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Ngalia Foundation

Wangka: Goldfields Aboriginal Languages Project



Kado and
Peter Muir
working on
Ngalia
language
2013

Welcome to our first newsletter

The Goldfields language project commenced in 2011 on the recording, transcription, analysis, databasing and documentation of the critically endangered languages of the Goldfields region of WA. The languages studied so far are Tjupan, Ngalia, Ngadju, Kuwarra, Kaalamaya and Mali-Kupantja (Cundeelee Wangka).

The work has been undertaken through the Ngalia Foundation under the auspices of the National Trust of Australia (WA). Many thanks are due to the National Trust for their continued support of this important work.

Funding for this work is received from the Commonwealth Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport under the Indigenous Languages Support program.

Language Funding for the 2013-16 period

Hello to everyone involved in and supporting the Aboriginal language preservation work of the Goldfields, WA region. The language project has run very successfully for two years now and we are very pleased to announce that the Commonwealth Government has awarded a further 3 years funding for the project for the period 2013 to 2016.

Many thanks to everyone who has worked with and supported the project to preserve these critically endangered languages. We hope you continue to support this important work! Sue Hanson,

Save the Date!

Language Specialists Workshop

Wednesday 2nd Oct 2013

Meeting in Coolgardie 11am to 2pm. For invited language specialists working on the Goldfields project. Please come along!!

Ngadju language field
trip May 2013



People in the project

Introducing the people involved with the Goldfields Language Project

Kado Muir: Project Management

Kado Muir is the founder and chairman of the Ngalia Foundation. He is an anthropologist and archaeologist with a long history managing and undertaking Indigenous community based research projects. Kado is pleased to support Goldfields elders and language speakers to document, record and preserve their important language heritage.



Tom Perrigo: CEO National Trust of Australia (WA)

Tom Perrigo is the CEO of the National Trust (WA). Tom has worked closely with Ngalia Foundation for a number of years on the preservation of Aboriginal heritage of the Goldfields region. The language project is the first of its kind for the Trust and aims to assist Aboriginal people to preserve and use the languages which are a vital part of Aboriginal heritage.



Sue Hanson: Project Linguist

Sue Hanson is the project's linguist and manages the work of the language project. Sue has worked for more than 30 years in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields regions as a teacher, principal and linguist. She holds both teaching and a linguistics degrees. Sue was the senior linguist with Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre and also the manager in 2008. Currently she works as an independent contract linguist.





Lorraine Barnard and Kado Muir discussing Tjupan.



Tjupan speaker Shirley Wonyabong



Doug Marmion, Silvano Fasolo and Sonny Graham in Kalgoorlie

The Goldfields Languages

During the 2011-13 period, the language project focused on 6 of the Goldfields languages. Little work had been done on the recording and analysis of these languages previously.

Ngalia: This language is from the area to the north and east of Leonora and Laverton. There are 3 fluent speakers and a number of partial speakers.

Kuwarra: This language is from around Leonora. One fluent speaker and one partial speaker have been located.

Tjupan: This language was from the Wiluna area. A number of partially fluent speakers have been identified and working on the language's

recordings.

Kaalamaya: This language was located between Coolgardie and Southern Cross. A couple of partial speakers have worked with the project team.

Ngadju/Marlpa: This language was located from the Kalgoorlie to Norseman area. One fluent and a couple of partial speakers have been working with linguists on their language's recording.

Mali-Kulpatja (Cundeelee Wangka): This language is from the Cundeelee Mission area and appears to be an Indigenous creole developed from four dialects of the Western Desert language.

School Language Programs

The Goldfields Language Project supports the development of school Aboriginal language programs.

The language project has committed to working with Leonora District High School for the implementation of an Aboriginal languages program from K-12.

Commonwealth Funding for the 2013-16 period has enabled Ngalia Foundation to make a long-term commitment to the school's LOTE program.

