’t just mean deer, it meant something important was about to happen. And it was something in that importance that he recognized was part of that word dósi.

It was something that Ernie Siva once talked about that was so wonderful. Do you know Ernie?

SG: Uh, no. I don’t.

MM: Serrano guy. He’s a singer and a language guy. Speaks Serrano. Created the Dorothy Ramon Learning Center in honor of his aunt Dorothy Ramon, who he considers to be the last full speaker of Serrano, although he speaks Serrano. He’s up in, the center’s off in Banning, outside of Riverside.

And Ernie once sang a song, and I said, “What does that song mean?”

And he said, “Listen, Malcolm. If you want me to tell you what the words mean, I can translate the words. But that’s not what the song means. What gives the song meaning is when I sing it in the song cycle, who taught it to me, who I’m going to teach it to, whether we ever sang it at a funeral. The fact that I’m talking to you about it now gives it meaning. All these things give the song meaning. The words are only part of it.”

And it was somehow or other these language, these Master Apprentice programs, that didn’t just take isolated words, so you learned the word for “nose” and then, not only know the word for nose, you know it in the context of looking at somebody’s nose. You learn it in a familial setting. You learn it in an emotional setting. You learn it from somebody that you’re attached to.

And I thought that a whole lot of, there were a whole lot of failures in those Master Apprentice programs. But I thought that the mere fact that you ended up getting a younger person to relate to an older person for several hours a day for several weeks, even if they didn’t learn the language, what they learned was still of tremendous value. In learning the language, whether in the end you come up with a language or not, maybe it’s just the stone of stone soup. Maybe it’s just the thing that gets you to talk to somebody, so you can learn about what it is to be a human being. You can learn about that tonality of mind, that way of posturing yourself against the world. The humor, the deeply defeated people that, a shattered nation, the way you rise above it. I mean, you can learn all those things that you can only learn by relating deeply to a person.

And this whole language stuff. If the language is lost, that communication is still so important.

SG: I was apprenticed to Violet Super for three years.

MM: Oh, you did. Yes, I remember that.

SG: She was a riot. I loved her. Getting to drive around and visit with her friends. Oh, gosh, there's somebody whose name I cannot, I couldn't remember it yesterday when I was talking to Line Mikkelsen and I still can't remember it today. But she told me the eel and sucker story in Karuk.<sup>5</sup>

MM: Oh, yeah.

SG: Just free telling it, even though it's written down. Just telling it in her own words. And I have that recording in my stuff. And this box of recordings and my hard drives is what sent me to grad school. (laughs) So, yeah. The connections. I feel like, I don't know if I would have spent so much time with Auntie as I did.

MM: What was Violet Super, what was she like?

SG: She was, you know, very tough. Hard sense of humor. But very, like she had more energy than I did. And, you know, just, yeah. Very energetic. Very knowledgeable. Like felt very much that she needed to live to one hundred years old because she had a job. You know, once the Supahans had warmed her up to the idea of helping to revitalize the language, that she grabbed the job by the tail. And she loved Elvis, and loved to go on rides.

One of my kind of favorite but embarrassing stories, I guess, she was trying to get to Mountain Dance. And she had wanted to can some things or get some things ready. And nobody was working fast enough for her. And she's blind. She gets her walking stick and she's going to walk to Panamnik Store from her house which is like a two-mile walk on windy old Red Cap Road. And then along the highway. And get her stuff and come back and get ready for dance.

And Greg, now my husband, picked her up and was like, "Where are you going, Auntie?"

MM: (laughter) She was just walking along the road?

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<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Snapp.

SG: Uh huh. Tapping on the asphalt to make sure she's still on the road with her cane. (laughs)

MM: What courage.

SG: I know!

MM: Amazing courage.

SG: Formidable spirit, you know, just completely. But enough about—

MM: Let me tell a few more stories.

SG: Sure.

SG: Because there was, Bun Lucas was a wonderful friend. And he was Kashaya Pomo. And Bun told a language story that I thought was very revealing. That he grew up speaking only Kashaya until he was about five years old. So Kashaya was his first language, and it was deeply embedded.

Then he went to the Kashaya school and he learned English. And he enrolled in the Second World War. I think he lied about his age and went into the war. And I think there were eight people from Kashaya that went into the Second World War. And Essie Parrish made them all magic handkerchiefs. And she made a symbol on these magic handkerchiefs and she gave it to them. And then at night she would dance and sing to empower that symbol that was on the handkerchiefs that would protect them during their time there.

And all the soldiers came back except one. And it was said he was not wearing his handkerchief.

But Bun came back from the war. And he came, they drummed them out, I think, in Virginia. And he took a bus back to San Francisco. He took a bus up to Cloverdale, and he's walking up that Skaggs Creek Springs Road to Stewarts Point.

And he comes up to the top of the ridge and there's Kashaya, you know, the two round houses there. And in that round house, there were benches around the round house. And the old-timers would sit around on the benches. And if it was cold, they'd sit facing the sun. And if it was hot, they'd sit in the shade. And they'd move around as the sun moved around. And they'd just sit and talk.

And Bun came up, and they greeted him in Kashaya. And he said he couldn't find his Kashaya. That he had not spoken it, he'd been in the army, he had not spoken it for a couple of years. He couldn't find it. And he stood there, and he was dumb. This was his basic language.

And then he went off and spent some time at home and was utterly miserable. And then he talked about it. It was as if something in him melted and the Kashaya came up. And he realized that what he had done was he had put a cap on it. That he put a protective layer on it. So to keep it protected and pure, so that nothing could get at it. And he was able to break through it and then it came up.

And there's something about, I've always felt that these languages were dormant, they'd been sleeping, there was a protective cap on them. and once that melts, the languages come back. They just come flowing back and stuff.

I got Bun a job. Leanne Hinton hired him at Cal to teach field methods. And this is where the students learn how you go out into the community and you find somebody that's speaking an obscure language and you get a text and you get a grammar and you get a vocabulary and you get a sound system and stuff. So Bun was kind of the model.

And the only place Bun knew how to get to in Berkeley was my house. So he would drive from Kashaya to my house. And he always arrived about four hours early. And I'd go home and I'd find him sitting outside in this old car, reading a copy of the *Enquirer*. Reading about crop circles and aliens and stuff like that. (laughter) And he'd want to discuss crop circles and aliens with me. (laughs)

SG: That's awesome.

MM: And for me, this was all a crock of shit. But it's Bun. So we'd discuss crop circles and aliens. Then I'd get him up to the class.

And there was one time where he was up there. And they were trying to learn a word. And there are, I think, six different gutturals in the Karuk language. And they're all like different letters. And you have to get it right.

So he was pronouncing something, a word for something or other, *aka*. And they were going *aha*. And he goes, "No, no. *Aka*." And they go, "*Aha*." "No, *aka*." And they were putting their hands on his Adam's apple to find out how he was making the sound.

And finally they got the sound down. And he said, "But that's not how my Uncle Herman said it. Herman said it this way." And Herman came from Rockpile, which was about two miles away from Kashaya. And they finally got that right.

He said, "But that's not how my Aunt Gladys said it." And you're realizing this little tribe of 500 people, everybody had their own way of speaking. That there was no—and there was a delight in variety. There was a delight in variety. There was, that we come from here, and this is the way we say it. We're in this family, and this is how we pronounce it.

And in the dominant culture, there's this sense of conquest. The sense that languages are becoming homogenized. Back then there was this sense that things were becoming dispersed. That languages were splitting up. They were splitting up into smaller units.

And there was this utter joy in it. There was—Leanne wrote this up. There was one—Hey, it's you! I want you to meet Susan.

SG: Hi!

MM: This is Lindsie.

SG: Hi Lindsie. Nice to meet you.

L: How are you guys?

SG: Should I pause that (points to the audio recorder)?

MM: No, no, that's okay.

SG: Okay. Leave it on? I'm doing my, I'm interviewing Malcolm for my master's thesis on Breath of Life and AICLS.

MM: This is Carolyn Smith's sister.

L: Hi.

SG: Hi. (laughter) Thank you. What was your name again?

L: Lindsie Bear.

SG: Lindsie. L-i-n-d—

L: S-i-e.

SG: S-i-e. And your last name?

L: Bear. B-e-a-r.

SG: Bear. Okay. Yeah. Yeah.

MM: So she's doing this, she's been interviewing various people about Breath of Life and stuff. And she's going to get all these interviews. And she's going to have these interviews transcribed and we're going to get them.

L: Oh, that's wonderful!

MM: Yeah. I'm not sure she knows this or not. (laughter)

SG: Well, you know, and I've already, everybody that I'm interviewing knows that they're getting gifted to the Survey. And then they'll be open for anybody at the Survey. So yes, they can come here, too. Yeah. No. And (laughs) like twenty years ago, when I first came home, Malcolm had invited me to write an article for *News*. And I'm just like, I don't know what to write about! I panicked. And he's like, "You don't have to write it right now." So I guess, I'm ready! (laughter) to write an article.

MM: You have the most difficult family that I've ever come upon. I mean, the whole family is just completely impossible.

SG: Yeah! Yeah! No, we are. I think that's kind of, you know, that's part of our journey. (laughter) Oh, shoot. (laughs)

MM: So we're talking about the creation of Breath of Life and AICLS and how it was all formed. And I've been telling stories about language. But I wanted to make sure that you met her so that when, so that when these riches come to us, that—

L: I have a face.

MM: There's a face there, yeah.

SG: There's some context.

L: I'll let you guys get back to your interview, because I know the tape is running.

SG: Very nice to meet you [Lindsie]. So I know you're [Malcolm] going to, what materials are you donating to the Bancroft? And how is it being on the donating end to an archive?

MM: Where did you get that from? Who told you?

SG: Lauren. Is that kind of—

MM: No, that's interesting. The—

SG: Did I misspeak?

MM: No, no, no, no, no. There's no secret.

SG: Okay.

MM: Hey, listen. I'm not sure what I'm doing. I've got all this stuff that is so astonishing. I mean, we've got thirty years of material that I've got. I mean, I've got—

SG: And I should know better. The little bit of donating and letting go of materials, I know is a complicated process. And I—

MM: Look what we get for people's family albums. So this is photos from people's family albums.

SG: Oh, wow.

MM: See what, volumes and volumes of this stuff from the Karuk that would just knock you for a loop. Merkie Oliver's photo albums. I mean, I've got Terry Supahan's photo albums. I mean, all these family photos, they've got all of these commentaries on it. I had Marshall McKay come up, so I pulled some of this stuff out for Marshall to see.

And then I pulled out, as an example, Hupa, take a look at this Hupa stuff. Here we've got, Nellie McGraw was a teacher up in Hoopa Valley at the turn of the century, and we've got her photo album.

SG: Oh, wow.

MM: Photos from the old days of, you'll get to see what we've got from the Karuk. I've got zillions of photos. I've got correspondence that I'll have to go through because some of it should not be public. Some of it is people ratting on each other and accusing each other of terrible things. And I've got to go over. I've got file cabinets filled with pictures and correspondence. I've got all of these, twenty-five years of *News from Native California*. A hundred issues with back-up material.

I don't know what to do with it, Susan. On the one hand, as long as it's here, people come here and it's open to the Indian community. And people will come and they'll ask me, "Do you have a picture of my aunt?" And I know who their aunt is. And I want to keep it here.

And yet on the other hand, I'm not going to last forever, and they might not last forever. And there needs to be some way of protecting it for the future.

And so the Bancroft came around. What they're more interested in than the Indian stuff is the general publishing that we've done. The general cultural stuff, the literary stuff. That's more up their alley.

This Indian stuff is, they recognize its value and its worth. But I don't know, I just don't know what to do with it. I don't want to keep it here. I mean, I don't, I want it to be available, I want it to be accessible. What I want is an insurance policy that if this place goes broke or when I die that there's someplace that it can go to. And I'm trying to deal with them in some way where we can hold onto it and categorize it and sort it out. And yet if the place goes broke or if I die or if it changes hands, there's someplace where it can be protected and saved. So that's what it is.

And I'm stumbling around on it. What I was hoping for was that I could apply with them for a grant to spend the time and have people go over this. I mean, I've got all these goddamn photos. I'm the only one that knows the name of anybody. And my memory is beginning to fade. I can't even remember Larry's last name. (Gehr laughs) Larry—

SG: Ah, that's what Google is for. (laughs) Oh, shoot.

MM: Oh, let's stop this interview right now.

SG: Okay.

MM: I'll take care of— (pause) What I'm hoping is somebody that gives, I'm hoping somebody will just give us a chunk of money so that we can deal with it all and it's—I want to do more Indian stuff here. I want to just make this thing into more of a center. I hired Lindsie to run *News* and to set up this place with outreach, with an artist in residence. I'd love to have a study center. I'd love to have something here that's open and porous. And people come in and they come in and they walk out more beautiful than when they came in. It benefits people. I'd love to have fun. I'd love to have people come in and tell great stories. I'd love to have people come in and make everybody cry.

And I'd love to have the archive here. It's clear that this question is loaded and muddled. And it's not that I'm hiding anything. I'm just confronting the fact that I'm not going to live forever and I can't have this thing out there. Okay.

SG: It's, I think, yeah. No, it's a big question. The Center for Indian Community Development has a lot of language materials. And they're doing sort of a pre-processing thing where they're having me come and look at it and write about it and talk about—kind of like almost write an archival collection guide before it even goes anywhere.

MM: Oh, this is Susan the librarian. Oh! What an interesting thought.



SG: Mm hmm. And almost do some of the processing in-house so maybe it can stay until it has to go. Or just sort of figuring out that whole—I know, I know that, yeah. When to give things over, how long to keep things, it's a big question and it gets into people's mortalities. I felt very kind of self-conscious asking Bill Bright, you know, about a year before he passed, you know, "What are you going to do with stuff?"

MM: What happened to his archives?

SG: Most of his paper materials and copies of his electronic records went to the APS.

MM: APS is?

SG: American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. Because they have other—

MM: How terrible. How utterly lousy. It ought to stay here. The California material should be here.  
You know who came by the office? We had a reception for Tim Buckley.

SG: Yes!

MM: And it was just so wonderful. I just loved him. Do you know Tim?

SG: Yes. For my internship at HSU, I processed his papers that are there at HSU.

MM: Is Tim's papers at HSU?

SG: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I spent a year processing six boxes. I'll have to pick up the pace if I'm going to get a job. (laughs)

MM: He's been such a, we used to just drink and smoke and get all fucked up. He was just so great to be with. (laughter) He was a real person. He was a real person. There was no, there was a bigness of soul to him that was, that other people are going up to see. In the old days, they'd go up to see informants. Then they went up to see consultants. Tim went up to see friends. There was a whole difference up there.

SG: Yeah. It's funny the whole, like language around "informant, consultant, linguist." I know that this year at, I don't know, this year at Breath of Life

they tried to, they instituted a new term, “linguist buddy” instead of “linguist mentor.”

MM: I suppose that democratizes it. But there’s something about mentoring that I like. There’s something about, the acknowledgement that some people know more than you and you can learn from them. And that, and I like the word “mentor” because I like the personal quality of it. I like the fact that you’re learning from a person. You’re learning from the full personhood of that person. You’re not just learning, the person is not just putting out some little curriculum of knowledge and then you’re learning from that curriculum. You’re learning from the mentor.

And that’s what I was saying about the value of the linguistic stuff is that you learn from, the Master Apprentice Program, as opposed to a scholarship, as opposed to a more conventional academic program. You’re learning from a person. And you get, and maybe this is old fashioned, maybe people are learning from computers these days. But when you learn a word, you don’t just learn the word. You learn the connotations, you learn the nuances. You learn the way the word is embedded in the person’s history. I just love learning from people.

What else do you want to know?

SG: Oh, let’s see here. What have been some of your experiences attending the Breath of Life workshops? I know you’ve, I’ve seen, like the two times that I’ve been, I’ve seen you, like at the gatherings.

MM: Yeah, I hang out. Well, there was Clifford Geertz’ great definition of an anthropologist. “Anthropology is deep hanging out.” And this is what I do is I deeply hang out. And I go there. You know, I go there because it attracts such amazing people. So these are the people, I come more for the people than for anything else. And it reminds me of something that Julia Parker, the basket weaver, said. We were engaged in the early days of the California Indian Basketweavers Association. And there was one particular basketweavers gathering where I was standing there with Julia and I was looking out. And there were all these amazing weavers. There was, Vivien Hailstone was alive then, and Norma Turner was alive then. And all these grand people were alive.

And I look at Julia and I say, “Isn’t this amazing how basketry has attracted the best people in the world?”

And she looks at me and she says, “No, Malcolm. You don’t understand. It’s baskets that make us this way.”

And there’s something about learning the language that shapes people. It’s watching people come in and be shaped by the language qualities. And watch the way—I just love the emotionality of it. I just love the beauty of it.

And I think that you need culture. That if you're a member of a small, isolated tribe and you're learning a language on your own, you lose heart. You lose a sense of importance. You dry up and you wither. It's too isolating.

When you're around other people that are doing it, then you're, it fuels your passion for it and it gives you a sense of community and competition. That if somebody else is learning faster than you are, you want to catch up with them. I mean, there's something about getting this thing out there. There's something in the gamesmanship of it all. There's something in the comparison of it all that I've seen people come in there and they were so depressed that their language was down to a couple of speakers. And then they meet people who have no speakers. And suddenly they feel wealthy. (laughter) And I just think that there's such—  
And then I'm also, you know why I hang around you guys?

SG: Why is that?

MM: For the laughs. Because it's so damn funny. And I just love hanging around with people and talking and hearing the jokes. And the humor of it all. And how funny people can be. How utterly funny people can be. And it's a good party. It's a good, I love to go to parties. It's a good party.

And I went to school, I went to college, I went to Harvard. I never had a good experience at school. That's not how I really learned the things that are important. And I loved creating this experience where people are learning and they're excited and it's personal.

And there are these wonderful old voices that come, that you hear. Do you know who Isabel Meadows was?

SG: Name rings a bell.

MM: She was Ohlone, she was a Rumsien woman from down in the Monterey area. And Kroeber in 1923 declared the language dead and said only fragments are remembered of the customs.

Back around 1940, J.P. Harrington found Isabel Meadows. And she was a full speaker of the language. She had a deep knowledge of the customs of the place. He brought her back to Washington, D.C. And she stayed there for five years while he recorded her and got her memories down.

And it was her memories that came back and created a wonderful revolution, a revival down in Monterey area, of people relearning customs and language and things like that.

And her great-nephew, Stephen Meadows, was a poet, and came to me with a book of poetry. And there's a wonderful, and we published it,

because we didn't have any choice. And there was a wonderful poem in there to Isabel Meadows. (looking for book) It's called "In the Water Over Stones for Isabel Meadows."<sup>6</sup>

Your voice Isabel  
is a quail's voice as the sun's song ticks  
in the brush

It is the hawk's voice  
and the heart's heat  
of the rabbit  
in the parched summer grass

Nearby in the river  
in the water over stones  
it is a willow voice  
it is a crayfish voice  
in the hollows  
in the darkening places

At the first light  
it is the wind's voice  
the mouth of the river  
tule voice the voice  
of a hundred breezes

The sun marks out  
the red madrone  
and in the canyons  
it is a redwood voice  
a sycamore voice  
sweet scented

In the spring  
it is the lupine voice  
a blue white and purple  
coverlet voice  
all over the hills  
and the meadows

On the river banks

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<sup>6</sup> Published with permission courtesy of Heyday Books from Stephen Meadows, "In the Water Over Stones," in *Releasing the Days* (Berkeley: Heyday, 2011), 39-42.

as the set fires burn  
and the steelhead run  
it is the hunter's voice  
flinging the gleamers  
silver on the sand

Though the houses  
of rich men now cover these hills  
it is your spirit voice  
your evening voice  
your voice of the western waters

The stars hang out  
over the point of wolves  
on the edge of the world  
the sea lions call  
the otters break open  
abalone

It is the voice of the land  
It is the voice of bright shells  
It is the voice of the valley  
And the mountain Isabel

It is the voice of the people too

It is the weaver's voice  
It is the young girl's voice  
The gatherer's and the singer's  
and the farmer's voice  
The wives' and the children's  
and the old woman's voice  
It is the Indian voice  
and the whalerman's voice  
and the voice of the servant  
escaping

It is the voice of your face  
across the years Isabel  
in my grandfather's face  
in my father's face  
and in my face as well

It is the voice

of the ones on the edges Isabel  
It is the voice  
of the ones with no voices

Hawk and rabbit  
Quail and brush  
Water and willow and crayfish and stone  
Wind in the canyons  
Daylight through limbs  
The lupine the steelhead  
The cookfire's call  
Beans and tortillas  
Your memories Isabel talking  
Talking to us all

It's so goddamned beautiful. It's so beautiful. And it was that crackly voice that you hear on the wax cylinders. It was that crackly old voice that you hear on that wax cylinder recording. So slurred and so deeply buried in the technology of the wax cylinder.

SG: Amazing how, just sort of the details are what can on the surface seem very annoying or difficult about working with archives and archival materials can be poetic. You know, that scratchiness. The bagels seven days a week at Bagels of Life. (laughs)

MM: What's this?

SG: Breath of Life. Do you, there was a poem or a song that Linda Yamane wrote at the end of the first Breath of Life—

MM: About bagels?

SG: "Bagels No More." (M laughs) Because of Breath of Life's Silent No More. Like, bagels, no more!

MM: Because you were served bagels every day.

SG: Every day! Possibly for multiple meals. (laughs)

MM: That's the food of my people.

SG: Yeah. (laughs) Yeah. Oh, shoot. Yeah. So "Bagels No More." Bagels of Life, that's good. (laughs)

MM: Well, I mean, it's just how funny it all is, just how funny it is. It's just how damn funny it is.  
So what you've got over here is this Tribal Scholars Conference.

SG: I want to thank you before I forget for including the *Advocate's* newsletter in *News from Native California* for so many years.

MM: Yeah. No, I thought that they needed somebody to set up the type and to put it in and to get it out into the world.

SG: Yes. And you made my background research for this very easy. (laughs)

MM: Well, that's good.

SG: I could sit at Humboldt State.

MM: I'm very glad. And I'm not sure, I think that that article that we did in *News* was republished in *Flutes of Fire* the way it was. But we can check. Okay.

SG: Okay.

MM: All set? More questions?

SG: Let's see. Do I have anymore? What are your future hopes for Breath of Life and for California languages?

MM: There was a wonderful friend of mine was John Mohawk. He ran *Akwesasne News*. And somebody once asked him, they were talking about these prophecies that the Iroquois had about the destruction of the world.  
And somebody said, "Hey, listen, the world is going to be destroyed. Why are you doing all this stuff? Keeping all these languages alive and doing all of this?"  
He said, "Hey, listen," he says. "Maybe the world will be destroyed, but there's one thing that I have to do and make sure it's not on my watch."  
I have no idea what the future brings. I have no idea whether there will be languages around in one hundred years. What you know is not on my watch. As long as people are here, you don't let it die. You keep it alive. You keep it alive for its beauty. And the future will take care of itself. We don't know what the future is.  
And there's been a sense that I have always had of the tremendous variety and richness of Indian culture, this treasure that was here. This

absolute treasure that was here. And people came and they crushed it. And then, even good people at their guilt of having crushed it, they can't look it in the eye. They can't deal with it. They can't deal with the harm that was done. And somehow or other, there was just such a loss. Such a loss to Indians and such a loss to humanity, that the more you can bring back and the more you can keep, the better it is for everybody. And it's not just for Indians; it's for everybody.

Some of that amazing musicality of language that you just end up going from, people would talk about how you'd go from Clear Lake and you'd go down from the Lake Miwok that spoke the Miwok language. And you'd go up to Elem, and there was the dialect of Pomo. And you'd go up to Rumsey and there was another dialect of Pomo. And you'd go up to the north and there would be another dialect of Pomo. And all these dialects that you would hear, and all this, this wonderful musicality, this wonderful, these wonderful sounds of it all. And I mean, it's just such a rich part of the human heritage, these marvelous ways of expressing things. The infinite cleverness of the human mind, enumerating and describing and articulating. You just want to keep it around for as long as you can. And see what happens with it and hope for the best. And just at least keep a possibility alive of something. And I don't know what the future's going to bring. I have no idea what the future is.

SG: What are, any, what are some of your experiences doing research in the archives? Or do you use archives very much?

MM: I don't use them as much as I used to. I used to use them a lot. But I've been publishing a lot. And we do a lot of stuff so I end up seeing people more. I end up running around more. And I end up dealing with living people more than I do with archives. But I did use archives.

And I daydream a lot. There are some people that go into archives and they collect a lot of information. I go into archives and I see something and I just dwell on it. And I think about it. And I wonder about it and I pull it out. So I'm intensely into, I'm not a very good researcher. I probably am a good researcher. I really think about stuff. I think that we're so overloaded with information, there's just so much scattered information around that what is really necessary is to think more deeply about less. And not just to learn more, but to think more deeply about less.

Why do you want to know about archives? Because you're a librarian?

SG: Yeah. Yeah. It's funny, when I was planning my questions, I was like well, I should sneak in a question or two to Malcolm about archives directly, or about his own connection with archives. Partly, oral history is



a little more impression-based in people's personal recollections. So I thought I would ask you about them.

MM: You know what, my relationship to the Bancroft Archives as I go up there, and Susan Snyder tells me that she's just discovered the most wonderful thing and I ought to see it. And these abstract systematic ways of retrieving information are probably very good. I use them.

You know what I'm doing, I gave a lecture, I think last week, at Hastings Law School on Indian property law. Traditional property law. And it was a professor at the law school that I've known for years is a lawyer. He's a poet. And he was doing something on property law. And he asked me to come in and talk about Indian property law. So the fact that I don't know anything about it doesn't stop me.

And I went in. And I started out with these quotes that everybody knows from Massasoit and Chief Seattle about how nobody owns Mother Earth and stuff like that.

I said, "Now let's just take a look at a fishing spot on the Klamath River. (laughs) Let us take a look at the overlying property laws on this one. And there's enough in there to keep several law firms busy for eternity sorting this one out."

And I went into all of these laws that are out there, and all of these ownership patents. And ownership of rights, and who could own, individuals could own, houses could own, tribes could own, villages could own. I mean, they could own different aspects of something. And it was just so damned complicated, and so marvelous.

And then I talked about how capitalism gave ownership a bad name. That ownership in the Indian world meant something different than it means here. That ownership was a responsibility to care for it. You had responsibility, you had responsibilities of sharing with other people. You had reciprocal relationships. There was something about that ownership where you owned it and you could dominate, and it had ownership. It was ownership. But there was other mediating factors in there. But your relationship with other people in terms of, that you could own a dance, but you had to perform the dance. You had to keep the dance healthy. You had to preserve the dance. You could own the regalia, but you had to show it. That there were public obligations to this ownership.

And I got a whole lot of that from books. And I'd love to do a conference on it sometime. Wouldn't that be fun to do a conference on property?

SG: That would be terrific. And the little light bulbs that went on in my head was you know, when you give things to an archive, you donate, you do a deed of gift. You transfer the ownership, in a way. So it was like, talking about the ownership of cultural information or language information.

- MM: That would be so good. That would be so good. And tying it in with traditional understanding of ownership and modern understanding of intellectual property rights. We could get some interesting people together on that.
- SG: Mm hmm. That would be terrific. Are there any topics that you thought oh, I definitely want to cover in this interview, that Susan hasn't asked me yet?
- MM: [pause] What would you like to see done? What's your vision of the future?
- SG: Let's see here. I would like to see Breath of Life keep going, because people get a lot out of it. That whole recharge that people get in meeting other people who are doing the same thing they are.  
As I get towards my own graduation, I'm starting to think well, you know what we need is like a regional, like a place to put our information, but I almost hesitate to call it an archive. It's almost like, I used to work at the Happy Camp Community Computer Center. And we had computers, and people could come and use them and make their own projects and do their own thing. So part archive, library, part working space. So language people in residence or, yeah, something like that.
- MM: Yeah. You know, there's something about knowledge detached from people that I don't care about. I love going to Breath of Life because there are people there. You could put all that information on a computer or website and you could have it referred to and it would be of value. But I just wouldn't care too much about it. I mean, it's creating a center where there are flesh and blood people. And this may be because I'm old, because I'm not that computer savvy. I don't care about preserving a word outside of the human imagination, outside of, its attachment to the human spirit that I think is important.  
Why are there different languages? Why don't we all speak the same language?
- SG: I think because we're not all in the same place. One thing I think about Karuk is how perfectly it describes the Karuk land and the things that are in the Karuk world. And so that language wouldn't make so much sense, you know, in Pomo country.
- MM: How well do you speak Karuk?

SG: I always say that a patient elder could understand me and a cranky elder could talk circles around me. (laughs)

MM: If I was to invite a bunch of people here to hear the sound of Karuk language, would you say something?

SG: I would.

MM: Let me invite some people over.

SG: Okay. Shall we finish this up?

MM: I think we're finished.

SG: Okay.

[End of Interview]

## Chapter 7: Workshop Participants Introduction

This section contains the interviews of two of the hundreds of participants of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival's (AICLS) Breath of Life— Silent No More California Indian Language Revitalization Workshop. Quirina L. Geary (Mutsun Ohlone) has attended nearly every Breath of Life Workshop since its beginning in 1996, and she's a leader in the revitalization of her language and ceremonies. Leah Mata (yak tityu tityu, Northern Chumash) is a talented artist and regalia maker who is also in the middle of a master's degree in cultural sustainability, examining the societal values, policies, and practices that will foster Northern Chumash language and culture.

Growing up Native in the 1970s and 1980s meant being aware of an absence of Native language and culture. In fourth grade, when she was studying California Indians at school, Geary told her classmates she was an Indian. They asked her to say something in her Indian language. When she was unable to do so, she wondered to herself if that meant she was not really an Indian. Leah Mata knew the Northern Chumash name for her mother's ancestral village, and that her family had had another language before English, but she knew of no place where she could go to learn that language. Growing up, Mata thought that it was just her people that had lost their language. However, as all the participants at the welcoming dinner of her first Breath of Life introduced themselves, Mata realized that all the California tribes, especially those tribes whose ancestral lands range from San Francisco to Los Angeles, had suffered similarly devastating losses to their cultures and languages. Realizing that one's family losses are part of a larger historical picture can be very emotional, but very empowering. The very gathering of

Breath of Life Workshop participants was emblematic of the historic and systematic nature of the dismantling of Native communities and cultures.

While Mata's mother had graduated from San José State University, and her sister had received her PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles, Geary reported that in her community finishing one's education meant graduating high school. Geary said that walking on to a university campus was very intimidating. But even with the educational attainment in her immediate family, Mata felt that the doors to the archives of academic institutions were closed to her, even the ones that held her grandmother's notes.

According to second language acquisition expert Jacqueline Schachter, the best way to develop fluency in a language is to live in a place where that language is the language of communication and to become immersed in that language.<sup>1</sup> That is not a possibility for Geary, Mata, or other Breath of Life participants who have no or just a few living fluent speakers of the language. How do they learn their languages then, and how does the Breath of Life Workshop support them? Learning a language with no or very few living speakers means having to make one's own speech community. Many Breath of Life participants speak their Native language to their children, pets, or families. Geary spoke Mutsun to her children from birth, and her son's first word was the Mutsun word for "touch" *tatay*. Mata's primary speech community are her cousins, her sister, and their children.

At Breath of Life, the linguists teach participants the sound system of the languages (phonetics and phonology), the formation of words and sentences (morphology

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<sup>1</sup> Jacqueline Schachter, (lecture, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, Fall 1999).

and syntax) and the meanings and proper contexts of words, sentences and certain speech types (semantics and pragmatics). Ideally, the linguist will listen carefully to the goals of their participants, assess their prior knowledge of their languages or linguistics, and follow their interests. Hopefully, the linguist has already done research on their language. But if not, hopefully they become interested in their participant's language. Geary was pleased that Natasha Warner stayed interested in Mutsun and was willing to help with developing a Mutsun dictionary and textbook. Geary and Warner's relationship expanded to co-authoring several articles on the revitalization of dormant languages and the development of the Mutsun dictionary.

Linguist Kathryn Klar started working on Chumash in the 1970s under Mary Haas and Madison Beeler at the University of California, Berkeley. John Johnson of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History referred Leah Mata to Klar when she asked him a question that he could not answer. Johnson thought Klar might be able to find the answer in Harrington's work with Mata's grandmother. Breath of Life provides access to linguists to language communities without the means to pay a linguist. It gives a structured way for linguists to give their time to the language communities and still meet their academic obligations during the year.

Learning a dormant language typically means having to learn the sound system of the language from a linguist's written explanation of the sound system of the language. Hopefully there are recordings to listen to, and in Geary's case, she was willing to go to the national Breath of Life in Washington, DC in the hope that there were audio

recordings of Mutsun among the unlabeled recordings made by John Peabody Harrington.

At Breath of Life, participants are expected to have a project for the week that they work on from morning until late in the evening. These projects may seem modest in the beginning. At Mata's first Breath of Life, her goals were to learn a few commands such as "Be quiet!" or "Stop it!" to her children and to learn to sing one of her grandmother's songs.

At her second Breath of Life, Geary translated a traditional Mutsun story back into Mutsun. At her third Breath of Life, she translated the Dr. Seuss book *Green Eggs and Ham* into Mutsun. The translations were very rough at first, done English word by English word without really understanding Mutsun grammar. Geary's linguist mentor, Natasha Warner, with the help of Leanne Hinton, taught Geary ten points of Mutsun grammar and helped her apply those ten points of grammar. The result for the first translation *Green Eggs and Ham* might have had more mistakes than if Warner had corrected every single bit of the Mutsun translation at once, but Geary learned ten rules of grammar so well that she would be able to apply them in future work. Most important, Warner's and Geary's working relationship blossomed through the process. Geary and her first linguist mentor, Natasha Warner, co-wrote an article in which they discussed what makes for good working relationships between language communities and linguists, that the community take charge of as many revitalization decisions as possible, and that

the linguists consult the community as they make decisions about the language.<sup>2</sup> In that article, they also wrote about the ethical issues that come with revitalizing a language imperfectly, concluding that there is no way to bring back a dormant language exactly the way it was spoken before it went dormant.

Learning a language that has been dormant for one hundred years means thinking about ways to bring language out in the community while being a beginning learner of the language. Mata talked about the possibility of working with agencies in Northern Chumash territory to add Northern Chumash place names to signs. She and her family are often called to give opening remarks or opening prayers for events that happen on Northern Chumash land. Both Mata's and Geary's children have noticed their efforts and wanted to use their language like their parents. Mata's son Emilio Dale participated in an earthquake awareness project through Sherman Indian High School's American Indian Science and Engineering Society. Students provided translations of the slogan "Drop, Cover, and Hold On" for a poster designed to encourage earthquake preparedness.<sup>3</sup> Mata's daughters filmed themselves saying "I love you" in Northern Chumash for comedy group the 1491s' "Indigenous Love Words Project."<sup>4</sup> Geary said that her daughter planned to apply for the 2014 Breath of Life Workshop.

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<sup>2</sup> Natasha Warner, Quirina Luna and Lynnika Butler, "Ethics and Revitalization of Dormant Languages: The Mutsun Language," *Language Documentation and Conservation* 1, no. 1 (2007): 66-67, <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/handle/10125/1727/warner.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> "Native California is Earthquake Country," [http://gallery.mailchimp.com/2a7871c49e7e3a673d3a1e83d/files/Native\\_American\\_Post\\_er\\_FINAL7.pdf](http://gallery.mailchimp.com/2a7871c49e7e3a673d3a1e83d/files/Native_American_Post_er_FINAL7.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> the 1491s, "Indigenous Love Words Project," YouTube video, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zvt4Eba\\_EJM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zvt4Eba_EJM).



How do participants work with archivists and documents at Breath of Life and afterwards? The answer depends on the extent of a particular archival collection. If the language has just a few collections, the participants might not spend very much time in the archives after their first or second time at Breath of Life. Mata said that she did not visit any of the archives during the 2012 Breath of Life Workshop because they already had copies of what was available from the archives and their linguist, Kathryn Klar, had gotten some additional materials prior to Breath of Life. Geary corresponds regularly with Lauren Lassleben in between workshops. Shortly before the interview, Geary wrote to Lassleben asking after some Coast Miwok materials. Lassleben knew that they had been shipped to Texas, and connected Geary with them. Geary is very thankful for Lassleben's knowledge and her willingness to share it.

On the day of her interview, Geary had a research visit to the Bancroft Library planned for the afternoon. She was looking for information for her husband, Robert Geary (Southeastern Pomo). Some of his tribe's ceremonies came from the Alisal roundhouse at Pleasanton and were also conducted by Quirina's Mutsun ancestors. In fact, some of the songs sung by Robert's ancestors were in the Mutsun language. When they reviewed their copies of field notes they had on those ceremonies, they realized that the dance and the Mutsun language had traveled north from Alisal.

While the focus of AICLS' Master–Apprentice Program is oral proficiency, and the final presentation for Breath of Life is designed to get participants speaking or singing their language, most of the documentation from which Breath of Life participants learn their language is written. Participants need to learn the writing systems that were used to

document their languages. Sometimes these writing systems are technical orthographies developed by trained linguists, while others are informal writing systems used by non-linguists who happened to have an interest in documenting the local Native language. No California Native languages had been written by the communities themselves before outsiders documented the languages. As they revitalize their languages, Breath of Life participants want to make new materials, they want to publish stories, curriculum, write out prayers so they can practice them, and so they look at the writing systems they find in the archives. While some of them are very accurate, there are usually problems. Common problems are that the writing systems can not be easily typed on the computer, they are too technical leaving the typical learner unable to figure out how to pronounce words, or they are inaccurate and they leave out features that are important to the language. The most successful writing systems can be easily typed on a computer or phone, can be easily pronounced by someone who is comfortable reading English, and accurately represent all the distinctive sounds in the language.

Geary and Mata both talked about participating in the development of practical orthographies for their languages. Maintaining knowledge of the orthographies used in the archival materials is going to be a key part of intellectual access to those materials. If there is no documentation explaining the old orthography, it is comparable to having a Microsoft Word 97 document that can not be opened on a computer running Microsoft Word 2013. Speakers of English are users of a spelling system with a long, established written tradition. Mata and Geary are both developing practical orthographies of languages for which they are second language learners.

Geary and Mata also talked about questions of access to culturally sensitive documentation in archives. Mata expressed a different point of view than Geary about using the archival documents of neighboring languages and cultures and on access to culturally sensitive documents on her tribe. Geary described being very grateful for the step-by-step descriptions of ceremonial dances, saying that the elders who provided the descriptions shared the information with hopes that the information would eventually be received by their descendants. Geary also explained that she did not mind that cultural knowledge had been studied by non-Mutsun people. “Because they were interested enough and they...asked these elders. And they taught them. And sometimes we have to go back to learn certain things from [non-Indians.]”

Mata relied on descriptions of cultural items such as clothing and ceremonial regalia for her art. But she did not want all of Harrington’s notes to be digitized and put online without consideration of the gossip and the descriptions of community grievances he had also documented. Mata also described a problem with groups using access to cultural information to establish false claims of Chumash identity in her interview. Mata wanted tribes to have more say in whether or when culturally sensitive information is accessed. Fortunately, archival institutions with Native American collections are beginning to be more responsive to input from tribes regarding culturally sensitive materials. The Protocols for Native American Archival Materials were written “to

identify best professional practices for culturally responsive care and use of American Indian archival material held by non-tribal organization.”<sup>5</sup>

The participants begin by learning to conduct research on their language and by studying the basics of linguistics. The guided learning process has empowered many Breath of Life participants, including Geary and Mata, to do their own archival research independent of Breath of Life. The AICLS model of training people to be trainers, expecting participants to share what they have learned in their community, fosters a sense personal ownership in the health of one’s language and culture. Mata’s academic study has her thinking about how to structure her community so that it values use of her Northern Chumash language. Geary is thinking that whatever the future holds, Mutsun Ohlone people know where to learn their language and that they are not extinct.

