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A few years ago, a colleague and friend who is big on linguistic diversity sent me a postcard. It shows a cartoon of a prim-looking schoolteacher from the 1950s cheerfully addressing a clutch of well-behaved, smiling children. “Yes, boys and girls—she announces proudly—when the whole world speaks English, we will all be better off!”

Of course my friend intended that postcard as a tongue-in-cheek commentary. A monolingual world is the last thing either he or I would like to see happen. But there was a more somber undercurrent to the joke: both of us realized that the irony would likely be lost on many people. That “we would all be better off if the whole world spoke English” continues to be a widespread belief in the English-speaking world.

That postcard reminds me of an episode that occurred earlier on. I was on a long flight to New Zealand, on my way to holding a workshop on how to support cultural and biological diversity through indigenous language development and protection of linguistic human rights. In preparation for that, I was re-reading one of my own papers on linguistic diversity. At some point, I noticed that the elderly woman sitting next to me was eyeing the paper to see what I was reading. When I got up and walked away to stretch my numbed legs, leaving the paper face up on my seat, she must finally have been able to satisfy her curiosity by taking a quick look. No sooner had I squeezed back into my seat that she blurted out: “What is this nonsense, linguistic diversity? If everyone wants to speak English!”

Sparing her the likely embarrassment of learning who the author of the nonsense was, I decided to engage her in conversation about her views. It turned out she was a German immigrant to Australia, where she had followed her parents as a child and found herself suddenly immersed in a sink-or-swim language-learning situation. She had to learn her English while getting no support for continuing to speak her German. Soon her German was history—and so was her ability to talk with her parents in the mother tongue they once shared. I tried to imagine that situation and couldn’t, or not without a sense of anguish. I had been fortunate enough to grow up in a multilingual family, with no pressure on me to forget one
Australia and North America are the two regions of the world in which the steepest losses of linguistic diversity have been recorded historically, with declines of 50% or more in just two generations’ time, between 1970 and 2005.

I learned a few others. But not only had my fellow traveler done just that—forget her mother tongue as she learned English; she was also visibly proud of it.

And who could blame her? After all, she had done what she could to cope in a linguistically unsupportive environment. The fault was not hers, but of the political and societal forces that had created that environment. Australia and North America have not been very accommodating toward the mother tongues of their non-English-speaking immigrants—and even less so toward those of their Aboriginal peoples.

Australia and North America are, in fact, the two regions of the world in which the steepest losses of linguistic diversity have been recorded historically, with declines of 50% or more in just two generations’ time, between 1970 and 2005. Such losses are by no means confined to these two English-dominated parts of the world. It is a fact, however, that over half of the currently “nearly extinct” languages worldwide (those languages that are no longer being passed on to the younger generations) are spoken—often by just a few elders—in these two regions. This has been the consequence of a consciously planned effort to suppress indigenous identities and assimilate native peoples to the dominant society, whereby in past generations many native children were forced into boarding schools, away from their families, ridiculed for speaking their “primitive” languages, if not outright barred from speaking them and punished, even physically, for doing it. Many of them had reacted to the pain and the shame of this treatment by vowing never to speak the language to their own children. And indeed language after language has fallen into silence, with many more teetering on the brink.

Why this should have happened may be hard to fathom for those among us who share a passionate love for languages and delight in their bountiful variation. We view language in all of its variety as one of the defining features of our common humanity, of our “unity in diversity”. We marvel at the inexhaustible creativity of the human mind, at the ways in which this creativity has given rise to a dizzying array of worldviews, values, beliefs, feelings, knowledge, and artistry found in the world’s languages and cultural

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We view language in all of its variety as one of the defining features of our common humanity, of our “unity in diversity”.

traditions. We baulk at the idea of losing any of this diversity. We recognize that linguistic diversity and cultural diversity are not expendable, but rather, along with biodiversity, are part and parcel of the diversity of life on earth. We have learned that these diversities are deeply interrelated and interdependent, and that they are mutually supportive, so that losses in one precipitate losses in the others. And we are aware that traditional ecological knowledge encoded in the world’s languages provides a wealth of contributions to addressing some of humanity’s most pressing challenges—from biodiversity loss to climate change adaptation to food security, and many more. We can’t imagine how the importance of linguistic diversity could be seen as anything other than self-evident.