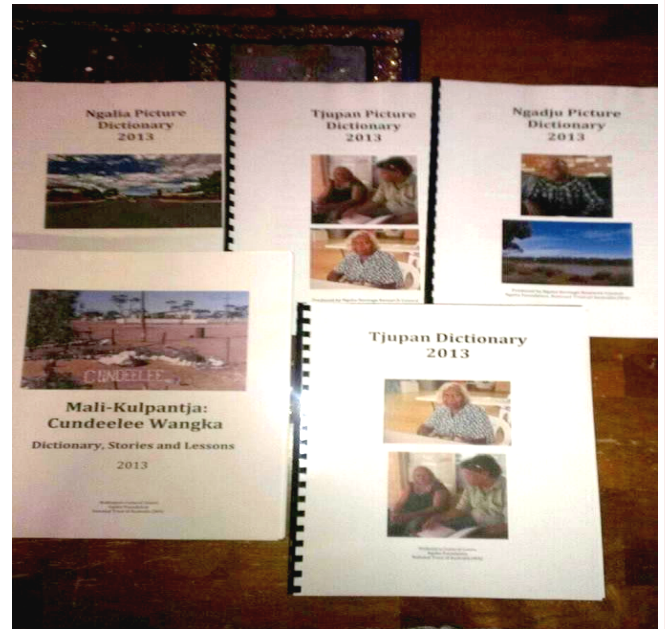
Work on this exciting development is also supported financially by the National Trust (WA).

Watch this newsletter for updates on the program's development!

Book productions 2012-13

Picture Dictionaries

The project produced 3 small picture dictionaries as part of the year's output. The dictionaries have been made in Tjupan, Ngalia and Ngadju for the speaker's family members to use to learn some of their parents and grandparent's language. The language work has stimulated discussion in the home and kids are keen to learn. Draft dictionaries in Tjupan, Mali-Kulpantja and Ngalia have also been produced.



Linguists Doug Marmion and Sue Hanson on a field trip with Ngadju speakers Betty Peterson and Sonny Graham May 2013

Draft Dictionaries

Draft dictionaries have been produced in Tjupan, Ngalia, Kaalamaya and Mali-Kupantja (Cundeelee Wangka) in the 2011-13 period.

All dictionaries are in draft format to enable speakers and speaker's families to discuss the words in them and to stimulate discussion on new words.

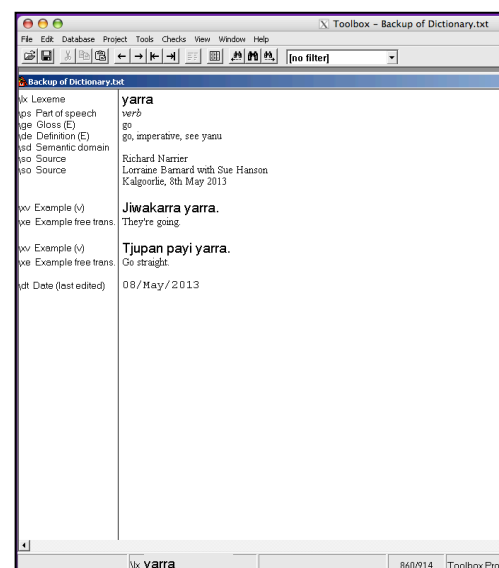
Mali-Kupantja and Ngalia dictionaries will be published and available for sale during the 2013-14 year. Watch this newsletter for release dates.

Language Electronic Databases

Specialist linguistic databases have been set up for Ngalia, Tjupan, Marlpa and Mali-Kupantja to date. These databases allow linguists to work with all the words in the language and record analysis material.

The databases can be used to make dictionaries.

Databases for Kaalamaya and Kuwarra will be made in the 2013-14 period.



Example of Tjupan Toolbox database entry

Background to the Language Project

Preliminary linguistic analysis work in the Goldfields was undertaken in 2008 with speakers of several of the varieties of the Western Desert Languages (WDL) from this area, as well as with speakers of Ngadju (spoken in the southeast Goldfields). This preliminary investigation indicated that a great deal of work needed to be carried out immediately in order to record, analyse and preserve the highly endangered Aboriginal languages of the Goldfield's area.

The WDL language varieties, and the Goldfields in particular, have seen very little documentation despite the upsurge in such work across Australia over the last two decades. The language work in the Goldfields included a thorough search for existing language material to enable recovery to be undertaken.

The linguistic work will develop an understanding of the variety of Western Desert Languages (WDL) of the region. This will be undertaken through the collection and analysis of data on these languages and will develop a better understanding of the status of these languages and the need for further documentation and revival work.

The work is being done in response to requests by language speakers for critical recording work to be undertaken on their languages.