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<sup>5</sup> First Archivists Circle, “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,” <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/index.html>.

## Chapter 8: Quirina L. Geary

[In response to a question about whether Breath of Life prepared her for research at other archives] Yeah. I come back to Berkeley a couple of times a year. I'll go to the Bancroft and look up some stuff. I've been to UC Davis and looked at the things that they have there. Where else have I gone? UC Santa Cruz. But there's so much online now. I've been to Chico State. I've ordered stuff from the University of Indiana, and other places. But physically visiting places, probably here, UC Davis and Chico State. And I love it. I'm there till they kick me out. I could spend eternity there. There's so much to look at.

My main goal is language. But there is so much information on different cultural aspects of our people that are archived, especially ceremonies, dances, those kinds of things. And for us, it's not just anything labeled under Mutsun or even Ohlone, because things traveled so much. I look at outlying areas. So there's just so much out there. It's just amazing.

Quirina L. Geary (Mutsun Ohlone) has participated in several of AICLS' Breath of Life Workshops from its beginning in 1996 to the most recent one in 2012. Geary has gone from knowing she was Native but not knowing a word of her language, to being a leader in her language community. She's seen the changes Breath of Life has gone through over the years. Geary has made the key elements of Breath of Life—conducting archival research and collaborating with linguists—two fruitful components of bringing back her family's language and culture. Not only has she learned the writing systems past researchers have used, she also helped develop her tribe's current orthography.

With her original Breath of Life linguist mentor, Natasha Warner, Geary has co-authored several articles on the revitalization of sleeping languages through archival research.<sup>1</sup> Warner and Geary are also working on a dictionary of Mutsun, which will be

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<sup>1</sup> Natasha Warner, Lynnika Butler and Quirina Luna Costillas, "Making a Dictionary for Community use in Language Revitalization: The Case of Mutsun,"

published in a few years. Geary has created so many new Mutsun language materials that she has thought about at which archive she will deposit her own materials to ensure their access by future generations. Geary launched the 501(c)(3) nonprofit Mutsun Language Foundation in order to increase visibility and for fundraising purposes. However, the grant funding came with administrative responsibilities that took a great deal of energy away from language learning. Heyday Books honored her more than twenty years of language revitalization work by inviting her to give one of five talks in their 2007 cultural revival salon series.<sup>2</sup>

Born in 1971 in Madera, California to Ruben and Lillian Luna, Geary's mother is Tarahumara Indian from the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico, while Geary's father is Mutsun Ohlone from the villages of Tamoi and Tamorox, near the central California town of Tres Pinos. Growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, Geary was aware of her grandmother's traditional uses of herbs and of traveling with her family to traditional Mutsun areas for gathering, camping, and working. By Geary's generation, however, there was no knowledge of the language and no ceremonies held in her community. The last fluent speaker of Mutsun, Ascencion Solorsano, died in 1930. Fortunately, Solorsano had shared her knowledge of the language with missionary-linguist Father Felipe Arroyo de la Cuesta and linguist John Peabody Harrington.

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*International Journal of Lexicography* 19, no. 3 (2006): 257-85; Natasha Warner, Quirina Luna and Lynnika Butler, "Ethics and Revitalization of Dormant Languages: The Mutsun Language," *Language Documentation and Conservation* 1 (2007): 58-76; Natasha Warner et al., "Revitalization in a Scattered Language Community: Problems and Methods from the Perspective of Mutsun Language Revitalization," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 198 (2009): 135-48.

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Margolin, "Cultural Revival Salons at Heyday Books," *News from Native California* 21, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 13-20.

Geary remembered always being interested in language. In fourth grade, while studying California Indians and the mission system, Geary remembered telling a classmate that she was an Indian. When her classmate challenged her to say something “in Indian,” Geary’s inability to do so stayed in the back of her mind. Geary described her attempts before *Breath of Life* to find documentation of her language. She described her visit to the mission where her family had been held at one time, and being told by the people there that all the Ohlone were extinct and that there was nothing written in her language.

Geary talked about the first time she had some success in her search for Mutsun language documentation when she met Linda Yamane (Rumsien Ohlone) at AICLS’ first biennial *Language is Life* conference in 1994. Geary tracked down de la Cuesta’s grammar of Mutsun that Yamane recommended, and that was the first time she had ever seen anything written in her language.<sup>3</sup> When Geary heard the announcement for the first *Breath of Life* Workshop, she applied and was accepted.

Geary described the first *Breath of Life* Workshop in detail. She recalled feeling very intimidated at first by setting foot on a university campus, coming from a community where the idea of completing one’s education meant graduating from high school. But everyone at *Breath of Life* was so welcoming and friendly that she eventually began to feel at home. In fact, she reported that *Breath of Life* fostered in her a lifelong connection to an archivist, Lauren Lassleben, and made her comfortable doing research at other archives.

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<sup>3</sup> Arroyo de la Cuesta, Felipe, *Grammar of the Mutsun Language, Spoken at the Mission of San Juan Bautista, Alta California* (New York: AMS Press, 1970).

She talked about whether the materials pre-selected by the archivists for *Breath of Life* were useful. In her case, there was just one Mutsun book at the Bancroft Library. She mentioned that Leanne Hinton connected her with Marc Okrand's dissertation of Mutsun, so the linguists may know of documentation that the archivists do not. By comparison, Geary said that there was much more on Southeastern Pomo, her husband's language. She also described how her tribe and her husband's tribe shared common ceremonies in past times. Their research notes documented the connection and helped them reconstruct some details of the ceremonies.

When asked what she might change about visiting an archive, she would make the catalogs more consistent and concise. For example, one online catalog suggested that a certain book could be found at the Bancroft Library. However, when she arrived at the Bancroft and tried to repeat the search, she could no longer find that book in the Bancroft's holdings. In another instance, Geary noted that the finding guides that exist as a PDF on the Hearst Museum's website, such as Richard Keeling's guide to language recordings from 1900-1949, only yield access to the materials if the researcher knows about that PDF.<sup>4</sup> It would be better if the guide were encoded for inclusion on the Online Archive of California so that a researcher just searching by language could find those recordings.

During her interview, Geary discussed the archival materials she used during and after *Breath of Life*. She gathered a great deal of information in the the field notes made

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Keeling, "A Guide to Early Field Recordings (1900-1949) at the Museum (in Sections, Below)," Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, <http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/research/resources#Resources%20at%20PAHMA>.



by linguist John Peabody Harrington in the 1920s. Geary talked in particular about audio recordings that Harrington may have made of her Mutsun elders, and materials that she had heard he had left with Solarsano's family. Harrington had a reputation for being secretive about documentation of his research. Rather than sending his field notes back to his employer, the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of Ethnology in Washington, DC, he would store his notes in the homes of his language consultants or in rented storage units. Geary said she was applying to go to the national Breath of Life in Washington, DC in part so she could review Harrington's unlabeled recordings with the hope of finding some Mutsun recordings.

Geary's interview brought out several important themes of note to Breath of Life organizations. For example, she described how Breath of Life prepared her for doing research and empowered her to continue working in archives beyond Breath of Life. Another observation Geary made of note to Breath of Life organizers is that as a result of the program, her language goals have changed. Beyond learning to speak Mutsun for herself, she now hopes to ensure that future generations will not have to experience being told that Mutsun people are extinct and no knowledge of their language exists. Moreover, her role in relationship to archives is no longer solely that of researcher; she is now contemplating what is involved in being a donor to an archive and to passing on her accumulated knowledge of the language and of the documentation that exists for her language.

Geary also shared the advice that she would give to a new Breath of Life participant. She suggested that participants search the catalogs and the collection guides

in advance and contact the archivists ahead of time with any specific requests. She reminded participants to bring pencils, paper, digital cameras, and quarters. She also suggested that they bring a research strategy and a priority list of the materials they would like to see. Geary explained how she made a list of all the materials she's interested in seeing, highlighted in yellow all the items that she might have time to see, and circled in red the items she had to have that day.

Geary reflected on the concerns of access to culturally sensitive information. Having access to the detailed descriptions of ceremonies has helped her community bring back some of the ceremonies. She also expressed gratitude that non-Mutsun people have learned aspects of Mutsun culture and shared their knowledge with Mutsun people. Geary said that restricting access to these documents to Mutsun people only might put the knowledge at risk of being lost completely.

This interview took place on the morning of February 27, 2013, in the office of Andrew Garrett at the Department of Linguistics of the University of California, Berkeley. Though Geary lives a three-hour drive away from Berkeley, Geary had a research visit to the Bancroft Library planned, and the interviewer had an interview with Malcolm Margolin scheduled for the next day in Berkeley. The interviewee extensively edited the transcript, deleting some passages, and adding information to other passages. The added information has been put in brackets. The interview was recorded open air using the TASCAM DR-100mkII digital audio recorder with the onboard microphones.

Interview with Quirina L. Geary

Interviewed by Susan Gehr  
February 27, 2013  
Berkeley, California  
50 minutes

Susan Gehr:

And then I'll say today is Wednesday, February 27, 2013. This is an interview for the thesis oral history project *Breath of Life: Revitalizing California's Native Languages Through Archives*. I am interviewing Quirina Luna Geary. And my name is Susan Gehr. This interview is taking place in Berkeley, California, in the offices of the linguistics department.

So my first question is where did you grow up?

Quirina L. Geary:

I grew up in Madera, California, in the San Joaquin Valley. My family's originally from the Mission San Juan Batista, and the surrounding area, located in San Benito County. But my family moved to Madera probably in the early 1900s. So that's where I basically grew up. I moved away in my thirties back to my homeland, which is San Juan Bautista.

SG: What was your, in your early years, what was your connection with your language and your culture like?

QG: Actually, like language, we didn't know anybody who spoke it. No one spoke it anymore. As far as culture, we didn't really even think about it as being a culture. We were just who we were. When I was very young, I grew up on a place that the BIA called a reservation, but it was not a reservation of one tribe. It was where Indians were put to learn a trade. My father learned auto body. I don't remember being there. It was early on.

But I guess for me being Indian was just, I don't know, it wasn't even something you thought about. Like my grandmother, there were certain times that she would use herbs for ailments, and those were just things that you use. We never really thought about it, you're doing this, this is an Indian thing. It was just who we were.

But as far as language, there was no language was in use. Like dancing, there were no dances. None of that kind of stuff was going on. It was basically herbal medicines, and some other ways of life. We would

still travel back to our homeland to go gather, or actually to go work. My family would go back to Hollister and Gilroy and Tres Pinos whether it was, to work the apricots, or other things that were out in that area. We would do that seasonally. And it would be done every season. And everybody would go. It wasn't just our immediate family. We probably had forty, fifty people that would travel out that way for the season. And then we would go back to Madera.

When we were there, there was there was no McDonald's, there was none of that kind of stuff. [So my father and others] would have to go out and hunt deer for food. Or they would go and maybe buy a sheep or something and go and cook that or whatever. But they would do things there at the camp. We all lived in tents and used out houses during that time.

So I don't know. I guess that's kind of the cultural part that we kind of grew up with, not realizing it was, you know, this is an Indian thing that you're learning or doing. It was just how we grew up, that we did.

But as far as language, ceremonies, those kinds of things, they were gone already.

SG: And your parents' backgrounds? I mean, ancestry?

QG: Yeah, my father is, he's Mutsun. He comes from the Tres Pinos area, from the villages of Tomoi and Tamorox. And then his father was actually Tarahumara Indian. So our Californian Indian we get from his mom.

And my mother is actually Tarahumara Indian from the Sierra Madres. And she was actually born in the United States, but my great-grandmother came from villages up in the Sierras out that way. But, yeah, that's where they're from.

SG: Let's see here. Oh! Tell me a little about the Mutsun dictionary that—

QG: Yeah. It's something that's been in the works for quite some time. Maybe a good fifteen years. We've been working with Natasha Warner. She was actually a student here at Berkeley. And she's now at the University of Arizona. And through the Breath of Life Workshops we were able to meet. She was my mentor. We kind of got her hooked on our language and she's helping us with what we want to do.

So early on she started on a dictionary. It was a really small one. She edited John Alden Mason's work that was based on the early writings of Arroyo de la Cuesta, a priest from Mission San Juan Bautista. He learned the language from our people there and documented some of it. That's what we started off with. And since then, she's got all the

resources that are known right now in Mutsun and is putting it into a dictionary. And it's pretty much near done. She's analyzed everything already. And so right now the community's just kind of test driving it to see how it works for us. And it should be published pretty soon here. Next couple of years, maybe.

SG: Excellent. Online and print? Or just, or print?

QG: Right now it's print, but I'd like it online. I've heard of other tribes doing apps where they're able to download it. I want it accessible to everybody, not just the community. In the beginning, we were trying to hoard it like no, it's just for us. I think it's because it's something that we hadn't had for such a long time that we kind of wanted to get a head start before everyone else. So, I guess my views have changed since the beginning. I think it's important that anyone can have access to it because after we're gone, we don't know what's going to happen. We don't know what the future holds. We don't know if our revitalization is going to actually continue. And if it doesn't, someone might come along in a hundred years and they're going to find it. That's one thing I'm pushing for, is to have it available online. And even maybe a downloadable app or something. To continue to keep up with the newest technology and just to make sure that it stays in the system.

SG: When did you first, first become, first know anything about, or get in touch with the Mutsun language, or find a book?

QG: Actually it was probably the Language is Life Conference. I think it was the second biannual that they had at Wonder Valley Ranch. This was like in the early '90s, I think. And I've always been interested in language. And as a little girl, I remember being in about the fourth grade and you know, studying the missions and everything. And I remember telling somebody, "Yeah, well I'm Indian." You know, just being proud of who I was.

And they're like, "No, you're not."

It was like, "I am."

They're like, "Well, say something in Indian."

And I couldn't. And I remember it bothering me. It always bothered me. It made me feel like okay, well maybe I'm not really enough Indian because I don't know the language. So I think as I got older, it was something that kind of stayed in the back of my mind.

And I heard of a conference, this Language is Life Conference going on. So I applied and got accepted. So I think me, my niece and my mom went. And we attended, and I met this lady, her name is Linda Yamane, who's Rumsien Ohlone. And so when she found out I was

Mutsun Ohlone, she was just really friendly and kind of said, “Well, you know what?” She goes, “Have you ever seen de la Cuesta? He did some language work.” And she gave me the name of the book.

And so when we left that conference, I remember going online, trying to find out whatever I could about it, and actually got a copy of it. And that was the first time I’d ever seen anything in our language. We’re lucky in that our language is like very fluid. Like you could write a lot of it in the Spanish orthography. So for me, I took Spanish in school, so I was able to kind of make my way through it okay. But that was like gold to us, you know, to be able to see it. And always wondering what it sounded like.

But a couple of months later, we found out they were having the first Breath of Life conference, so I attended that and found some more information. Yeah, that’s kind of how it started.

SG: Excellent. Did you ever visit an archive before Breath of Life, before your first Breath of Life?

QG: No, not an archive. I’ve been to different libraries. I would go to different county libraries. I even went to the mission where we came from to look for things. They didn’t have anything. Actually, they would say, “Oh, you mean the Ohlone tribe? They’re all gone. They’re dead.”

And it was just like, well we knew who we were, we were always told we were from Mission Santa Cruz and San Juan Batista growing up. We knew we were Mission Indian, but Ohlone, we were like, “What’s Ohlone?” We had no idea what Ohlone even meant. But we’re like, “They’re all dead?” We’re like, “No, no! We’re from here. Our families were from here.” And they didn’t believe us or anything.

But there was no information. We did a lot of traveling within our tribal areas, and no one could give us any type of help. Like nobody knew anything. So, but as far as going to university or anything, I hadn’t even thought of it. We figured that if we went to the towns within our homeland, somebody must know our family. Maybe we would find other relatives whose family still spoke the language. No one knew anything.

So before AICLS having the Language is Life conference, I had no knowledge of our language. I wouldn’t have had any direction of where to find anything. We just thought, okay, it’s just gone.

SG: What are some of your memories of that first Breath of Life?

QG: Oh, wow. I remember feeling really overwhelmed with the intimidation of being at a university first thing. I grew up in Madera. It was a small town. Our idea of getting an education was getting through high school. We were never told, “You can go to college. “These are things that you

can do.” No. Our goal was to graduate from high school. And that’s just how our families grew up. That’s just how it was. Nobody, nobody went to school. I think I had one relative when I was young who actually graduated from college. And she’s still one of the few in our community.

But anyway, yeah, so it was really intimidating coming to this campus, feeling really inadequate. Like, you feel dumb. You feel like, oh my God. You’re afraid to talk to people. It’s just really, really intimidating.

But everybody at Berkeley, Leanne and all the mentors and everybody, they just made you feel so comfortable when you didn’t. Towards the end, you didn’t worry about that anymore. They made you feel really comfortable, and you were okay. You knew you were okay.

SG: Do you remember, and this could be from the first one or just any of them, but some of the experiences going to the archives?

QG: Yeah, just for me, personally, when we went, they showed us a couple of things that had been published. The Bancroft is the one that I remember the most. And one of them was Mason’s edited version of Arroyo’s work. But we had just gotten that right before the workshop.

It was me and my sister Clara that came to that first one. And I remember we looked and looked and looked and there wasn’t hardly anything on Mutsun. That was the only thing that they had for us.

The other participants had all these books. I remember we looked at each other like, “What?! This is it?”

And so, I mean, we just kept searching. And my sister was really, really good at this. She’s a really good researcher. And we happened to be looking through some other stuff there. And she goes, “Look at that.” She goes, “That says our grandmother’s name.” It was Josefa Velasquez. She goes, “But it says she’s from Watsonville.” We knew that’s where she lived, she goes, “But it says that she’s Miwok.”

And I’m like, what? So we looked at it anyway.

It turns out it was our like great-great-great-grandmother. And she had been interviewed by [James Alden] Mason. It’s not that many pages. It’s maybe, I don’t know, a good fifteen pages, she tells a story, some language, some other stuff. We couldn’t believe it. It was our connection to her, which we’ve never even seen a picture of her. We’ve seen photos of a generation down from her. We knew what they looked like and we’d always hear stories about them. But her, we didn’t hear too much about. We just knew a name and a few other things about her. We were just crying. That piece of paper was worth more than anything to us at the time. Just to see it.

So we made sure we let [the archivist] know, “No, this is who she is.”

And in the notes, it actually does say that she's Mutsun. But for some reason, it got categorized as being Miwok. So now you look and it's under Mutsun Ohlone.

SG: Good. Good. I was going to ask if they took the time to correct it or add it to the file.

QG: Yeah. Yeah.

SG: Cool! Let's see. What, did you have any difficult either experiences with the archives or with the archivists?

QG: You know, every time we come on our own or we come with the Breath of Life group, they're just so helpful. Sometimes I go in there, they recognize me from being there so often with [Breath of Life]. They're like, "Oh, yeah, well we have this." They're always very helpful.

Lauren Lasseben, I love her, she's just the best. If I'm at home and I see something, I might email her. And she will send us things. So yeah, they're more than helpful. From what I understand, from a couple of archivists that I talk to, they're just glad that people are using the material. And we're just so glad that it's there. But they're always really helpful. I haven't had anything but a positive [experience].

SG: Right on. Since you've been at Breath of Life, have you visited other archives?

QG: Yeah. I come back to Berkeley a couple of times a year. I'll go to the Bancroft and look up some stuff. I've been to UC Davis and looked at the things that they have there. Where else have I gone? UC Santa Cruz. But there's so much online now. I've been to Chico State. I've ordered stuff from the University of Indiana, and other places. But physically visiting places, probably here, UC Davis and Chico State. And I love it. I mean, I'm there till they kick me out. I could spend eternity there. There's so much to look at.

My main goal is language. But there is so much information on different cultural aspects of our people that are archived, especially ceremonies, dances, those kinds of things. And for us, it's not just anything labeled under Mutsun or even Ohlone, because things traveled so much. I look at outlying areas. So there's just so much out there. It's just amazing.

SG: Would you say that Breath of Life kind of prepared you or taught you about going out and doing that other research?



- QG: Oh, definitely. Definitely. I mean, I would have never even walked onto a UC campus. Never. Ever. Even, onto a state college campus. I would have been terrified. Or even to have the courage to go up to a reference desk and ask for anything, there's no way I would have done it. Ever. So it's definitely gave me the courage. It's given us direction as to where to look, how to look. And to know that it's okay, this is here for us, too. So, definitely. If it wasn't for [the Breath of Life program], there would be no way, no way I would have done anything.
- SG: Yay. Let's see here. What, if anything, would you change about visiting an archive?
- QG: [Maybe have a more user-friendly catalog system. Something that you can cross-reference easier. There have been times that I have looked up a catalog item from a book that states that it is housed at a the Bancroft library, but when I get to the Bancroft, I cannot find it listed in on their computer system.]
- SG: I talk about it, cataloging and access points so the words and the ways that you, like when you are using a search engine, the kinds of terms or the fields that a search engine looks through.
- QG: Yeah. I've been working a lot with Gifford. So if I type in "Edward Gifford," [on the online search engine] for the raw field notes that I want to see, they're not really listed on there. I have to go to another catalog that I can download onto a PDF file [or go to the reference desk]. But if I didn't already know that the document existed, I would have never found it.
- SG: Oh, so today, what are you going to look for at the Bancroft today?
- QG: Right now I'm looking at information for my husband. He's Southeastern Pomo. We found out that after the mission system, a lot of our dances and [ceremonies] were done in Pleasanton. At Pleasanton, we called it Alisal, there was a roundhouse there. And Indians from all over came to Alisal to learn these dances and take them back to their people. It was at a time where people needed something to believe in.  
So they knew there was this big encampment [of Indians] at Pleasanton. There were different Ohlone tribes that were there, Miwok, some Yokuts. And they would have these old time dances.  
Many tribes still dance some of those dances. And the others got put away. But it's been documented.

So I'm going to look at outlying areas. I know we had this one elder, his name was Chiplichu who went and took our dances to the Lone, Knight's Ferry area. So I'm going to look at those things.

And it's interesting that my husband is Southeastern Pomo from way up north. And he has quite a few ceremonies that are documented that actually came from the Pleasanton area. Some of the songs are in our language. The same dances he did, we did. We have this dance called Kilaki. They call it Gilak. We have, well a lot of places had Kuksui. Other people called it Kuksu or Guksu. That's stuff that I don't really bother, we kind of leave that alone, because those are really powerful dances. But I know that dance did travel. There's others like the Sunwele, Lole, Lehuya, Hiwei, Tura. There are few other ones that traveled. So I'm going to look [at fieldnotes] to be able to piece together how we danced them. It helps us both to understand them a little better.

How we found out was interesting. It was through language. We were in the car one time and my husband listens to old recordings of his elders. And they're singing these songs, and I'm like, "What is he saying?"

He's like, "Oh, I don't know. It's in God's language.' We don't understand what it means."

I said, "Well in our language, this is what it would mean."

And he's like, "What?!"

I said, "Yeah. What's the name of this dance?"

He goes, "Oh, it's, they said they called it Gilak."

I said, "We have a dance called Kilaki." And we like looked at each other. And when we got home, we started looking through all of our old notes that we'd been collecting [over twenty years]. Field notes. And we found out how it traveled. And so that old dance traveled all the way up to his place. And there are some other tribes still dance some of our old time dances and still sing the same songs. Many of them I can understand.

Several dances are documented in detail. It shows you step by step what to do. All these elders from all these different places talk about them and where they came from. They left it for the future.

And so we're also working on outfits for what my people call the Tura dance which is our thunder dance. And everything is there. The songs, it tells you step by step how they came in, what they wore and what the outfits were made out of. So that's kind of how language brought us here. So that's what I'm going to be doing today is just looking for more information. There's so much out there. I could spend a year here and probably wouldn't see everything that's here.

SG: Oh, wow.

QG: There's so much out there.

SG: Nice. With the materials pre-selected by the archivist, like when you come in and they've got the stuff that they thought well, this might work, is that pretty useful? Or do you always go back for more?

QG: For us, there were only a couple of small books. We found out Marc Okrand did a dissertation on our language, on the grammar. And it wasn't something they brought out, I think Leanne [Hinton] actually found it was in the main library for us. I think she felt sorry for us because we didn't have much to work with. So she went out of our way to help us. She's good lady.

But I mean, it's helpful, I see a lot of people with stacks of material and sometimes they even come out with a cart of stuff. You know, my husband's tribe, they get the cart of stuff.

For us, we were so early impacted by the mission system that there's not a lot of known sources of documentation. Right now, the most known documentation we have is from J. P. [John Peabody] Harrington's field notes. During the first two Breath of Life workshops, they didn't have the microfilm at Berkeley. They had to order it. But by the third year, they had all the Mutsun related Harrington notes, which added up to something like 35,000 pages. [We haven't found any language recordings other than some songs. We do know that he did do recordings with some of our tribal elders, but they have not surfaced. There are stories that Harrington left materials with Ascencion's family, including recording devices of that time era, but many items were destroyed when a storage building was flooded. But we still have the 35,000 pages to work with.]

SG: Good, good, good. Have you gone, or have you thought about going, to the national Breath of Life?

QG: Yeah. I actually, I started an application. I did my husband's application for him. He wants to go with a team member. But I have to go home and do mine today. (laughs) But I would love to be able to go.

I heard that Harrington has a lot of miscellaneous recordings that are not labeled. And I know people have gone up there and have actually found things on their language. So I think I have a good enough ear now with the language that I'd be able to tell if it's ours. So that's something that I've always wanted to go up there to do. So if I get accepted, that's something I'm going to look forward to doing. Having the resources to get there on our own is difficult. [If AICLS didn't support these types of programs, we would probably never make it there.]

- SG: Nice. We talked a little bit about using the catalogs and the finding aids. Anything else you want to add about searching for—
- QG: No, I don't think so.
- SG: Do you have a connection with any of the archivists, say, as involved as with some of the linguists you work with?
- QG: Well, just maybe Lauren. I know, my husband as well. If there's anything that we need from the Bancroft, we'll send an email to her and she's always been really helpful. Or if we had a question about where something was at, I know like for me, there was some Coast Miwok stuff that I wanted to look at. She knew where it was at, where it went. For whatever reason, the field notes I was looking for had been sent somewhere else. [Texas, I think.] But she knew exactly where it was with out looking it up. She's got so much knowledge and she's always willing to share and to help in any way that she can. We really appreciate that. It surprises me how nice she is, because most people aren't that way. She's very helpful.
- SG: Nice. I asked that one. Oh! So this last, at this last Breath of Life, the term "linguist buddy" came out. What was your impression of that?
- QG: That was kind of funny. I don't know. For me it's okay if they're a mentor. I didn't mind the word "mentor." (laughs) It was okay. But, I don't know, I thought it was cute, you know. I think it would make people feel less intimidated. So maybe it kind of broke the ice a little bit, made things a little bit easier, maybe, for people. But yeah, it didn't matter to me one way or the other, you know.
- SG: Uh huh. Good to know. I remember it struck me, too.
- QG: It was kind of funny. (laughs) It's just like, no, I don't need a buddy. I need a mentor. (laughs)
- SG: Yeah. Let's see here. I think, and one thing I'd heard was it was a way, like using a more endearing or diminutive or friendly kind of term was a way of sort of evening the playing field. Did you ever notice like an uneven dynamic between either linguists and you or archivists and—
- QG: No. No. For me, it was just, my goal is just to learn. And it doesn't matter who I was learning from. I just wanted to learn. So it didn't matter whether they were a linguist or whatever. I wanted it so bad.

Now when I was here and I learned that it's okay to talk to these people, and they're not going to snub you off. So you knew it's okay. You started this relationship that AICLS kind of opened up with this program. I didn't even pay attention to that. I just wanted to learn and soak in what I could. And I really didn't care who it was from. And I think it actually helped open me up, because now I'm not so afraid. I can go anywhere, really, and not be afraid to ask for something or to ask for help, because the goal is to learn. So whatever it takes to get there. You know, if I've got to talk to a stranger, then I'll do what has to be done to be able to get what I need.

SG: Over the years have you started, like making your own original materials and things on your—

QG: Yeah, well we created our own orthography. We went through three different ones. So we used each one for a little while to test it. And after a while we're like, no, no, no. That's not working. Because we can't text that.

So after a while, we created a committee and for a couple of years we worked on language and developed our own orthography.

You know, it was funny, because our linguist didn't like the way it looked. She showed it to another linguist. They were saying, well why don't they use this instead. But we stuck with it. This is what we wanted. And it's just the easiest thing to type. And for them they wanted the symbols, I guess. We're like no, because that turns people off. If it looks too hard, they're not going to touch it.

So that's what the dictionary's orthography is based on. It's from our own community. We've also done, language tapes, translated stories. We translated, Dr. Seuss' Green Eggs and Ham, our traditional story, "Story of the Thunders." We've done a useful phrasebook. You know, those kinds of things.

Yeah, we started also started a textbook. And it's really formal. We kind of don't even bother with it too much. The community doesn't really use it. It's a draft. But it's more like if you sat down in a school type setting. You know, we realize that just doing a pre-set of useful phrases is more practical. It was based on a survey we took. We had people write down things down that they use all the time, or they catch themselves saying. They sent it to us and we translated it. That's probably the most useful tool, I think.

SG: Have you thought about sort of long-term preservation, so that those things are available for somebody one hundred years down the road?

QG: One main goal is not only to learn to speak Mutsun to my kids, but to make sure that somebody doesn't have to go through what we did in the beginning. It was hard. Just to make it that much easier for them to pick it up where we left off. Maybe deposit language materials here and make items available online.

SG: Nice. Like here, when you say "deposit it here," like here at the Survey [of California and Other Indian Languages]? Or here at the Bancroft?

QG: Probably the Survey. For me, it's just, because this is where all the linguists are. and I'm thankful for everything they've done for us. I mean, if there's anything that we can leave, I know that they'll know where it's at if somebody comes looking for it, they'll be able to say, "Oh, you know what? This is here in this department." And be able to give it to whoever needs it without a restriction.

I know a lot of times people restrict their material. And I can understand, certain ceremonial things. That's a hard one sometimes. But for me, when it comes to language material, I think it should be accessible. Even if somebody just wanted to study it. The important thing is that somebody keeps it alive. Because unfortunately sometimes it's not your own people, sometimes you have to go to somebody else to learn something. You know, I found that even with old-time rigging-making, I know some of the good ones aren't even Indian. Because they were interested enough and they went to these old-time Indians and asked these elders. And they taught them. And sometimes we have to go back to learn certain things from [non-Indians. And that's okay. At least somebody has it. Once we regain that knowledge, it's in our hands now. And Indians can start teach other Indians again.] So definitely someplace like this would be good. [It's not the ideal situation of learning from another Mutsun person, but it's someplace safe until the next person comes along.]

I also don't know if my kids are going to continue speak it after I'm gone. I don't know what's going to happen. You know, you hope for that, but it's not always that way. I'm sure all the informants who left information on their languages hoped for that. Like Ascension, I'm sure she hoped that one of her kids would pick it up or her grandkids and take it, and it actually wasn't any of them. So I don't know the future. So my thing is accessibility to make sure that the community will have it whenever they're ready.

[Someone once suggested that I keep the materials with my family to care for. But we don't know what the future holds. How do we know that any of our children will do the right thing when the time is right. I know my husband and I have great kids but what if there's a tribal division? Who has the rights to it? So I've decided that it will be

deposited for accessibility. Language belongs to the people, not a person or family. The only one who truly owns it is God.]

SG: What are some of the changes you've noticed in Breath of Life over the years?

QG: It's a lot larger. (laughs) A lot more people. I think early on when it was a smaller group, I think it was easier to learn. It was basically a crash course in linguistics. And I know that because I was only here for that week. And then when I left and I went back home, I took a linguistics class at Fresno City. And it was almost the same stuff we learned. Even some of the worksheets were exactly the same. And so it was easy for me when I got there to do it. And I think it was that smaller group made it easier to learn.

Now I think it's a little more difficult in a way. I guess because it's a larger group so you've got to kind of accommodate everybody. And now you've got people at different levels. So they've got to kind of put it all together in one. But I just feel fortunate and glad that I was able to come for the first two years. I think it really, really helped me as far as being able to understand some linguistic terms because it's just really different if you don't have an education after high school, really. So for somebody like me, it's difficult. I know a lot of learners are in my position. So it really did help me.

I think everything's great. Every time I come, I learn something new, find something new. So it's always really good.

SG: You think you'll apply for the next one?

QG: You know what? I think my daughter's going to apply.

SG: Oh, nice!

QG: Yeah. She's been learning, she's been working with me. So she wants to be able to learn for her son. She has a two year-old. So I think she's going to apply next year for the Breath of Life.

SG: Let's see. What are some of the lessons you've learned about using archives for research?

QG: What do you mean, lessons?

SG: Well, sort of like, or maybe strategies for searching or, you know—

- QG: Oh. Do online research first if you can do it at home, so you don't waste too much time. And basically the first thing you do when you come here is fill out your card. And bring a camera if, because you don't know if someone's going to be on the microfilm reader with a printer to print. Bring your quarter to put in the locker. (laughter) Bring a pencil. You know, those kinds of things to know ahead of time. So just being prepared that way. I've been trying to come down the last few years is to do as much research as I can at home through the catalogs online. And to get a strategy going. I have this whole list of stuff that I'm interested in looking at. And then highlight in yellow which ones I might have time for. And then in red the things that I need to make sure I bring home today. So, yeah, so it's just that kind of thing. You're kind of more prepared. You want to look as much as you can with the little time that you have here.
- SG: And if somebody were thinking about going to Breath of Life what would you, for their first time, what would you—
- QG: Wear your good shoes. (laughter) And just not to be afraid to ask questions. Never be afraid to ask questions, or to even be able to just speak. You know, to be able to say those first words in your language. That was hard in the beginning. At first you kind of feel silly for some reason, I don't know. And now it's just second nature. Sometimes I'll just rattle something off to our little ones and somebody will ask, "What did you just say?"
- And I'll say, "What?" I didn't even notice. Then I have to try to remember what I just said to them. Because you don't think about it. You just say it at that moment. And it's just everyday stuff, so you don't remember. But yeah, so it gets easier. So don't be afraid.
- SG: Oh, wow. We're coming up toward my wrap-up questions. What are your future hopes for Breath of Life and revitalizing your language?
- QG: Breath of Life, just for it to continue. For it just to be here. And to grow with us. Like every time we come, there's some new technology. So to keep us up to date of what's new out there.
- It's always a good place to network. You always make good contacts there. And some of those end up becoming lifelong friends. At the first workshop, Cody Pata was here and he was working on the Nomlaki language. Eighteen years later, we still email each other when we find something interesting about language. We try to help each other out.
- SG: Yeah. Were there any topics that you wanted to talk about that I didn't ask about?



QG: It's not just language. Language isn't something that's separate from everything else. Everything has to weave in together. And when you start learning your language all these different cultural aspects start to come along with it. And I know for us, we didn't know any ceremonies or songs. Those kinds of things were sleeping. And those things are coming back. And it's because of language that it was able to come back. Because of language, we were able to say, "Hey, I recognize the words in those songs," which is able to spark [the interest] to find out what happened. You know, one hundred years ago until now, we can see the trail of how things traveled, and those things are coming back because of that. So once you learn your language, you don't know what's next. Like I thought I was just here to learn language. But it's just like God changes it all the time. You don't know what your next thing is. And right now it's language and then it's ceremonies. These things will eventually come back to the people.

You know, a lot of people say, "Oh, once it's dead, it's dead. You're not supposed to mess with it. Whether it's language or culture or anything.

It's like, no, you know what? Our elders left these for a reason. They talked to these non-Indian people who they really didn't trust, really probably didn't care for. But they left it for a reason. Like my husband always says this thing. He says we're the living dreams of our ancestors. You know, they dreamed about us. They dreamed of someday these things coming back. And that's what we're doing with language and with these ceremonies and these other things. So, yeah. So it's just be prepared, because all these other things come with it.

SG: I thought of one question I forgot to ask before. Do you remember, were you around for the Tribal Scholars Language Conference?

QG: No.

SG: It was the one in '92, I think, where AICLS was founded.

QG: Oh, no. Oh, wow.

SG: Okay. So that was after.

QG: Yeah, I think '94, maybe, I want to say, was kind of when I started.

SG: Okay, good. What was it like thinking oh, I might get started, or there might be people to start with?

QG: When I started learning language? It was exciting. It was me and my sister who started together the first two years. But she had issues at home that she had to take care of. And then it was my niece that I brought in. And it ended up not being her thing. Then I had some cousins. Everybody kind of comes and goes. And I'm still here. (laughs)  
So I'm going to be applying I think for the national Breath of Life with one of my other cousins. She's been here twice before. Nora Lopez. So hopefully I'll get her hooked again. But if not, it's okay. I will be here when they're ready.

SG: That's all my questions. And so thank you very much for your time and your information.

QG: Thank you.

SG: Thanks.

[End of Interview]

## Chapter 9: Leah Mata

I have a lot of kids. It's hard for me to have a babysitter to watch all of them when they're that little. So I'd always rotate and take one or two with me. And Emilio, he used to like to go. The first year, he went with me every day. I think he was four.

I know it wasn't authorized [to bring non-participating children to Breath of Life], but I had no choice. I had no childcare. And they weren't disruptive. In fact, I think that's why they're so interested in language. So the one, Emilio, the one you saw right now, he actually did a language project at Sherman [Indian High School of Riverside, CA]. And because of Breath of Life, he was able to participate with other tribes. Because usually we're always left out because we don't have enough language. So we never participate in major language projects.

And so his school was doing public service announcements on earthquake safety. So the kids had to do, what is it, drop...[d]uck and cover. And they had to do this in [their] language, and then they had to put, "Spread the word, earthquake preparedness."

So it was really cool because he called and he said, "How do you say these words? I'm going to do it. I'm going to participate." Which was cool because he goes to Sherman so he was there with so many other tribes that have language. So for him to be able to participate was really cool.

And he wouldn't have been able to participate if he hadn't been exposed to [Breath of Life].

Leah Mata (yak tityu tityu, Northern Chumash) and her family started researching their language and culture in the mid 1980s with the help of John Johnson of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, and linguist Kathryn Klar, both specialists in Chumash studies. Mata is a board member of yak tityu tityu yak tilhini Cultural Preservation Kinship, a non-profit formed in support of Northern Chumash cultural and language revitalization. She has attended several Breath of Life Workshops since 2004 and has even experienced intergenerational benefits to Breath of Life because her family situation required her to bring her young children to the workshops.

Mata has a BA in cultural anthropology from Ashford University and is currently in the master's program in cultural sustainability at Goucher College. She is an artist specializing in traditional California Indian regalia and jewelry and operates her business, Saqwamu, out of her home. She is one of four 2011 recipients of the National Museum of the American Indian's (NMAI) Artist Leadership Program for Individual Artists.