Yet, for many—often monolingual—speakers of English and other majority languages of the world, the common attitude is the one expressed in the schoolteacher cartoon. Perhaps it’s because being monolingual may give people a sense of isolation, make them wary of other tongues they can’t understand, of other behaviors they can’t easily interpret. People may be led to wish that the rest of the world were more predictable [that is, more like them] in its ways of living and speaking. And after all, you can’t really blame people for this either: many countries actively embrace and promote strong monolingual [and monocultural] ideologies in school, at work, in government, and in the media. So these are the attitudes that people are commonly exposed to and often even unconsciously adopt. The paradox is that many such people may otherwise be very keen on social justice and human rights. Yet, when it comes to linguistic diversity, there may still be a “blind spot” that makes them question what the fuss is all about with this story that we’re losing the world’s languages. Indeed, don’t we all want to speak English (or Spanish, or Hindi, or Chinese, or Russian, etc., as the case may be)? Isn’t the loss of all those other small and obscure languages a small price to pay for “progress”, modernization, conflict reduction, and the ability to better communicate with one another? Aren’t the proponents of maintaining linguistic diversity just holding on to a retrograde position, wishing to “freeze people in time”, to “keep them in some kind of a museum”? 
Languages are a key component of the shared heritage of a group, a nation, or humanity at large.

It’s because these attitudes persist that we need to continue to “make the case” for linguistic diversity, and argue again and again for “why bother”. Much has already been written on that topic over the past couple of decades, as awareness grew of the increasing pace and scale of language endangerment and loss worldwide. Many reasons have been brought up as to why we should “bother” with maintaining linguistic diversity. I’ll summarize the main ones.

The more academic arguments have pointed out that, if we want to understand what counts as a “possible human language”, we need to have the whole panoply of human languages available for study. We couldn’t know about the whole range of variation as well as the commonalities among languages unless we can preserve and analyze as many of the world’s languages as possible. You certainly wouldn’t be able to tell if you were only left with English, Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, and Russian, for example.

Other arguments highlight issues of common heritage and identity. Languages are a key component of the shared heritage of a group, a nation, or humanity at large. Because of that, the proponents claim, we should accord them the same value that we attribute to other aspects of our tangible and intangible heritage: that is, as intrinsic and defining parts of our history and identity, worthy of being cherished, protected, and promoted. This argument is closely connected to that of identity per se. Language can serve as a prime marker of group identity and of the societal boundaries between groups. In fact, there are plenty of studies of societal boundary formation that highlight the role of language in the process of identifying who’s part of the “in group” and who’s not. In turn, this helps regulate inter-group exchanges. Take language away, and group boundaries begin to blur. (Which is, of course, exactly what the world’s dominant powers seek to do in order to assimilate the indigenous peoples and minorities within their countries’ borders!) Much is made of the “curse of Babel”—the claim that speaking different languages is not a good thing as it breeds misunderstanding, conflict, and war. Contrary to this popular belief, linguistic boundaries per se are not usually at the root of conflict. Peaceful interactions are both possible and frequent across linguistic and cultural boundaries. It is rather the lack of respect for such boundaries that can commonly lead to conflict.

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Among First Nations youth in British Columbia, Canada, the rates of Aboriginal youth suicide are lowest (and in fact near zero) in the few communities where native language knowledge is highest, while they skyrocket where the use of the native language is on the wane.