The last two years of work has seen databases for each of the six languages developed and the production of draft dictionaries for three languages.

The Commonwealth funding body has been very pleased with the outcomes achieved to date and consequently awarded a further 3 years funding to the project.

Kado Muir Chairperson of the Ngalia Foundation says, 'We are very excited to have the third round of investment from the Federal government. We worked hard over the 2011-13 period and the outcomes have proven the immediate need for further linguistic work in this region. Over the course of this year, we will be approaching universities and other funding agencies to attract more resources into this much neglected language community.'

Part of the strategy for the project is to create academic interest in the languages of the region in order to attract linguists interested in writing comprehensive grammars for each of the languages.

To properly record, transcribe, analyse and database a language takes many years work. The development of language documentation such as dictionaries and grammars takes several more years of work. Attracting linguistic PhD students to the project will fast-track the work on the preservation of the languages and the production of these documents.

The Ngalia Foundation, auspiced under the National Trust of Australia (WA), was concerned about the lack of this linguistic work being done in the Goldfields and applied for Commonwealth funds to ensure the work would get done.



Tjupan speaker Shirley Wonyabong working with linguist Sue Hanson.

Language Project in the News...

Our language project has been getting some attention and positive media from the Kalgoorlie Miner with two articles featuring our work.

Goldfields Language Preserved in Writing by Missionary Couple

Article appearing in the Kalgoorlie Miner Saturday 13th July 2013, Pp.14-15

This is a nice story about the many years of hard work put in by Mr & Mrs Hadfield out at Cundeelee to document, record and preserve the languages of the Spinifex people. You can read the full text of this article on our website.

Extinction Threat over Aboriginal Languages

Article published in Kalgoorlie Miner Thursday 27th June 2013, pp. 1-3

This is the first article published in the Kalgoorlie Miner reporting the dire circumstances of Aboriginal languages in our region. It reports the importance of our project in recording and protecting the languages and how we have contributed to workshops relating to the development of the National Curriculum for bringing Aboriginal languages into schools across Australia.

Talking it up on the Goldfields

Article published in Trust News: National Trust Volume 6 No 1 May 2013, p.5

This is an article appearing in a nationally circulated magazine for the National Trust of Australia. The Ngalia Foundation is auspiced by the National Trust of WA and so this article communicates with our stakeholders in the National Trust. The story talks about our project and the work we are doing in Leonora trying to bring Aboriginal language into the school.

You can find links to each of these articles on our website at www.wangka.org.au/media

Goldfields Languages Family Tree

Aboriginal languages of Australia are of two types, Pama Nyugen (PN) and non-Pama Nyugen (NPN). The NPN type languages are spread across the top of the Kimberley and Northern Territory and the PM languages are spread across the rest of Australia. These types of languages are quite different from each other.

The languages of the Goldfields are of the PN type. We have been studying these languages to determine which family of languages they belong to in order to make a language family tree.

Below is a diagram of the language family tree for the region, as of June 2013. This language family tree may change as further work is done on the analysis of the languages.

The **Wati** group of languages are all varieties of the Western Desert Language (WDL) and they may be distinct languages or dialects of each other. This has yet to be proved or disproved.

Mali-Kulpantja is the name given to the variety of language that developed at Cundeelee Mission and which may be an Indigenous creole developed from four dialects of the Western Desert Language.

Goldfields Languages Family Tree 2013

Wati	Western Desert Languages (WDL)
	Kuwarra
	Mankulatjarra
	Tjalkatjarra
	Tjupan
	Wangkatja
	Mali-Kulpantja (Cundeelee Wangka)
	Ngalia
Ngaju-Mirning	
	Ngatju/Marlpa
	Mirning
	Kalaaku
	Kaalamaya
Nyungar	
	Nyakinyaki
	Wudjaarri

Using Your Language



Kalkurla : Silky pear

Everyone can help to pass on languages to the next generation. Use them at home, even if just a few words here and there. Support school language programmes or encourage your school to start a language programme. Listen to Elders telling stories in language and learn the story. Encourage traditional names to be used on signs and public notices. Support the Goldfields language project's work and buy a copy of the dictionaries when they become available, for use at home.

Contact

www.wangka.org.au

Sue Hanson 044891 7437

susanhanson@y7mail.com

PO Box 3149, Midland 6056