Leah Mata was born in Santa Clara, California in 1967. Mata grew up with her very strict, traditional Northern Chumash mother, her non-Indian father who was agreeable to making his wife's family and culture the center of their family life, and five brothers and sisters. She grew up knowing the name of her family's ancestral village and, by extension, that there was a language that her family once spoke. However, the languages taught in school were Spanish, French, and German. She felt hurt that her family's language was not considered worthy to be a language of instruction.

In the late 1980s, Mata and her family began researching their language and culture at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, with the assistance of curator of anthropology, John Johnson. By the late 1990s, before her first Breath of Life workshop, Mata had contacted linguist Kathryn Klar at the University of California, Berkeley. Johnson and Klar both told Mata that their work on Northern Chumash was based on information that her grandmother had shared with John Peabody Harrington. That news gave her hope that she might be able to have access to her language. But when she realized that the notes were housed in the academic world, at the Bancroft Library, she doubted if she would ever see her grandmother's Harrington notes because she did not know how to use an archive.

Her cousin Debbie Morillo, who is currently an AICLS board member, was the one who started Mata and her sisters in studying Northern Chumash language. Morillo also told Mata about AICLS' Breath of Life Workshops, suggesting that if she participated she would be able to work with her grandmother's notes. Initially, Mata thought that she would attend Breath of Life just once, in 2004 or maybe 2006, to learn a few commands she could use with her children. However, she returned for the next workshop to study descriptions of regalia, birds, and jewelry to help with her art. Mata relied on her relatives to learn the grammar and develop communicative competence in Northern Chumash. This arrangement worked well until Mata was the only person in her family to be available to do an opening prayer for a major public event. Frantically, she worked with linguist Kathryn Klar to develop the language for her prayer. After that harrowing experience, Mata decided that she needed to work harder on speaking Northern Chumash.

Her master's degree in cultural sustainability extends her work on her language beyond personal language proficiency into the realm of promoting community practices and institutions that support Northern Chumash language and culture. Mata's work is preparing her to work with schools to promote the addition of Northern Chumash to the languages taught at schools.

While making it very clear that she really appreciated the Breath of Life Workshops, Mata discussed possible additions and changes to the workshop. Having seen how her children learned how to research and revitalize Northern Chumash from watching her do it, Mata wondered about the possibility of a youth component at Breath

of Life. Intergenerational transmission of language can take place even through archives. Her children have not yet registered for Breath of Life as participants themselves, but they have attended with her and have started doing their own projects related to language. Mata also worried that she was taking a spot in the workshop that someone else might need more and wondered if long-time returning participants could serve as mentors rather than participants.

Mata also mentioned that linguistic and archival jargon can be overwhelming to new participants, and that the concepts involved need to be introduced through exercises and projects that help the participants achieve their language goals. Mata still finds that the finding aids and guides are often frustrating to use. Though she has attended Breath of Life several times, Mata still prefers to work with the materials identified by the archivists and the linguists and gives up on searches when the guides or catalogs are complex or contradictory. Mata also discussed the difficulties she had reading the handwritten field notes from different linguists because each one had their own system for writing Northern Chumash. Some used the International Phonetic Alphabet, while others made up their own system. As part of her master's coursework, Mata wrote a paper describing those writing systems in a way that would help future Breath of Life participants. In that paper, Mata also described how she and her family are in the process of creating a practical writing system that is better suited for the Northern Chumash speech community.

At the beginning of the interview, Mata talks about the changes in linguistic classification of Northern Chumash. There are different names as well for the language,

Obispeño. Multiple language names and classifications affect access to materials. For example, if something is listed as Obispeño but not Northern Chumash, then materials remain unknown to the researcher interested in Northern Chumash. Conversely, if materials from all six Chumash languages are lumped together, Mata has to first identify which of those materials are Northern Chumash, because the six languages are different.

Mata discussed the issues involved in allowing access to tribal materials, particularly online. Mata urges archivists to consider tribes and the descendants of language consultants such as Mata's grandmother as co-owners of the tribal collections. Before starting a digitization project, especially when the digitization project's goals involve unrestricted online access, tribal co-owners should be consulted. She expressed dismay when an archivist at the Smithsonian excitedly described how they would digitize everything so that everyone would have access to their Northern Chumash materials. If tribal groups do some strategic planning to decide as a group what their stance is on access to cultural information, then they will be more ready to collaborate with archives holding collections on their languages.

This interview took place on the morning of May 30, 2013, at the home of Leah Mata in Rohnert Park, California. Sounds of deck sanding and the occasional sounds of family members opening and closing doors can be heard. The interview was recorded open air using the TASCAM DR-100mkII digital audio recorder with the onboard microphones.

Interview with Leah Mata

Interviewed by Susan Gehr  
May 30, 2013  
Rohnert Park, California  
100 minutes

Susan Gehr:

Today is Thursday, May 30, [2013] and this is an interview for the thesis *Breath of Life: Revitalizing California's Native Languages Through Archives*. Today I'm interviewing Leah Mata at her home in Rohnert Park, California. And this is Susan Gehr, interviewer. Now I'll go ahead and get started.

Leah Mata:

Okay.

SG: I like to ask some background questions first. Where were you born and what year?

LM: I was born in Santa Clara, California in 1967.

SG: And what is your tribal affiliation and languages?

LM: Yak Tityu Tityu, Northern Chumash and we speak the Northern language of Chumash or, I don't know if, it's always changing. First we were in one category, then we got booted out of that Hokan category. Then we were on our own, then they said there were dialects. Then they're like oh, maybe not dialects. I don't know. According to the anthropologists and linguists, it's always changing. So I don't even like to even put a category on it. Because it's the scientific terms and they just keep changing. I just know it's our home language. So they can call it whatever, but—

SG: They do the same thing with Karuk (LM laughs). Some linguists say Hokan and other ones are like nah, it's its own thing. And I just go, you know it's Karuk.

LM: Right. Exactly right, right? It's just, it is what it is. It doesn't need to go in all these different categories.

SG: So tell me a little bit about your family growing up, and kind of what you, what you knew of your culture and your language growing up.



LM: Well, growing up, my mom is Indian, my dad's not. But my dad wasn't really attached to his family. He had a very small family and they were back in the Midwest. So when he came out to California, he really didn't have much family. He had a sister out here and that was about it.

But my mom, on the other hand, for us and our tribe, family is like the most important thing. So we grew up with my mom's family and my mom's people, and relatives on my mom's side. So we had, my mom and dad had six kids. I'm second to the oldest, oldest girl.

My dad, because he wasn't really attached to his family or culture, so whatever my mom decided, that was it. He just went along with it. Because it was important to her and he knew that. So what's cool is that he supported her. If we had to go to family events—we didn't do vacations like other people do, like Disneyland and things like that. We went to see relatives. And that was what we did. We went and saw relatives. But he was always good about driving and making sure my mom always was connected to her relatives and her mom. So that was cool.

SG: Oh—oh, go ahead.

LM: I'm sorry. I didn't finish the whole thing. So growing up, my mom, most of our values and our things comes from my mom. So she's very strict. (laughs) Yeah, more the traditional side as far as how things go. And growing up in a very white, semi-affluent neighborhood, it was really hard, because everybody just had like two or three kids. And we had six. People would kind of say stuff to my mom. She actually graduated from San José State. She was the first in her family to finish high school and even go on to college. But she was really traditional. I mean, we couldn't wear makeup or date or behave in a way that would bring disrespect to our family or disrespectful to, I don't know how to explain it. We were taught to be very respectful in the way that we dressed and the way that our manners—my mom was really strict about everybody being there for dinner, sharing a meal together, all those things.

It was hard because white kids don't have to do that. They're free to run around. And parents would give them money. So it was really hard growing up being different in our environment.

SG: What did you know about your language when you were a kid or about—

LM: I really didn't know much about it at all. Just knew where our village was and that name. I really didn't know much about the language. When you're in our school district, if you want to go to college, you have to take these languages, and these are the only languages you can take. These are

the only things that qualify. And I really was kind of upset, because I didn't want to learn French, Spanish or German. I wish there was some alternative even to that. But it seemed like those were the only things that were important as far as language is concerned.

There wasn't a lot of opportunity then, either, for me to even go back home or talk to professionals or other people about wanting to learn my language. Because the message I got from high school and junior high is that's not important, these languages are.

- SG: So you were aware of your language and that you were missing it when you were young.
- LM: Only because my mom had mentioned it. It wasn't, how to explain it, it wasn't like it was there on the forefront. It was only when issues of language came up. In high school and junior high, when we had to pick our language courses to meet the language criteria, just that message of, well, these are the only languages that are important, these are the only ones that can get you anywhere, which I don't think we have too many German-speaking people in our country right now. It would have been better to do some other languages if they were going to send that message. There wasn't a lot of the culture of our area at that point in time. It's changed now, because I grew up in Cupertino. So it was like the heart of Apple and Silicon Valley. So what is there now was not there when I was a kid. So Silicon Valley hadn't happened yet. So it was a different culture going on there. Different ethnic groups, different culture. So when I say that, people are like, "Oh, well there's so much diversity there now. But not back then.
- SG: Yeah. Yeah. I remember at my age being aware that I was away from my culture and missing it. Like I knew I was Indian and I was from the Klamath River, but I didn't know more than that. I didn't even know we had a language until, actually until I moved home in my twenties.
- LM: Yeah. Like I said, I knew our village. So I knew there was a language. But I didn't, I wouldn't know how to access it as a kid. And there was nobody really outside, you know what I mean? Like there's nobody, not a teacher or anybody in your community that would facilitate that. Because it just wasn't important.
- SG: So I know you're going to graduate school. Tell me a little bit about what you're studying.
- LM: I am getting a master's in cultural sustainability, which is a new discipline, a new area. And people are like, well what is that? And basically it's,

when we talk about sustainability, whether we're talking about economic sustainability or cultural sustainability, I mean, the principles of sustainability apply in that you are trying to make your culture sustainable. So what was happening was there was a bunch of folklorists and social service people, and a bunch of policy makers. They all kind of felt like there's something missing. A folklorist was telling me, we get these traditional communities, we want them to practice their traditional art forms. So we tell them, "We'll fund you to do your traditional art forms." But they couldn't produce it because they had problems with either immigration, they had problems with getting evicted, they had problems with alcohol. It's too many barriers. So then these poor folklorists would try to pull in social services people to try to get their needs met so they could continue. So there was kind of like a missing degree that would cover those different areas and pull it all into one discipline. So it's really about making culture sustainable and how you do that. So some of our courses can be grant writing.

Some of them, like for me this semester, it's grant writing, it's native language preservation, it's making museums relevant and cultural policy. So those are just some courses. So, even at a policy level, I can make my tribe more sustainable by going to our local government, whether it's city council or the county and making sure that some of those policies that have prevented us from being sustainable are changed. (laughs) It's managing all of those pieces that it takes to make something sustainable. So I love it.

SG: I was looking at that website for your program. And if you get to talk to or take a workshop with Linda Shopes. Have you gotten to already?

LM: Not yet.

SG: Okay, okay. She's actually one of the people my advisor wants me to read for the interpretation part of my thesis.

LM: Oh, uh huh. Yeah, we do, there's a lot of field work courses, there's cultural documentation I and II. And then I'm doing, wait, who was it—

SG: Linda Shopes.

LM: Okay, no, I was thinking of my native language professor. But yeah, it's an amazing program because you really develop a wide range of skill sets. Because sometimes our Indian communities focus just into one category. Okay, you're going to be native studies. Or you're going to study anthropology, or you're going to study archeology, thinking that you can help your people. Which you can, but only in that small, limited area.

And so I wanted to do something that was a little broader. And so again, like I said, I can work on a developing language program, turn around, write a grant, have it funded, then work with our city council or our schools to change policies to make [language count as credit for school. College.]

SG: Yeah. Yeah.

LM: So that's what's amazing. Their instructors are top notch, nationally known people in their fields. I love it. You just get the best of the best.

SG: Right on. So you mentioned that you've gotten to already do some work on language specifically. What were your papers or projects about?

LM: Our papers and our projects, basically, it's funny because it's called native language preservation. And they do cover a little bit of linguistic work in there. But that's not its focus. Its focus is revitalization, protection of endangered language. It's really about those aspects of it, and looking at different methods that have worked for different tribal communities. What's effective, what hasn't been effective. And looks at taking a broad view of endangered languages. So it's not linguistics. Because some of the students are like, "Oh, I don't know that much about linguistics, I don't want to take it. Sounds hard."

I'm like, no, no, no, no, no. That's different. This is about policies. This is about looking at methods that work. So if you're working in a tribal community, you might be able to say oh, this method might work good for us, based on your community's needs. And you might see another model and be like oh, that will not work. You know what I mean?

So it's been nice because we need to work on our orthography. We're at a point where we can't move further, but it seems like a waste of time if we don't get our orthography down. So why develop curriculum if we're not consistent in how we're going to spell or do things. So we've gotten to the point where we needed to do our orthography. But we have people who are at different levels. We don't have a tribal, tribally sponsored language program yet.

I know Leanne Hinton talks about this in a couple of her books. It was really out of individual efforts of wanting to revitalize the language. And so it was individuals that started attending Breath of Life. So we have people who are at different levels. We have people who have been attending for ten years to people that are going to their first one this summer. So how do you, on a continuum like that, how do you bring all that together.

So this course, when I talked to my professor, I said look, I really want to design papers—I want to do something that’s going to be a useful tool for my community. So I changed my papers a little bit to be less research and more projects oriented.

So the first paper I did was a basic paper on orthography. Because we have people that are so new, they don’t have any background in linguistics at all. Like me, I had no idea. I didn’t even know how to say the word when I went to the first Breath of Life. I was like, what?! (laughs)

Going into Breath of Life, I wish I would have prepped myself a little more, or known how to prep myself a little more. I wish I would have known what an orthography was and why it’s important. So what I wanted to do was create a tool so that before they go to the national Breath of Life in Washington, DC, they know those things that we didn’t know.

So basically my paper was just an introductory to orthography, the different styles based on our tribe. Which linguist used which, whether they used IPA, or you know what I mean. So which ones used which, kind of figuring that out for them, because I had no idea that there was, there was different formats. So I thought I was going crazy because I was like, wait, I told Dr. Klar, “You just said this was a ‘ch’ and now you’re saying this is a ‘ch.’” And they’re two totally different—

And she’s like, “Oh, well, they’re two different linguistic styles.”

“Well, why didn’t someone tell me that?” Because that would have saved me hours of headaches, thinking I was going crazy that I did not remember symbols or ways things were spelled.

It was really just a paper to lay that out for someone. So anyone coming in knew that before they go to Breath of Life, we’re kind of doing this prep thing. And so really we prepped them with some of those things that you need to know ahead of time. That there are different spellings. You’re not going crazy. And that’s why we need to standardize our language so that we can take it to the next level.

And breaking it down. Because some people think, oh, it’s just figuring out how you’re going to spell things. And I’m like no, it’s not. It’s grammar. It’s how are we going to coin new words. It’s all of those things. It’s not just spelling.

And I feel like if you do a mini strategic plan prior to going to Breath of Life, I think you could get a little more out of it. So we’re trying to, those individuals that have been at Breath of Life for a while, we kind of are helping the newer folks by prepping them.

And I hate to say this, but I suck at English. So when Dr. Klar is using terms in English, this wasn’t the example, but I’ll just say it. She was saying something like oh, a suffix. It wasn’t suffix, it was some other grammar. But I didn’t know it. So I had to get like a basic little grammar book just to—because you forget that stuff. You know what I mean? I’ve

been out of school. I already did my B.A. I hadn't been in school for a while. So I was like, oh, no, I don't remember all those things. I don't want to look like a dummy. Because some of these are adults that are in a professional environment or near retirement, we made those recommendations to people. I mean, when's the last time you sat in an English class. So just to brush up on those things. Take a little, even like a little kids' book that just has those terms, you can kind of refresh your memory with.

SG: Yeah. Yeah.

LM: So, but anyway, I think I digressed.

SG: No, that's really good, because, I mean, one of the things I'm hoping to get out of this—

SG: Okay. Go ahead. Yeah.

LM: I'm not dissing Breath of Life. I think it's the most amazing program and amazing opportunity. I just was, I mean, I had a cousin that said, "You've got to be here!"

I didn't even know what I was getting myself into, or how powerful it would be. So yeah, just, I'm kind of a spontaneous person. So I just showed up. And had no idea about anything, any of it, at all. So I think it's important.

I think people could get more out of it if we have that kind of big brother/big sister approach to it. Where we kind of just do a little planning and prepping before our new people attend Breath of Life.

SG: I really like that. In fact, that very story you just told is one of the things I'm hoping to get at. Like as I'm writing, like the logistics of Breath of Life, things that might make it work better, or things about using an archive, or things about managing an archive. So feel free. (laughs)

LM: I got a whole list of ideas.

SG: Oh, good! (laughs)

LM: And it's not, like I said, it's not bashing. It's just that my brain is always thinking about the next group coming in, and how do we not turn those people off, how do we engage those people. Because there will be some people that think oh, this is not for me. And if they just had this, they might have felt more comfortable. Or if they just had this, they might not think it's as hard.

And when you say words like “documentation” and “archive” and “linguistics” to someone that’s not in an academic environment, that might be scary. You know? I mean, it was for me. I was like, what the hell?

SG: Yeah. For people who didn’t like school, or for people who, you know—

LM: Right. Or didn’t have opportunity.

SG: Yeah.

LM: A lot of my family didn’t have opportunity. So I wouldn’t want them not to go, you know what I mean?

SG: Yeah. To benefit from it. I love the idea of preparation.

LM: Yeah, we actually had a meeting last, two weekends ago.

SG: And “we” being—

LM: Debbie and my sister Amber and I, there’s four more, there’s three going to DC Breath of Life, and so we sat with them. But they brought their other sisters and mom, even though they’re not going to DC because they’ll be applying to the Berkeley one. And then the plan then is that when they come back from DC, more of us will be on the same page as far as figuring this out. And then we’ll try and do some orthography planning this summer after DC. And then by next Breath of Life next summer, for the one in Berkeley, we’ll send hopefully more people. And just get that momentum going? Because once people go there, then you see it.

SG: Yeah. Yeah.

SG: So what years have you gone to the Berkeley Breath of Life?

LM: You know, I knew you were going to ask that, and I was trying to think. I do not know. This is how I calculate it, because I don’t really keep track of years. I just know the first year I went, the sixteen year-old you saw there was being carried around by the younger girls. Because I didn’t have childcare, so I’d bring him with me. And my other two were in diapers still. So I don’t know. I don’t know. I just have pictures—part of it is I’ve always had to bring one or two kids, because I have a lot of kids. It’s hard for me to have a babysitter to watch all of them when they’re that little. So I’d always rotate and take one or two with me. And Emilio, he used to like to go. The first year, he went with me every day. I think he was about three or four. Maybe four. Because I remember Molly and

Felicia and the girls, Debbie's nieces, they were carrying him. And he was being a baby. They were giving him food and little snacks.

SG: Ah.

LM: Yeah, he liked it. And they took him to go, because he was really into Ishi then. He must have been about four. And they took him to go look at the museum stuff. And he was all excited.

And then Naomi went, Jacob and Naomi went with me the following years. And I still have their little cute note cards. They could barely write. And they wanted to know how to say like "dog" or "chicken" or "whale." And we had these little index cards. It's like little tiny preschool writings of animals. And they would give them to Dr. Klar. And she would write what they were. So I saved them.

So last year I brought them back to Breath of Life with me, and Dr. Klar's like, "Well, that's crazy," because now they're driving and you know, it's crazy to see that.

But I think, and that's another thing, I wish that, I mean, I know it wasn't authorized, but I had no choice. I had no childcare. You know, and I'd have to bring them with me. They weren't disruptive. In fact, I think that's why they're so interested in language. So the one, Emilio, the one you saw right now, he actually did a language project at Sherman. And because of Breath of Life, he was able to participate with other tribes. Because usually we're always left out because we don't have enough language. So we never participate in major language projects.

And so his school was doing public service announcements on earthquake safety. So the kids had to do, what is it, drop—

SG: Stop, drop and roll? No.

LM: No, that's fire. (laughter) I always do that. Drop, stop and roll. But—

SG: Drop and cover? Duck and cover?

LM: Duck and cover. And they had to do this in a language, and then they had to put, "Spread the word, earthquake preparedness." And normally we wouldn't participate in that because we're thinking there's no way we could do that. So oftentimes I think, especially for California Indians, especially in those mission areas, where there's been long-term colonization, it's hard. And often those tribes in those areas don't participate because it's just not there. I mean, you can't.

So it was really cool because he called and he said, "How do you say these words? I'm going to do it. I'm going to participate." Which was cool because he's there with, he goes to Sherman, so he was there with so



many other tribes that have language. So for him to be able to participate was really cool.

SG: Right.

LM: And he wouldn't have been able to participate if he hadn't been exposed to it. And without my cousin Debbie, I mean, she really was instrumental in getting us involved. But I didn't know enough of, I'm bad at language. I'm not going to be anymore, though. I have a funny story.

Because when Debbie, and I wrote this in my paper to my instructor, when Debbie first told me about Breath of Life, I was like (sighs). She's like, "You know, it's your grandma's notes. You have to go."

I was like, oh, God, now I feel obligated to go. So I just put my name in and went. I had no idea. And to me, I was like, okay, if I pick up like a couple commands that I can tell my kids in public without anyone knowing, cool. If I have a way to tell my kids "stop that" or "quit it" or "be quiet" in public, where I could say it on the down low, that would be good. That's really all I thought I was going to learn. And that's really all I was interested.

Then I was like, oh, maybe we'll do my grandma's songs. Okay.

So the first year that I did a song for my project, one of my grandma's songs. But they don't tell you. You're hooked, see? (laughs) You get hooked after that first year. And so I was like, I'll just go, I don't really want to, but I'll go. I'll just, figure out how to say a few commands and a couple of songs, and that will probably be it.

I think we brought my mom the first year for a few of them. And my sister. I can't remember if my mom and my sister came the second year. Maybe it was the second year my mom and my sister came with us. And my mom, we just brought my mom along just because. She wasn't really participating, but she was interested. But not in a position where she could do academic studying and stuff. And we lived close enough where we would travel. So I've never stayed in the dorms, which is a unique experience. So we would travel in every day.

So I brought my sister one year, my mom. I can't even remember what years they were.

SG: That's okay.

LM: Gosh, if he's sixteen, he was four, so it must have been, I don't know, 2004, 2006, somewhere around there. What's the first one?

SG: The first one was '96.

LM: I think my first one would be 2004 or 2006, somewhere around there. But I really, and my sister's really smart and very academic. And she was getting it, and Debbie was getting it. So I kind of got lazy, because I would just be like, "You guys, how do you say this?"

So I always relied on [other] people, [that] were better than me. And then Debbie's nieces, they were really getting good. So I was like, oh I don't really need to learn it. I'll just ask someone every time I need something, you know? Because I was kind of, like I said, I was being lazy about it.

And also, as an artist, when I looked at the documentation, I was honestly more interested in pulling out descriptions of regalia, descriptions of jewelry, descriptions of those items. So I would be in the language thing and I would be looking and my mind would wander on focus—I'd read a reel and I'd be like, oh, whoa, I've got to read this reel! And I'd be writing down these things in the microfilm room and not really remembering oh, yes, it's language. But it was language, because I would write down the birds and feathers and certain things that we were using on certain pieces. I'd write them in the language and then try and figure them out in English. So it still was language-related, but it was a different focus. So they were focusing more on grammar, and all the things that you're supposed to be doing as far as being able to make it useful in a sense that you can converse with someone. So I was on a different, I was on my own track. So everybody else, because we're all in there doing that kind of work.

And what I noticed was I relied on those people to do it for me, or to do the grammar. I was like oh, I'm going to go work on this. Give me the grammar when you're done. And they would.

And then we oftentimes in our home community get called on to do opening prayers for things. So we always had this kind of, Debbie would always do it, because she's the most fluent, and then my sister. We had kind of like a pecking order, not pecking order, but you know, like an order. And I was like—so they got their opening prayers, you know, just things that we would have to—enough language that they could do an opening prayer.

So one day I was like, oh, I don't really need to learn it. I ain't going to be called. There will be Debbie. What's the chances that they both can't make it?

So then one year, that happened to me. They both couldn't do it. So they're like, you have to. I was like, crap! So I called Dr. Klar and I was like, "Help me!" I was just dying. And you had to be like, of course, some of our introductory things that we have to use to introduce ourselves are these crazy long words. And I was like, oh, God!

So I called Dr. Klar. "Say it again! Say it again!" On the phone. And I was just struggling, struggling, struggling.

So we get to the place. And normally it's just maybe at a salmon conference. Or maybe at an intimate, smaller event. No. They had a huge, professional stage with these Marshall stacks for the band. Yeah. Like a huge stage that you have to go up all these stairs, a professional concert stage. And a microphone. And I was like, what the hell! Why out of all the times—

So I had to go up there. And I was like, man. I couldn't get the last three lines. So I wrote them inside my hand, right? So I go up there and I did the first four lines, and I was like, okay. And then I just totally could not remember. And I paused, and I was like, oh, yeah. So I looked down. I was like this with my hands like this. And I read them real quick and I looked up when I said them, but it looked like I was pausing because I was being emotional or whatever. So I pulled it off.

But it was a, after that point, it was a big lesson. You know, don't waste time. Either give someone else a spot that's more serious about it, or get serious. And like I said, I was using it, but just in a different capacity. And I still think the capacity I used the documentation for is incredibly important. It's just a different piece. I'm acquiring different information out of it. So, yeah, I learned my lesson.

So now I've become really interested in the grammar and how we say things. So I'm constantly writing it down and trying to remember.

SG: Maybe you're the one who can think of the importance of having language around artistic processes or creative processes.

LM: Yeah. That and also environmental areas as well. We've had certain mountains that were important to us. And sometimes I'll go through the archives and documentation and I'll be like man, that mountain's called that, or that river's called that. So for me, those are like important pieces. And I think a lot of it has to do with my focus in my program. Because I do want to, you know, one of the things that helps a tribal community be sustainable is creating partnerships. And that's scary and risky for tribes to go outside their community. But I really think if we had solid partnerships with safe agencies, or agencies that are respectful, it might be beneficial.

And so one of the things I really was looking into is partnering with our tourism industry. And I know people are like, oh, no, you're going to exploit our culture and it's going to be like a tourist thing! And that's not really what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that it would be nice to create more of a sense of place when people come to our original village site. Right now it's just a regular little beach town. Nobody knows the history there. Nobody knows that Pismo Beach means "the place where the tar is," and it's really Pismu'. You know what I mean? Like nobody knows that. But how cool if we were to educate people on

that. And use the language. Instead of saying “Pismo,” put underneath “Pismu” and its meaning. Because then people will realize, oh, wow, there’s a history here before us. This was actually somebody’s home, this is actually somebody’s place where they gathered these things from.

So there are certain things about tribal cultures that are sharable. I’m not saying give away our secrets and put on dresses and make a fake village and do a little dance every day at twelve o’clock for tourists. That’s not at all what I’m saying. What I’m saying is creating a partnership with the tourism industry that adds a sense of place when you go there. So when you go there, you get a sense of who the people are from that area. In a good way. Not in a way where it’s exploitive. And language can be a big part of that. Language can be a big part of helping protect our sacred sites.

So when I look at our language, I’m usually focused on those areas more so than extracting things that would make me more fluent in the beginning. But now I’m like, after my ordeal, I realize the importance of buckling down and becoming, making it more useful in everyday conversation stuff. So I’m really working hard now on that.

SG: Oh, yes. So I came across a paper when I was doing another interview. I came across a paper that a lady named Elizabeth Konzak had written. And she interviewed Deborah ten years ago.

LM: Oh.

SG: And she mentioned that, Deborah mentioned that she was working with her nieces on language, and nephews, and made T-shirts with language on it. You were one of the nieces?

LM: No, no. Debbie’s sister’s kids is the one she’s talking about. It’s funny because Debbie and I are related, and our families go way back, like even before contact. And we’re not blood related, but our families in our old villages married each other’s families, all the way up until—gosh, Debbie has, it’s so cute, she had a picture of my great-grandma holding her great-grandpa as a baby. So our families have always known each other, have always been married back and forth, even before contact. We’re from the same villages, we have the same relatives. And when you’re in a small tribal community, it’s like she’s blood related to a lot of my blood related cousins. You know, it’s just crazy. You just have to do these family trees.

I always tell the kids don’t, don’t pick up on anybody at our gatherings, because you don’t know, you know what I mean? Let me go back and look at things before you exchange phone numbers.

Yeah, so Debbie’s nieces were, her sister’s kids were doing that with her. And I think one of them might be looking into doing a master’s

in linguistics, I think, at this point in time. I'm not sure. So that was a really nice find.

Oh, so what I was saying about Breath of Life, too, is [that] my kids became interested in Breath of Life by being exposed to it as kids. And I just wish that there was more opportunity to do something on that level. Not that everyone has to bring their kids each time, but maybe do a separate, I don't know, project or allow, you know, I don't know. It just, I know it changes the liability and logistics a lot having young people in. But really, for my kids to see their aunts and their cousins working hard to revitalize the language, and for them to see that unfold, and for them to see the passion that our linguist has, that was powerful for them. And that's why they're interested in the language.

And their other tribes, they're enrolled with their dad's tribe, which has strong language. So when my son wanted to do with his language project, I mean, he could have very easily done it in Navajo. But he chose to do it in Northern Chumash. Because he knew that it was important to revitalize that language and to have that be visible.

And it's funny, because they did a little T-shirt at the end of their—they did a poster, so we have a poster of it. But they also did a T-shirt. And on the T-shirt it says, there's a picture of a guy, duck. Yeah, it's duck, cover, I don't know what it was, but the earthquake thing. They have the word for "duck" in all the language and the word for "cover" in all the languages. And then over here it tells you what language it's in. and that's really nice, because that's one of the first times that people are like wow, I didn't know there was a Northern Chumash language. They hear a lot about Samala, which is a Santa Ynez dialect in Santa Barbara. But very rarely, Northern Chumash is out in the public. So it was kind of nice for him.

But they all choose to, I mean, it would be much easier if they learned a language that has fluent speakers. I mean, he could call his grandma and say, "How do you say this, this and this?" But he chose not to take the easier route. And he knows how important, by seeing all of us, through Breath of Life, do all that research and all that work. And how excited we get when you find something, a word that you didn't know.

Like one, I think it was one year my cousin Clarabelle, she was looking for the word "pine nut." And it wasn't in Harrington's notes. And I think she went to Henshaw, and I don't know, she ended up finding it. But she was really excited. And we're like, "Oh my God! You found it!" So it's like little things like that, you know.

SG: Yeah, the kids seeing you work, or even like, I noticed my son will brush his teeth better if I'm brushing them at the same time.

LM: Yeah. So they understand that. And they've interacted, like just making, they are curious, you know? "How do you say cat? How do you say dog? How do you say this?" And they draw their little cards and Dr. Klar would write. And they try and say it. So it's, it was fortunate, I used to think it was unfortunate they didn't have childcare all the time. But it was fortunate that I lived close enough, was the other thing, that I could drive back and forth each day. And bring one of the kids with me. So it's been a blessing to have that happen. Because I don't think they would have understood the value of it or the importance or how hard people are working had they not seen it.

And it was good for them to see not just us, but other tribes doing the same thing. So it's good for them to be exposed to that.

SG: Yeah. That's for sure. It would be nice if they, if there was some way to include—

LM: I know. I wish there was like a—I know it's hard, because it just opens up a whole can of worms, probably, with legal stuff and food and dorms.

SG: Yeah. That's for sure. Before your first Breath of Life, had you ever used an archive? Visited one and had that experience?

LM: Nope.

SG: And you said, if I remember correctly, that you kind of fell into applying for your first Breath of Life. Like somebody had said—

LM: "You have to go! You have to go! It's all your grandma's stuff! Just go!" And I was like oh my god, all right, I'll go.

SG: Yeah. And who was it you found out about it?

LM: Debbie.

SG: What was it like getting there to Breath of Life, and maybe the first workshop, the first time hearing linguists talk about—

LM: Well, I had known our linguist, actually, prior to this. Because we did have contact with our linguist. And she did give us her dictionary, or family members the dictionary. I think I was in junior high, and she'd given family members the dictionary. And I have a beautiful letter I saved. I think it was before Breath of Life, it was like 1997 or '98. And she had written a nice letter.

And I think it was John Johnson at the Museum of Santa Barbara who told me to get in touch with her. Because I had asked him about something and he said, “Oh, it might be in your grandma’s Harrington notes.” And I was like okay. And he said, “Why don’t you call Dr. Klar? Here’s her number.”

I spoke with her briefly on the phone and she followed up with a really nice letter. That was before *Breath of Life*. Because I knew there was a dictionary. And so he had mentioned the dictionary to me, too. Then I think it was him that got me in contact with her. And she wrote the letter to me. And that was before *Breath of Life*.

But I still really didn’t know like, I didn’t even know what they were talking about when they were talking about my grandma’s notes with Harrington. I didn’t know what that means, you know what I mean? I had no idea. I had no idea where she extracted her dictionary from. And then in her letter she had wrote that she did her dissertation using my grandma’s Harrington notes. So then it was like, oh, okay. Like maybe I could get access to those. But you still think no, because it’s the academic world, and it’s at the Bancroft. And how would I, who would I talk to? I mean, where’s the point of entry into that world? You know what I mean? You just don’t know. Like how do you get there? How do you get in?

SG: With no door. So what was it like walking through the door of the Bancroft Library?

LM: Oh, my God. It was amazing. It was amazing. Just being there and hearing, I think the thing that impacted me the most was the welcoming dinner. And seeing other tribes there. I thought we were the only ones that didn’t know our language. Because it seemed like other people did. I mean, I knew there was a few other tribes. I lived in San Jose, so I knew that local tribes in that area and Salinas area didn’t have any speakers, either. But I just thought it was that area.

SG: Yeah.

LM: From the Golden Gate to L.A. just doesn’t have language. And it’s pretty much true. I mean, there was no speakers in those areas. I knew my cousin’s wife had speakers. So it was like, okay, they do up north. They do down south. I guess it’s just here, we don’t have language. So it was nice to see people from tribal communities that I thought had speakers that I thought could—why are they here? You know what I mean? I thought they could just learn it in their communities, it was spoken there. That was my perception.

So really for me, the big thing was, when I went to that dinner and I saw all those other tribal communities, and people I knew there, I was

like whoa, I didn't know you were in the same boat. And a lot of people get really emotional during that welcome dinner, because it's such a powerful experience. And just to see that power, that's what really was like, oh, shoot, this is for real. This is real. So really that opening dinner was the first, that was a major impact in opening my awareness to how important and what a big deal this really is for so many people, not just my community. Wow, there's a lot of communities like this. Just opening dinner. I mean, right off from there. So that was like, wow. That's crazy.

SG: So were you there in 2012? Were you there last summer? I can't remember.

LM: Yeah.

SG: And have you gone pretty much every year in between?

LM: I think so.

SG: Or most years?

LM: Most years. Some years I came but I didn't do a final project. It was hard because the school districts here were always ending that week. And so it was really hard when you have young kids. Because it was like someone was graduating from elementary school, someone had a school party. Someone graduating from the eighth grade, then it was high school graduation. Just like always that week. So it's always been—that's why I've never stayed in the dorms, too, is partly because I've got to come back and bake cupcakes or someone's swim party, or fill out permission slips. That whole week is crazy. So I usually just drive in and out. And then I'll call Debbie and tell them, "Start without me. I'm late this day." Or, I can't stay tonight for the night events. I just miss some of that stuff.

But at the same time, it's kind of cool because I remember when we were pulling the songs from the wax cylinder, one of the gals there, she went to the rooms, I don't know, because I had them on cassette from the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. And she was able to put them through the software that they have at Berkeley on a CD. And so it was kind of cool. Because even though I didn't get to stay for the night events, the whole car ride home, the kids [and I] were working on the songs. And we hit traffic time. So it was a good practice session, a good two-hour practice session. So it's a little different driving back and forth, but I still got to work on language in a different way.

SG: The materials that the archivists, like they pulled out in advance, were those helpful? Or was it more the searching?



LM: I like it when they do it. (laughs) I'll tell you, I admit. When it comes to academics, I am lazy on that stuff unless it really serves an immediate purpose, like for my art. Or if I want to know a plant name or something. Unless I'm using it right then and there, I'm not going to search for it. So just put it here for me. And that's probably the only way I would access it. Once I get it, I like to search through it. But I don't like searching.

SG: What happens when you do try to use the catalogs or the finding, the printed finding aids?

LM: It's not my thing. It's confusing. It's hard. I mean even, it was funny because when I did first want to do the songs, it was funny because Santa Barbara—Harrington cataloged them one way with one numbering system. And then this guy, God, what is, I forget his name.

Anyway, he worked with Santa Barbara and Smithsonian and did another cataloging of them, another way of cataloging them. And then the Smithsonian, through their wax cylinder project, has another way of cataloging them. So sometimes on the transcript there's a, they're not full transcripts, but they're kind of brief little summaries of okay, this song, blah, blah, blah, deer song, this is a good recording, it's on 00 AB side of the cassette. You know, so the paperwork, but then you see all these other numbers on there. And then it doesn't correspond when you go back to the original Harrington notes. And I was like, what the hell? Is it that hard to just come up with one numbering system and stick with it? Why does everyone keep changing it on us? I can't figure this out. Four different numbering systems. Really? If it takes me more than two numbering systems, I'm done. (laughs)

So at DC, when I was at DC, at the Library of Congress, she said, "Well, there's lots of numbering systems, and this is why." And she explained that whole thing. And I was like, oh, God. So it's hard. It's hard. I went to DC not for the Breath of Life, I went for an art scholarship for research. So I was able to access the Library of Congress and the archives at the Smithsonian. But it was for a totally separate project, not with BOL. But just having their archivist there and being able to pull stuff made it easier. You just tell them ahead of time what you're looking for and they get it for you. It's done.

And when you're there, and even at Breath of Life, it's like you're on a time frame. I can't spend four days trying to figure out a numbering system and figure out where things are. I need it now, because this is my only day here. Then I got next day over at this place. Your time is limited. So I think you get more out of it if it's searched for you.

SG: Yeah.

- LM: I would love to have the skills and the patience and the time, but I don't.
- SG: Yeah. Yeah. What, I don't even know how, the question is only half-baked in my head, so I'll just block it out and we'll work into what I mean. (laughs) But what media do you work with? Or what—
- LM: Mostly I do our traditional addresses and all of our dance stuff. And jewelry. I do both traditional and contemporary. So it's both. But that's pretty much what I do. So I do our shell work, all of our abalone and clam and feather work. Whatever it takes to create a piece.
- SG: And what's one of the projects, or if you can talk about one of the things that you've made that was helped by Breath of Life?
- LM: It's funny, because when I applied for the Smithsonian project, it's the Community Artist Leadership Project. And they only choose two people out of the whole, there's only two indigenous people chosen each year out of the whole Western hemisphere. So Canada all the way down. So it's pretty hard to get into. When I got accepted, I knew that I'd be going to the archives. Not just looking at our items. But you also need that documentation. Because that's the other piece. I need to have descriptions of things, especially things that haven't been made in a long time. And I knew I'd be going there. And I felt a little bad because I already had access to so much of it. And I was like dang, I feel kind of bad spending a day in the archives there, because I have a lot of it and I've gotten a lot of it. But there were some different things there. And there was a lot of photographs that I had not seen or had access to through Berkeley. So that was nice.
- But I think, I don't know, because it's hard to say because it's kind of like a progression.
- SG: Yeah.
- LM: So years ago, way before Breath of Life, in the late 80s, we were working more with the museum, because they had our stuff. And then when Breath of Life came, we transitioned it and started working more with Breath of Life for our language stuff. You know what I mean? Because there wasn't anything available other than working with the museums? When Breath of Life came around, it gave us another option and way to get language.
- But it's all kind of intertwined. Because you go back and forth with different agencies and different resources and different scientists and different professionals to try and get the things that you need, or try and

put those pieces together. And who has this, who has that? And so it's just a progression, I think, really. So it's hard to say what exactly came from Breath of Life because I've accessed this material in different ways at different places at different times. And sometimes I'd be looking at the same material that I'd seen at Breath of Life but I wasn't ready to receive it. So I just dismissed it or overlooked it. You know what I mean? I just wasn't in that place or looking for that at that time. So I don't know, it's like a progression.