Another set of arguments takes on matters of social cohesion, social justice, and individual and collective well-being. The same processes that serve to create boundaries toward the outside also promote cohesion on the inside—the two facets of identity. Maintenance of social cohesion is crucial for individual and group well-being, in terms of physical, psychological, and spiritual health. Conversely, a loss of cohesion has a profound impact on all those dimensions of health—witness the despondency and dis-ease that often characterize societies whose cultural identity and way of life have been significantly undermined. Language has a major role in fostering social cohesion. It’s as if language acted as an anchor for all the mutually shared understandings and interactions that keep a culture together and give people a common sense of belonging. (Which is not to say that mutually shared understandings and interactions are not possible among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds—they certainly are, reminding us of human commonalities across boundaries.) Language loss, on the other hand, appears to be both a warning sign and a contributing factor of a loss of social cohesion and a diminished sense of life’s meaning. In turn, this has a profound impact on health and well-being and on the ability to be a well-adjusted contributing member of society, particularly among youth.

Some of the most striking evidence as to the importance of language maintenance in relation to social cohesion and human well-being comes from recent studies that have revealed a strong correlation between the level of maintenance of native languages in indigenous communities and the incidence of health problems and youth suicide. Among First Nations youth in British Columbia (BC), Canada, the rates of Aboriginal youth suicide are lowest [and in fact near zero] in the few communities where native language knowledge is highest, while they skyrocket where the use of the native language is on the wane.

To fully appreciate the import of this finding, consider this additional fact: between 1890 and 2010, the percentage of fluent native language speakers in the BC First Nations population has plummeted from


Linguistic rights - the right to the full-fledged use and unhindered transmission of one's language - are a fundamental aspect of human rights.

100% to merely 5.1%.\textsuperscript{6} Taken in conjunction with the finding from the studies I just mentioned, these figures suggest that the chances for social cohesion and thus for community health and well-being have dropped drastically among BC First Nations, in parallel with this precipitous slide in fluent native language speakers. Chances only remain good in those few communities in which language transmission to younger generations is still ongoing. No doubt, similar findings would be made in other indigenous communities elsewhere. And indeed, many of the language revitalization efforts now taking place worldwide are strongly motivated by awareness of this critical role of language.

All this brings up vital issues of social justice: in a nutshell, the right—enshrined in a host of human rights declarations and conventions, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the recent United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—for individuals and communities to fully develop and freely maintain their own social, cultural, and linguistic identities, without any discrimination or pressure for assimilation, and without being forcibly deprived of the conditions needed for the deployment of their highest human potential. From what I have said so far, it should be clear that anyone concerned with social justice and human rights can in no way remain indifferent to this crucial link between language and human well-being. Linguistic rights - the right to the full-fledged use and unhindered transmission of one’s language – are a fundamental aspect of human rights. Affirming and protecting them goes hand in hand with affirming and protecting social and cultural rights. Indigenous peoples around the globe have certainly made linguistic rights one of the cornerstones of their struggles for self-determination.

Yet other arguments in the case for linguistic diversity are ones that I might dub “anthropological”: arguments that point to the intimate connections between language and culture, and in particular between language and traditional knowledge. Cultural worldviews, values, beliefs, knowledge, meanings, and practices are inextricably bound with language, and are conveyed through language in a myriad ways—from everyday interactions to rituals and ceremonies, elders’ teachings, stories, songs, myths, historical accounts, poetry and other forms of oral traditions and art. These cultural traditions are key to the formation of individual and social identity, sense of place, and connections between generations as well as with ancestors and

If linguistic diversity is part and parcel of the diversity of life in nature and culture, then any loss in linguistic diversity is a loss in the vitality and resilience of the whole web of life.

the spiritual realm. Language has a primary role in ensuring the continuity of these fundamental societal processes and in communicating and transmitting countless facets of culture.

In this context, the relationship between language and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) has gained special prominence in recent years, as attention increasingly focused on the importance and value of TEK. Hundreds of ethnobiological and ethnoecological studies from all over the world have revealed the extraordinary wealth of nature knowledge among indigenous and local communities, born out of the intimate bond and interdependence between people and the natural environment. This knowledge has been and continues to be crucial for survival and adaptation in these communities. Moreover, there is growing recognition that TEK also offers many solutions to global environmental problems—and thus that the lessons of TEK from the world’s different cultures are essential for the future of humanity at large. Keeping languages vital as living repositories of TEK has therefore become another major argument in support of linguistic diversity.

