Cynthia Jensen-Flisk: Cindyhl wil’ wá’ Laax Lo’opìfl wá’m Gíbh’san’. Gíbh’aḣást wíl’ naa ṓthì’yl’ wílps Gíbh’ wíl’ sàa wì’tì’re’yl’ Ansbayaxw wíl’ sàa wì’tì’re’y’ì. My name is Cindy and Laax Lo’opì is my Gíbh’san name. My clan is Fireweed. I am from the house of Geel, from the village of Ansbayaxw. I started the Donen Jensen Memorial Gíbh’san Language Class in 2009 in memory of my mother. She believed that both the language and the culture of the Gitksan were “Just sleeping”. She worked her entire life to re-awaken them. It is my honour to carry on the traditions of my ancestors and follow in my mother’s footsteps of paving the way to ensuring that our language and culture never dies.

Patrick Moore is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. He has worked with Athabaskan languages in Alberta, the Yukon, and British Columbia for over three decades. With Angela Wheelock, he translated and co-edited Wolviken-Myths and visions and Dene Gederi: Traditional Lifestyles of Kaska Women. He edited a collection of Kaska stories Dene Gúdį: Kaska Narratives and wrote a Kaska, Mountain Slavey and Sakani noun dictionary Gísitzį K’ílį’l’.

Peter Morin is a Tahltan Nation artist and curator. His work has been exhibited in numerous galleries, including the Royal Ontario Museum, Open Space (Victoria), MOA Satellite Gallery (Vancouver) and Urban Shaman Gallery (Winnipeg). His artistic practice investigates the impact between indigenous culturally-based practices and western settler colonialism. Morin recently completed a series of new performance works for the Indigenuity in the Contemporary World Research initiative at Royal Holloway University, London, UK.

David Nathan is Director of the Endangered Languages Archive at SOAS, University of London, where his team has developed new approaches to archiving language resources. With 20 years experience in education and electronic publishing for endangered languages, he is interested in the connections between language documentation, research and revitalisation, and how media technologies can support these connections.

Tyler Peterson is a linguistic and Assistant Professor at the University of Arizona who works on Gitksan. His research interests focus on how understudied languages such as Gitksan can enrich our empirical and theoretical understanding of how meaning is embodied by language. This work is balanced with a strong interest in endangered language documentation, maintenance and revitalisation.

Khelsem Rivers was born in North Vancouver, BC in 1989 and recently given the names Swanhalten and Xelsilem by his paternal grandmother, Audrey Rivers (Tiyáltelut) of the Sḵwxwú7mesh. His work has been focused on the rebuilding of Indigenous language fluency in the face of language speaker decline. He is a strong believer that “languages don’t die in healthy communities”, and as such has worked on the concurrent effort of rebuilding healthy community through language fluency revitalization and vice versa.

Patricia A. Shaw is the founding Chair (1996-present) of the First Nations Languages Program at UBC. She has worked in close collaboration with several critically endangered language communities to record and analyze extant grammatical knowledge, to teach research skills and archiving methodologies, and to develop pedagogical materials for language revitalization.

Clyde Talis is a Náiwát language and oral history teacher, from Bella Coola B.C. He is featured prominently in Banchi Hanuse’s film Cry Rock.

Loretta Todd is a filmmaker known for powerful, visual storytelling. Her work has screened at Sundance, Toronto International Film Festival and MOMA. Her many honours and awards include a Rockefeller Fellowship to NYU. Todd created and produced Tarsi' Nîhâyuwashw (APTN) - a children’s series that teaches Cree using storytelling, music videos, games and adventures. She also conceived and developed My Cree, a free language app available in the iTunes store.

Mark Turin is a linguist and anthropologist of Italo-Dutch origin. He is Program Director of the Yale Himalaya Initiative, and Director of the World Oral Literature Project and the Digital Himalaya Project. He will join UBC as Chair of the First Nations Languages Program in July 2014.


John Wynne is an award-winning sound artist whose work includes site-specific installations, ‘composed documentaries’ for radio, projects with speakers of endangered languages and a body of work with heart and lung transplant recipients. He has a PhD from Goldsmiths College, University of London and is a Reader in Sound Arts at the University of the Arts London.
As the multi-sensory installation Anspayaxw renews endangered languages represented in image and sound, cutting through questions of creative expression and innovation. The complex relationships between the subjective nature of language documentation, interpretation, and the sustainability of long-term projects. We will extend this discussion by asking: What are the ethical and creative boundaries of what we might call a ‘traditional’ language documentation and/or maintenance project?

Chair: Tyler Peterson
| Pat Shaw | Louise Wilson | Barbara Harris |
| Sylvia Jensen-Pak | Loretta Todd | Larry Grant |

11:40 - 12:15
Screening of Cry Rock (28 mins) by Banchi Hanuse
Introduced by Kate Hennessy

Has digital technology facilitated community access and control of language archives and served the ongoing project of endangered language revitalization? How might this be either complicated or enriched by the politics and practices of digital circulation and remix?

Chair: Kate Hennessy
| Clyde Tallo | David Nathan |
| Mark Turin | Candace Gala |

2:10 - 2:30 Refreshment Break and assemble in Great Hall for Peter Morin’s performance

2:30 - 3:00 Performance Hello Darlin’ by Peter Morin

3:00 - 4:00 Session 3
Endangered Languages, Creative Practice and Activism

This session will explore the museum as a site of cultural contestation and issues of appropriation and commodification. How is cultural identity conveyed in art – by whom and for whom? We hope to explore a variety of perspectives. One view is that in dealing with Indigenous issues, non-Indigenous artists and researchers are simply engaging in ‘metaphorical microcolonialism’ (Corbett). Alternatively, some see in cross-cultural collaborations the potential for ‘a dialogue across the boundaries of oppositions’ (Smith). As such, how do ethical considerations and artistic license co-exist? Are issue-based and socially-engaged artistic practice simply a less effective form of activism or do they have a unique contribution to make in defining cultural identity and promoting recognition of the value of Indigenous languages?

Chair: John Wynne
| Peter Morin | K’holstam Rivers |
| Patrick Moore | Margery Fee |

4:00 Closing Remarks + Acknowledgements

Symposium Schedule

10:00 - 10:10 Welcome to Musqueam territory by Larry Grant
10:10 - 10:15 Introduction to the Symposium by Karen Duffek
10:15 - 10:35 Presentation by John Wynne and Tyler Peterson
10:40 - 11:35 Session 1
Language Documentation and the Anspayaxw Project

In recent decades there has been a flurry of language documentation, maintenance, and revitalization initiatives. In this session we engage in the ongoing discussion of the ways these initiatives can be developed and directed. Using the Anspayaxw project as a starting point, this arts event will encourage the surrounding language community involvement, the linguist-speaker research relationship, community-led language activities, and the sustainability of long-term projects. We will extend this discussion by asking: What are the ethical and creative boundaries of what we might call a ‘traditional’ language documentation and/or maintenance project?

Chair: Tyler Peterson
| Pat Shaw | Louise Wilson | Barbara Harris |
| Sylvia Jensen-Pak | Loretta Todd | Larry Grant |

12:15 - 1:15 LUNCH

1:15 – 2:10 Session 2
On Endangered Languages, Digital Technologies and Archives

As documentary and archival technologies rapidly change, we ask: What role does the digital play in the preservation—or conversely, the loss—of documentary media? What uses and reuses of language documentation are appropriate and who, ultimately, are the beneficiaries of these documentary initiatives?