But I think the best thing I loved the most was the microfilm. And just seeing my grandma's words and the stories, and getting to read those stories. They're all like, "Next group's coming in."

I'm like, "No!!!" (laughter) Hugging the machine. "No!"

And I told Debbie, I'm like, "How much do those machines cost?" (laughter) Seriously, I wanted to buy one and just sit there and wheel through the next slide. It's like, I want one of those! I need one of those!

So I think that that was, for us, since the bulk of our stuff comes from her notes, that was significant. Because we had access to the dictionary prior to that, and we knew Dr. Klar and Dr. Johnson. And people were giving us songs and the words and things that they had. But it wasn't organized or in a package. It was just us seeking it out. And it wasn't, you know, it was just these, trying to pull it together. So it was nice is that it's all pulled together at Breath of Life, for you. With a purpose and a plan. And there's other people going through it, and other tribes there, and other communities that are further along and some that are just beginning. So it's nice to see that spectrum.

Just knowing that the microfilms were available closer to me than Santa Barbara, because I live in Northern California. So just knowing that was nice, that I could access them without a six-hour drive. So needless to say, I never got the money to buy the machine. But now that everything's being digitized, it's going to be easier.

SG: Yeah. Yeah. I get motion sickness from those spinning microfilms.

LM: Oh, man, I was getting good at those, I'm like, oh my God! (laughter) And it was hard because you'd be trying to write. And it was before smart phones. Now I would have been taking pictures with my phone. So technology has changed so much since the first Breath of Life, or the first one I went to, at least. It's like oh my gosh, if I had some of these tools earlier, it would have been easier.

SG: Yeah, the tools these days are amazing. So it's Kathryn Klar?

LM: Yes.

SG: And then who's Dr. Johnson?

LM: So he works at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. And he's the anthropologist there who studies and archives everything for our tribe. Or not just our tribe, but I would say Chumash in general. So usually, I mean, the microfilms are there, too. So some of the materials that are at the Bancroft are there. We have a few baskets and other items there. But it's housed down in Santa Barbara. Even if it was from San Luis Obispo area.

So just, I mean, there's nothing in San Luis Obispo, anyway. They don't house anything currently. So it was a trek for me to get down there and have access to things. So Breath of Life made that easier.

SG: Yeah. Yeah. Do you think Breath of Life helped out, or having that background of using archives helped out either in getting or getting stuff out of the Smithsonian?

LM: Oh, yeah. Once I got to Smithsonian, I felt like a pro. And then in my language revitalization class, I felt like so prepared. I was like, I am so prepared for this class. It was almost like I shouldn't have taken it. But I wanted to learn a little bit more. And I think that there's always something to be learned. But I felt so well prepared for all of the lessons that were going on. There were lessons about documentations. Lessons about, just all the, any of the course lessons, it was like oh, I know about how to access documentation. I know what this is, I know what that is. And that was all through Breath of Life.

I even emailed Leanne. I was like, "Oh my God, I feel so prepared. I just want you to know, I feel so prepared for this course because of Breath of Life."

SG: That is really terrific.

LM: So if I get an A, I'll owe it to BOL! (laughter)

SG: What are some of the other things, you were saying you thought might either improve or benefit Breath of Life? Now would be the time for your list.

LM: I do think having a youth component in there would be helpful. Even if it's, I know young kids would be more difficult, the younger they are. And I know they [have a track at] Language of Life which involves younger kids. But that's different than seeing someone access archives. That's different than learning how to be quiet and not play—because, you know, the Language of Life [conference] is fun because you play games in

your language, you hang out with other kids. It's a little funner, more casual atmosphere. And I love it. But they also need to see the other side of it, like how do you access the materials? How do you get access to those materials? What's available to you? And I think that helps. I think it's good for them to be around older adults, and not their peers all the time. I don't know.

SG: (laughs) I like that idea.

LM: Because how are they going to learn how to do this? They need to see their adults in their lives doing the work. So for me, I wish there was a youth component.

And then the other thing I would like to see is, you know, I feel bad every year taking up a space at Breath of Life. But it's the only way for me to go is if I apply. So I feel like for those people that have gone for a long time, can we not take up a space, and come in as maybe mentors. And not take up a dorm and a space. I mean, I'd be willing to travel back and forth in and let a new person have a space. But I still want to work with Dr. Klar. I still want to work with the new people coming in. So I don't know. You know what I mean? Like having some of the veterans of BoL, rather than being permanent students and take up permanent slots, come in as mentors rather than taking up a beginning spot. Because I don't need to go to the tour a hundred billion times. You know what I mean? I don't need some of the early lecture stuff. I would love for more people to have that opportunity. So is there a way that I don't stay in the dorm and I bring my own lunch and come in the afternoons when they're working? That's all. To me, that would get more people in.

Because see, in order to participate, you have to apply. But then I'm taking a spot. That makes me feel bad because it's like I have a cousin that might be interested. I don't want to bump someone.

SG: Yeah. I think they do agonize over how to keep the numbers—

LM: Fair.

SG: —manageable.

LM: And manageable. I know. So is there a way to not pay for a dorm and I can come in as a mentor and still benefit from the linguist. I mean, and I think there would be people even out of the area that might be willing to do that, if there was cheap lodging somewhere. I don't know. Just an idea. Because I feel like I don't want to take another spot. But then I still want to work with Dr. Klar and the team, the core group that's there.

Because that's how a lot of learning takes place for us is having access to Dr. Klar.

SG: And you get together with her sometimes outside of BOL, too. Or correspond with her.

LM: We correspond with her quite a bit. But I did before, prior to Breath of Life. So the corresponding has been there, prior to BOL. But increased after Breath of Life. When we talked to her recently about trying to secure funding to hire her so that we have more access to her. But it's hard to come up with money, and funding is tight and competitive. So if we don't have the funding, then that's the only time I have access to her is through Breath of Life. I keep coming back because I want to have that time with a linguist. It's expensive to do it on my own. And I don't have that resource. And neither does our tribe have that resource. So it makes it affordable for people to have access to their language.

SG: I know they do also like to get a mix of newcomers and long-timers. I hate to call them old-timers. (laughs)

LM: I know, I know. I'm like (groans). But yeah, I mean, if there was a way that I didn't have to take up space and I could still come and participate, then more people would learn, more people get in, more people have the experience. And then you're not leaving people out. You know what I mean?

SG: Yeah. Yeah.

LM: I don't know if it would work logistically or how it would work. I'm more than willing, you know what I mean, I'm more than willing, because I know how much it costs, the food and this and that. But I'd be more than willing to just buy my own lunch and have access to Dr. Klar like everyone else in the afternoons.

And it's nice because some of the old-timers, we have stuff that Dr. Klar then doesn't have to keep repeating.

SG: Yeah.

LM: We've developed some materials. Then she doesn't have to keep— (laughs). And that's what's nice is also staying in touch with those tribal communities. Because as with us, it's been a transition from individuals. And now our tribal chair and some of our tribal members are going to the national Breath of Life. When they get back, they'll be more instrumental in implementing a language committee and working on grants to get

things funded. So, but it's nice for Dr. Klar to keep in touch with those. Because if we develop language materials, she might need to or want to use those, rather than starting from scratch each time there's a new group coming into Breath of Life. You know what I mean? If we have a curriculum developed, it might be easier for her to use that. So kind of a reciprocal give and take. I don't know. That's kind of what I wish could happen, is that those old people could still somehow participate without taking a spot.

SG: Since your family and your community has worked on language for a long time, are you starting to make your own materials that then need storage and care and access, too?

LM: We're getting, we will be getting to that point. And I think the other thing that again, going back to kind of strategic planning, is that I think tribal communities really before they jump into a huge language program, it might be beneficial to do a strategic plan. Because here's the thing. Like when I was in DC, they were like, "Oh, we're so excited! We're going to start digitizing these, and we're going to put them online so everybody has access to them!"

And I'm like, "Wait, wait, wait, wait. Who said that? This is my grandma's stuff. I don't necessarily know we want—because some of the stories are personal. You didn't ask." I mean, who gets to decide who has access? The people whose language it is? Or the institutions who house it? I mean, who does it belong to?

And so you have to really work those questions out with your tribal community so that you have a position on those things.

SG: Yeah.

LM: I mean, there's people who think they want their language online for everybody to access. And then there are people who like, no, no, no, no, no. Because it can be exploited. And for us, in our community, we have a huge problem with people—gosh, what's the word? There's so many phrases for it. But there are people who claim to be Chumash, and they're not. It's a huge problem. In fact, there's academic dissertations on it. There's all kinds of stuff. It's crazy, crazy, crazy. And so I don't want to make it easier for those groups to exploit more than they already have. And that's a whole other can of worms. Because, anyway.

So for me, who has access to documentations, why can't we be the gatekeepers of our own language? You know what I mean? We're not good enough to? We don't have the credentials to? I mean, it's ours. And back in 1915, when he was interviewing my grandma, she didn't know English. How's she going to know about copyrights or all those

things? Like things that would affect in the future. Because nobody could predict the technology or what was going to happen to the stuff. So it's like, I don't necessarily know that we want it everywhere. I mean, why can't we decide what we as a tribe want to share and what's sharable? Why can't we as a tribe decide how we want our stuff accessed?

SG: Yeah.

LM: It's like a lot of tribes don't have a voice in that, and I'm so against that. You know? It's not cool. Because again, we don't have control over our own things. And decisions are made for us, as if we were incompetent to make those decisions.

When I was at Smithsonian, it was like, wait, we haven't talked with you guys. You haven't approached us. I mean, we don't want it out there like that. Not that we're saying we're not going to share the language. But let us put it in a format that's sharable, and let us decide that. You know? I don't particularly want the Harrington notes that have personal stories in there, because sometimes it's about other people's families, or things in the community that were horrible. You know what I mean? Let us decide, let us have that opportunity to decide what we want to be shared and what we want kept private.

There are sacred sites mentioned in there. Anybody who's a grave robber who wants to find out where those sites are can through those notes. And it's like no, it's not, we don't want all that out there. And like I said, it's not about not sharing the language. But let us decide as a people what's sharable and how we want to share it and who has access. Can we just at least have that respect? So, I don't know, that's, it doesn't always fit in with the museum scene. (laughter) I know, because I have to work with museums a lot through work and school and I'm like, "I know you're not going to agree with me, but let's just have an open dialog about this here." Because I think that tribes should have some ability to say what gets shared and what doesn't get shared.

SG: Yeah, it's a big—

LM: I know it's a big issue.

SG: I have a paper that's up online that's about kind of access issues for all the materials that were created by the Center for Indian Community Development up north at Humboldt [State University]. Because they recorded a lot of Hupa and Karuk and Tolowa. And they're trying to figure out what to do with it and what are the access issues, if any. And it might stir up some good thoughts or ideas.



LM: Do you have, can you send me that?

SG: Yeah. I will.

LM: Because that's kind of what I'm talking about for my final.

SG: Oh, right on.

LM: Yeah. So that would be really cool to have some more resources.

SG: Yeah. I'll point you to the link, or I'll give you the link right after we finish up.

LM: Yeah. Okay.

SG: Don't let me leave the house. (laughs) When is your final paper—

LM: Well, I got an extension because of my foot situation. I was almost out like completely for two weeks. Because the medication, the pain medication and doctors' appointments, and I had to see a surgeon. It's just like I can't do anything right now.

SG: Yeah.

LM: So I just sent them my doctor's orders and they were like, "No, just go ahead, take your time." As long as I get it in before they submit grades, I'm good.

SG: Yeah. That's not a hard sell for them. Let me see. What was your impression last year when they talked about using the term "linguist buddy" instead of "linguist mentor?"

LM: It didn't bother me either way. I don't really have a preference. I think I've seen some tribe, I'm not going to mention it. People have been disrespectful to the linguists. Which is unfortunate. So whatever helps aid in that respect, I'm all for calling them whatever helps them. Because a lot of them, right, are volunteers?

SG: Yeah.

LM: I've seen some tribes, some people, treat them pretty mean. Just weird. I don't know what the ego thing is. But yeah, I've seen some times where a linguist might have been treated not so well. And it's like oh, God, it's so embarrassing. Like we shouldn't be behaving, Indian people shouldn't be

behaving like that. These are volunteers, and so what if they're white or whatever ethnicity that they are, you know what I mean? They're volunteering to help. So zip it! Or you know what I mean?

Go back home if you haven't learned any manners. So it doesn't matter. Whatever works for supporting them and helping them feel more a part of the whole process, you know? And not like alienated.

SG: You mentioned—without getting into specifics, which is just hard to do that for a recording – so without getting into specifics, did you notice any similar dynamics, or different, between participants and the archivists? Like the staff at the archives.

LM: This past year I didn't really use the archives. Reason being that we kind of knew what was there, and we kind of brought the materials that we needed to work on. Then Dr. Klar had gotten us additional stuff prior so that we'd just be able to just go in her office and cram out work, like stuff we needed to do. So she had some materials for us. And she's really good about making a copy of stuff. Like she'll go get what we need and make a copy. And then she gives it to one of us and then we go make copies for our team members.

SG: Yeah.

LM: So one of them, like my sister, she'll take it to work, because she drives back and forth, too. And she'll take it home or at work and scan and then email. So we're really good about getting resources to each other in the most effective and quick manner.

SG: Yeah.

LM: Because like our time with Dr. Klar is gold. Like we don't want to waste one second. Poor lady. We're like, we'll carry your lunch up for you, don't even sit down. We're going to get your lunch and you're going to go to your office. But she is amazing. She's the most amazing person. I mean, really. She's just so dedicated to us and so patient. Because we're like, like little kids in there. "Oh, no, wait, no, no, no, help me! No, no, no, wait! I got this!" And we're blurting things out. And we're like, "Me next!" (laughter) We regress when we're in there. Oh, God. I mean, she's an amazing person. We have a great relationship with her. And we're just so blessed to have her there helping us and just as interested in the revitalization as we are as tribal members. So it's nice to see someone take that same interest at the same level.

And it's just cool because even if it's something little, like I'll show you, where was this, that, I don't know if you know that they do have a Youtube channel, the 1492s—

SG: Oh, the 1491s.

LM: The 1491s—

SG: Yeah, I love those guys.

LM: Okay. So did you do their valentine project?

SG: I don't think so.

LM: So they asked everybody to submit—oh, God, where is it—to submit on Valentine's Day how to say "I love you" in their language.<sup>1</sup> And then they would edit it all together. You have to go on Youtube and see it. Because the whole thing is amazing. There's my baskets. Um, where did it go?

SG: How do you keep track of all the stuff that you've either—

LM: Okay. So here's what the girls did for—

SG: Ah.

LM: Oh, did they erase one of them? I think they did. I think one got erased. Oh, shoot.

SG: Are you trying to make it bigger?

LM: Yeah, it was a recording. But you'll see it in the video. It was them saying "I love you" in our language. Being able to—yeah, darn, it somehow got erased. Just the photos left. Darn it! Anyway, but yeah, so they participated in that. And that was one of the first things that they all had asked Dr. Klar to learn how to say. So it was kind of cool.

But if you go on YouTube and go on their channel, you can look up their videos, or the video that they did. It's really cool. I love the video that they did. It was so cool.

SG: I've seen some of the things that they've done, but I missed that one.

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<sup>1</sup> the 1491s, "Indigenous Love Words Project," YouTube video, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zvt4Eba\\_EJM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zvt4Eba_EJM).

LM: Yeah. It's the "I love you." It was on Valentine's Day.

SG: Oh, right on.

LM: I don't know what happened. I used to have a video of it. But, so.

SG: Cool. So I've actually got to my wrap-up sort of questions. What are your future hopes for Breath of Life, and for your language?

LM: Well, our future hopes is that now that our tribal council has kind of been motivated and they're going to be, some of the members will be attending Breath of Life this year, that they'll get hooked. And that we can kind of make it more official rather than individuals coming together. But make it more of an official sanctioned language project and do some strategic planning around that. And from there, have that direct our goals, which will direct funding sources and those kinds of things.

And really, for me, because our tribal community is very scattered, I think using technology, such as creating interactive lessons that could be accessed through a tablet or computer, where it could be graded or kind of interactive in that if you miss something, it kind of shows you why or how, with different levels of lessons. And I would love to see—and this is really futuristic—I would love to see it move into a way where we could be creating lessons that are like at a three or four-year proficiency that would allow our young students to use that as their language criteria for accessing four-year universities.

SG: Yeah.

LM: For me, that's my goal. I don't know if that's everybody else's goal. But I mean, that's why we would need a strategic plan. But I would love to see more tribes develop language programs that allow for their students to test at a three-year proficiency and to meet those language criterias in their own language. Because it seems unfortunate that they have to take foreign language at school, and then do their own language at home on the weekends. I think schools should place value on students that want to learn their own language. And if there was a way for our languages to fit in that academic world—be measured and tested and all those other criterias that they want—I mean, if that helps our kids get into school while learning their own language, I mean, I'm for that direction.

SG: Mm hmm. I wonder if there's some way of weaving together, connecting a youth component of Breath of Life with the language requirement.

LM: Right. Right. Right. Something even that simple. I imagine we might be able to get universities to—money’s tight, but I mean, any dollars help—and working on those policies again. And that’s really about sustaining our culture. It’s really about how can language—because in order for a language to be sustainable, it has to have value to your community.

And what value would that add to young people to be able to use that as a language requirement for college? I mean, that adds a lot of value to it.

Because my kids, they wanted to learn the language anyway. But it’s hard because they’re at school all day studying. And then they have their school foreign language criteria that they’re doing. And then we’re trying to do language lessons on the weekends. That’s a lot. I know other cultures do it. But I just wish that there was some way to kind of eventually make that happen. I know I’m not the only one in our tribe that shares that view. There are a few others. So I’m hoping that down the line that might be something, or even develop a model that can be used. So.

SG: Are there any questions that you were thinking “Oh, I know Susan’s going to ask me about this?”

LM: I knew you were going to ask me about the years I went. (laughter) I knew that one was coming. I was like, dang it, I knew that was going to happen. And I just can’t even remember what year that was. I just know my kids were so little. And it’s cool, because I still have all those little preschool drawings of cats and whales and chickens and horse and dog. Some of them we didn’t have words for in our language, which was a neat exercise, because then we were exposed to “Okay, how do you want to coin new words? Do you want to borrow? Do you want to say it in English? Do you want to create something with your own language? Do you want to—” I mean, there are so many options. So that really brought up that for us. Oh. Oh, no. I didn’t think about that. You’ve got to have new words, have this expand.

SG: I won’t make you get up to find them today, but I would love to see an example of—

LM: Yeah, I’ll have to send them to you. I’ll have to scan them. They’re so cute. I know, I bring them to Dr. Klar. And she’s like, “Oh my gosh.”

SG: When did your language go dormant? When was there not speakers around?

LM: Pretty much my grandma's the last one. So that would have been in—and she spoke with a few other locals that were also interviewed with other linguists at other times. So they kind of had like their little clique. But 1914. 1916, I think, was the last year he worked with her. Somewhere around that time frame.

SG: And were there any—it's pretty early for audio recordings. Were there any?

LM: Yeah, well, the wax cylinder recordings. And with her, he only did songs. So no spoken language. But there are other Chumash that he did, extensive recordings with languages.

You know, I try not to use other, I don't know, it's just kind of a thing, I don't want to use other tribes. Even if they're Chumash. It's a whole different tribe, in some aspects. It's like I don't want to use their materials or use their things without permission. So I pretty much just use our stuff. You know, our Northern Chumash stuff. Just because I don't want to get into all that drama. And I have enough resources, I think, within my own community.

But it gets weird. It just gets messy when you start using things from other tribes or other groups. I wouldn't use them without permission. But other people just feel like things can be just taken back and forth without permission. I think that's why I'm so protective. I'm like, "No!"

And then we have, with Chumash, there's a lot of people that profit off of saying they're Chumash. So it's a big issue. It's frustrating, and I don't want to make it easier. I'm like, "It's ours!" I hate that. You know, I hate that that happens. But unfortunately, I don't know where like, I don't know, I mean, I know it has to do with colonization and historical trauma and blah, blah, blah. But a lot of Native people, they don't have manners, like simple manners, anymore. They don't think to ask, "Can I use this?" Or you know what I mean?

SG: Yeah. Yeah.

LM: They'll just sing your grandma's songs because they can, because they have access. Without even common courtesy. I mean, some people ask, but the majority don't.

SG: Well that was my last question. So I'm happy to turn off the recording and say thank you so much, and thank you to your family who was so nice and quiet. (laughs) And it all turned out. I'm hitting the stop button.

[End of Interview]

## Chapter 10: Archivists Introduction

“You know, every time we come, and when we come with the Breath of Life group, [the archivists] are just so helpful. Like sometimes I go in there, now they recognize me from being there so often with them. They’re like, “Oh, yeah, well we have this,” or, you know, they’re always very helpful.

Lauren Lassleben, I mean, I love her, she’s just the best. I mean, if I’m at home and I see something, I might email her. And she actually will send us things. So yeah, they’re more than helpful. They’re just, from what I understand, from a couple that I talk to, they’re just glad that people are using the material that are there. And we’re just so glad that it’s there. But they’re always really helpful.”

—Quirina Luna Geary (Mutsun Ohlone)

This section considered the role of the archives and the archivists in Native language revitalization from the archivists’ perspective. The founders and organizers section of this thesis focused on the history of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival, and the participants section assessed the use of the archives for their language work. The three archivists interviewed discussed archival processing issues specific to dormant and endangered language materials: identification, acquisition, arrangement, description, access, and preservation. They also described their efforts before, during, and after the Breath of Life Workshop. In addition, they spoke about their collaborations with the other archives on campus, to Berkeley’s Linguistics Department, and to the archives profession in general.

It is interesting that the three archivists interviewed are representative of three different eras or trends in academic training for archivists. Lisa Conathan is a relatively new archivist (2006) with both an MLS and a PhD in linguistics; Lauren Lassleben, who has been with the Bancroft Library since 1985, has an MA in history; and Andrew

Garrett, a professor of linguistics who directs two archives visited by Breath of Life Workshop participants, has a PhD in linguistics. Conathan's dissertation was supervised by Garrett, who now draws on her formal archives training in his work. In past years, it was the norm for archivists to have graduate degrees in history. Currently, as Conathan observed, the master's in library and information science is the requirement for entrance into the archives profession. Lassleben added that the ideal education for working in university-based archives is to have both a subject-based masters and either a master's in library and information science or archival administration. Though his training is in linguistics, Garrett is the director of two archives. He draws on established archival standards, acknowledging that someone in the field of archival science has likely already thought through whatever problems he encounters in the archives. Conathan mentioned that her training in archives did not prepare her for the range of ways researchers connect with archival materials beyond academic uses. It was her experiences at Breath of Life that taught her that researchers can come to archives with personal, cultural, and spiritual research questions.

They each talked about the archival process that the collections used by Breath of Life participants have undergone. For the acquisitions stage, Garrett described a collection of John Peabody Harrington's notes on the Chochenyo language found in an office of Berkeley's Department of Linguistics. Lassleben explained that the Bancroft Library has such an extensive collection on the Luiseño language of southern California because local shopkeeper Philip Sparkman documented the language as a hobby. Sparkman had been in correspondence with Berkeley anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, and



after Sparkman's death in 1907 a thoughtful sheriff or coroner contacted Kroeber, asking if he wanted Sparkman's language papers. Kroeber said that he did want Sparkman's papers, and they became part of the Ethnological Documents Collection of the Department and Museum of Anthropology, a collection of the Bancroft Library.

During the first four days of the week of Breath of Life 2012, archivists from the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, the Bancroft Library, the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, and the Berkeley Language Center hosted four rotating groups of about fifteen Breath of Life participants. On Friday, participants were free to return to any of the archives except for the Hearst Museum, due to another visiting group. In past years, participants also visited a couple of the libraries on campus. However, these visits were removed from subsequent schedules because participants were overwhelmed and it was more likely that they could get published materials through interlibrary loan or booksellers.

The archivists wanted to encourage Breath of Life participants and other Native language scholars to think of their research as being of value to future generations and worthy of placement in an archive. But the archivists also wanted to be very careful not to pressure participants into putting their materials in any specific archive. They all mentioned that they would be glad to receive materials, but that there were also archives more local to Native American communities that might be just as good, including tribally run archives. Garrett suggested that participants work with both a local repository and a larger more established archives to preserve their language collections.

In his thoughts about how community language scholars might keep their language materials in such a way that would be very easy on the archives, Garrett had good advice. With interviews, Garrett said, always identify the date, location, participants, language, and topics at the beginning of each recording. He advised the use of sensible and meaningful file naming conventions and file structures. He recommended that potential donors start talking to the archive to which they are intending to deposit their materials. The repository will have specific guidance regarding how it wished to receive the materials.

In terms of describing materials, Conathan mentioned relying on her knowledge of linguistics and of California Indian languages in particular to identify language materials. Lassleben mentioned that one benefit of collaborating with Berkeley's Linguistics Department was being able tap into the faculty's knowledge of languages and linguistics. All three archivists recognized the value of detailed and accurate description. Lassleben mentioned the Library of Congress lumping all of the Chumash languages under one subject heading, thinking of them as dialects of one language. This is problematic for Chumash researchers. Breath of Life participant Leah Mata (Northern Chumash) mentioned in her interview that she does not look at documents for the other Chumash languages, so specific descriptions are important. All of the archivists spoke of the value of improving descriptions by consulting with Breath of Life speakers who can identify speakers in a recording, or people in photographs, or give more information about the content of a document. Lassleben said that she has participants fill out notes to curators or archivists slips with the correct information. Participant Quirina Luna and her

sister Clara Luna filled out such a slip on a fifteen-page interview where the catalog record had incorrectly identified their great-great-great-grandmother as Miwok. The record has since been corrected, and the interview now is retrieved in a search for Mutsun Ohlone.

While the languages historically represented at Breath of Life Workshops have been languages with no living fluent speakers, Garrett and Conathan both talked about how Breath of Life can benefit groups with living speakers. Conathan said that archival materials are not merely a last resort for language communities. Rather, even communities with living speakers can get access to the knowledge of previous generations through the use of archival materials. For the groups whose languages do not have fluent speakers, the presence of fluent speakers sometimes inspires the groups without speakers to move toward fluency or greater language use.

In terms of arrangement, the archivists spoke of the challenges of developing an organizational system that was both suitable for the archives and useful for researchers. Lasseben talked about the decision at Berkeley to divide collections based on format and then distribute the materials among different archives. This was good for the materials because each repository has its own experts, but burdensome for researchers who have to visit multiple repositories to study the related materials of one collection. Garrett spoke of wanting to digitize a collection of file slips for the California Language Archive, but present them as one item composed of 1500 related images, not 1500 distinct items.<sup>1</sup> In order to do accomplish that presentation, he would need to use METS and MODS

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<sup>1</sup> For an example, see Hupa Vocabulary and Grammatical Elements, <http://cla.berkeley.edu/item/2584>.

metadata standards for representing digital objects with multiple files, either learning to create the metadata himself or hiring someone to do it for him.

All of the archivists talked about issues of access to Native American language materials. The word “access” has several meanings in this context. The first concerns physical access. Garrett talked about the digitization as a means of providing greater access for language researchers not living near Berkeley. Lassleben talked about one of the benefits of Breath of Life as bringing participants to Berkeley at low or sometimes no cost to the participants. If organizers and partners can afford it, they will subsidize duplication fees and waive personal camera use fees. Physical access can also refer to the sense that the doors are open, not just to students and faculty of the University of California, Berkeley, but to anyone. Lassleben wanted Breath of Life participants and other Native language scholars to know that the Bancroft was open to them, that they would be regarded as legitimate researchers.

The second type of access concerns intellectual access, the ability to locate materials and then to understand them once found. Conathan discussed the general path that Breath of Life participants followed when accessing language materials. Starting with published and printed materials, such as the grammars of the University of California Publications in Linguistics, then progressing to sound recordings and handwritten field notes such as word lists or dictated texts, and slip files, a collection of

three-by-five inch cards with language data written on them, re-arrangeable to propose and test hypotheses about the language.<sup>2</sup>

Another consideration when discussing access concerns culturally sensitive materials. Both Garrett and Conathan talked about the need to restrict access to some of the more culturally sensitive materials. But both felt that some types of access restrictions need to be challenged. They also spoke of the historic notions of ownership of the materials which placed sole ownership in the hands of the linguist who pressed the record button or who elicited the data. With the advent of the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, ideas of ownership are coming to include the bearers of the languages and cultures.<sup>3</sup> Tribal definitions of ownership, who has the right to sing a song for a recording, for example, are a concern of archivists working with tribal language recordings. On a related topic, Lassleben talked about what she might say if a group asked for repatriation of original language materials. She would not want to just reject the request outright, but she would want the requestor to understand that the archives had kept the material safe during the eras of cultural assimilation, internal tribal politics, and natural disasters. Fortunately, with language materials, unlike items such as baskets, the language information can be copied multiple times with no loss to the value of the information. The idea of virtual repatriation, the repatriation of paper or digital copies of

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the types of materials found on American Indian languages, see Victor Golla, "The Records of American Indian Linguistics," *CoPAR Bulletins*, no. 8, (n.d.), [http://copar.org/par/par13\\_golla.pdf](http://copar.org/par/par13_golla.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> First Archivists Circle, "Protocols for Native American Archival Materials," <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/index.html>; National Park Service, "National NAGPRA FAQ," <http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/FAQ>.

materials to the tribal groups represented in the materials, can be easier for an archives than the repatriation of objects from a museum.

Each of the archivists emphasized that the knowledge transmission at Breath of Life was not a one-way street. The archivists not only appreciated the linguists' technical knowledge and the participants' knowledge of their people and their culture but used it to improve their collections' metadata and catalog information. Conathan talked about the advantages and drawbacks of linguists developing language archives independent of formally trained archivists. Language-specific archives are certainly more responsive to the needs of linguists and language communities, but they do not necessarily consider how to make their collections visible to researchers outside their immediate sphere. Untrained archivists also may not think about the bibliographic standards that make their catalog compatible with library catalogs, though Garrett talked about knowing that there were standards and that using them will ensure that more researchers will be able to find what they are looking for.

All three archivists expressed the job satisfaction that comes from seeing Breath of Life participants reconnect with and bring their languages back into use. After the 2011 Breath of Life Institute in Washington, DC, Conathan said that the archivists at the Smithsonian told her that Breath of Life was the most important event to have taken place there, and it was the reason they had become archivists. Both Lassleben and Conathan also spoke of how much work Breath of Life is and how they look forward to spreading the work among more people and institutions.

These interviews captured the archival process as it pertains to working with Native language materials and researchers of Native American heritage. They documented the work and the contributions of the archivists before, during, and after a Breath of Life Workshop. They revealed the information needs of the participants and how the archivists met those needs. They identified trends in educational backgrounds of archivists working with Native American language collections and gaps in current archival training when it comes to providing archival reference to Native American language researchers. In these ways, the narrators analyzed the role of the archivist in the Breath of Life Workshop and the effect that Breath of Life has had on their careers.

## Chapter 11: Lauren Lassleben

I have to say that some of the most poignant moments for me [during the Breath of Life Workshop] have been when people have sung. In this last time, we had a Northern Pomo singer who sings for dance groups. He's a song leader. And he said—I love people that know what they're looking for, because it's a lot easier to help people if they do—he said, “We have this group. I write the songs, but the words are Kashaya words, because I don't have the Northern Pomo words.”

At first I thought he meant do we have sheet music. (laughs) I wasn't getting it. He said, “No, Lauren, I can write the music. I need the words to fit with my music.”

So he found real Northern Pomo songs in Samuel Barrett[’s papers] dating from the early part of the 1900s. I know Barrett finished his doctorate in 1908 and left [California], so it was before 1908. He said, “This is it. I've got it. This is Northern Pomo. I can totally sing this.” And he said, “Do you want me to sing it [for you]?” And I thought, these words have not been spoken or sung—it's very likely, because they were in a manuscript, and not in a published book—for over one hundred years. And he brings them back to life in our reading room. Then he goes back to his dance group and his singing group and says, “This is ours.”

Lauren Lassleben is the appraisal and accessioning archivist for the Bancroft Library, the main special collections repository of the University of California, Berkeley. The Bancroft Library has employed Lassleben since 1985. As Bancroft Library's liaison to the Breath of Life Workshop since its beginning in 1996, she coordinates Bancroft staff, materials, and resources for Breath of Life. Her work in identifying collections for acquisition by the Bancroft and preparing them for use by researchers has the potential to benefit Breath of Life participants in both the short and long term. Her work with Breath of Life has opened her eyes to what researchers are looking for, how they use materials, and how their subject knowledge can improve access by future researchers.



The Bancroft's holdings in the areas of Native American studies, anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics are vast. The Bancroft is the university's repository to visit for California Indian language text materials created before the 1920s.<sup>1</sup> For the languages that went dormant in the early 1900s, the Bancroft may be the repository at which Breath of Life participants spend most of their research efforts.

Born in 1953, Lassleben grew up in the Los Angeles suburb of Whittier, California. Because her father graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and often spoke positively of the Bancroft Library, Lassleben has known of the Bancroft since her junior high school years. She majored in history as an undergraduate at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. She earned a master's degree in Latin American history and literature at the University of New Mexico, having completed some of her master's coursework in Quito, Ecuador, where her courses were conducted in Spanish. In 1980, she moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, and by 1985, she took her first position with the Bancroft as a project archivist. Seven years later, she took a leave of absence from the Bancroft in order to serve as an American Library Association/United States State Department Fellow at the National Archives of Chile. During her time in Chile, she helped to revive the Association of Chilean Archivists.

Just a few years later, in 1996, Lauren was the Bancroft Library's lead representative at the first Breath of Life Workshop. Her studies and experiences in Latin American countries gave her a respect for what it might be like for a Breath of Life

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Garrett, "Archives and Archival Research" (presentation made at the Breath of Life California Indian Language Restoration Workshop, Berkeley, CA, June 4, 2012).

participant to study and re-learn their language and culture through archival research. Lassleben also expressed that knowing that language and world-view are intertwined disposed her “very enthusiastically, toward working with California Indian scholars, high school students, master-apprentice pairs, everybody who wants to use the materials” at the Bancroft.

In her interview, Lauren Lassleben explained how the Bancroft Library became involved with the Breath of Life. She covered how Bancroft Library staff prepares for Breath of Life and described what Bancroft Library staff does during the week of Breath of Life. She gave some highlights of past Breath of Life Workshops. Lassleben discussed working with California Indian individuals and groups in between workshops.

Lassleben talked about the collections that Breath of Life participants tend to use, the history of those collections, the processing those collections have undergone, additions to metadata in light of new information given by researchers, and changes to Breath of Life over the years. She explained why some California Indian languages are well-documented, while others are not. She also shed light on the value of Breath of Life’s end-of-week project as a means of encouraging participants to focus their archival research so that they do not become overwhelmed, and they are able to use the research to take concrete steps to revitalize their languages.

Archivists wishing to replicate Breath of Life at their repositories will want to read this interview closely to get a sense of the work and the resources involved in bringing a Breath of Life workshop to their repository. Lassleben described the

balancing act of guiding researchers towards materials that will meet their needs while making sure to provide a sense of the full extent of materials available on their languages.

This interview featured discussion of the gaps in cataloging information that can be filled by archivists with the expertise of the Breath of Life participants researching their languages. Lassleben also shed light on how related collections, usually of different media, end up at different repositories, and the decision-making processes of accessioning and describing language documentation collections.

While being careful to avoid sending too specific a message about where the materials need to go, Lassleben hoped to encourage Breath of Life participants and other community language scholars to think about the long-term preservation of language data collected or materials created in the language by community language scholars.

This interview took place on the morning of January 10, 2013, in a conference room of the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California. The conference room had windows all along one wall. Construction was taking place just outside of those windows, and noise from the construction can be heard on the recording. The audio was recorded open air using the TASCAM DR-100mkII digital audio recorder. The recorder was set to automatically create a new track when a recording reached two gigabytes in size, and this interview consists of two tracks.

The interviewee edited extensively the transcript for this interview. Lassleben added information to enhance the original interview. She also deleted passages from the transcript that she wished to omit, in keeping with the agreement made at the beginning of the project and at the time of her approval of the transcript.

*Interview with Lauren Lassleben*

Interviewed by Susan Gehr  
January 10, 2013  
The Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California  
107 minutes

Susan Gehr:

Today is Thursday, January 10, 2013. This is an interview for the thesis oral history project “Breath of Life: Revitalizing California’s Native Languages Through Archives.” I am interviewing Lauren Lassleben. And my name is Susan Gehr. This interview is taking place at The Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California.

I’m going to start off with asking a little background information. Tell me a little about when and where you grew up.

Lauren Lassleben:

I grew up in Southern California, in Whittier, which is a suburb of Los Angeles. It’s mostly famous for being Richard Nixon’s almost hometown. I think he was born in Yorba Linda, but he went to school in Whittier. And I always tried to live that down in my college days.

I left Southern California when I was seventeen, to go to Reed College in Portland, Oregon. And then I also did a master’s degree at the University of New Mexico, with a year studying in Quito, Ecuador.

I moved to the Bay Area in 1980, having known about The Bancroft Library since I was in junior high, because my dad was a Cal grad and a huge fan of Bancroft. And I have to say it has been by dream to work here, and I’m still thrilled that I do.

I came to Bancroft in 1985 as a project archivist, [usually] working on grants to process large collections. And my title now is appraisal and accessioning archivist, which means I deal with all the manuscript collections that are coming in. Not printed materials, not books, but manuscripts, personal papers, organizational archives. To work with the curators and donors to bring them in the door, and do all the things that are necessary to get them ready to be used by researchers.

SG: Excellent. Where were your folks from originally?

LL: My dad was born in Whittier. And my grandparents came there from Wisconsin in the 1910s. My mother was born in Indiana and moved to California as a baby. And her parents were originally from Michigan. So I’m only a second generation Californian.

SG: Let's see here. I was going through your biographical information. I was interested to hear a little about your time as an American Library Association fellow at the National Archives of Chile.

LL: I was in the middle of the Sierra Club Centennial processing project, a very large archival processing project, when that fellowship was listed. I couldn't leave in the middle of a grant, and I was so disappointed—but luckily for me, they didn't get anyone that year. So they reposted.

And these fellowships, sadly, don't exist anymore. They were somewhat like Fulbright fellowships. But there were only between twelve and twenty of them in the world at any one time. The way that was set up was the Foreign Service staff in a country would talk to their cultural affairs attaché, who would then talk to librarians and archivists in the countries, and ask if they had any special needs. Would they be interested in having a library fellow?

The program went for, I would say, about ten years. And I was one of three or four archivists that got to go. The first one, Tom Connor, was evacuated from Pakistan. (laughs) That was unfortunate. But the timing was perfect [for me]. Sad to say, most archivists are not particularly good linguists. There wasn't much competition, because of course you had to be fluent in Spanish, and I am. So I applied for it and got it and was so thrilled to go and work at the National Archives of Chile for a year and a half.

It was originally posted as one thing, [a cataloging job]. But by the time I was hired, it was quite another job, and it really was much more to my taste. What we did was open a new branch of the National Archives, for twentieth century records. When I got there, there was an unlit, unheated, still being reconstructed, warehouse. And we had five linear miles of records, eight kilometers of records, waiting to go on shelves. So it was a very challenging experience. And I also taught over one hundred students which I [didn't] know that I was going to do. Nor was there very much material available to me in Spanish from the Society of American Archivists. (laughs) But it was a dream job. Every day was challenging and exciting.

And I don't teach in English. So teaching in Spanish was a challenge. But my students and my colleagues were so eager to have me succeed, and were willing to help me in any way possible. How to write a check, how to pay bills, how to go shopping. I was invited to family birthday parties and fiftieth wedding anniversaries. It was just wonderful.

I guess the thing I'm maybe the proudest of is, before I left, we re-founded a lapsed organization, the Association of Chilean Archivists, which is still going strong. Because I know how important it's been to my development, to be both a member of Society of California Archivists and

Society of American Archivists. And I just couldn't feature how these archivists, well spread over a country that's over three thousand miles long, how were these people working without knowing their colleagues?

Part of the advantage of teaching so many students was meeting them and finding they were people with real interests in common, and who needed to know how to do things. The majority were working in the federal government in the different ministries. But there were also church archivists, school archivists, people working with personal papers, rare book librarians who had manuscript collections. And I'm a charter member number one, which was quite flattering, because that was re-founded at my farewell party. (laughs) This was in 1992-93.

One funny thing, of course, about being a fellow, or being a North American, in a position like that, is people think you know everything. I was asked questions about everything. They take your answer as being the answer. And that was a little sobering. Even more sobering to come back, and have everybody say, "How was it? Nice to see you." People [here] are not nearly as ebullient and as friendly and warm as they are in Latin countries. So it was a bit of a shock to come back, and just be a foot soldier again.

SG: Do you have a background, I mean, I know you know Spanish, but in languages or linguistics?

LL: No. I have a master's in Latin American history and literature. This was the only time, probably, I really used that degree. I started studying Spanish as a seven-year-old. My parents somehow knew that that was something that was important in Southern California. We had after-school classes. There was a choice of French, German or Spanish. And I went one day to each, and I thought Spanish sounded far better. (laughs) My German grandparents would have loved me to do German, and my mother was leaning toward French. And my dad said, "Oh, Spanish is the language for here. This is a growing language."

So I had rather poor teaching of language in junior high when it was required by the state for those few years. [I had] some very good high school teachers. But I had a superb Spanish teacher at Reed College, who just said, "There's no reason that you people cannot be fluent." And I believed her. A Peruvian teacher, [who never spoke to us in English]. Most of my coursework for the master's was in Spanish. Because I studied in Quito, and those classes were all in Spanish. And then all the language classes. I had philosophy, economics, [literature, and] history, in Spanish, in Quito, which was tremendous. It was really helpful.

It gives me an idea, only a slight idea, of how difficult it would be to relearn a California Indian language, which of course is not a Western European language. But if you speak and know something of another

language, you understand how important it is to understand the world view. It's not just the grammar and the conjugation and the vocabulary. If you lose a language, you lose more than just the words. So I think that has also influenced me favorably, very favorably, very enthusiastically, toward working with California Indian scholars, high school students, master/apprentice pairs, everybody who wants to use the materials we have here. I think this has great value, both personally for people, and for all the rest of us.

SG: When were you first approached by Leanne or AICLS or Breath of Life?

LL: I didn't know about AICLS until later. William Roberts, was the university archivist at the time that Breath of Life started. And I was working with him primarily on processing faculty papers. And we had a clutch of really good anthropology papers. Anthropologists that are still quite well known, like Alfred Kroeber and Robert Lowie, both professors here. Robert Heizer, who was a very well-known archaeologist.

These papers had come to Bancroft, and were either partially prepared for researchers, or they'd come in in bits and pieces and they weren't really completely ready. And we were actually able to get money from a program, now defunct, in the US Department of Education. This sounds like such old technology, but there was money to microfilm collections. And the reason that was advantageous was because [film] could be sent anywhere. People could purchase copies, we could lend copies on interlibrary loan. Unlike digital collections, once things are filmed, as long as you don't freeze them or put them on the stove and cook them, microfilm lasts a long time. Because census data is available on microfilm, most libraries, certainly from the community college level on up, and many public libraries, have microfilm readers.

So it's not that we thought microfilming was the wave of the future. More that it was extremely durable, easy to use, and in many cases you could really focus clearly on materials that were faded, or damaged, or [written hastily because they were] never thought of as being other than somebody's personal notes.

Bill [Roberts, the university archivist] started out. Professor Leanne Hinton asked him to be involved. And he turned to me and said, "Let's do this together, because you're more familiar with the contents." He's very familiar with the Department of Anthropology records, which are also valuable. But the linguistic materials tend to be in people's personal papers.

So I thought, well, this is great. We made it up as we went along. Leanne told us what languages were going to be represented. She's always given us the courtesy of a couple months ahead of time, at least. And of course it changes as people sign up and drop out and other people

join up. Then people decide well, I have three languages, and I'm really going to focus on this one.

And I have to say that Library of Congress, being on the East Coast, tends to think of the California language picture—I mean, this is probably not a fair thing to say—but they're looking for large chunks. So they think of Chumash as being one language, with [several] dialects. We know there are seven Pomoan languages. There are multiple Chumash languages. This is part of the difficulty of getting people to what they want, if somebody wants Kashaya Pomo or Barbareño Chumash. And in many cases, the catalog is going to say, "This book or this manuscript collection has Chumash materials."

So it upped our game, in that we realized with manuscript collections that we needed to describe them as accurately as we could, [with local headings,] and Leanne was extremely helpful with that. But it also told us that we didn't know a lot about some of our manuscript collections: we knew them superficially.

At Breath of Life, people use printed material, maps, books, journals, sound recordings, photographs. But they're particularly interested in linguistic field notes. And you need to be able to describe to them where those are. Not just at Bancroft, but in multiple repositories, and museums on campus. That's a little daunting for people, to know where things are.

But one other great benefit of Breath of Life is we've gotten to know our colleagues at Berkeley Language Center, at the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, at the Phoebe Hearst Museum. So we can say, "You know, we don't really hold the sound recordings here. We may have transcriptions. But let's get a hold of people at Berkeley Language Center, the Linguistics Department, and at Hearst Museum and see if we can find what you're looking for."

So a benefit to us that's come out of this is the realization that we need to describe more accurately and in more detail what we have. Since obviously none of us speak or read the approximately seventy-five California Indian languages, we need to make that information available.

So I'm kind of going on a tangent here about what we're doing. But at the very beginning, we didn't really know how to do it. We just sat down with our catalog and said, what have we got for these languages that are going to be represented? What does Bancroft hold?

And I always tell people at Breath of Life, you know, it's pretty unusual [for] there [to] be one copy of a printed book in the world. But when you come here, think strongly about using material that you can't find anywhere else. Because I would love to have all these collections microfilmed and then digitized, but that's an amount of money that we simply don't have. We've done some digitization in the last few years, but it's just a drop in the bucket. So it's important to get people to the



material, and it's important for people to identify, help us identify, what is and isn't right about our cataloging work. We're always happy to change misidentified photos, or if a language is not properly identified. The users are the experts in most cases.

SG: Is there a process for capturing that information?

LL: Yes. We have notes to curator slips or notes to archivists slips. People will just tell us, "I know that's my great-grandmother, and the baby on her back is my grandfather." It's important to have that.

I can't stress enough to people that we transcribe whatever information comes with the material that's given to us by the collector or compiler or linguist or anthropologist or whoever it was. And they're not always right. And in some cases, people probably didn't want their names used, so they gave a pseudonym, another name, or they gave their English name and not their Native name. And we want to be as accurate as we can. But we can't go back to 1902 in Ukiah and say, "Obviously this is so and so." So we're always trying to upgrade the information.

SG: What are your recollections of the first Breath of Life workshop?

LL: Well, it was a lot smaller. I remember it not being quite so daunting in size. And I remember being hugely relieved that there were mentors that came that were the real language experts. And we could say to people, we can help you get to materials, but we're not linguists. What we can do is help streamline your search [strategy]. But your mentors, who are both faculty members and graduate students, not just from Berkeley, these are the people that either really have worked on the language and know it, or are willing to work extremely hard to get up to speed to help people.

So it seemed like it was a room of people. And now it seems like it's really big. (laughs) So I think it was easier, in a way, in the beginning. Because we were newbies, we didn't know what we were doing, but you really had time to talk to everybody. And I feel badly now, because we had sixty-five or some number approaching seventy last year, plus their mentors. So we're talking about one hundred people. It isn't a cozy group now. And I know Leanne can't bear to not let people in. (laughs) But logistically, it's difficult. I want to talk a little bit later when you ask me perhaps about how we've changed, what we're doing.

At that point, they still broke it up, [Leanne Hinton has] probably talked about this extensively. She's put languages together that she thinks, you know, belong together. What's the proper word? That are in the same language families. And people have done like a round robin. Because if you're new, and everybody was new at the beginning, no one was a returnee, you didn't know where your material was going to be. So

you would have very super-intensive linguistics classes in the morning. And then divide up into groups and spend an afternoon at one of the repositories on campus.

And then if you found something that you wanted by luck on the first day, which you would always hope people would find, you just hit the thing that you wanted to work on. Because you're already thinking ahead, "Oh my gosh, I have a project I have to present." You could then simply stay at that place and continue for the week. But Leanne always encouraged people to do the round robin the first year they came, so they could get an overview of everything that was available, so they could know what would be the best source material.

I think Bancroft is unique in that we have probably more representation for more languages. But it might not be exactly what people are looking for. And there are some languages that I would give my eye teeth to have more of, you know, like Essalen. Some of the languages that were in early contact, small groups. Nobody got there in time. There's very little material for some of the Northwest coastal groups.

It really depends on the luck of the draw. There are groups like Luiseño that have a lifetime's worth of material. Why do they have it? Because Philip Sparkman was an English shopkeeper down [in Rincon, San Diego County]. He became an amateur linguist and was fascinated by the language. Unfortunately, he was murdered at his store. But luckily he had been corresponding with Kroeber, Alfred Kroeber. And the sheriff or the coroner [wrote, asking], "Professor Kroeber, is this stuff worth anything?"

And Kroeber said, "Send it to us. We want everything." So we have very much material for some groups, and almost none, for [some] others.

C. Hart Merriam, fortunately, pretty much got all around the state. He was a medical doctor, based in Marin County. He had the time and the scientific drive to go out and try to talk to somebody everywhere in the state. So when we get really desperate, we'll go to Merriam and say, "Is there anything in Merriam, even if it's a small amount of material?"

So I think it was small and kind of doable at the beginning. And in some ways it was a lot more gratifying, because you were really dealing with people for a [longer] time. But I have to say the success of it has been extraordinary, to get so many more people.

Many people came for the first several [workshops]. Then once you had repeaters, they were able to help each other. And they would come and they knew what their project was, because they had, in some cases, been working on it extensively. I believe the first year and the second year were back to back, '96 and '97. And Leanne said, "We can't

do this every year. This is just too much to ask” of [all the mentors and Berkeley staff].

So in some ways, we would have been more agile if we’d done it every year. But also, you’re asking [the attendees] to take vacation time. When their kids are out of school. It was difficult for people, probably, to come and make that time commitment of essentially [a week] every year.

So it got bigger gradually. And [Leanne] would always say, “I’m going to cap it at forty-five. Fifty.”

I remember when we hit fifty and I was like, “That’s good. That’s enough, Leanne.”

“Well, but we have fifty-five people. Well, I can’t turn down...” You know, she’s a soft heart. And I couldn’t have turned down people, either.

SG: Let’s go straight to that question you brought up, the activities added to or deleted from *Breath of Life* over the years.

LL: This is my problem, Susan, as a narrator. Leanne just told us both that it’s reinvented every year. And I always try to look at it new every year. But I do keep the notes I have. And I keep all the records. I would print the records from our online catalog. But I would always check to see if anything had come in in that two-year period. Because if you’re lucky, you’ve gotten more books or you’ve gotten a collection. So it’s not ever static.

You’re trying to think of what’s another way to get people [the material they need]. And you’re trying to shrewdly figure out where people are in their search. If you have people who have just started, printed material, a book they’ve never seen, a journal article, that might be all they need. When I say a journal article, I don’t mean fifteen pages. It could be three or four hundred pages. Samuel Alfred Barrett’s *Ethnogeography of the Pomo*, which has got all these great maps and charts comparing all the language, all the seven Pomoan languages, and then all the languages that border [them]. That might be all the information they need.

When I say “shrewdly,” I don’t say to somebody, “You can only have this.” I mean, I would never say that. But I can say that if you give somebody twenty options, that can be just not really helpful. You try to say to people, “What are you looking for? What are you trying to do? Are you trying to learn to sing? To pray? Do you want to hold tribal meetings using some correct words? Are you interested in ethnobotany? Have you started an immersion preschool, and so you’re really interested in things that kids would like? Names of plants, names of animals, names of birds, so you can play bingo or go out and take kids on hikes and ID them properly?”

And then there are people that don't know. They just want to get into it. And they're not as easy to help. And again, I'm not trying to steer people towards what I think is interesting; I'm trying to figure out what can we possibly do in this very short, intensive period of time, to get as much done as possible.

Basically they have the mornings in class, the afternoons working, doing the round robin, working on their projects. And usually Friday, everybody knows they've got to present on Saturday morning. So Friday is a free-for-all. (laughs)

I want to say that Bancroft has moved in and out of this building, and we held one Breath of Life down in a very small auxiliary building in Downtown Berkeley, where we were for three years, while Bancroft Library proper was retrofitted. And that was a tight squeeze, even getting people around the table. We did the best we could.

Then we did it when we had just moved back, but not all the manuscript materials were available. So we were using the news microfilms room, with all their nice microfilm readers. We placed all of it that we thought could be useful, which was a lot, down there, so people could use it. So we actually held it in another space.

One great innovation this last year, was Susan Snyder's idea. She is our head of public service. She and her staff, [especially Iris Donovan and Lee Anne Titangos,] are extraordinarily supportive of this. Because this is a lot of extra work for them. All our stacks are closed, everything has to be paged. So I start a month or so ahead, requesting things that I think are likely that people will want. Because if it is stored in Richmond—which the bulk of our collection is—it can take two to three days to get it here. Ideally, it would come the next day. One truck a day goes each way. And it's not the Bancroft truck, it's all of the libraries on campus truck. So we try to pull stuff in and have it ready.

But what Susan thought was, okay, Breath of Life is during intersession. Meaning the major summer school hasn't started, and the spring semester is over. Bancroft's intersession hours are 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Would Leanne [Hinton] consider flipping it and having the trips to the different repositories in the morning, and teaching the class in the afternoon? For Bancroft, that means we could turn the whole reading room over to Breath of Life for those five days. Nobody would have to worry about being quiet. It would be much easier for our staff, because there's so much paging. We wouldn't be duking it out with other patrons for the microfilm readers and reader printers.

And the people could cluster in groups around a table. And they could talk out loud, which of course we can't do in the reading room during regular hours. We used to have people in seminar rooms, and irreplaceable material flying around in these rooms. You know, manuscript material dating to the nineteenth century. Not that I'm

implying that anyone would have taken anything. But the risk to the materials of it floating about, it's not a good way to go.

So that was a real advantage to us, and I hope that it didn't inconvenience the other participants. Then in the afternoon, the reading room opened at one, and [some] people were back en masse. But they then could work individually. It didn't disrupt Bancroft, but it gave people full range. People that had table-sized maps could have two map tables, and lay everything out. It was really great.

And our staff, I think, enjoyed it, because they could then interact in a much more free way. Because you could simply talk to people, not whisper. (laughs) So I've lost track of your original question. I'm going on and on here.

SG: Those are all things that I wanted to hear about from you.

LL: But the changes have been incremental. Afterwards we think about it, but we don't formally meet to evaluate. But we do what we can under sometimes reduced circumstances, like when we were literally out of this building.

But I have a lot of support from the public service staff, from people in manuscripts, because people help me find things and get them ready, and from our administration, who sees how important this is. This is not just because it ups our statistics, you know, which it really does. But because the people using these materials, in many cases, are descendants of, or in some way related to, or even knew the people who created this material. And how wonderful it is to take material that is seen as an academic exercise by most people, and use it, bring it alive again.

I have to say that some of the most poignant moments for me have been when people have sung. In this last time, we had a Northern Pomo singer who sings for dance groups. He's a song leader. And he said—I love people that know what they're looking for, because it's a lot easier to help people if they do—he said, “We have this group. I write the songs, but the words are Kashaya words, because I don't have the Northern Pomo words.”

At first I thought he meant do we have sheet music. (laughs) I wasn't getting it. He said, “No, Lauren, I can write the music. I need the words to fit with my music.”

So he found real Northern Pomo songs in Samuel Barrett's papers] dating from the early part of the 1900s. I know Barrett finished his doctorate in 1908 and left [California], so it was before 1908. He said, “This is it. I've got it. This is Northern Pomo. I can totally sing this.” And he said, “Do you want me to sing it [for you]?” And I thought, these words have not been spoken or sung—it's very likely, because they were in a manuscript, and not in a published book—for over one hundred years.

And he brings them back to life in our reading room. Then he goes back to his dance group and his singing group and says, "This is ours."

And I do remember Linda Yamane, who was very active in the beginning, also singing. I often go to the presentations on Saturday. Obviously I'm not understanding every word. But people are telling stories. And it's a very emotional thing. And it's a very satisfying thing, to think it lives again. Native Californians have told me, to use the dance regalia, to dance the regalia again, brings it back to life. Certainly to speak the words or sing the words, or write your own poetry based on those words, you're bringing those back to life again. Which I guess is what language revitalization means, right? It's not an academic usage. But it's a very pure and a very beautiful usage, I think.

And I don't know if Leanne thought about that, specifically, what she was enabling people to do. I don't know if she was thinking of the creative side or more of the academic side when she started out. There are so many things I admire so much about her. She's a start where you are and go forward person. She's not going to lament what we don't have. She's not going to sit back and say, as some very pure linguists would, "Well, nobody's going to speak it fluently anymore." Or, "Well, how are you going to get the grammar right?" I know she's been criticized for that.

I think she would be the first one to say, "No one will speak these languages fluently." These languages that really have no [fluent speakers]. But is it important to save what we can, and is it important to go forward with the good will and the hard work of people?

And I think people underestimate how much work it is. I think people that participate in Breath of Life somehow think it's going to be easier than it is. But some people, I'm thinking of Quirina Luna, there are people who have used their language with their children. One of her children's first words were in Mutsun. She's made it a part of her life and her children's lives in a way that is very interesting and very, very exciting.

We have all levels. From people that come for a week and say, "I did it. It was interesting. I don't need to do it anymore," to people that continue on. As you well know, having been a participant.

SG: So you start up to a month ahead of time requesting materials. Do you get a chance to talk to participants ahead of time, or correspond with them ahead of time?

LL: I ask Leanne always to have people who have come and know what they want to please let us know, so we'll have it ready for them. She will often get people saying, "I'm looking for something really specific." It is so helpful for us to know in advance what people want. We will make a

good faith effort to try to find stuff. But part of doing this is doing your own research.

The catalog is online. I don't know how many people themselves prepare ahead. Often people will bring their notes from before. Some people will come very clearly knowing what they want, right down to the exact item. But there's always so much to do in the last two or three weeks beforehand, it's a little bit hectic. So when in doubt, we try to have material here. And certainly know all the languages that are coming.

And then Leanne will also let us know when someone has dropped out and then someone else is added in. So there's that last minute scurrying about "Well, sorry, we're not going to have any Hupa folks, but we're going to get somebody from Pit River instead. And so we try to be on the ball. (laughs)

Sometimes it's really hard to know. I remember Achumawi [and] Atsugewi. I mean, they're next-door neighbors east of Mount Shasta. The languages are related. But they're really not the same language. And I'm always hesitant to say, "I don't have much of this. Would this work? Would this be helpful?"

But I don't actually correspond with people unless they email me ahead and say, "I hope you're going to have this ready for me." Or, "Hi, remember me?" Or, "I've never been, but I really want this."

I would say that just varies. Some years people like to prep in advance. And other times people are in their complicated lives, and they get here and start thinking about it when they're here. It's very advantageous for us and them if they can prep it in advance and have an idea of what they're going for.

But unless you know what's here, and how could you possibly know everything that's on this campus, you don't want to say to somebody, "Just choose something," and then have them miss something that would be even better for them. So I don't know how to really answer your question except we would love to be better prepared, always, than we are. But we do spend quite a lot of time getting ready.

I've mentioned Susan Snyder. Lee Anne Titangos, who is also a public services staff member, works extensively with classes during the year. And she considers this a kind of class, in that she will help me get ready and prep stuff and have things on hold. You know, everything has to be accounted for. Everything has to be checked out of Richmond, brought in, placed somewhere, checked in when it gets here. But we have to account for everything.

And I have the luxury of saying, "I want these things brought in, please." And someone else does all the paperwork, brings them in, sets them up day by day. I say, "I want these materials Monday, these Tuesday, these Wednesday." This is all work that needs to be done.

Then people will want other materials that are here. All the user copies of microfilm are physically in this building. So the other great thing this year is they put double pages on for me, for those mornings. So if somebody wanted something, they could page it and it would be there in five minutes. No waiting period, which is an incredible luxury.

SG: It was very nice.

LL: The speed of it helps. We are trying really hard to get the fastest turnaround for people. And I always am telling people, "Page with anticipation. If you think you're going to want it this afternoon, let's page it right now. It will be on hold under your name. You come in after lunch, and you say, 'I'm here now.' And it's right there." This is the beauty of having the whole reading room to yourself. This is what you really want, if you can do it.

I don't think I'm answering your questions very accurately. I think I'm all over the place here. But this is very impressionistic. From my point of view, [it's] how much work will it be, how much gain will it be. Who can we get to help us to make this a good experience for people?

And part of the job is listening to people and what they're looking for, and trying to help people think of another place to look. And that's when it's advantageous to [have] processed [some of] these collections [myself].

Because I'm leaving out one. I've mentioned Kroeber and I've mentioned C. Hart Merriam. I want to say that there's a collection that's daunting in its size and complexity. It's called the Ethnological Documents Collection of the Department and Museum of Anthropology. And it's as complicated as its name. We call it Eth Docs; Kroeber asked everyone to put originals or copies of their materials, their fieldwork, in the department.

So if you were going to work on Mojave, and then ten years later somebody comes and says, "Wow, do we have any Mojave, or do I have to start from scratch?" There would be that work that had been done.

It was decided in the early [or] mid '60s that really, the artifacts belong with the [Hearst] Museum. Bancroft isn't a museum. We don't seek to collect artifacts. Occasionally we get something that we feel that we want for display purposes. But I'm not talking about baskets or regalia. I'm talking about Oski heads and things like that. (laughs) Although we certainly have some, because if we're going to do an exhibit on presidential politics you want bumper stickers and buttons and hats and all that stuff, so you don't have a case full of just gray and white, black and white material.

But the decision was really made in the mid '60s to divide things up. So sound recordings, like old wire recordings, wax cylinders, would



stay at Phoebe Hearst. The baskets, the regalia. But we would end up with the paper records. And in some ways, that's really advantageous. Because they don't have archivists and we don't have museum scientists. But it also means there's a split, in many cases. There's Samuel Barrett's basketry collection, and the papers are over here. Well, Ethnological Documents was a collection of collections. It's over two hundred collections, ranging from one single piece of paper, which is a Quiché Maya leaf of a prayer, just literally like you'd have a piece of the Bible, up to hundreds and thousands of pages.

So this is a collection that has something for almost everybody. And it's one that is daunting, because it was treated as a museum collection. If this walked in today, it got the next number. We microfilmed it because it had already been used for fifty years, we microfilmed it in order.

So your reel could be entirely one item. Or it could be an item so large it's on multiple reels. Or it could be a small item, and there could be six different items, different collections, mini collections, on that reel. Which have no relationship to each other, except they were numbered [consecutively]. We would have handled it differently, but we couldn't disassemble that collection, because the collection [itself] was a historical artifact. And it had been used extensively and quoted extensively.

It's a closed collection. We don't add to it. This is one that gives people problems. But we did index it. And one thing we did—and luckily we were doing this in the early '90s, right around the beginning of *Breath of Life*. And I realized—or somebody realized, I shouldn't take credit for it—that in the past people were going to look for subject matter, like basketry, acorn use, indigenous religion, and they were going to look for the collector/compiler, [and] they were going to look for the anthropologist. Now people are going to say, "My great-grandfather was so and so." So we added a two thousand-name index to that. But we tried to pull every informant/consultant's name, and add that to the index.

So if you have Captain Tom from somewhere, you try to get every version of his name, if he's indicated on the item as the speaker, as the source. English names, Native names, nicknames. Chief so and so, Captain so and so, Old Sally, Old Martha. This is really important. Because now people are going to come—they might know who the anthropologist is but they're most definitely going to know who they're looking for.

SG: With the Native names—

LL: Every name we could get.

SG: How did you spell them? Or just how it was there?

LL: Again, we're not adding names. Sloluck, S-l-o-l-u-c-k, okay, that's how the anthropologist wrote it. Probably it wasn't ever written before that, maybe never was written later.

But then, if we could also figure out what language group. So you might have Old Sally who's Yurok and you might have an Old Sally who is Miwok. But we tried really hard to get complete names. And that's been really a boon for people. And then people also will challenge us on those names. Not challenge us, but say, you know, "I think this was so and so. And now that I've read it, I know. Here's a last name for you." Or, "He might have said he was Old Tom, because he really didn't want his name used, but I'm sure this is so and so." And that's so valuable. That's so, so important to us.

And it's amazing to me how you will get great-grandchildren, people that have the whole genealogy in their head. And they'll say, "Well, of course they interviewed them at the same time. They weren't just next door neighbors, they were also first cousins." Or, "This person adopted this person, and therefore they called her Mother, but really—" It's just tremendous how people have that in their heads.

I'm going to put a plug in here. One thing I haven't been very successful at is encouraging people—and I hope people don't think I'm trying to rip them off, because I'm not. I'm always saying to people, please put a copy of your genealogy, your paper that you've written, your artwork, whatever you have, think about where it's going to go. If there's someone in your family that wants to keep it and will continue it, that's wonderful. If you're going to do this your whole life, that's great. But what happens when there's a flood? What happens when there's a fire? It's just more and more crucial after seeing all the super-storms we've had. Don't forget to leave this documentation somewhere, with someone. But think about the long term. Because the next person coming along in twenty years, maybe your grandchild or cousin is going to need this information.

Books, yes, definitely we purchase anything that's published. I don't want people to think I think we have a right to their work. That's not the point. The point is very much the work you do has as much or more value than anything done [by] a PhD in 1933. Don't think "I'm not a scholar, I'm not a trained linguist, I'm not a teacher." We need this material.

And I don't know how to encourage people to think long term. Our collections are quite good through the early '50s for California Native materials. But by then, Kroeber had retired, Lowie had retired. They were getting pretty elderly. The Linguistics Department in the early '60s went international. And now there [are fewer] people working on California Indian languages. Leanne [Hinton has retired]. Now [it's]

Professor Andrew Garrett. But the bulk of the linguists in that department are not at all involved in language revitalization or California or even American Indian languages.

So our collection dwindles. We would love to have fieldwork and field notes from people. Certainly we get them from faculty when they retire. But there just aren't as many people working in that field. Kroeber said, "Put your stuff in [the Ethnological Documents Collection.]" I notice he didn't put his stuff in. Neither did Lowie. Most of his stuff stayed in his own papers. But the idea was very good, to not lose all the work that somebody did. [Up to] ten years of a PhD. Whenever someone says, "Oh, it's published," a fraction of the work that someone does is published. People used to throw away their field notes because they felt like they [had] exhausted [their usage].

The usual procedure was to go out with a field notebook. Usually a cheap steno notebook, with horrible paper, which we've spent many hundreds of dollars repairing. Take it down longhand. Then they would card it. They'd go through and they would pull the bits they wanted onto index cards, the vocabulary, you know.

And in Barrett's case, for Pomo [languages], we have several linear feet of card files. Because he's comparing the seven Pomoan languages on, unfortunately, paper that's so close in color that it's pretty hard to figure out which is which. That's why it would be difficult to microfilm it. And in some cases, the field notes are gone. The cards, then, are [filed in] various ways, so they can do the comparative work that they want to do.

So I know that it was not atypical for someone to write a seven hundred-page paper, which would then be printed as 150, 200 pages. And the bulk of it, if you were lucky, would still exist in their field notes. Barrett was obsessive, [and] Kroeber as well, about keeping the different versions.

Edward Winslow Gifford, if I had a nickel for everybody who has said to me, "Well, where are Gifford's field notes?" Well, what little we have of Gifford are in the Ethnological Documents Collection. But it's a fraction of what he published. I know [that] people that went up to the garage in Paradise, [California], after he died, and asked the daughter and the wife, "Isn't there more? Where's the rest of it?" So I hope that people that are now collecting material are thinking about a home for it and hanging onto it.

SG: I'm wondering if there's room for a presentation in the already packed Breath of Life week on—

LL: I always encourage people in a small group setting. But I don't know how to do it and not sound mercenary, like, "Give it to Bancroft." That's not

the point. It could be locally, in your county. It could be in your tribal office. It could be anywhere that's safe. And I think people are a little shy about pushing themselves forward. Or they say, "Well, I'm not done yet." Well, you're never going to be done.

Maybe we'll talk to Leanne about that, and say this is what we must do now. There's this oral history collection, that Susan's done. Now we've got to get onto the next thing.

And people always say, "Yes, I know." (laughs) But I don't get those little packages in the mail. And they don't, as I said, they don't have to come to me. They just need to go somewhere.

We have had some remarkable things published that people said, "This was a product of Breath of Life. I went to some of Linda Yamane's [Rumsien Ohlone] books. This got me started and this is what's become of it." And that's a thrill to see that.

SG: So I don't know if you heard of it, but the weekend before the 2012 Breath of Life started, there was a workshop that L. Frank hosted, called Shadow of the Whale. One of the things they were going to talk about was the dynamics between Breath of Life participants and linguists. Power dynamics, specifically. Is there anything similar—

LL: All I know is there's been something of a falling out between L. Frank and Leanne. And I don't know L. Frank well, and I'm very sorry it has come to that. But I don't feel that I have any power. I feel like I'm the least educated of the people working with these materials. Like I said, all I can do is help people find an entry point.

I have to say, Susan, I've always thought the day will come when somebody will say, "This is ours. Give it to me."

And I've always thought, what would I say? And I would listen and I would be respectful and I would try to say in the most gentle way possible, "This exists because it's in a library/archive." The bulk of this material has been protected against tribal politics, natural disasters, people's children who didn't know what it was, who threw it away. And I don't mean just California Native materials; I mean a lot of materials in this library. But I'm sensitive to the fact that if you live eight hours away, [Owens Valley Paiute] folks, and there are exactly two microfilm readers in the county, and when it snows you have to go the long way around the Tehachapis or [Tahoe]. I mean, it's just not practical for you to go and work for a week. What are we saying to people? We're saying yeah, we're saving it. You know, it's a heck of a drive. I don't feel anything about power. I don't know that we would de-accession original materials. I think if someone came to us and had made a good argument as to why it must be available locally, we would do everything we could to provide facsimiles, [digital copies].

I mean, some groups have done that. The [Big Pine Band] have actually sought grants and have digitized materials, and then provided us with digitized copies of the things as well.

Archivists have a strong ethic that if it's open to one person, it's open to everyone. And I've also expected criticism of things being open. And I've not received that at all. I know photographs also are sensitive.

The linguistic material does not tend to be ceremonial in nature. I mean, the informants were paid. Consultants. I always say "informants." That sounds terrible. They weren't paid very much, but nobody was paid very much in the '30s. They were works made for hire. The intention was that it would go with the scholar back to wherever.

I'd like to talk to L. Frank about it. I know she would have a very interesting and compelling point of view, because she's an interesting and compelling person.

We have tried very hard whenever we've been asked, when groups have said, "We want our own tribal archive/library. Will you help me get started?" We've done everything we could to make that happen. Helped with grant applications. Sent letters to support the grants, to support the applications. Made copies available the least expensive way we could think of. Helped people find print materials. I consider that part of my job as well. And I'm delighted [to help] when I'm asked. Because I would love it if you could be in Loleta or some town out in Anza Borrego, and you could go to your local library, and say, "It's here. It's right here."

And it could be used with kids, it could be used in schools, it could be used in community colleges, for teaching writing and teaching languages.

The gaming tribes who have money are definitely seeing this as a priority. And I'm not a big fan of gaming, for various reasons. Not that I'm morally opposed. I just think it's probably a dubious way to make money over the long term. But I would love it to see more money going into cultural resources.

I mean, to say, "We've got it and it's sitting in Berkeley," that is just one bit. You know, that's like the starting point. And the Breath of Life people go out also and spread the word, I hope. It's there. It's good. You know, this person will help you. That's part of the point of Breath of Life.

SG: Yes. That's for sure. So, I went to SAA [the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting] down in San Diego in August [2012].

LL: I missed it.

- SG: And one of the presentations was Lisa Conathan and Leanda Gahegan, who was at the National Anthropological Archives, helped with the national Breath of Life. And she said—
- LL: —which I wish I had gone to.
- SG: She [Gahegan] talked about three big challenges with Breath of Life. And one was staffing, like having enough staff to meet the needs of a big group. And then space. And I forget the third one. But what are your—
- LL: Well, the resources to get people there. In many cases, the people that need to be here live the farthest away and in the most remote places. I don't know that they think of them as remote, because that's where they're from, and that's where they live. But as far as having a great library or wonderful archives...
- I'm thinking about retiring to Medford, Oregon. And part of my question is can I live somewhere without world-class libraries? Medford has a very fine library. But a few years ago, Jackson County defunded all the libraries. And temporarily all the libraries were closed. And I thought, I can't live in a place without libraries. Fortunately, the funding has been somewhat restored. It was money that they got from timber harvesting. Why had that anything to do with county services?
- In Jacksonville, a little gold rush town, the brand new library was open for eight weeks before it was closed. It was just heart-rending. The big library, the good library in Medford, it had been open two or three years. And there's one state college, Southern Oregon State University [in Ashland], and they had to put in a priority of service situation. Because everybody thought that they were suddenly going to be welcome in that library. Because that was the only library open in the county, essentially. I mean, elementary school libraries. It lasted for less than a year, but it was dire. This is way off the topic.
- But I think one of the things that probably we should think about doing is taking Breath of Life out into the field and doing it. And the great part about doing the national one was seeing how you could go on the road. But you were going to somewhere with even more resources than we have. Could you do a similar type of thing in Eastern or Northern California somewhere? In Eureka, or in somewhere that's underserved? I don't know exactly how we'd do it. We'd have to limit the number of languages, and we'd have to figure out how to bring the right things.
- I also realize people make a considerable sacrifice of time and money to come. The other thing I'd love to do, and I know AICLS has been involved in this, and the Lannan Foundation, is figure out a way so people can come whether they can afford to or not. Just make it need-blind, like colleges are trying to do.

[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]

LL: Because that would be a way of getting even more younger people. We've had younger people who are actually Cal students or Davis students who are able to come. But it's pretty difficult to get younger people that aren't affiliated in any way. Can they afford to get here, and can they afford to stay here? Again, I know that Leanne has moved heaven and earth to make money available to people.

It didn't happen this time, it happened more earlier on, when she would get money, and everybody would have a chunk of money for copying and microfilm or books, whatever they wanted to buy. A stipend, a small amount. But that was also really heartening for people to feel like they had credit. (laughs) That's not really something I perceive as the library's job, but it would be nice to have a way. I mean, we've certainly done everything we can to make it less expensive. All our material has to be hand-copied, not by the user, by the staff. Our copy staff makes the money they need to pay their salaries, that was cut out in an earlier budget cut. So we can't not pay those people, we can't not charge for copying, because then we have nobody to do it. Those folks are strictly on that fund.

I need to be finding someone who wants to take this over when I retire in a few years. Nobody's come up to me and said, "Give it to me." (laughs) But I know a couple of people who are interested. Whether they will be here, since they may or may not be on hard money—we have really limited staff on state funding. Most of our manuscript staff is on grant money and they turn over when grants end. So I want somebody who's going to be here for the future. And I have my eye on a couple of people.

The fact that the [Bancroft's] public service staff backs this means that they move heaven and earth to get everything as perfectly as they can, to have it as good an experience for everybody. People are met with great enthusiasm. And that helps, too.

SG: Does public service mean reference?

LL: Reference, yeah.

SG: Okay. I'm taking reference this semester.

LL: I don't know why, we don't say reference, we don't say reading room. Informally we say "the reference staff," but it's the public service staff. Because they do more than man the desk. They do all the bringing of stuff in and out. They do the copying. They do the website, the social media.

All of that stuff is considered, it's outreach. It's public service. They do the routing of materials to conservation. So a lot of their work is behind the scenes. You see them on the desks. But they're doing a lot more than staffing the desk. People think, "Oh, you just work four hours." No, no. They're here many more hours than that

I don't work the reference desk. I've never been on the public service staff. Most curators and most archivists have a shift a week. And I always say, "Well, I do specialized reference," meaning I do Breath of Life (laughs) and I do work with people on collections that I've processed. I've always got people writing me or coming or emailing me about a specific thing.

SG: Oh, let's see here. Dynamics. How do you think Breath of Life has changed maybe the public services in general? Or your work?

LL: Yeah, I can't speak so much for public services, except they appreciate some advance notice.

I do have a couple of folders, pretty thick folders on Breath of Life. And whenever I find new material has come in, or a collection's been processed that's useful, I try to always keep notes on that, even just a slip of paper [saying], "This collection now available and it has this kind of material."

You know, you hear Leanne on the radio and it's just so great. This happened to me several times, when I've said, "Boy, that sounds like Leanne Hinton!" That's because it is Leanne Hinton, talking on National Public Radio or whatever. That's always kind of a thrill.

We clip the [local newspapers] for the week. That's part of the history of the program. Sometimes we've had [journalists, photographers, and videographers] crawling around a little bit too obtrusively.

We've recently gotten a large collection called the American Indian Community History Collection. And it includes papers from Intertribal Friendship House, which was very crucial in Oakland after World War II as people got out of the military with their twenty bucks and their civilian clothes. What did they do, where did they go?

Intertribal House just strikes me as being very idealistic. Everybody was a member, it was not tribally based. Everybody was welcome there. It was a place for music and dance and food and childcare. I'm really looking forward to working on that collection. I would like to see that open. That's the beginning of, certainly there were Indians living in cities before, but an urban out-migration from the reservations or the rancherias.

I have to say that my job now is not to be processing, it's to be bringing stuff in. So I do get to look and pick and choose, and I love to do that. I mentioned to you and Leanne briefly, before we started taping, that



it sounds like we're going to be offered, the twenty-five years of records of News From Native California, from Malcolm Margolin. We're going to meet with him next Thursday. And he wants to know what we want. We wouldn't be trying to duplicate the [detailed production] process. But we'd love to see manuscripts that were published and that weren't, if he kept them. We'd be very interested in the photo files, because those are tremendous. It's a tremendous publication. That would fit very well in our early twenty-first century kind of collecting.

We need to do more outreach on what collections we should be looking for. Those are two collections, one that we have and one that I'm quite sure that we'll end up with, that strike me as being fifty years from now, unbelievable. Because it's going to document, you know, who were the basket makers. Who was doing all the organizing, who was doing the writing, the publishing, the artwork? We're always looking back, but we're always looking to the future, as to what will have historical value.

And that's partly my job, to figure that out. And there's no exact formula for that. You know, you're always trying to weigh research use, research value. Which is very much in the eye of the beholder, Susan. (laughter) I don't always agree with the curators. And the curators have final say of what comes in. The Western Americana curator, Theresa Salazar, we work very congenially. But sometimes she takes things that I don't think have as much value. And then there are other things that she probably thinks, why is Lauren so gung-ho on this? I mean, you're trying to serve people that might not be born yet. (laughs)

But that's why this library is so great, because we do go back, way back to the beginning of printed books. And we have materials that go many centuries back. And then we have some very, very contemporary collections.

You know, documenting California, it's shifty. It's thirty-seven million people. It would be a country anywhere else, you know.

SG: What's collaboration like between the Survey?

LL: We work with the Survey. When I need expertise in languages, I either drag Leanne [Hinton] or Andrew Garrett in now.

We have invited other linguists to identify languages. There's always a graduate student in charge of the Survey. We helped them some years ago get things into archival containers.

They've helped us in appraising a collection and just simply saying, "Well, it looks to me like you've got, you know, these languages here. Do you need to talk to somebody who can help you more than that?" And the answer is yes, especially on the very large Ethnological Documents Collection. We had stuff that wasn't identified at all. They

would say, "Well, it isn't this and it isn't this. And it could be this. Let me think about who knows."

I don't feel like we're in competition for collecting, because most faculty members have the right to designate where their papers will go.

And I'm not talking about official records. If they're departmental chair and they've taken those records home, technically those are university records, and we would try to get those back. But, you know, they've saved them so they won't be discarded or whatever.

But we don't compete against other archives, per se. I mean, we can certainly say, "We'd love to have it here." But if they feel strongly that since they were in the department here that it should go to the Survey...

The disadvantage of the Survey, Susan, is that it's only open by appointment. We have more hours. That's one plus that we have. But they have more expertise. And certainly they're doing a really fine job of curating what they have.

They also don't have a lot of growth space, as you know. You've been there.

SG: Yes.

SG: There's something of an in-house archives movement in linguistics specifically. Is that true of other disciplines?

LL: I'm not sure exactly what you mean. Most archivists are trained in humanities or social science. It's pretty hard to find math and science majors that have become archivists. So what you're hoping is your staff is going to have a range of people. You don't usually hire somebody for an undergraduate or graduate degree. Now the ideal, certainly the ideal in academia, is to have a subject-based masters, and a library degree or an archival administration [master's] degree.

How many linguistic archives are there in the United States? Probably not a lot. But how many archives handle linguistic materials? Probably just about all of them. So we would generally be looking for people with interest and expertise in Western history, California history, literature. Certain languages of which we have substantial holdings, which would be Spanish, French, German, Russian. But you don't usually get all of those things in one person. I mean, most of us are generalists. At one point, you'll be doing business records, because that's the next collection up. Then the next one is going to be linguistics papers. We get tremendous environmental collections, they're in huge demand. I worked on Sierra Club and some others, so I'm very interested in them. I think they're valuable, and they get used. That trend may end.

Women's history is always hot. Women archaeologists, women anthropologists, women botanists, women linguists. People are interested because they've been under-collected and under-written about. Women, minorities, all sorts of people that are here that you just have to happen upon, that have never been researched or written about, even an undergraduate or graduate paper.

So I don't know if it's a trend, particularly, for linguists. I'd like there to be.

SG: There's the Max Planck Institute, and they have their digital archives. So all their grantees contribute to them.

LL: Right.

SG: And then they will receive other language collections, if people want to offer them. And kind of a similar thing with the Endangered Languages Archive at University of London's [School of Oriental and African Studies].

LL: I would like there to be more material collected. I mean, there's so many academic fields. Who's going to collect nanotechnology? All of these fields that nobody's even thinking about collecting, because the field is still being pulled together.

Like I said for oral history, there has to be a bit of a nostalgia. Not nostalgia in the gushy sense, but there has to be a "Wow, it's been twenty-five years since... Or this started ten years ago, has anybody thought about that?" That twenty-fifth anniversary, people retiring, and people dying in an untimely way. That's what kicks people off. [Sometimes] there's a loss. Oh, that collection was dumpstered, oh my god. Or no one ever interviewed so and so. What were we thinking? That's what pushes people forward.

I'm a great believer in knowing your other archives, and knowing who collects what. And when we are offered material that is out of field for us, I try never to say no outright. I try to say, "Let me help you find a more appropriate repository." We don't collect New England history. And we don't collect women's history from Iowa. We get offered, anything old, "Oh, we'll take it to Bancroft. They'll take everything." (laughs) That's not really our goal here. (laughs)

SG: What you're doing is thinking one hundred years in the future, thinking fifty years in the future.

LL: And I think regional repositories in counties or regions of the state, or state colleges, or community colleges, or historical societies, as the state gets

much more diverse, it's not going to be the same people working in those, volunteering in those. They're going to be looking—I hope, I think—more broadly as to what their constituency would be.

I think there need to be tribal archives. The Society of California Archivists has had two or three tribal archives workshops. Nancy Zimmelman, our current state archivist, whose last name now escapes me, has been very instrumental in that. She really gets it.

SG: Is that Lenoil?

LL: Yes. Thank you. Nancy Zimmelman Lenoil. She was involved in organizing those. I don't think it matters, in some ways, where [a collection] goes, as long as it goes somewhere where it will be used and cared for. But there has to be the funding and the determination that it will continue, that it will stay. That it has value. And not just with that particular generation of people.

I don't mean to sound elitist, but the longer term a library and archives has existed, the better chance there is that in some ways it's going to continue. Because somehow there's been funding for it. I mean, even in bad funding times, I don't think anybody has seriously said, "We're going to close this library." I hope not. I haven't heard about it. Whereas if you have ones that are hand to mouth, and you're always just barely staying alive, it's very difficult to implement an archival program in which you can see continuity.

The same with museum objects. I understand why people feel strongly that objects should go back to where they are [from]. I don't think anybody could not understand and appreciate NAGPRA [the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act]. But they exist in some cases because they were collected and were saved. And now you're putting the responsibility back on the creators [or their descendants], that they need to do an equally good job. And it's okay to transfer the responsibility, but it needs to be taken seriously. This is cultural history for everybody. It's not just the creators.

It seems to me we all benefit when a museum or a library or an archives does a good job. We all grow because of that. It's very idealistic. The problem is, who pays the piper, right?

SG: Exactly. Let's see.

LL: I'm taking you way off course.

SG: No, no, no, no. I just realized I was staring at all the organizer/founder questions, and not staring at all the archivist discussion topics I had. (laughs) Let's see. First contact, early years, level of involvement with

planners, and the Berkeley linguists. I mean these are things we've all touched on.

LL: I'm pretty much it here as far as the planning. But I've realized in the last two ones, let's get all these other folks on the list and at the meetings. Because we'll have to deal with it at Bancroft. Someone's going to have to take this over.

By having the public service staff right there, involved in the planning meetings, for Susan to say, "Let's have it in the morning. Can we do it?" For us it was a great revelation. It was a great improvement. Again, I don't know that it will fly with everybody else. But, you know, the more brains working on it, the better. Instead of saying, "We should do it this way" for the public service stuff, I just say, "How do you guys want to handle it? What do you think?"

It was quite funny at this last one because it's Lee Anne Titangos and Leanne Hinton, spelled differently. But I kept saying to people, "Well, ask Lee Anne."

And they're looking at me. "Well, she doesn't work here."

But it seemed like I was saying Leanne all the time, meaning one or the other, sometimes in the same sentence. "What does Leanne think? Well, Lee Anne says this." It was kind of amusing. It worked really well for us. I don't know if she's thought about the next one yet. I think she's taking a break this year.

I don't know that I have anything else. I really haven't told you much about the program, per se, or what we do. I can tell you just really briefly, I don't know what time you have to be in Santa Rosa, but...

SG: Not until after three, so...

LL: All right. Once we get the material pretty much pulled together and arranged by the day that people are coming, I try to do a very brief overview. And we register everybody, which we have to do. They need to have a reader's card for that day. And then once they're in the database, and it's kind of a pain filling out the form, but they stay in the database. Now you're a registered reader. Again, we're hoping that's going to bring people back. They're going to say, "Oh, yeah. All I need's my ID. I can walk right in."

We try to give just a brief kind of housekeeping overview, and Lee Anne Titangos did that this year very well, about how to maximize your time, how to page, all that kind of thing. My little spiel has gotten shorter and shorter. Like three lines now about the history. And then turn people loose.

I try to float among the groups. And that, again, was so great about having the whole reading room. There's usually a few people

working alone. There's usually, if you're lucky, at least a few people on some languages. And there's often a more senior person, not in age, necessarily, but in knowledge of what is there. And that person kind of gets the group together. At least to talk over how to divide it up. And we always encourage people, if you've got multiple rolls of film, if you've got multiple books, think strategically of how to use the time the best way you can.

"Is there any more about this? Where would I find this?" Most people are very computer savvy. [Some] may need a little bit of a brush-up. Some people are not real familiar with an online catalog. But most people have that down in five minutes, if they didn't already know.

I encourage people to look really widely. And if they're close by and can come back, I often will say, "Well, do you have a project for this week?"

If they're from farther away, sometimes I'll say, "Do you feel like you have enough time to look at everything, just so you'll know what you would want to come back to? How much there is here."

And then to try to get stuff into people's hands so they can see that working with manuscript material is not equivalent to picking up a book and reading it. It doesn't have chapters, it doesn't have page numbers. The handwriting may be difficult. They think they're going to get through twenty rolls of microfilm a day, and you're just kind of like, yeah, okay. People are always overly ambitious. But you don't want to discourage anybody.

And sometimes people are going to look through really quickly and say, "This is of secondary interest to me. I would look at this on a second visit, but I don't need this now."

And trying to help people strategize. Again, many people are extremely sophisticated, and know just what they want and even know where it is. But other people, it's a new world.

The one thing I did want to say is once you've met people face to face, you are so much more likely to call or email or check in the next time you go back. I really think that's great. It's just not as scary. I hand out my [business] card. I go through cards like I'm dealing them out. (laughs)

And then the other thing I like a lot is when people say, "I'd like to bring a group of high school students. I'd like to bring a group of elders. I'd like to bring our history group or our language acquisition group here sometime this spring."

And I say, "Just give me some notice. Let's get a date. We won't do a mini Breath of Life, but we'll pull whatever material you want. They often tie it in with a visit to the museum. And they often are very overly ambitious as to what they can get done in a day or two or three.

So I would say Breath of Life, usually it's the [initial] contact, not always. I average maybe five to ten groups a year. Some years I'm chockablock. Other years it's not so much. And the group could be two or three people, or it could be ten. I've had as many as fifteen people come. It takes the mystery out of it. You have people who are just newbies who are like kind of listening in and interested. High school students are particularly good, because they're fast and they're very computer literate. And then you have people that are like, "Yeah, I was here twenty-five years ago, and I always meant to come back. And now I'm retired and I'm really going to. You're going to see me." And I like that a lot.

And I love the multigenerational groups, and the extended family groups are interesting. Because they often will have divided up the work already. "Oh, she's doing the photographs and I'm doing the genealogy. And my dad is a semi-speaker, and is really looking for this." As a team, they can get so much done.

So, again, Breath of Life has allowed us to show off what we have and say to people, "It's yours. Come and use it. I'm sorry it's so far away, in some cases, but it's yours to use. We're not formal, we're not stuffy. You're not going to have to show us all your badges. We want you here. You're a legitimate user."

And our current director, who's been [here] a year and a half, she's a German lit person. She's kind of fascinated by this. I mean, our last one, Charles [Faulhaber] was fine with it, but he didn't get it. Elaine [Tennant] seems to just think, "Who would have ever thought that this would be used in this way?"

[Elaine] sees this as a population of California that has been underserved. And she likes that people are here. She just wants people to be here and to feel at home. She's generally that way. She's one of those people that you meet and you just think, fantastic. She's got a great laugh. She has great people sense. The questions she asks are always right on. So she can go up to somebody and say, "What are you working on?" And be genuinely enthusiastic.

(clock striking) I guess it's twelve. I wanted to mention one other thing. We had a Friends and Family Day. Friends with a capital "F," like Bancroft Friends. Friends with a small "f," friends of friends and family, in June [2012]. And that was her idea, Elaine's idea. And it was kind of a lot of work. But everybody was just invited to pick something about Bancroft, any staff member who wanted to, to do an informal presentation over the morning. It started a little early. I think it was at nine. But boy, it got packed.

And I did a little Breath of Life one. I just picked a couple of languages and I tried to show over time the kind of material that we had.

I thought well, this is pretty esoteric. You know, I'm going to get five people in three hours that are going to say this is cool. Everyone else is like, "Where are the photos?" (laughs)

I couldn't get rid of people! I mean, they were just glued. It wasn't me. It wasn't the presentation. It was the idea of the use of it. We had just had *Breath of Life*. So it was like, these are the kinds of materials we have, and these are the kinds of uses and users.

And I had some good pictures that some people had taken at *Breath of Life*. Not posed pictures at all. And people were just saying, "I didn't know there were all these languages." I mean, there were seventy-five languages. They weren't dialects, they were languages.

And then, "Well, there are a few languages spoken."

I said, "Well, more than a few." Of course I had *Flutes of Fire* out, because that's always an interesting book to people. And they might have heard of language revitalization, or something piqued their interest in it. It was so heartening that people could see a good for someone else.

So when I say "outreach to the users," this is something that Bancroft should be proud that we're doing. And that other non-Indian language speakers or revitalization people can see this as a both idealistic and a very practical thing that we're doing.

And that made me happy, because I thought, well, I'm interested in this, and frankly it will be easy to get it organized, because I just did it. But I didn't expect people to be almost celebratory about it. It's like, I can't believe what a great use of archives this is. And that's a word that, maybe it's hard for Bancroft to get that word out. I mean, we have blogs and we have Tumblrs and we have all this social media stuff and question of the day and artifact of the week. But it was gratifying for me personally to have people come and say, "Isn't it great that Bancroft does, isn't it great that we're here to do this?" You know, almost as if there's some fairness here. Somebody's getting something back that was taken from them. But it wasn't negative. It was more like, "This is what an archive should do. This is both backward looking and forward thinking."

And that's all I've got to say!

SG: Yay!

LL: I'm sure I'll think of something and I'll email you.

SG: Then I, just as a matter of course, which I do every interview, let's see here. Topics you wanted to cover that I didn't ask you about?

LL: I think I bent your ear about every topic I could think of.

SG: Okay. And future hopes for *Breath of Life*?



LL: Well, of course I'd love to see it go to two weeks, but I don't think that's practical either money-wise or time-wise, because people have two weeks as their whole vacation. I love working with the smaller groups, but just like Leanne, I couldn't bear to turn people away. I mean, she always says, "Well, we can't let this many of this language in, because we've got to let this language in." I'm glad I'm not on that committee, deciding. (laughs)

I guess my future hope is I need to find some people here that are as passionate about it as I am. And I always invite people to be involved. But people are busy. I want this to continue at Bancroft. I want this to be something we do the best that we can do. You know, not an afterthought. And part of it is finding somebody enthusiastic. Not that I know a lot, but having worked on the collections, it makes it particularly gratifying for me to see them used. And it's easier for me, because I actually understand how they're arranged.

But these things have finding aids. And any good archivist can read a finding aid, and say, "Okay, I understand the collection." Even if they have to pull something in and look at it.

So I want Leanne to continue because she's the heart and soul of it. She doesn't seem to me to be in any way—she might be tired, but she's still buzzing around all over the world doing this work. I don't know if Andrew's going to be as involved. I mean, she's so integral to it that I can't imagine it happening without her. But I'm imagining she's also thinking who will take this [over].

I love meeting with her. I love talking to her about it. I love the way she involves all of us in the discussion and the planning of it. And listens, you know, listens to us and tries to balance all of the different needs of the users and the creators. It's a privilege to work with her. I was afraid when she retired that she'd disappear. I knew that she wouldn't. But I mean, it's really gratifying to have her available.

Sometimes we just have lunch and we just talk about her grandchildren. We don't even worry about Breath of Life. Sometimes we meet and talk about, "Okay, we're going to do this," or, "We need to do that." But just to see her and be in the same space and see what one person has done in a lifetime, and how her work, her academic work, may not be even the most important thing about her. What she's done for all these people, what she has, how she has changed these lives—and she'd be the first one to say she didn't do it—but how she's catalyzed that, to me, is a great inspiration. And not that every faculty member here and every staff member on this campus haven't done great things. But I can't think of too many people on the campus that I know of that have brought the mission or the riches of the university to so many people, and have done it so gracefully and so modestly.

I want it to continue. If I have to come back and do it when I'm retired, I will do it. Because she, if she's doing it, I would do it. (laughs) But it would be much better to just know that this was going to continue, you know. It's something we do, and it's not only we should do it, we like to do it. We want to do it. And we need to do it. I've gotten some amazing notes from people. Email, calls, gifts. Thank you notes. Drawings. So I know that it has had an impact on people. I know that it has. Someone brought a salmon last time that they had smoked. And that was almost unbelievable. They'd caught it and smoked it and canned it. I was kind of overwhelmed. I mean, I just took that as the greatest compliment.

So it won't die off. I hope you'll stay involved. Is that your plan?

SG: That's the plan.

LL: Good.

SG: All righty.

LL: Maybe you'll be involved in this end of it, since you'll be an archivist. Are you doing the archives track or library?

SG: Archives, mainly.

LL: Maybe you better do it. (Gehr laughs) Let's go upstairs where we can get a pen and sign this thing.

SG: Great. I'm going to go ahead and push the stop button.

LL: I don't have anything else to say. I can only enthuse for an hour and twenty minutes.

[End of Interview]

## Chapter 12: Lisa Conathan

“Breath of Life was really instrumental in sparking my interest in working with California Native languages, just because it was this whole really vibrant group of people who were so interested in applying the fruits of scholarship to their everyday lives.”

Lisa Conathan was a very important interviewee for this project for several reasons. Her experience as a linguist with the Berkeley Breath of Life led her to seek a Master of Library Science from the University of Maryland to become an archivist. Moreover, her publications are among the very few scholarly works on archives and language revitalization.<sup>1</sup> Her training as both a linguist and an archivist gives her a unique perspective, having both subject expertise on the language materials and an understanding of the archival needs of these language materials.

Lisa Conathan was born in Kingston, New York, in 1975. She grew up in nearby Saugerties, home of the famous Woodstock music festival of 1969. Her interest in Slavic languages began when her family hosted an exchange student from Russia. As an undergraduate, she studied Russian and the native languages of the former Soviet Union at Dartmouth College. Because Russian tends to be taught in a linguistic tradition, Conathan’s study of linguistics began at the same time.

Conathan started a PhD program at the University of California at Berkeley intending to continue in Slavic language studies, focusing on the languages of the Caucasus region, which includes southwestern Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia,

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Conathan, “Archiving and Language Documentation,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*, eds. Peter Austin and Julia Sallabank, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 235-54; Lisa Conathan, “Recovering Sociolinguistic Context from Early Sources: The Case of Northwestern California,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 48, no. 3 (2006): 209-32.

northeastern Turkey, and northern Iran. However, her interests shifted to California Indian languages as she came to appreciate Berkeley's linguistics department's history of documenting California Indian languages. Conathan served as a linguist mentor during the 2000, 2002, and 2004 Breath of Life workshops. It was during that time she came to experience the importance of archives for Native language revitalization and for the academic field of linguistics.

Conathan finished her dissertation "The Linguistic Ecology of Northwestern California: Contact, Functional Convergence and Dialectology" in 2004. But as she documented in a career autobiography for *Versatile PhD*, Conathan realized that she had little enthusiasm for theoretical linguistic research that would be of interest only to other linguists.<sup>2</sup> Though she was tired of being a graduate student, she was energized by the possibility of connecting language communities with archival language documentation. As quickly as she could, she completed coursework in archival studies and earned her MLS from the University of Maryland at College Park in 2006.

Being involved in revitalizing indigenous languages is not always the most prestigious or well-paying area of archives, linguistics, or academia in general. Forced to choose between a temporary job with Berkeley's Survey of California and Other Indian Languages and a tenure-track job at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Conathan chose to go to Yale but remained involved with California Indian languages in a consulting role. In 2011, she and Leanne Hinton co-directed a national Breath of Life Archival Institute for Indigenous Languages, held for the first time in

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<sup>2</sup> Lisa Conathan, "Taking the Best with Me: From Ph.D. Student to Archivist," *The Versatile PhD*, 2010.

2011. Replicating AICLS' Breath of Life Workshop model on a national scale, this Breath of Life brought twenty teams of Native American language learners and linguists to the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives and other repositories in Washington, DC.

Conathan's educational path reveals that both subject expertise and archival training are two essential and powerful components of the Breath of Life Workshop. This knowledge can be provided by one person or through partnerships. Conathan's training as an academic linguist carried forward into her archival career. The experience of publishing combined with a topic that mattered to her spreads a deeper understanding of language documentation to the archival repositories. Conathan's work encourages linguists to think more carefully about the uses of their language documentation beyond their individual research agendas and demystifies the archival process for Native language scholars as they make decisions about care, preservation, and access to the materials they create in the course of restoring their languages.

In this interview, Conathan discusses her studies of linguistics and how Breath of Life changed the course of her career. She discusses linguistic, archival, and tribal issues concerning Native American language materials. She covers one of the several instances of replication of the Breath of Life Workshop model, that of the national Breath of Life Institute. She analyzes the many aspects of accessioning, providing access, and preserving Native American language materials. She discusses the amount and types of preparation that go into opening up an archival repository to more than sixty researchers

for two intensive weeks of study. She concludes with her hopes for the Breath of Life Workshops, namely that they continue on with more institutional support.

Because of geographical distance, this interview was conducted via Skype. The interviewer did try out a Skype extension that would have recorded the application audio, but pretests resulted in only one side of the conversation or the other being recorded. The audio was recorded open air using the TASCAM DR-100mkII digital audio recorder used for all the other interviews. Because there was no plan in place to record video for the project as a whole, no effort was made to capture the Skype video of this interview.

Interview with Lisa Conathan

Interviewed by Susan Gehr

November 29, 2012

Arcata, California (Gehr)/New Haven, Connecticut (Conathan)

70 minutes

Susan Gehr:

So today is Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012. This is an interview for the thesis oral history project *Breath of Life: Revitalizing California's Native Languages Through Archives*. I am interviewing Lisa Conathan, and my name is Susan Gehr. This interview is taking place via Skype. I'm in Arcata, California, and where, where are you at?

Lisa Conathan:

I'm in New Haven, Connecticut.

SG: Excellent. So I'm going to start out with a few background information questions to get to know more about you. So I saw from the information that you sent me that you grew up in Kingston, New York. What was it like to grow up there? What kind of town was it?

LC: I was born in Kingston. I grew up in Saugerties, which is right next to there. It's in the Hudson Valley. And it's a lot of very small towns, but it's kind of in the cultural realm of New York City. So it's near the town of Woodstock, which is famous for the 1969 festival. So the cultural influences there are very creative, artistic. And it's also within a day's drive of New York City. So there's a kind of urban element, even though it's a rural area. So it was a really nice place to grow up. And I'm still fairly close to there. I'm just a couple hours away from where my parents are here in Connecticut. They're still in that same house that I grew up in.

SG: Right on. Where were your parents from originally?

LC: From Massachusetts. Both of them. And they, so they grew up in eastern Massachusetts and then they met in college at Cornell. And then in the early '70s, like probably around 1970, '72, they moved to that Hudson Valley region. And that's where they've lived since then.

SG: Uh huh. What did they do?

LC: My mother works in social services for a nonprofit social service agency that was actually founded right after the Woodstock '69 festival, where it kind of left a whole cohort of people who needed social services and didn't really have anywhere to go. So she worked for that agency for forty years. And then she just retired last year. And she's done a lot of different things for them. When I was little, when I was like two years old, I would go to her sometimes, go to her work with her where she worked on a suicide hotline. She worked at a daycare. So I would go to work with her when I was really little. And then she went on to do more administrative things.

And my father's an engineer and there are various kind of manufacturing factories in the Hudson Valley that he's worked in. Like computer engineering and lighting manufacturing now.

SG: Let's see here. When did you first get interested in languages and linguistics?

LC: I would say as a high school student, when we had an exchange student from Russia come live with us for a few months. And I became interested in her language. And so I started studying Russian as an undergraduate at Dartmouth College. And the way Russian is taught, it overlaps a lot with linguistics. And the way some other languages are taught in a more literary tradition. But Russian tends to be taught in more of a linguistic tradition. So that's how I became interested in linguistics.

And as an undergrad, my first exposure to the idea of Native cultures and Native peoples, really, was thinking about the languages of Native former Soviet Union. So in Siberia and the Caucasus of the former Soviet Union I started studying the Native languages there.

SG: Uh huh. Does your, the little headphones you're wearing, does it have a microphone on it?

LC: You know, it does. But I don't know, can you tell, is the microphone this microphone? Or is it the one on my laptop that's, that is being used?

SG: I think the one on there is picking up something, but it's also rubbing on your sweater.

LC: Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. So maybe, do you think if I just hold it like this it's better?

SG: Yeah. I'm not getting anything right now. Yeah. If there's a way you can make it not rustle on your sweater, then—



LC: Yeah. I'll just hold it. That's fine.

SG: Okay. Okay.

LC: Does this sound okay now?

SG: Yeah. This is fine.

LC: Okay. Okay.

SG: Okay.

LC: So, yeah, as an undergrad, anyway, I studied Russian and linguistics and Native languages of former Soviet Union.

And then when I went to Berkeley, it was with that intention to study. And in my academic trajectory that switched to looking at Native languages of California and studying that, it was, I mean that was a really, in a way it was a really big switch. But also, from a kind of scientific perspective, the languages had a lot in common with the other languages that I was studying because it's a very linguistically diverse area. I had been looking at the Caucasus, and the history of languages in the Caucasus. And California, sort of like the Caucasus, is a very linguistically diverse area. It has really interesting, rich linguistic history. So I approached it initially from this very kind of scientific perspective of studying the languages, when it came time to work on my dissertation.

And then I started to connect with this rich history that University of California and specifically Berkeley had of working with Native people in California. And that was really exciting for me to be part of that tradition. The department was founded by Alfred Kroeber who is a very large presence in the study of California languages. And having the Survey [of California and Other Indian Languages] at UC Berkeley was just a way for me to connect with a community of scholarship that I found really rewarding.

I started to research the history of Native languages of California. And specifically your area of the world, when I was writing my dissertation. And that, I think then I started to shift my focus in really discovering more of the kind of social and human element of language, generally. And of Native languages in California specifically.

And I wrote a little bit about this in the essay you were talking about, the career history, where it was that kind of human connection that made me realize that working with archives could be a really powerful thing to do because you're connecting people with resources in a way that can produce results that are quite rich, engaging and powerful.

- SG: Did you have some experience of that before you maybe got connected with *Breath of Life*? Or some first inklings of that?
- LC: So the bad thing about doing an oral history with me is that my memory's really bad. So remembering the timing of when things happened precisely, I'm not so great at that.  
I came to Berkeley in 1998, fall of '98. So I assume that the first time I did *Breath of Life* was 2000. Because that would have been the next one that occurred after I came to Berkeley. And that was, I would say that was probably the beginning of my interaction with California Indians. I wouldn't be surprised if that was my first entrée into that world. But you know, because my memory is so bad, there could have been other things going on before that.  
So I probably did, participated in *Breath of Life* as a graduate student in 2000 and 2004. I think in 2002 I was out of town or something that time. So I think I probably participated twice as a graduate student. Once after I graduated, and maybe twice after I graduated. So I've probably participated three or four times.  
So anyway, to get back to answering your question, I would say that *Breath of Life* was really instrumental in sparking my interest in working with California Native languages, just because it was this whole really vibrant group of people who were so interested in applying the fruits of scholarship to their everyday lives. And I found that practical element really appealing. In a world where as a linguist you're often writing theoretical articles or dissertations or books that might only really speak to a dozen people in the world who are really engaged in that small facet of linguistic theory. When you're faced with that, coming around to a point where there are entire communities of people who can actually engage with research and put it into practice in their daily lives was very appealing to me.
- SG: Let's see. Did, when you were at, oh, what did you do when you were a graduate student assistant at the Berkeley Audio Archive of Linguistic Fieldwork? Yeah.
- LC: Digitizing audio tapes. So they were on, the archive there is basically an archive of linguistic fieldwork, field recordings, from probably the early, pretty early in the twentieth century up until, you know, there's contemporary stuff there. Although, I guess in the last few years, I don't know if they're still collecting stuff. But anyway, up until at least the 2000s. And a lot of the recordings had been mastered onto reel to reel tapes. And then they would hire graduate assistants to digitize those and annotate them. Basically create descriptions. But we weren't following any kind of bibliographic standard or archival standard. It was basically

like we were creating notes and annotations about the contents of the material. So we were digitizing. And now that collection is pretty much fully accessible online.

SG: The California Language Archive. Did you help out with Breath of Life from the audio archive?

LC: No. My work there was not related to Breath of Life at all. It was really, I was hired just to help with that digitization project. And it didn't overlap what I was doing at Breath of Life, which was working with individuals to access, I mean, sometimes it would access those resources at the audio archive. But we were also accessing resources at other places.

SG: What were some of your memorable experiences or ah ha moments as a linguistic mentor at Breath of Life?

LC: One of them, I would say, would be visiting the object collections at the Hearst Museum and just observing how very emotional and important it was to people to see some of these objects and understand a little bit more what it meant that these objects might have spiritual significance. Or that they might also be associated with an individual's family members or ancestors. And just witnessing the powerful emotions that those evoked. And it was, I mean, I have a way of being a kind of detached observer in these situations. It wasn't so much that I felt caught up in the emotions myself, but I could empathize with them and observe them at the same time. And that was a very powerful moment for me.

Also, and I don't know that this is a specific anecdote, but it's sort of a general anecdote, because it seems to happen every time, it was very frustrating and also educational to me to find out how intensely factionalized different tribes or groups or people who claimed native heritage can be in the sense that there can be people who might share a common ancestry and yet feel themselves to be so far apart because of family history or local history that they were not able to work together toward a common goal of learning their language. So I found that to be an incredibly frustrating thing, because from my perspective as a linguist, as somebody who was trying to participate in this workshop, I would say, "You guys have more in common than the things that divide you."

And yet from other people's perspective, they would say, "Well, you have no idea, because you're not from here. And the things that divide us are more important than the things that unite us."

So I found it to be, like I said, frustrating and educational to understand that the very particulars of family history might in fact play out in important ways in contemporary language revitalization. And you can't

just ignore it or fight it; you have to work with it. You have to figure out how to work around it sometimes.

So, and this is where I think I wouldn't necessarily want to name particular names or particular tribes, because I feel like then it can distract from the issue, because then people say, "Well, that's their problem. It's not our problem." If you start naming names. But there would be two people who would self-identify as being of the same tribe. And one would say of the other, "Well, they're not the real tribe. And so they don't deserve to work together to learn this language, because it's not their language. It's really our language."

So there's a whole host of issues there, obviously, that are very complicated, that revolve around a proprietary feeling that some people have toward the language. A proprietary feeling that some people have toward the actual archival material itself. And then this overlaps with a relationship that some people feel that they should or do have toward linguists, where linguists also have their own sort of proprietary feeling toward language data because they might feel that, in a sense they own it because they own it intellectually and they understand it. Which can be a very alienating position to take.

And I feel like I'm kind of addressing several different topics here. I'm opening a lot of cans of worms.

SG: Mm hmm. And they're all questions that are in my list of topics to cover with you. So this is great. I don't have to do so much. (laughs)

LC: I think I've kind of jumped from one topic to another. But your, I'm trying to remember what your, what was your original question was you were talking about memorable anecdotes. Right?

SG: Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

LC: And I kind of have gotten far afield from that. So I think my original answer to that was just this, one of the most memorable and informative things for me was just witnessing how the language and access to the language can not only unite people, but divide them. Because of the particulars of local politics and local history. So that's one aspect.

Another aspect is witnessing how people relate in a sort of proprietary way to this material. Both linguists, and I would see it in both linguists and also in people of cultural heritage and Native people who are accessing the material. That both have propriety feelings in a different way. If you are Native, you might have these proprietary feelings because the documentation is directly related to you, to your ancestors, to your tribe, to your culture. If you're a linguist, you might have these feelings because you feel like you are somehow connected to this intellectual

history of studying the language in a certain way. And you can grasp maybe exactly what the linguist was doing. You know that they were looking for bilabial verbs when they were probing in this certain way. And so you might feel a kind of proprietary relationship because you understand the jargon and you understand what the linguist might have been doing when they were creating these records.

So I think that about covers the very memorable experiences I've had with Breath of Life. I'm sure there are many, many others, and they might come up.

SG: Yeah. So you talked about the proprietary feelings that both the linguists and the participants of Breath of Life have toward the language and the language data. Do those feelings or expressions transmit themselves, say, into access policies with archivists?

LC: That depends a lot on which institution you're talking about. I mean, are you thinking specifically of the Survey? Or like UC, University of California? Or just more broadly?

SG: I was thinking of generally. But if you want to speak of a specific instance, that would work, too.

LC: I'm not sure how to answer the question, I guess. I think that—

SG: Maybe I'll try it in a different way.

LC: —how to answer the question.

SG: Let's see. Do the statements that the linguists, or, you know, the feelings, or the expressions of their feelings about, about access to the data, do those get transmitted to the archivists who maybe are making decisions about what to say?

LC: Yeah. What has been very lopsided, I think, in archival access policy is that it tends to be, maybe until quite recently, it's always been dictated by the quote unquote "records creator," which would be like the missionary who collected the records, the anthropologist who collected the records, the linguist. And so they have had the privilege of being able to frame the access. If they wanted to put restrictions on it, for example. And I know that there are many cases at the University of California, at the Survey, at the audio archive where linguists have deposited materials and then placed access restrictions on them such that even members of the heritage community can't necessarily access those records. And so it's been this very, I just think it's a lopsided view of things where they have, because

they've quote unquote "created" those records or pushed "record" on the tape recorder, that they have had the privilege of being able to dictate access.

And of course you're very familiar with how these conversations have been developing and changing over time. (phone ringing) There's a phone ringing in the background.

SG: That's okay.

LC: You know, with the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials and et cetera, I think that more and more archives that have holdings of documentation of Native American culture are just becoming a little bit more aware of how that had seemed very lopsided to many people over time, and are trying to rectify that.

SG: So you got your MLS after you had already finished your PhD. And in the article you mentioned that some of the classes kind of repeated what you'd already learned through getting your doctorate, but other classes were very useful. What were the useful ones?

LC: It seemed like the program that I did at University of Maryland, it was sort of divided into very practical skills that you would need, like how to make a catalog record. And what Library of Congress authorities are. And the history of bibliographic description or how archives are described, etcetera. And these very practical skills that are necessary when you walk into a library job you need to know how to do these things. Because somebody will hand you a half-finished EAD [Encoded Archives Description] document and you have to finish it. Or somebody will hand you a manuscript and you have to create a catalog record of it. So those things I found very useful.

And then the other half of it was more about professionalization. And that, I found to be less useful for anybody who had any kind of professional presence before doing that, it just wasn't that useful to learn how to write a grant application. Or practice giving a presentation in front of a classroom. There were things like this that I just found to be a little bit, it was just a perfunctory thing that I felt like I had to do in order to get the degree, but they were less useful. These practical things were very useful and I turned around and used them right away in my job.

SG: Uh huh. Uh huh. What inspired you to go ahead and get the MLS after [your PhD]?

LC: So it was really my work with Breath of Life that demonstrated for me how interesting and useful it can be to work with archives. And Breath of

Life in particular, it's focused on language revitalization, but specifically it's focused on using archival documentation in revitalization.

And as I spoke about this a little before, that seeing that linguistics could actually affect people's everyday lives was very inspiring to me. I found it to be a better avenue to pursue rather than writing papers where I was speaking to an audience of my peers who had a similar educational background to my own. That I didn't find to be a particularly inspiring discourse. It was a much more inspiring discourse to talk to people who on the surface might have very little in common with me, and yet can somehow benefit from my experience and skills and turn around and do something very practical with it. And who can also teach me something that's very different from my own experience. So I found that to be just more, more inspiring.

And so, going and working in archives, of course, you just need to get an MLS, really. It's a requirement. So I just did it, and I was not a model student. I did it in a very quick and perfunctory way (laughs) in order to just get the requirement out of the way.

SG: Good. Let's see here. How did you get connected with consulting for the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages?

LC: That was, so when I graduated from the Berkeley Linguistics Department in 2004, Andrew Garrett and I worked together on a grant to support activities at the Survey. And at one point there was an intention that I would go back and work there. But I ended up with this job at Yale that I felt like I didn't want to leave in order to go back to California for what could be a temporary, grant-funded situation, not as secure.

So I didn't end up going back and working there, but I did, over the years, go back and help Andrew run the various projects at the Survey.

SG: Uh huh. What kind of projects?

LC: Basically we were trying to bring some coherence to their catalog. So it was a little bit more standardized and accessible online. They've completely revamped their web presence, which I didn't have a lot to do with. I was more helping them do work that was at least more consistent with national bibliographic and archival standards. Rather than just having a random Excel spreadsheet of metadata.

SG: (laughs) Excuse me. The lights go off in here automatically if no one is moving around. Hence the wing flapping.

LC: (mic trouble, unclear) at Berkeley where the lights would go off. So it was a sign of a really bad class if it went off when there were like twenty

people in the room, because you knew that people were just sitting totally still. (Gehr laughs) And then the lights would go off and people would wave.

SG: Yeah, that's what it is. (laughs) So the last word I heard was "metadata."

LC: I was helping them basically create metadata that was a little bit more in line with national bibliographic and archival standards rather than just kind of an ad hoc thing. There were graduate student assistants who were creating all the metadata. From one person to the next there was very little consistency. So I was just helping them with that, basically.

SG: Coming up with vocabularies or controlled vocabularies.

LC: Also trying to make sure that the metadata categories that they created could be mapped onto Dublin Core, so that they can share metadata with other repositories.

SG: Mm hmm. Did you have much to do with the Survey becoming part of OLAC?<sup>3</sup>

LC: Yeah, exactly. So that was one of the things that we did. Yeah.

SG: Yeah. Open Language Archives Community. I'm actually writing, I'm taking a metadata class right now and I'm writing, I'm doing a project creating a fictional OLAC repository and then writing a few records.

LC: How cool!

SG: Let's see here. What are my next questions? So, consulting with the Survey. When did you, when you were a linguistic mentor at the Berkeley Breath of Life, what were your interactions like with the archive or the archivist?

LC: Hmm. So you know what's interesting is I don't remember having many interactions with the archivists at Berkeley at all. I think that's because the Survey is situated within the Linguistics Department at Berkeley, and the Survey had a lot of the material that we were using or needed. So in a sense, we didn't have to go outside our own department in order to get the

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<sup>3</sup> OLAC, the Open Language Archives Community, is a worldwide partnership of individuals and institutions who contribute to an online catalog of their language materials. Gary Simons and Steven Bird, "OLAC: Open Language Archives Community," <http://www.language-archives.org>.



most important resources. And also that it happened to be that the people I worked with over the years were more at a point of beginning their research rather than delving further into the archives. So we were often working from published grammars and vocabularies. Or grammars and vocabularies that weren't necessarily published but they were at least, they were in the gray literature, semi-published. Sometimes in conference proceedings or the Survey reports, things like that, where the resources were there at the Survey. And we also had microfilm, a lot of things on microfilm, at the Survey.

So often the material you wanted to look at, even the primary source material, would be microfilmed and there. So it's just interesting, and I had never thought about that until you just asked me that, but I don't think I really had interactions with the archivists there. I'm sure that Leanne [Hinton], as the person that was running the whole thing, had a lot of interaction with them.

SG: What do you think of possible pluses and minuses with linguists kind of doing on their own? Sort of creating an archive or repository without much input from professional archivists?

LC: I think one of the pluses is that linguists can be very responsive to a certain very specific kind of data. And also if they intend to basically curate large amounts of data, they would put an amount of effort into it that is often not possible at a university or at an archive or at a library. And I find this, I mean, now I understand, having worked in an archive, that the level of detail, of description and markup and metadata that linguists want, and I think more generally that scientists want out of sets of data, you know, archivists and librarians can't provide that. Because they both don't have the time and the resources to do it. And they don't have the expertise to do it.

So I think that's a plus, that it does actually allow a kind of concentration on certain very specific types of data sets that could be fruitful. A minus is that you wind up with these siloed collections that are not necessarily widely accessible. People are not thinking more broadly about how the data that they've collected might be more useful, not only for their own type of research but for other types of research. So just because you're a linguist doesn't mean that the only people interested in learning about the data you've collected are linguists. You know, many other people might be interested as well. So that's the minuses.

I think that linguists, or scientists more broadly, tend to have a kind of siloed, insular view of what the purpose of that documentation might be. Whereas archivists, librarians, tend to have a much broader view of thinking about all the different ways that that documentation might be useful.

SG: Yes. Tell me a little bit about the job that you have right now with Yale.

LC: Yeah. I'm an archivist at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. And archivists here are in the Technical Services Department. So primarily I catalog manuscripts and I process large manuscript collections. And the material that I work with is a lot of twentieth century European literature. So I've gone back to the Slavic language skills of my undergrad years, and I've worked with Eastern European literature quite a bit.

And then I catalog a lot of small manuscript collections and items in nineteenth and twentieth century American history. And they're actually, there's a lot, our collections are really strong in Western American history. And there's a lot there about Native peoples, and especially the interaction of Native peoples with government, interactions of white settlers and Native peoples. And sometimes missionary records, things like that.

So my, most of the time in my job I'm creating catalog records and finding aids. And then I also do a certain amount of public service as well. So I do reference and I conduct classroom sessions. So instructors on campus will bring their classes to Beinecke to learn about resources at Beinecke that are relevant to their classroom, to their curriculum.

SG: Nice. Does your job give you release time or something, somehow give you the space to, I know you started the national Breath of Life...

LC: Yeah. Well, yeah, they've been very generous in allowing me to take time to go those two weeks that the institute is conducted. And the rest, the planning, I just kind of squeeze it in wherever it fits in. There is space in my job to do things like that, yeah. But, yeah, it's not easy. And in fact, this is the second time I'm doing it, and it's going to be the last time.  
(laughs)

SG: How did you get started with it? Or how did the national one get started?

LC: It must have been 2010, yes, at the 2010 Breath of Life in Berkeley, I was talking to Leanne [Hinton] and she had this idea that she had been wanting to do something that was on a larger scale, that had a bit of a broader scope. So I said, "Hey, that sounds like a great idea!"

And she and I basically got together to write a grant proposal to get it funded. Because it seemed like if we did do something that was going to be located in Washington, DC, it was going to require a significant amount of funding. So we put together a proposal, and it got funded. And she and I co-directed that institute in 2011. It was in June, 2011. And it

was such a success that there was a general consensus that we should do it again. And I was the person around to put together the next, the next grant proposal. So here I am doing it again.

This time around, though, we have hired a program assistant to do a lot of the details of the planning. And that has just been a huge relief for me. It helps a lot. But yeah, Leanne and I have been working together on it since 2010.

SG: Uh huh. Uh huh. Let's see here. And you can answer this in terms of either the Berkeley one or the national one. What are some of the most frequently accessed materials or types of materials?

LC: So I think the two most frequently accessed types of materials, so if we're talking about, first of all, say that often when people are just starting out, they're actually learning how to use secondary source materials and not primary materials. So they come with somebody's dissertation that's a grammar sketch of X language. And they're coming to get help, to try to learn how to read it, interpret it and use that grammar. So very often, people start with that material. So there will be dictionaries, grammar sketch, fire truck, fire truck. (laughter) Of course, there's construction right outside my window, so the fire truck is being held up.

So that is very common. And sometimes people don't necessarily go beyond that. So also, published collections of texts tend to be very, very useful for people, because they have been cleaned up and edited a bit. They're just easier to access and understand than original manuscript or audio recordings. So often people start with those things, the Mary Haasian trio of dictionary, grammar and text.

Then people become fascinated to learn that these published descriptions are only the tip of the iceberg, and that there is, in fact, so much more documentation in field notes or slip files, things like that. So I think slip files are really useful source that people often go to. It depends so much on what language it is and what kind of records they're looking for. But often slip files are really useful because sometimes you'll have slip files containing grammatical information or basically lexicon, and only a portion of that has ended up in the published version of whatever the research was. Or maybe it was never published at all. So those are really useful.

And then, of course, field notes. And as you go sort of down the ladder toward more and more primary material, it just becomes more difficult to interpret, it takes more time to interpret and use. So it's a selection of people who end up really delving into field notes and reading through them and interpreting and using them.

But what we hope to do in all these workshops is just to make that experience of approaching the primary material less daunting, to demystify it and make it more accessible to people.

SG: What are some of the things that make it more daunting?

LC: First of all, the material is not widely available. It might not be microfilmed. If it's unique manuscript material, it's only in one location. So it might be in the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. And if you live in California and your tribe is in California, how often do you go to DC? So it's physically challenging, geographically challenging, to do that.

And then second of all, once you actually do start looking at the material, it might be in very difficult to read handwriting. And it might use symbols such as International Phonetic Alphabet symbols that are unfamiliar to you. So you finally get the material and you look at it and you think your language is going to jump out from the page into your brain. But it isn't, because you find that the handwriting itself is difficult to read, and that the alphabetic symbols that are used are unfamiliar.

And then it could be that the field notes or the slip files or whatever they are are organized in such a way that it reflects the linguist's work habits and how those notebooks were created and used. It doesn't necessarily reflect whatever you're going after. So if you're looking for ceremonial songs, you're not going to find the chapter on ceremonial songs where it's all laid out for you. It could be that there's something accidentally in the notebook, or it could be that these things are interspersed, or it could be that there's certain vocabulary that's interspersed in these papers. But it's not necessarily pulled out and digested and presented to you. You have to do a lot of digging to find it.

And then finally, I think, there's just the use of linguistic vocabulary, where you might be completely unfamiliar with that vocabulary. And once you are introduced to the vocabulary, all of a sudden it makes a lot of sense. But when somebody's using vocabulary that's unfamiliar to you, it can just be a turnoff. If you don't understand it and you don't have a way of understanding it, then you could just close the notebook and put it away and turn away.

SG: Let's see here. I have a question on here about, hmm. Is there, do you have experience, and maybe not, since you're at Yale, but any experiences with assessing, arranging or describing some of the materials that, the Native language materials.

LC: Not so much material that has been used in *Breath of Life*. I mean, we do have material like that here at—

- SG: Lisa? Uh oh. We got disconnected. Hmm. (pause) Uh oh. Offline. Online.
- LC: Hi.
- LC: So I was saying that, I don't know where I got cut off, but just that here at Yale, we don't necessarily have the materials that have been used at Breath of Life directly. But we do have a lot of Native language documentation. It tends to be more incidental. That's not our collecting focus. We're not out there looking for that material. It tends to be that it's incidentally associated with other material that is in our Western Americana history collection. So it could be—every once in a while you'll just have somebody who was a Euro-American traveler who writes a vocabulary of a Native language. And that might end up in our collection. Or sometimes you'll have images, illustrations, portraits of Native people. And then it will have their Native names associated with them. So it's just a little bit more incidental than the other documentation that I've worked with at the Smithsonian or UC Berkeley.
- SG: Have you ever had the experience of, like you get materials that are in a language but it's not labeled which language it is?
- LC: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. And usually, I mean, because of my background, I'm able to figure out what language it is. But often I'm not able to figure out to a level of granularity that's satisfactory to me. Like I might figure out that okay, this is some kind of Salish language, but I'm not exactly sure which kind of Salish it is. You know, something like that. So I'm able to give it some kind of identification, but often not quite to my satisfaction. And often that's because it's ambiguous. You know, the documentation itself may not be very high quality. It might not be clear. Also, sometimes the categories that we lay out for languages don't necessarily match up with reality. So if you have three—I'm just making this up—but if you have three different categories of Salish that you want to try to fit something into—you might be presented with something that doesn't really fit into any of those categories and yet is still Salish or whatever. That happens a lot, where your preconceived categories don't necessarily match the documentation you have. It could just be some other dialect or you just don't always know exactly what it is.
- SG: Uh huh. Uh huh. Let's see here. With—and you can tell me whether or not this question applies to you—with some of the Native language materials that are in somewhere, are there other users besides Breath of Life participants?

LC: Yeah. So what's interesting about that is in 2011, when we had the Breath of Life hosted by the Smithsonian and Library of Congress, they said that that was the heaviest use of that material that they had ever had. So what that indicates to me is that yes, it is being used by other people, but at no time has it ever been used as much as it has during Breath of Life.

But other users are, you know, I don't know that I'm able to say with a lot of confidence exactly who they are, because I'm not running those institutions. But I would assume that there's a whole range of kind of scholarly and cultural consultation that goes on with these papers. So you know, from anthropologists, ethno-botanists, etcetera, those sorts of people to also kind of more cultural consultation, Native people coming to view them. And for some cultural purpose. But I can't say with certainty exactly who the other users are, since I'm not there at those places on a day-to-day basis.

SG: Right on. What are the differences between like a typical day working in an archive, and a day when Breath of Life is going on.

LC: Well, when we have brought Breath of Life to archives, it's very clear that it's a huge ramp-up of activities for them. So for example, at the National Anthropological Archives in 2011, when we did this Breath of Life in DC, we had somewhere between sixty and seventy people participating. And I think on a typical day at the National Anthropological Archives, they might have, I don't know, four or five people researching. (laughs) So they had to make—and they were so willing to accommodate us and make major changes to their procedures in order to make this happen—but they opened up two additional reading rooms. And they got interns to help them. They turned offices and conference meeting rooms into reading rooms. And they turned their library into an archival reading room. So they had to really plan ahead and changed the way they paged materials, just because there was such a high volume of research going on during those two weeks. And they also closed down the reading room to other researchers during that two weeks. They only focused on the Breath of Life people, researchers.

And at the Library of Congress, I think they're a little bit more set up to handle a high volume of researchers. Their volume is just higher in general. So I think it was less of a huge impact on them. But still, it was definitely a higher volume using those particular collections than other days.

SG: Uh huh. Were there, have you observed any changes because of Breath of Life?

LC: At archives?

SG: Yeah. Ongoing.

LC: Well, the staff of the Smithsonian who participated last time, some of them have said things to me like, “This is why I became an archivist.” Or, “This is the most important thing that’s happened in our archives recently.” So people were obviously very enthused and touched by the amount of engagement that occurred during those two weeks.

In terms of ongoing changes of policy or the way they run things, since I’m really talking about the DC one that happened in 2011, I don’t know that I can really say that anything like that has happened. Except that I will say that one thing the staff keeps saying is that they want to learn from the Breath of Life participants about their collections. And that every time they interact with Breath of Life researchers, they do learn something more about their collections. And they’re trying to do a better job of somehow systematically capturing that, rather than just talking to someone and learning something really interesting, and not necessarily documenting it. So there is some talk of coming up with the way to document that interaction.

And that has been done a little better in a museum context at the Smithsonian. And we’ll see if something happens with it in the archiving context this summer, in 2013.

SG: Mm hmm. Are there dates for the 2013 one yet?

LC: Yeah. It’s like the two middle weeks of June, I think. So I can get the exact dates.

SG: Okay. I have to flap my arm again.

LC: Yeah. (laughter) Tenth through 21<sup>st</sup>. Or I think it actually starts the eighth. June eighth through 21, 2013. Yep.

SG: All right. Good. Let’s see here. So in working with the participants, how much material selection or identification happens beforehand?

LC: A lot, actually. And a very important, and I think this is true both in Berkeley and then also in the one we did in DC, a lot of effort was put into selecting material in advance and identifying material in advance. First of all because you don’t want somebody to come all that way and then find that there isn’t something new for them to look at. And then second of all, because it’s such a limited period of time. You know, whether it’s one week or two weeks, you don’t want them to spend half that time finding the material. So the staff, to a certain extent me, to a large extent the staff

of the archives, put a lot of effort into identifying that material in advance. (sound drops out) ...interaction about whether they might have already seen some particular thing and what kind of thing they might be interested in looking at.

And I think in the California context, because it's a smaller set of languages, at this point, because Breath of Life has been going on for like two decades, people just know what all the resources are. So in a sense you're not selecting in advance. You just, you kind of know. And maybe you talk to Leanne or, if you don't know, and then you find out. (laughs) But the set of resources is just more finite, and it's just known to the people who are engaged with California languages on a regular basis.

But when you're talking about just a whole new set of languages, and a whole new set of archives, you don't necessarily know in advance.

SG: Uh huh. Uh huh. So there was one point on my end where things dropped out for a second and you just were talking about back and forth interactions, say, between the participant directly and you? Or?

LC: Yeah. Well, sometimes I would just get in touch with the participants to ask if there were specific things they were interested in looking at. And also just to find out maybe what they had already looked at. Because a lot of the participants had already done a lot of archival research. I didn't want them to come all the way to DC and then say, "Oh, well, I've seen that."

SG: Yeah.

LC: I've done what I can with it.

SG: Yes. Do you have any observations about whether Breath of Life might make it easier, more likely for participants to use archives on their own, after Breath of Life?

LC: Yeah, I really hope, that's one of my main goals in doing this is not only to create this two weeks where people are intensely focused on using materials, but also to give people confidence and the skills and the information necessary so that they can conduct research like this in the future. And whether that's doing it from their homes using resources that are available electronically, or applying for a research fellowship to come back to the Smithsonian and visit the archives, or going to a local university archives or a historical society, I'm hoping that what people take out of this is more familiarity with how to conduct primary source research. And the skills and information necessary to be able to do it.



And also, many people will look at material and then request copies of the material, so that they can bring something home with them that hopefully can be of ongoing use.

SG: Indeed. Do you have—

[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]

SG: —I don't know if “advice” is the right word, or some thoughts that you've had, advice or wishes, for archivists involved with the other regional or national Breath of Life workshops that are springing up? I know there was one at Oklahoma, and APS [American Philosophical Society].

LC: Do I have advice for them?

SG: Or maybe if “advice” is too, too stuffy, just things that have been helpful to you in your process that you hope they know, too.

LC: Yeah. I think it's helpful to understand that there's a whole range of ways of interacting with archives. And some of those ways of interacting might be outside your own personal experience. But they are just as interesting and fruitful and relevant once you are exposed to them. So many archivists are trained as historians and might have a particular very academic way of approaching archives. And when all of a sudden when, if you're in that position, which is kind of similar to how I am. I mean, I was very much trained as an academic. And then you're in a room full of Native people who are reading the archives, you just come to recognize the range of knowledge and experience and ways of interacting with information and documentation that might at first seem very alien. And is very rewarding and fruitful. What I have found useful is just to be very open to those different ways of interacting that might be more personal, that might be very spiritual. That's, I mean, something that as a Euro-American, something that is very different when you're working with Native people and with Native documentation is that religion and spirituality really infused every aspect of work and life in a way that might not be familiar to you if you grow up in secular America. So just understanding those ranges of, that there is a range of ways of interacting with the material.

SG: Excellent. What are some of your sort of future hopes for Breath of Life and revitalizing dormant California Indian languages?

LC: I hope that, and I think that this, I think these workshops will continue and have proliferated. And what I hope is that people will understand that the

documentation that lives in archives is accessible to them, it's open to them and useful for them. And that they, that people will continue to find more opportunities to access the documentation and to use it and to bring it to life. I mean, that's why it's called Breath of Life. To bring it to life in daily practice.

On a very practical level, I hope that this DC workshop that I've been doing for the last couple of years will continue in some way. I think in a way it's diverging a bit from the California workshop as it's existed because it's not only focused on language communities that don't have current fluent speakers. It's also focused on basically any Native language. And I think that's actually really good for archives because it's making the statement that archives are relevant for all Native people who are learning their languages. Not only for people who don't have access to elders who are fluent speakers. It's basically saying that the archives are not only a last resort; they can also complement any language learning. And I think that's a really important statement to make.

SG: And if I remember correctly, finding someone else to facilitate for the future workshops.

LC: Yeah. (laughs) Yeah, that is my goal. I'm hoping that maybe the Smithsonian will take it on as a Smithsonian event or project. And I think that would be really nice. Because I can't keep doing it myself. And I think Leanne also feels similarly that she can't necessarily keep doing it. And we also need to find another way to fund it. It's just been through grants.

SG: Yeah. Are there any topics that I haven't asked you about yet that you thought I might?

LC: No, not that I can think of. I feel like I ranged over a lot of different topics in my answers. So.

SG: Yeah. I think so, too. (pause) I'm sorry, I missed the last thing you said.

LC: I might think of things later. And if I do, I can get in touch with you.

SG: That would be great. I think that was my last question unless I run quickly through anything. Access issues, archivist, no, that, I think I will say that is my last question. And thank you so much.

LC: Well, this was fun. And I'm really, I'll be really excited to read your thesis when it's done. I think it's a very impressive project you're taking on, so.

SG: Thank you.

LC: (sound dropout) Good luck.

SG: Thank you. Thank you so much. And I'll be sending you the original form. And then sometime in the near future sending you a first draft transcript to look through and a copy of the recording.

LC: Okay, great.

SG: All righty.

LC: Well, enjoy the rest of your day. You have more of it, since you're in California.

SG: Yes.

LC: It's already (unclear). (laughs)

SG: Yes.

LC: Okay. Bye.

SG: Take care. Bye bye.

[End of Interview]

## Chapter 13: Andrew Garrett

[In my first years in the linguistics department at Berkeley,] I was aware of this archive that's at Berkeley, the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages. I was kind of irritated, actually, because there were not very many people using the material in it. If the material was Hittite, which was the language I had written my thesis on, then the archive would be just full of German scholars all day long, transcribing everything and editing everything and publishing everything.

And there were very few people who were using it, using it as a scholarly resource. And it has all of these field notes and other treasures that are not being published and are not being analyzed. And that just irritated me, because I think it's important to do that kind of work.

So I got interested in trying to find a way to do some of it, and that was what pulled me into doing work on California Indian languages. And so therefore I interacted a lot with Leanne [Hinton], then you get involved in doing Breath of Life things.

Andrew Garrett is a professor of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. He is also director of the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages (the Survey) and director of the California Language Archive (CLA), two of the archives visited by Breath of Life Workshop participants. Garrett is not an archivist by formal training, but he has drawn successfully from the expertise of others in his archives work. Garrett writes and presents extensively on archives and documentation in the work of linguistics.<sup>1</sup> He has been involved with Breath of Life as both a linguistics mentor to Rumsien Ohlone and Karuk language participants and as an archives director. Currently, he works extensively with the Yurok and Karuk languages of northwestern California, maintaining online dictionaries and text collections for both languages.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Garrett, "Talks: On Archives and Documentation," <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~garrett/talks.html>.

<sup>2</sup> William Bright, Susan Gehr and Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, "Karuk Dictionary and Texts,"

Born in Seattle, Washington, Garrett moved all around the country, following his father's academic career. In fact, one of his uncles is a professor of philosophy, and his sister and brother have also made their careers in academia. Garrett became interested in languages and linguistics through the writings of Mario Pei and J.R.R. Tolkien. He studied folklore and mythology as an undergraduate at Harvard University, which led him to graduate studies in linguistics, also at Harvard, so he could do work in comparative mythology. Through his study of ancient Anatolian languages, he first became aware of the role of archives in preserving language documentation. In 1995, Garrett was hired by University of California at Berkeley's Linguistics Department for his expertise on Hittite and other early Indo-European languages.

Garrett acquainted himself with his new department by spending time at the department's Survey of California and Other Indian Languages and auditing the field methods class taught by Berkeley colleague, Leanne Hinton. In the course, students worked with a speaker of the Yowlumne language, spoken in the southern part of California's Central Valley, to collect and analyze language data.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to his research on ancient languages, Garrett enjoyed working on California Indian languages because he was able to interact with people who were speakers or learners of the languages.

In this interview, Garrett discussed his participation in *Breath of Life* as a linguist and as the director of the Survey and CLA. Speaking as the director of the archives, he

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<http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~karuk/links.php>; Yurok Language Project, "Yurok Language Project," <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~yurok/index.php>.

<sup>3</sup> Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, "Yokuts Languages," <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~survey/languages/yokuts.php>.

explained the preparations for *Breath of Life* and the work afterwards. Garrett described how he draws on archival principles and expertise in light of not having formal training as an archivist. Linguists recognize the enduring value of archival materials in the languages they study, and a number of linguistics programs have developed language archives independent of the archives and special collections repositories of their institutions.

Garrett discussed the collecting foci of the Survey and CLA, as well as collaborations with Berkeley's Bancroft Library and Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology. He provided a helpful set of guidelines for both academic and community language scholars to consider when thinking about the long-term welfare of their California Indian language documentation. When talking about the importance of placing documentation in an archive for long-term preservation and access, Garrett was careful not to pressure community language scholars to deposit their materials with the Survey, but to instead emphasize the unique value of community-based scholarship and to encourage its long-term preservation in a repository of their choosing.

Garrett discussed the issues surrounding ownership of the documentation and also the different reasons for restricting access and the potential consequences, both positive and negative, to language communities. He talked of expanding access to the Survey's and the CLA's collections through digitization and online presentation, both in terms of language community requirements regarding what materials should not be accessible online and technology requirements to present complex digital collections online.

Discussing the Breath of Life Workshop, Andrew described the benefits of including participants whose languages do have living fluent speakers. He talked about how proximity to Berkeley dictates which languages tend to be represented at Breath of Life as well as which materials tend to get the most use. He described the advance preparations for Breath of Life, including the work that goes into planning the tour of the California Language Archive website. He explained that a great deal of the work of Breath of Life for the Survey and the CLA actually takes place after the workshop in the form of fulfilling duplication requests for participants.

The interview took place on March 8, 2013, in the collections room of the Center for Indian Community Development (CICD) of Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. Garrett, a member of the Linguistic Society of America's Executive Committee, was in Arcata to present the 2013 Leonard Bloomfield Book Award to Humboldt State anthropology professor Victor Golla for his book *California Indian Languages*.<sup>4</sup> Earlier that day, Garrett was looking at the Yurok language materials in the archives of CICD. The audio was recorded open air using the TASCAM DR-100mkII digital audio recorder.

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<sup>4</sup> Victor Golla, *California Indian Languages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

Interview with Andrew Garrett

Interviewed by Susan Gehr

March 8, 2013

Arcata, California

50 minutes

Susan Gehr:

Today is Friday, March 8, 2013. This is an interview for the thesis oral history project *Breath of Life: Revitalizing California's Native Languages Through Archives*. I'm interviewing Andrew Garrett and my name is Susan Gehr. This interview is taking place at the offices of the Center for Indian Community Development at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California.

So I ask some background questions before I get right into the whole topic of *Breath of Life*. So tell me a little bit about where you grew up.

Andrew Garrett:

Oh. I grew up all around, actually, because my father was an academic. Or a student, and then an academic and then a teacher. So I was born in Seattle. And spent most of my years up till about kindergarten in New York City, in Manhattan. Every summer in Seattle. And then lived in Seattle for first grade and Columbia, Missouri, for second grade. Third through seventh grade in Long Beach, New York. Eighth grade in Seattle. Ninth through twelfth grade high school in Portland. So I'm fundamentally western, but I spent a lot of time on the East Coast.

SG: And what was your parents' background? Where were they from?

AG: My mother was from Seattle. She grew up in Seattle and lived there her whole childhood. And my father was originally Canadian. His family moved from Canada to Arizona and then to California when he was about fourteen, I think.

SG: Whereabouts in Canada?

AG: Thunder Bay, which is, do you know where that is?

SG: Yeah. Yeah.



- AG: I haven't been there since, when we were little kids we went up there occasionally to visit relatives.
- SG: Right on. When did you first become interested in languages and linguistics?
- AG: Um, probably, I don't know exactly. Maybe junior high schoolish, I guess. Yeah. Probably junior high school. I remember reading Mario Pei's book, which I think lots and lots of people read.. I think it's called *The Loom of Language* or something.<sup>5</sup> Maybe it's called something else. But anyway, he was a popularizer. I was interested in Tolkien languages, too.
- SG: Tolkien like J.R.R. Tolkien?
- AG: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.
- SG: Did you study linguistics as an undergrad? When did you start?
- AG: Not officially. As an undergrad, I was officially a folklore and mythology major. But I took a lot of languages, and some linguistics courses. So I was sort of on the edge of linguistics. And then I went to grad school in linguistics because I thought that for the type of work I wanted to do, I thought, which was, which I thought was not really linguistics, but was about comparative mythology. I thought that most of the people who do that kind of work are in linguistics departments. Because it's very linguistic work. So I went into a linguistics department and got more interested in linguistics proper, then, than what I had thought I would be interested in.
- SG: With any of your studies, either as an undergrad or a graduate student, had you used archives very much?
- AG: No, not archives, really. I mean, not directly. Except the languages I was, I mean, the languages that I wrote my thesis on, for example. And you know, similar things could be said for other languages that I worked on. Languages that I wrote my dissertation on were the ancient Anatolian languages. So Hittite and relatives of Hittite. And if you work on those kinds of languages, I mean, those are, they survive on clay tablets that are dug out of the ground and they're in museums. And I myself, the people who work on the languages don't usually directly use the, you know, consult the tablets, as it were. But you're very aware of the fact that you're working with material that is curated in museums. Or if it's paper

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<sup>5</sup> Mario Pei, *The Story of Language* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1965).

material, in archives. And some linguists will actually be responsible for, you know, if it's papyrus or something, they will be responsible for transcribing it or editing it. So although I didn't really do work in archives, I was very aware of the relationship between preserving material in archives and the languages that I was interested in.

SG: What brought you to [University of California], Berkeley?

AG: A job. And a wife. (laughter) I was teaching in Texas and I was in a commuting marriage between Texas and Berkeley. So we had to resolve it one way or the other. And Berkeley was the resolution.

SG: Uh huh. Uh huh. So now you're—

AG: And I've been there since '95. So whatever that is. Eighteen years? Seventeen, eighteen years?

SG: Wow. It doesn't seem like it's been that long.

AG: No, I know. I say, when people ask me, I say, "I think it's about ten years." And then I sit down and compute and it's much longer. (laughs)

SG: Yeah. How did you get connected with Breath of Life?

AG: Well, I think if you're at Berkeley and if you're interested in California Indian languages, you couldn't not be connected. So it's really about how I got connected with California Indian languages. And that happened, that happened kind of through two pathways, two sort of similar pathways, I guess, or related pathways. One was specifically in the late '90s. Just out of interest, I audited, I mean, I was a faculty member, but I audited the field methods class that was being taught by Leanne Hinton.

And it was on Yowlumne, so that was kind of interesting to me. I had not really done it because all of the languages I had worked on up to then were long-dead languages, like thousands of years ago. So I'd never really worked with speakers of a language or on languages, documenting languages or describing languages that are still spoken. And that was a pretty interesting experience, that class. And the language was very interesting.

And then at the same time, I was aware of this archive that's at Berkeley, the Survey of California and Other Indian languages. I was kind of irritated, actually, because there were not very many people using the material in it. Scholars. If the material in it was Hittite, which was the language I had written my thesis on, then the archive would be just full of German scholars all day long. You know, transcribing everything and

editing everything and publishing everything. And there were very few people who were using it, using it as a scholarly resource. And it has all of this, you know, as you know, all of these field notes and other treasures that kind of are not being published and are not being analyzed. And that just kind of irritated me, because I think it's important to do that kind of work. So I got interested in trying to find a way to do some of it, and that was what pulled me into doing work on California Indian languages. And so, therefore, I interacted a lot with Leanne [Hinton]; then you get involved in doing Breath of Life things.

SG: Did you serve as a linguistic mentor any of the years?

AG: Yeah, I did. The first time I was involved, I did that for, I forget what year that was, but I did it for Rumsien Ohlone. I feel like that must have been around 2000. But I'm not exactly sure when that was. And then, I mean, as you know, last time I was involved with the Karuk group.

SG: And what was that like? Or the, yeah, both experiences.

AG: Oh, that Karuk group was terrible. (laughter)

SG: I know.

AG: So demanding.

SG: Such pests.

AG: No, that was fun, actually, that was fun. When I was doing Rumsien, Linda Yamane was the person. And she was great. She was really interesting to talk to. I felt like she taught me a lot more than I taught her, because she knew so much. But it's a really interesting language so it was great to learn all the stuff that I learned from that. And Karuk was obviously something I'm really interested in. And that was great, working with you guys.

SG: Great. Thank you. Was last year the first time you also like put on the archivist hat and had people come visit the Survey—

AG: No. I had done that, I mean, after Leanne retired. Which I feel like that maybe was five years ago or so. I'm not sure exactly when that was. But I feel like well, after she retired, then it was my role as the head of the Survey to sort of manage the Survey tours. Not necessarily to give them, but to kind of superintend who would give them. And also, once we set up a new catalog, the California Language Archive that integrated our

paper catalog and all of the audio materials from the Berkeley Language Center, then we had to kind of do the introduction to that material. So last time was the first time that I did that. That is 2010, I guess.

SG: Mm hmm. What kind of planning goes into Breath of Life as the archives?

AG: At the Survey we have one research assistant, who's a graduate student in linguistics. And that person is kind of doing the bulk of the actual work that's preparation. Part of the organizational process that involves Leanne and AICLS [Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival], which we weren't really participating in, but kind of aware of on the periphery, that organizational process involves Leanne and AICLS figuring out what languages people are interested in. So you get a list that they assemble, these are the participants, and these are the languages they say they're interested in. So we try to figure out which languages we have a lot of material for, and which ones we don't have so much material for, and try to get up to speed, what is likely to be needed that we have, or if we have some issues that are going to come up with a particular language. That doesn't take that much preparation, actually, because we're used to it, I guess. So it's more just a matter of making sure that if this language has a lot of field notes, they're actually there, and one can look at them. But it doesn't require too much in advance.

And then in the actual tours, so the tours are organized, as you know, they're organized by language area, sort of roughly speaking. And so if there are four tours, organized by language area, then for each tour you want to make sure to pull out a bunch of things that are relevant for that language area. But that's done usually, like you might the week before work out what things they're going to be. And then maybe the night before, or the afternoon before, just do it. So it doesn't really take that much preparation. There's a lot of intense work during that week. But the bigger burden, in a way, is afterwards. Because people have looked at a lot of stuff and they want copies. So organizing the making of copies and things, and following up with people's requests, that is actually probably more time consuming than the preparation on our end.

SG: Do you—

AG: You put a little bit of thought into just figuring out how to explain—you know, in the case of, well, there's the physical tour of the Survey itself, which involves just looking at things. But then there's also, for the tour, the virtual tour of the CLA [California Language Archive], which involves showing people how to use a catalog and how to access audio materials. It involves a little bit of thought about what's the right way of, what's the

most helpful way of explaining how the catalog works, and explaining how people can find what they want. And that, I think, is always a work in progress. Because there's no way of explaining it that seems perfect.

SG: Had there been any sort of ways of explaining it that have been spectacularly like, "Oh, I won't do that again!"?

AG: I can't really remember. And that means probably that I repeat the same mistakes each time. Because I don't remember what I did wrong before. You have a roomful of twenty people, each with their own computer. And then you're trying to explain how to go through all of the parts of the catalog and look at different kinds of pages. And each person then gets sidetracked on their own computer by the particular thing they happen to be looking at. So you want to organize it somehow in such a way that the maximum number of people are going to pay attention to all of the pieces of the presentation, and not just get sidetracked by something that's really interesting, but then they won't notice this other thing that you're showing them. So I feel like you kind of want to start with the least interesting things and build up to the most interesting things, because those are the things that they'll probably, they'll stop when they get to those and just listen to those recordings or whatever. And there are, whatever, five or six different kinds of things you can look at in that catalog. So I think I probably tried starting with this one versus starting with that one.

SG: Do you notice increases in use of both the CLA and the Survey after Breath of Life?

AG: We don't track catalog usage, so I don't know. The Survey, I mean, the physical visits to the Survey, no, because people go back, back to wherever they came from. And we don't really track catalog use. Which we should, but we don't. So I don't really have any idea. And I mean I would love, it wouldn't be that hard to set that up, but I would to actually know. I'd be surprised if it wasn't, if there wasn't such increase. But—I don't know.

SG: Do you get visits, like during the year or between Breath of Lifes?

AG: Sure. Yeah. Maybe, maybe once a month somebody comes. I feel like it used to be a little bit more often. I feel like it used to be more like every other week. Now it's a little less frequent and I'm not sure, that might just be an impression that's false, because we don't keep very good records. But if it is true, it might be because more of the material is online than it used to be, so there's less need to come. I mean, the goal is that there

would never be any need to come because eventually we'll digitize everything.

SG: So I know you don't have formal training as an archivist, and yet you're the director of the Survey, which is a linguistics archive. What have you learned about archives along the way?

AG: I've learned that that blue book, the DACS [Describing Archives: A Content Standard] standard, is a very useful book. What have I learned about archives? I don't really know how to answer that question. I've learned a certain number of things about catalog, pieces, elements of catalogs. Because we constructed this large database for our catalog and then make it accessible to people. It isn't used or, I think, currently usable, by a library catalog. So it doesn't produce any output that is in any library format. It produces output that is read by the OLAC [Open Language Archives Community], I don't know what to call them, site or harvester or something, which is a kind of international standard for language archive data, but not really, doesn't really conform to library or archival standards. I know that I would like eventually for us to export data to the Berkeley library catalogs and so on. And so eventually we'll have to figure out how to produce, whatever they're called, METS [Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard] records or whatever they're called. But I don't actually know how to do that. So I've learned, I've learned around some technical pieces here and there that have to do with that, but not really very much, I would say. I don't know how to answer that question.

SG: That's okay. Those are totally good answers.

AG: I mean I really, for a lot of things, I do rely on that DACS book when we have this, you know, how should we treat dates, how should we treat names, it's very useful. I mean, I guess what I've learned is that, I learned to take seriously that there is a standard somewhere out there. Whatever problem one confronts has been thought through by somebody. And if we really want to do something that is going to be most compatible moving forward, then we should try to figure out what that is. And I don't always do that. But at least I know that I should.

SG: Is the Survey seeking anybody's materials in particular? Or collections?

AG: Well, we are. We have a funny set of foci that are a little hard to pin down. In principle, we collect for all over the Western hemisphere, all languages of the Western hemisphere, which is a very broad scope. The tradition of the Survey was that it was connected to Berkeley and to research that came out of Berkeley. And so it especially focuses on

California languages, just because people at Berkeley worked in the past a lot on California languages. But now, actually more people at Berkeley work in South America than North America. So that will produce an archival situation where we have a lot of South American resources, digital, as compared to what we currently have, which is not very much.

I'm most interested at the moment in actively collecting those materials that are from people who were Berkeley grad students in the '60s and '70s and either did field work a long time ago and haven't done any since then, or are still doing field work or whatever. That are in possession of their materials. And, you know, they should archive them. And when those people were doing California work, especially, they should archive them at the Survey. So I think that we should be the primary archive among academic archives for California documentation. And also for other, you know, documentation that people want to put there—

So there are a lot of people who are now in their seventies and eighties who I would like for them to take their stuff out of their garage and send it to us. So I've had some interactions with people along those lines. And we have now a backlog of great material from different people of that sort that hopefully will get into the system and then get online sometime soonish. We have very little money. So it's very slow. The backlog does not go very fast.

SG: What kind of advice or guidance or input do you get from consulting archivists?

AG: Mostly we operate on our own, but I've gotten some really useful advice from three directions. One is from Lisa Conathan, who was a Berkeley grad student, who got a PhD from Berkeley and then went on to become an archivist. And she's now at Yale. And she's one of the organizers, I guess the lead organizer of the national Breath of Life that is modeled on the Berkeley Breath of Life. She's really interested in making archives accessible to different communities, including, in the case of language materials, indigenous language materials, to Native communities. We've had a lot of really productive conversations about what the best strategies are for publicizing things and fitting up access rules that are easy and make it feasible for people to actually get materials, rather than keeping them locked up. That has been very helpful.

Also on the Berkeley campus, I've talked a lot with the people in the Bancroft Library. Mostly about technical issues. But also about trying to expand the scope of the California Language Archive to include their language collections. Because they have a huge quantity of language materials that are not very easy for a person, it's not very easy for somebody to find. If you know you're interested in California languages,

it's not very easy to figure out from the Bancroft catalog what materials will be appropriate for you. Because they just don't organize things that way, because they're such a big archive.

So we would like to try to extract all of the language information that we can from their metadata. That's not actually in their metadata. But to create metadata from language material that they hold and make that accessible to people. So I've had conversations with them about that. Larger projects and also specifically about digitization protocols. And we're also collaborating with the Merritt Service of the California Digital Library to devise a kind of permanent storage system for all of our digital assets. Currently the digital assets that we have are stored in the Linguistics [Department] server. And they're well backed up, but that's not a permanent solution. So the California Digital Library has a newish service that is intended for archival digital resources and research digital resources where we're going to transfer all of our digital content. I mean, that's been a kind of technical discussion about the structures of digital content. But that has helped in turn guide how we are structured and the content.

SG: Good. Okay. It's funny, with [oral history] interviews, like don't ask a lot of questions about yourself, or don't insert yourself too much in the conversation. But it makes me think well, okay, I have one class left over besides my thesis hours. If you were in my hat, would you do more of a, sort of a reference-oriented, people-oriented class, or another technology class?

AG: Well, I'm not wearing your hat. I feel like, there's a lot I don't understand on the technological side. I mean, it depends on what you mean by technological. Just in terms of data structures and, I guess the way that I approach cataloging and metadata, data structures and so on, is from the point of view of a user. I know what user experience I would like to have, and what user experiences I would like to see other people have. Because I feel like I have good judgment about that. But I don't quite understand what the right protocols are, for example, if you have a set of images that are associated with a notebook, exactly how they should be assembled and archived and labeled and so on. So I feel like if I were going to take one class, I would probably take a class that guided me about that. Basically about digital archival principles. Actually, not principles. Practice. Digital archiving practice.

Because it's easy to understand, as an archive user and as a library user, it's easy to understand what a notebook is. What a box of file slips is. That's very tangible. But nowadays, when people are doing language documentation, they have a sound recording, and then they have a derivative sound recording. And they have a text file that's a transcription



of the sound recording. Maybe they have a set of pictures. Maybe there is a notebook that they were writing in while they were doing it. And maybe there are some scanned, some photographed images of the notebook. And understanding how all of that stuff should be organized in a catalog is something I'm not familiar with.

SG: Sorry about that. (laughs)

AG: What was that?

SG: Motion sensor. If we just sat here still and quiet, the lights would have—

AG: Gone off.

SG: Completely off. Yes. Flapping the wing at it every now and again. Well, good. I had taken one class, metadata.

AG: Yeah.

SG: That got very generally into that.

AG: Yeah. It's not so much, I mean, that's also useful, definitely. But I feel like it's more of what should be the, what should be all of the structural relations of, you've got all these digital files. And how should they be organized? How, for example, we have these boxes of file slips that people made in the old days. And you have a box, which is a physical object, and has a thousand file slips. Or some number like that. Fifteen hundred file slips in that box. So we have 1500 TIFF files of photographs of each file slip. And kind of how do you, you don't want to have a catalog search produce 1500 results.

SG: Yes.

AG: But how do you organize that?

SG: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Very sort of broadly or generally. METS and MODS.<sup>6</sup>

AG: Exactly.

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<sup>6</sup> METS, the Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard, and MODS, the Metadata Object Description Schema, are two metadata standards used together to document the structure and describe complex digital objects such as a digitized version of a linguist's file slips collection.

- SG: And which one does what. So, have you ever gone to like any of the AICLS board meetings or planning meetings for Breath of Life?
- AG: No. No. I mean, there have been planning meetings at Berkeley that have had some AICLS people at them. But I've never, I'm not an AICLS board member.
- SG: Let's see. What would you say, like, or, like do you have other kind of collaborations with the Bancroft? Or how do you—
- AG: Well, we have collaborations with both the Hearst [Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology], sort of, and the Bancroft, sort of. With the Hearst, the collaboration consisted of getting their database of all of their sound recordings and then we spent a year, it was in very weird shape, we spent a year kind of wrangling it, so that we could put into our catalog information about all of the sound recordings, basically most of their wax cylinders. So those are now in our catalog. That collaboration, I suppose, is over, in a sense, because that's a fixed collection that they have that isn't going to grow. But that was very useful, and it makes the catalog much more impressive and helpful for people, because previously you couldn't really find out that information. And with the Bancroft, like I said, we have this ongoing project to try to collect information about their material that has language information and try to find a way to display that in the CLA also. And we did a couple of digitization projects with them, or we paid them to do some digitization of especially audible materials, materials that they have that are useful for language. (coughs)
- SG: Do you want to stop and get more water?
- AG: I'm fine.
- SG: Okay. What are the most frequently accessed materials at the Survey during Breath of Life?
- AG: I don't know—during Breath of Life? Well, during Breath of Life, it depends on what languages are represented. So I mean, Breath of Life tends to have a slight preponderance of people from around closer to the Bay Area, which makes sense. So I think that means that there are always people from Ohlone communities. From some Ohlone groups. There are always people from some Pomo languages. There are always people from some Miwok languages. And so I think you can expect every year that there will be a lot of usage of Pomo materials. And well, Miwok materials, we don't have as much stuff. And then further, beyond that, it just depends on, I think it's a little bit different from year to year. I would

say generally that the Pomo materials are the most accessed materials in the Survey on an ongoing basis. I think because probably for languages of Central and Northern California, Central/Northern California, probably it's the Pomo stuff, you know, manuscript material that we have that represents, let's see, how do I want to put this, there's more Pomo material that isn't published that we have than for any other, like for other groups, we have a lot of manuscript material, but mostly it's published. But for the Pomo languages, there's a lot of stuff on different languages that just never got published.

SG: If you got to speaking to somebody who's either documenting their own language or is working on a language, what would you tell them about how to keep their materials? Or what would make your job of receiving them later on easier?

AG: Well, one key point is whether it's physical materials or digital materials. And most linguists now, at least, who are doing documentation are producing only digital materials. And if you're producing only digital materials, it's so easy to lose them and lose track of them and lose track of what they are. So you know, starting at the very first point, you would tell people to make sure to, like you did, say at the beginning of the recording who you are and what the date is and what's going on. Otherwise, you get these recordings that just start in the middle and you have no idea what's going on. And you might not even know what language it is.

Name your files in a really sensible way and a way that is likely to be both unique, so that you don't call your file "my Karuk recording," it's both unique and also interpretable by a person reading it. So if the file name is, you know, GRQ5653.wav, that's not very helpful. But if the file name is Yurok recording\_May 14 2011\_Georgina Trull, or whatever, that's much more helpful. Naming files well, having audio files actually have content that makes them interpretable at the beginning. And then putting them into some sensible folder structure and backing them up.

And probably, you know, talking early to an archive rather than later about what the best ultimate structure is going to be is a good idea. Because different archives will insist on different kinds of things for digital files. And it's easy for people to just assemble a lot of digital files that, when the time comes, it's going to be hard to massage them into the right shape.

With paper materials, again I think probably having good labeling and a good physical indication on the material of what it is, is important. And, of course, keeping it in some safe location, and using acid-free paper and so on. Those are all good practices. But I think most people really nowadays are recording on digital media and doing their work on the computer. So the most important thing is just not, just throwing them all

on your desktop. Not paying attention to what they are. And there are so many cases of people who, you know, have just lost lots of files because they are disorganized or their computer had a hard disk crash, so they lost all their recordings. That's really terrible.

SG: Or formats that no longer—

AG: Yeah. It's good to avoid proprietary formats, like Word documents and Excel spreadsheets and things like that. Or if you use those, also save the documents in a non-proprietary format. Word documents, I mean, stuff produced by Microsoft is probably okay, because there's a lot of stuff produced by Microsoft. So it's in the interest of archives to be able to read that even later. But still, you know, we get people who contact us who have something that they've created fifteen years ago in a word processing program that no longer exists. And we don't really know how to deal with that. Or some old database, a program that's no longer available. And the archive does not want to figure out how to deal with that material.

SG: I imagine a Breath of Life day is probably a lot busier than a typical day at the Survey. (laughs)

AG: At the Survey, sure, yes. A typical day at the Survey is just the research assistant doing his work.

SG: Uh huh. Any changes to, say, practices or policies at the Survey because of Breath of Life?

AG: I don't think there have been any general changes. There are specific changes. I mean, people are, of course they come and they're interested in particular materials. And then it sometimes happens that the particular materials, you know, they're interested in Language X. And they're interested in recordings made by people, certain people. And sometimes for one reason or another, those recordings are restricted access, either because, typically because the linguist who deposited it said that it should be restricted access for whatever reason. And that produces problems because the person is from the heritage community, usually, and they want to listen to that material, reasonably enough.

And so one thing that comes out of those visits is sometimes that we are able to change the access status of materials because it turns out that there's no reason for it to be restricted. And sometimes there's a reason for it to be restricted. But often there isn't. And my feeling is that things should be as accessible as possible. So there are a lot of local tweaks that happen during and after Breath of Life in the access status of particular items.

SG: What have been, say, legitimate reasons for something being restricted?

AG: I don't know, I wouldn't feel comfortable using the word "legitimate" one way or the other. But I can tell you reasons why people have done it, and reasons why people have objected to it. So sometimes people have restricted access for what I consider to be the very bad reason that they're still working on the material and they haven't published whatever their scholarly magnum opus is. You know, they haven't published their dictionary or their grammar or their collection of texts or whatever they envision publishing. And they don't want someone else to scoop them. So I consider that to be a terrible reason, both in principle, because I don't think the material belongs to them. I think it belongs to everybody. Certainly not just to them. And it should be accessible to the heritage community. And secondly because nobody actually is going to scoop them. Nobody is going to come to the Survey and listen to a lot of recordings and transcribe them and publish a grammar on the same language. It's just not going to happen. So that, I think, is terrible. And there are a few cases like that.

There are also cases where a linguist has had a dispute of some kind with a tribal community, or an individual in the tribal community and has therefore made their material restricted access because they feel like they were disrespected. The linguist feels like they were disrespected. Or there have been cases of monetary disputes between linguists and tribal groups which have caused access restriction.

And those are really gnarly kind of cases to resolve. Because I don't think that should matter. Personally, I think those materials should still be accessible, and that the linguist should just suffer. If there's a dispute, they should try to resolve the dispute in some separate track. But the material, access to the material, shouldn't be held hostage. But they deposited it. And it is their right to stipulate the access condition. So I have sometimes had complicated and somewhat unsatisfactory conversations with linguists over that kind of question.

Then, I would say the majority of cases where something is restricted, are cases where the linguist, usually in conversation with either the person whose voice is recorded or the family of that person or the community that now represents that language, where the linguist and the other people have decided that for some cultural sensitivity, the material shouldn't be broadly accessible. And that would typically be for songs or other things that are judged to be culturally sensitive. We have a kind of access level where you can come to Berkeley and listen to things. But it's not available on the Internet, generally. And that's a level that some people are comfortable with. Yeah.

So, I mean, it's a minority of things that are restricted at all. But I would say those are the categories.

And then there's another class of problems, which is, which occasionally happens, where the linguist has said, "Yeah, you can disseminate this as widely as possible. Anybody can access it." But a present-day community member says, "No, I don't think it should be accessible." Those are also sort of difficult cases to resolve. And there might even be disagreement between the present-day community member and what the actual speaker would have said fifty years ago. Of course, the speaker at that time didn't know what the Internet was going to be.

SG: Yes. Yes. Exactly.

AG: I find, I mean, I find those issues, they're kind of unpleasant. But they're also sort of interesting. Just as ethical questions are interesting.

SG: Yeah. And that they change over the years.

AG: Yeah, yeah. And they relate, I mean, they're interesting questions of ownership because—obviously the culture is not the property of the linguist. But the linguist made the physical recording and owns the physical object. And also the recording wouldn't have happened without the linguist. So there's some kind of intellectual ownership, both on the part, I think, of the speaker whose voice is recorded, and whose cultural knowledge is represented. And also the linguist who was involved in the creation of the object. And kind of sorting out who in that situation gets to decide what happens to material is an interesting problem.

SG: What are your, what are your thoughts on like now that Breath of Life has been going on since 1996, and a lot of language communities are making their own materials. What are your hopes for what they do with their materials?

AG: Well, I think things should go into archives. So either, they should go into real preservation archives that have some kind of permanence to them. And that means that either those materials, which are immensely valuable, not just because since they're documentation done by insiders, community members, I think they represent, often, a kind of language that isn't, that wasn't documented by linguists. So, you know, linguists did certain kinds of recordings and were interested in certain kinds of things. But community members and language learners are interested in other kinds of things and have other intimate relations with the speakers. And so I think the kind of material that's in that documentation is valuable in a whole different way from the kind of material that linguists traditionally

documented. So that makes it all the more important for it to be preserved.

And so I think what needs to happen with it is either it goes into an existing preservation archive, or a new, or a set of new preservation archives, are created, you know, that are tribally run or whatever, to hold that material. And at present, there isn't really such a thing. But I think it would be great if there was. Or for those groups to have collaborative arrangements with existing preservation archives.

SG: What kinds of finds in the archives have kind of, have you noticed led to somebody's biggest progress? Or the big, "Oh, wow!" epiphany.

AG: Well, one thing that has been an obvious example is there's a manuscript that we have which was from J. P. Harrington. I don't really know why we have it. But he did work on all these languages, as you know. And somehow in the '70s, I suppose, it wound up at Berkeley. When he died, his materials were all over, and they were kind of collected and then eventually sent to the Smithsonian, because the Smithsonian employed him, and they're now in the Smithsonian. Somehow this material wound up at Berkeley. And I'm not really sure why it did, but it must have been kind of early on that that happened.

And it was found in the '80s, in the maybe the early '90s, in the quote unquote "emeritus office" in our department. Probably because Madison Beeler had had it. Probably because he was interested in Ohlone languages. It's half of Harrington's field notes on the Chochenyo language, several hundred pages of field notes on Chochenyo. And Harrington's work on Chochenyo is essentially the only documentation of that language, ever. Except for some really tiny things that were done by other people. But it's basically the only documentation of Chochenyo. So that knowledge has been immensely valuable to the present-day community in developing language programs. That's the most striking case of a kind of discovery, I guess.

And there are also, of course, lots of cases that happen at Breath of Life where somebody comes and they either did or they didn't expect it, but they hear the voice of their great-grandmother, or their great-great-grandmother or something. And that's always kind of exciting, too. That they had never heard before.

SG: Any advice for the archivists involved with the other regional and national Breath of Lifes? Or things that, you know, you felt like you learned the hard way, maybe?

AG: No, I haven't really had negative experiences, so I don't feel like—maybe I haven't been doing it long enough to have negative experiences.

(laughs) I don't feel like I have any useful contributions of that kind. I mean, it's a pretty easy-going experience. Just make sure that you get enough sleep and have enough table space. I mean, our problem is basically that we don't have enough table space to spread stuff out and for all the people that are in the room to sit and look at it. So like if you had a bigger room with more table space, that would be, that would be great. But usually an archive is limited to whatever it has.

SG: What are your future hopes for Breath of Life and for California Indian languages?

AG: For Breath of Life, I think Breath of Life actually needs to change somewhat, and has been changing. When it was originally set up, it was as a complement to the Master Apprentice Program. So if your language still had speakers, then you would do the Master Apprentice Program, because you would be able to learn from the speakers directly. And if your language didn't have speakers, you would come to Breath of Life and learn from archives.

And I actually think that even people, I mean, like the Karuk situation, even people who have still a community of really great speakers that one can learn hugely from, can still benefit from Breath of Life in my opinion. The archival material for many of those languages is rich and there's a lot to be learned from it. And also Breath of Life has other kind of networking benefits. And some of the linguistics classes, I think, are helpful for some people. And it's a context in some communities probably to forge relationships with linguists that could potentially be interesting for them in the future.

So I actually think that not, I think one thing going forward will be not restricting it at all to, or giving any preference, necessarily, to people that, to communities that don't have speakers. And encouraging communities that do have speakers to send representatives to Breath of Life. I think that's the most important change that, you know, has already started to happen, but will happen a bit more next time.

SG: I know, I—

AG: And it's also really—sorry to interrupt you.

SG: Oh, it's okay.

AG: It's really inspiring, I think, for the other people, you know, for the communities that have lost their languages entirely, it's inspiring to see groups like the Karuk group where, maybe in some cases an elder speaker actually comes. Or even if not, you can see that the younger people who



are there, you can see what they've learned from their speakers. I think that's a good thing for people to see.

SG: Good. Are there questions that you'd hoped I'd ask, but I didn't?

AG: No. I didn't really think about what you were going to ask, so. (laughter)

SG: Any topics that you'd like to add before we finish up?

AG: No. No, I don't have anything in mind.

SG: Okay. Well, good. Well, thank you so much—

AG: Sure. Of course.

SG: —for being interviewed for my thesis.

AG: My pleasure.

SG: Thank you.

[End of Interview]

## Conclusion

The story of AICLS and its Breath of Life Workshop is one of gradual evolution. For the past decade the Breath of Life program has helped Native people revive their languages through the use of archival collections of written materials and audio recordings. The number of Breath of Life participants creeps up every year, and workshop organizers accept as many participants as the archives and the organizers can handle. Participants like interviewees Leah Mata and Quirina L. Geary often initially attend Breath of Life to learn some phrases to use with their children or to learn a song in their language. They then progress to recapturing their tribe's ceremonies and cultural practices, using the field notes made by anthropologists and linguists. Some eventually desire to create more modern orthographies that they can use in their communities. In so doing they have developed new archival documents and resources in their languages and are starting to think about the long-term preservation of and access to these materials.

This thesis was designed to be an oral history of the Advocates of Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS) and its Breath of Life—Silent No More California Indian Language Revitalization Workshop. In the course of looking at AICLS' history and its progress, this study was also designed to uncover the roles of archives and archivists in the Breath of Life Workshop. This concluding chapter contains an interpretation and synthesis of some of the significant themes brought out in the oral history interviews. This chapter also discusses the ideas that narrators had about Breath of Life and its future. This chapter concludes with some suggestions for further research and reflections by attendees of AICLS' 2013 Language is Life conference.

## The Role of Archives and Archivists at Breath of Life

Addressed in this section are the research questions posed during the oral history interviews. What is the role of the archives in the revitalization of dormant Native languages? How do the roles played by linguists and archivists in the workshop differ? What archival documents do participants use? What new procedures have archivists developed for working with Native American collections and the Breath of Life Workshop?

### *Archives' Role in the Revitalization of Native Languages*

When renowned basket weaver and spiritual leader Mabel McKay (Pomo) passed away, Malcolm Margolin was at the funeral. When it was time for the song that would help McKay's spirit go on to the next world, Margolin recalled seeing Frank La Pena bring out a portable cassette player. Because Mabel had been recorded singing that funeral song, she was able to sing herself to the spirit world. Recordings such as this also provide the foundation for language revitalization programs such as the AICLS' Breath of Life Workshop.

At Breath of Life, the participants rely on the language data in the archival materials, the linguist mentors, and the archivists to learn their Native languages. In a sense, archival documents serve the role as master teacher in much the same way as a fluent master speaker of the language works with an apprentice in AICLS' Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program. The archives and the archival materials thus become a living part of the speech community, with the archivists and the archival

arrangement, description, access policies, and preservation procedures connecting the materials with the participants and the linguists.

*Difference Between Archivist's Role and Linguist's Role*

At Breath of Life, the linguist mentors might be professors of linguistics or they might be graduate students in linguistics, usually from the University of California, Berkeley, but not always. Linguists work with participants as a mentor, helping them interpret the intellectual content of the materials they study at the archives. They begin with the sounds of the language, moving on to the structure of words, sentences, and conversations. Linguists and participants may work together from breakfast until late in the evening. Because of this close collaboration, the linguist can provide a tailored interpretation the raw field notes at a level that is helpful to participants. For instance, when participant Quirina L. Geary translated *Green Eggs and Ham* into Mutsun Ohlone, linguist Natasha Warner taught her ten points of grammar that increased Geary's grasp of how her language worked without overwhelming her with corrections.

The workshop's archivists, on the other hand, do not typically have a background in linguistics or in Native languages. Lisa Conathan has both archival and linguistic credentials, but she is a rare case. As a result, the archivists are grateful that the participants have their linguist mentors to help them interpret the materials. Archivist Lauren Lasseben saw her role as connecting people with the materials that matched their information needs and helping participants streamline their search strategies.

So that the participants and linguists can start working immediately with archival materials, the archivists do a fair amount of preparation in advance. As soon as Breath of

Life Workshop organizers know who will be attending the upcoming workshop, they tell the archivists which languages participants will be studying. The Bancroft archivists then start requesting materials pertaining to those languages from the university's storage facility in Richmond, usually a month in advance. The archivists at the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages prepare a list of documents that will be available for participants one week in advance. The day before participants come for their scheduled visit, Survey archivists will retrieve these documents to facilitate their access and use. Once the archivists have connected participants and linguists with the documents, they generally leave them to do the work of making meaning out of the materials.

The archivists may not know as much about Native cultures or languages as the linguists, but they do understand the art of providing reference and other public services. Even archivists without formal training in library and information science get on-the-job reference experience at the Bancroft Library, for every staff member is expected to take one public-service shift a week in the Bancroft's reading room. The archivists will happily work with participants who need help with the catalogs and finding aids and answer all the questions about the search process the participants ask. The archivists hope to pass along enough information about using archives to make participants feel welcome enough so that they will continue to use archives independently in the future.

#### *Archival Documents Used by Mentors and Participants*

As archivist/linguist Lisa Conathan mentioned, when participants begin their language work, they traditionally have started out with secondary printed sources such as

dissertations, grammars, and dictionaries. This is because these materials have been edited and typed and are easier to use. However, Breath of Life organizers and archivists also see the advantage of advising participants to focus on unpublished field notes and audio recordings as sources of language data. As Lassleben said, published materials are accessible after participants return home because these books can usually be found in multiple library collections, while manuscript materials may only exist in one archive. Workshop founder Leanne Hinton agreed, explaining that the relative ease of locating published materials combined with Breath of Life's crowded schedule has compelled organizers to eliminate library visits from the workshop schedule.

Workshop participants learn how to complete their homework assignments and their final project with both secondary materials and primary materials such as audio recordings, field notes, and slip files. Leanne Hinton points out the value of these unprocessed field notes and recordings because they are not filled with technical linguistic analysis. The field notes have more language data and more examples of language use than the grammatical analyses typically found in published books.

Some participants do not want to use materials from related languages or tribes for both practical and political reasons. Leah Mata said that it is so problematic to use information from neighboring Chumash groups without getting proper permission that she tries to only use materials written about her community. Archivist Lauren Lassleben is also hesitant to offer participants materials on related languages because past researchers have rejected her offers, telling her that they are not the same languages. Languages near each other geographically may be from completely different families, or

there may be social or political conflicts between the related groups. Archivist/linguist Lisa Conathan described the issue of related languages and social divisions as one that was both frustrating and educational, and something that archivists, linguists, and Breath of Life organizers need to recognize and work with. On the other hand, some participants, like Quirina L. Geary, want to see the related materials because they reveal how certain cultural practices moved from one language community to another. On the day of her interview, Geary had scheduled an appointment at the Bancroft Library to research the Mutsun dances and ceremonies that were done at the roundhouse at Alisal, located in the city of Pleasanton. After the mission era drew to a close and some tribes no longer had their own ceremonies, Indians from all over traveled to Alisal to learn the Mutsun dances and bring them back to their people. Geary's husband Robert Geary (Southeastern Pomo) has notes from his own research visits on several ceremonies that traveled from Alisal to his tribe. His documentation includes the songs from those ceremonies, and those songs are in the Mutsun language.

#### *Changes to Archival Practices and Policies for Native American Collections*

The Breath of Life workshops have resulted in some important changes to archival practices and policies for Native American language collections. The changes are especially strong in the areas of description, providing public service to large groups, and revising access restrictions in light of research needs and cultural sensitivities of Native peoples.

Now that the AICLS Breath of Life Workshop has run ten times, the archivists know their Native language collections very well and how to make the best use of them

during the workshops. On an ongoing basis, archivist Lauren Lassleben keeps track of new collections that come to the Bancroft, noting what new materials might be of interest to participants at the next Breath of Life. During the workshop she tries to have everything related to the languages represented available for paging, knowing that the participants' goals and projects will guide their selection of materials.

When an archive receives unlabeled language materials, complete identification of the language may require a specialist on the language. To address this situation, Bancroft archivists secure the services of a linguist or language expert to correctly classify the material. Even linguist/archivist Lisa Conathan described needing help from a specialist in Salish languages to identify which Salish language is represented in the materials.

Archivist Lassleben said that during Breath of Life she tries to help participants think strategically about the best use of their limited time. She does not want to discourage people from spending time on a particular document, because she does not know exactly which documents will best help them with their project. On the other hand, she understands that some people are more able than others to return to the Bancroft after Breath of Life is over. Participants who may not be able to return may want to get an overview of everything that is available, while participants who can return might do well to focus on documents that help them with their final projects.

Assisting workshop participants with their research quickly revealed to archivists that the collections' indexes were not as effective as they could be in helping Native language learners locate documents. For example, while the Bancroft's Ethnological



Documents Collection was indexed by the name of the anthropologist or linguist who collected the data, workshop participants searched these collections by their ancestors' names or by the names of the Native people who originally assisted the anthropologist or linguist. As a result, the Bancroft staff added an index of two thousand Native names to the Ethnological Documents Collection to assist the language community in its research. Spelling these names, however, posed another challenge for the Bancroft archivists. The indexers used the spelling that the anthropologist or linguist used in the field notes, which may not be the way that the language community spells the name today, or the way that linguists write the name today. To help participants who may not be acquainted with an obsolete spelling, archivists also indicate current language or tribal affiliation in indexes, finding aids, and in-person reference services.

Participants have also helped archivists correct errors in their finding aids and catalogs. In response to mistakes uncovered during the Breath of Life Workshops, the Bancroft Library's archivists have devised "notes to archivists" slips that participants can use to correct errors in the collection guides. For example, participant Quirina L. Geary described her good fortune at finding a fifteen-page interview with her Mutsun Ohlone grandmother, Josefa Velasquez. It had been incorrectly described as a Miwok document, and Geary was able to get the error corrected.

Archivists also quickly discerned how the arrangement of archival collections impeded their access. Lasseben talked about the Bancroft's decision in the 1960s to separate manuscript collections from artifacts even when the materials were related, as in the case of the Samuel A. Barrett basket collection and his field notes about that

collection. The baskets stayed at the Phoebe Hearst Museum while the field notes were sent over to the Bancroft because the Hearst does not have archivists and the Bancroft does not have museum scientists. Researchers interested in Barrett's basket collection and the associated field notes have to schedule two research appointments at two different repositories, and they have a harder time associating the information in the field notes with the correct basket. Through digitization and placing collection information online, the separate collections could be reunited virtually, though this has not been done yet.

Andrew Garrett talked about another access problem that needed to be resolved with a new database containing 1,500 digitized file slips. Instead of the database retrieving each slip individually, he wanted the database to retrieve groups of related items. In this way, an audio recording of Karuk speech would be identified along with the linguist's transcription of the speech, photographs taken during the session, and a notebook kept by the linguist at the time of the recording. This same approach might be used to solve the problem of the Samuel A. Barrett baskets manuscripts; these related items could be collated via an online database.

Working with Breath of Life participants has also given archivists new perspectives on archives users. As L. Frank commented in her interview, the archivists have learned that researchers come to them not just with abstract questions relating to a term paper or dissertation but also with spiritual questions, family questions, and cultural questions. Archivist Lisa Conathan agreed that one of the important things she learned from Breath of Life was how to work with researchers seeking personal, spiritual, and

religious information so that they are effectively connected with appropriate information. Leanne Hinton observed that linguists similarly benefit from providing information and instruction to Breath of Life participants and other community language scholars. Hinton thought that Breath of Life had become an important part of training a new, more community-oriented generation of linguists and archivists.

In addition, Breath of Life archivists continually think about how to best meet the needs of the Breath of Life participants given the current circumstances of the archive. In 2012, Breath of Life was scheduled during the week between spring and summer terms when the Bancroft did not open until 1 p.m. Susan Snyder, head of public services for the Bancroft, asked Leanne Hinton if she would consider having participants visit the Bancroft in the morning when the library was closed so that they could have the reading room to themselves. Similarly, according to Lisa Conathan, the National Anthropological Archives closed its reading room to other researchers during the national Breath of Life Workshop as well as temporarily converted conference rooms and other spaces to reading rooms to accommodate the large volume of researchers.

The Bancroft's archivists also modify other policies to benefit Breath of Life participants. For example, it waived its personal camera fee to reduce costs. Archivist Lasseben wishes that she did not have to charge Breath of Life participants for duplication, but the Bancroft's copy staff salaries come directly from the duplication fees. The archivists also attempt to balance security issues with making the archives a welcoming space to Native peoples. All the archivists interviewed said that Breath of Life provided so much job satisfaction that they always look forward to the next one.

Finally, the Breath of Life Workshop has required archivists to confront the thorny issue of ownership of cultural materials, particularly documents and information that the language community feels should be restricted. Breath of Life participant Leah Mata made it clear that her tribe should be able to dictate access to the documentation of their language and culture. She did not share the enthusiasm of the archivist in Washington, DC who excitedly told her that they were going to digitize her grandmother's field notes and put them online so everyone could have access. Conathan described how archives are drawing from the Protocols For Native American Archival Materials when processing Native American language and cultural materials. Lassleben mentioned that she had not yet received requests from Breath of Life participants to close collections on the basis of cultural sensitivity. Both Conathan and Garrett discussed how archivists are coming to see that ownership of materials does not belong solely to the linguist, that intellectual ownership also belongs to the language consultant. Garrett also described sensitive materials that are listed on the California Language Archive but could only be accessed onsite.

### Interpretations and Synthesis

#### *Oral History Interpretations*

Oral historian Linda Shopes characterized oral history interviews as a dialog between an interviewer and a narrator about some historically significant aspect of the past intentionally recorded for the historical record. They might work and rework a

particular topic to clarify things that seem muddled and assess the meaning of events and actions.<sup>1</sup>

Oral historian Alessandro Portelli wrote that accurate recollection of dates is less important to oral history than reflecting on the possible meaning of the ways in which narrators remember the passage of time and when things happened. Portelli wrote that even factually “wrong” statements are “psychologically ‘true’” and that the psychological truths can say a great deal about how the narrators felt, what they hoped, and what they wanted to do. In one of the most cited works in oral history Portelli observed narrators shifting the time and circumstances of the death of Luigi Trastulli, a young man who was killed during a peace demonstration in 1949.<sup>2</sup> This time shifting by narrators revealed to Portelli how individuals made meaning out of the event.

Oral history narrators in this project sometimes worried because they could not remember exact dates. In response to a question about what year she first attended Breath of Life, Leah Mata said, “I knew you were going to ask that, and I was trying to think. I do not know. This is how I calculate it, because I don’t really keep track of years ... the sixteen year-old you saw there was being carried around by the younger girls... he was about three or four.” Even the interviewer, who had taken one graduate-level oral history course and conducted six interviews before this project, still did not know how to help narrators when they worried about not remembering dates or names. Although not remembering specific names and dates seemed to bother the narrators, it often did inspire

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Shopes, “Making Sense of Oral History,” Institute of Museum and Library Services, <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/08/making-sense-of-oral-history>.

<sup>2</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990), 71.

them to share experiences or events that were important. After figuring out approximately when she first attended Breath of Life by remembering how old her son Emilio was when she brought him with her, Mata launched into a story about how her young son's attendance of Breath of Life contributed to his interest in learning and using the Northern Chumash language more than ten years later.

The oral histories also revealed the deep-seated, sometimes conflicting, emotions that the Breath of Life Workshops elicit. Among the AICLS founders, there were mixed feelings of finality, fear, hope, and urgency around bringing back languages with no living fluent speakers. Malcolm Margolin described Mabel McKay's funeral as representative of the end of a language, while in the years afterward being so supportive of breathing new life into dormant Native languages. L. Frank said that there were some people who resented the archives and archivists for having information about their language that was taken away from them. L. Frank thought that what those people really resented was the destruction that had been done to their language and culture, not that an archive had managed to hold on to some of it. Others regarded the notion of bringing back a "dead" language as forbidden. As Quirina L. Geary commented in her interview, some people thought that knowledge that had died should not be brought back to life. On the other hand, Breath of Life brings out so many joyful feelings. Geary described being moved to tears when she and her sister Clara Luna found a fifteen-page interview of their great-great-great grandmother, Josefa Velasquez. Lauren Lassleben described being moved by hearing a Northern Pomo man sing a song that had not been sung in over one hundred years. L. Frank noticed the archivists watching generations of Native peoples

virtually connecting through the great-great grandchildren getting to hear the speech or read the words of their ancestors, and how this reunion was good for everyone.

Oral history comes out of listening to the individual stories, assembling them, and comparing them to each other. The Breath of Life participants interviewed expressed gratitude to the organizers, linguists, and archivists for making possible the reunions with their ancestors, languages, and cultures. In the stories of the participants, we see their responses to the welcome and help offered by the archivists and linguists. In the interviews with the archivists, we get that missing piece of the archivist's description of what they do at Breath of Life, the work that goes into the collections used by the participants. In the interviews with Breath of Life founders and organizers, we learn what brought together Native people who wanted to do something to reclaim the use of their languages, how the idea of Breath of Life came into existence, and how much work from so many people it takes to keep it going for twenty-one years.

When describing the goals of Breath of Life to the archivists at Berkeley, Leanne Hinton wanted them to know that the participants would be there for the purpose of revitalizing their languages, and that many of them, especially in the early years, were neither familiar with universities nor computers. Hinton needed the archivists to encourage participants to think of themselves as researchers, to teach participants how to find materials, how to get copies, and how to do those things well enough to want to return or visit other archives after Breath of Life was over. Lisa Conathan had similar hopes for participants, whether they did online research at home, or applied for a research fellowship at the Smithsonian, just as Leah Mata did, receiving one of four National

Museum of the American Indian Artist Leadership fellowships. L. Frank said that even Native people who had only heard about Breath of Life became inspired to arrange their own research visits to archives.

The oral histories also reveal how participation in Breath of Life and in language work more generally has impacted the next generation. Geary's daughter plans to apply for the 2014 Breath of Life, and Mata's children have already contributed to a variety of Native language media projects. Margolin talked about the value of the Master-Apprentice teams even when they did not produce speakers because the program connected the generations. He also felt that it was best when knowledge was attached to the human spirit, and that he liked going to Breath of Life because there are people there. And Mata talked about the value of children learning by watching adults and elders.

#### *Suggestions for the Future*

Through AICLS and Breath of Life, many participants have achieved short-term language goals like learning a grandmother's song, and long-term goals like raising one's children speaking their Native language. The people interviewed for this oral history all had ideas for the future of the workshop.

One of the important findings to come out of the interviews was the idea that AICLS' two key programs, the Master-Apprentice Program, which pairs fluent speakers with apprentice learners, and Breath of Life need to merge. As the last elders fluent in their languages pass, the Master-Apprentice program apprentices are going to need to rely on semi-speakers and on archival materials for language data. Therefore they need



to learn the language training devices used in Breath of Life to foster communication in their language of study.

Another recommendation from Breath of Life participant Leah Mata was that a youth component to Breath of Life be developed so that more young people could be welcome at Breath of Life. She noticed several of her children getting involved with media projects where they use their Northern Chumash language as a direct result of watching their mother and other older relatives bringing back their languages. Something like this could be added to Breath of Life.

Mata also wondered about the possibility of having returning participants serve as mentors so that more new participants could attend. In many cases those returning participants could mentor new participants in their own language, but they could also mentor participants in other languages if they were confident in their ability to convey the linguistic topics.

As the years pass, Breath of Life founders and participants are collecting large troves of language data. This is another topic the needs to be addressed in the near future. Breath of Life researchers need to figure out how to complete projects from that data. They also need to develop a program to preserve these records in an appropriate archival repository and resolve the many issues involved. How do they design the transition of their materials from their personal collection to archives? How do they ensure that if they identify a descendant or a community member to carry on their legacy that that person will have easy and even free access to copies of the documents? How will the archives ensure the long-term preservation of materials yet still provide access to

other researchers? How can they build into the donor agreement culturally appropriate access to culturally sensitive materials?

This final issue is one that needs to be addressed by the archival profession as well. There are some articles for archivists to read when they work with donors near the end of their lives or with their next of kin.<sup>3</sup> Wexler and Long wrote that archivists get involved in the lives of donors at some milestone in the donor's life, whether it is the completion of a project, retirement, or death. In a supporting role, archivists participate in helping donors build their legacies. How can archivists encourage *Breath of Life* participants to think about their legacies?

Another area needing further research and resolution is the area of ownership and access to traditional tribal property, such as songs, stories, and other cultural information. Geary and L. Frank talked about why the original Native consultants might have shared the information that they did with white people who were strangers to them during times when Native people faced genocide or assimilation. Geary surmised that they may have hoped that the information would eventually get to their descendants in a better time, in a time when they could make use of it. For the people who collected the information, and the Native people who shared the information, Geary and L. Frank felt certain that *Breath of Life* was how they hoped the information would be used.

Finally, more research could be done on how to prepare linguists and archivists to work with nontraditional researchers, such as members of the Native communities.

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<sup>3</sup> Geoff Wexler and Linda Long, "Lifetimes and Legacies: Mortality, Immortality and the Needs of Aging and Dying Donors," *American Archivist* 72, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009): 478-95.

Linguists study field methods, which includes culturally appropriate approaches to seeking language information from language consultants and meaningful ways to give back to the language community. But as Leanne Hinton admitted, occasionally linguist mentors run into problems when they depart from the role of helping participants satisfy their own language goals to understand the language documentation and slip into treating participants like research subjects or fail to explain the linguistic technology at a level helpful to the participants they were teamed with. Geary and Mata both want archivists to make catalogs and finding aids simpler to navigate and to include the search terms that they would use. Breath of Life is already a very busy week, but it might be very beneficial for archivists to plan a time for user testing of the catalogs and finding aids with the participants to learn how participants use the tools they are provided.

### *Closing Thoughts*

The theme of AICLS' 2013 Language is Life biannual conference was "Coming of Age." AICLS wanted to offer conference attendees the opportunity to look back at the evolution of the Breath of Life and Master-Apprentice programs and reflect on whether the organization should keep heading in its current direction. As Lasseben said in her interview, within an organization there comes a sense of years having passed as people retire or die, which makes one think about its legacy and documenting it for future generations.

Darlene Franco (Wukchumni), the founding board member of AICLS who encouraged L. Frank to get on the AICLS board, spoke at the conference about that legacy. One thing she noted was that at the 2013 conference many more participants

were conversing in their Native languages than did at the first Tribal Scholars Language Conference held in 1992.<sup>4</sup> She thought that this was because AICLS' Master-Apprentice program and its Breath of Life Workshops had helped people overcome the fear and shame of speaking one's Native language. She found this especially remarkable because so many fluent speakers of Native languages have passed away in the last twenty-one years. Between learning how to bring back their languages and healing from the pain of having their languages taken away from them, participants in AICLS' programs are breathing new life into their languages, just as L. Frank had hoped when she named the Breath of Life Workshop.

In addition to examining the history of AICLS and the Breath of Life Workshop, narrators were asked questions that uncovered the role of archives and archivists in language revitalization work. Through the perspectives of AICLS founders, workshop participants and the archivists themselves, archivists working with Native language collections and Native researchers have more information to guide them as the profession and the collections become increasingly born-digital.

Several people interviewed talked about how it was both wonderful that Breath of Life was so popular and so many languages were coming back into use and it was a challenge to work with the increasing numbers of participants at once. With the replication of Breath of Life as a method of bringing back dormant languages, it is clear that archives are a valuable component of language revitalization. However, Andrew

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<sup>4</sup> "Reports from Participants in Breath of Life Berkeley and Breath of Life Washington, DC" (panel discussion held at the Language is Life Biennial Conference, September 14, 2013).

Garrett said in his interview that there was not an increase in visits to the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages in between workshops. He thought that this might be because the Survey had made more of their collections available online and people had less need to travel to Berkeley to do research. If they kept statistics about site registrations, site visits, and downloads they could certainly quantify an increase in virtual use of their collections. The move towards digital collections and online access expands the concept of archives as place to include virtual places. Certainly the move towards digitizing collections and making them available online offers the potential for collections at repositories outside of Berkeley to be accessed by participants during Breath of Life. Still, the issue of culturally sensitive materials and consultation with tribes as rights holders remains, as there are a variety of concerns that Native people, Leah Mata for example, have with immediate and ubiquitous access to digital collections. Done with care, online access can make possible Lauren Lassleben's idea of taking Breath of Life on the road, bringing Breath of Life workshops out to California's Native communities with both local and virtual archival collections.

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