The whole field of biocultural diversity (BCD) has taken shape through the recognition of this “inextricable link” between language, knowledge, and the environment, and between biodiversity, cultural diversity, and linguistic diversity.7 Biocultural research has made it clear that protecting and sustaining linguistic and cultural diversity is intrinsically necessary for protecting and sustaining biodiversity and maintaining healthy ecosystems (and vice versa). Here, the case for linguistic diversity finds its most overarching argument: if linguistic diversity is part and parcel of the diversity of life in nature and culture, then any loss in linguistic diversity is a loss in the vitality and resilience of the whole web of life. Once this point is fully articulated and understood, it becomes impossible to shrug off the disappearance of any language, no matter how small, and of the cultural traditions and cultural knowledge it conveys. Every time this happens, it’s

Many major international organizations have adopted statements of principle, and in some cases even programs of work, about the links between biodiversity and cultural diversity (including linguistic diversity).

a piece of the planet’s living fabric that gets torn off, leaving all of the living world more fragile, more vulnerable, and with fewer options for the future.

Over the past two decades, this argument has slowly but surely gained global momentum, penetrating not only the realm of academia, but also that of international policy. Many major international organizations [such as IUCN, WWF, UNEP, CBD, UNESCO, and others] have adopted statements of principle, and in some cases even programs of work, about the links between biodiversity and cultural diversity [including linguistic diversity]. It is increasingly recognized that the conservation of biodiversity has to be carried out in conjunction with the affirmation of linguistic and cultural diversity. In this connection, one especially relevant arena for highlighting the importance of linguistic diversity and calling attention to the state of the world’s languages is the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Article 8j of the CBD states that each Contracting Party [that is, each country that is a signatory to the CBD] must:

“Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices.”

How to properly implement this article has been the object of some of the most intensive, long-term, and often contentious discussions and negotiations among indigenous and local communities, governments, NGOs, and international agencies. One of the most relevant outcomes has been the establishment of a series of targets and related indicators to assess and monitor progress toward the CBD Parties’ goal of reducing the loss of biodiversity. One of the targets specifically addresses Article 8j’s provisions about ensuring respect for the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities that are relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Among the indicators chosen for this target is the status and trends of linguistic diversity and numbers of speakers of indigenous languages. This choice follows directly from recognition of the links between language and

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10 http://www.cbd.int/convention/text
The ILD is the very first quantitative measure of trends in linguistic diversity.

traditional knowledge and, by implication, the links between language and biodiversity conservation.

Terralingua researchers have been long-term proponents of the use of trends in the state of the world’s languages as a valid and meaningful proxy for the state of global cultural diversity. Early on, we had begun developing a database of “vital statistics” [that is, demographic information] on numbers of speakers of the world’s languages, and subsequently a methodology to correlate the state of languages [as well as of other aspects of cultural diversity, namely ethnic and religious diversity] to the state of biodiversity. Because of these precedents, we were invited to participate in the consultation process that led to the identification of the CBD targets and related indicators, and later to provide advice for the development of the CBD language indicator. This collaboration then gave us the stimulus to independently produce a full-fledged Index of Linguistic Diversity (ILD).

The ILD, which is the centerpiece of this issue of Langscape, was completed in 2009 and published in a peer-reviewed journal in 2010. It is the very first quantitative measure of trends in linguistic diversity. Up to now, there only was anecdotal evidence about “last speakers” of this or that language, but no systematic information about numbers of

14 The development of the ILD, led by David Harmon and Jonathan Loh, was supported by The Christensen Fund (TCF). The TCF grant also funded our work on another indicator that directly measures changes in the vitality of traditional environmental knowledge, the Vitality Index of Traditional Environmental Knowledge (VITEK), created by Stanford Zent. See http://www.terralingua.org/projects/vitek/vitek.htm for the VITEK technical report.
15 See Harmon and Loh 2010 reference in footnote 1. Additional information and data from the ILD can be found on the ILD dedicated site at http://www.terralingua.org/linguisticdiversity
Many language communities are fully aware of the plight of their languages, and have been hard at work to reverse that situation.

speakers of the world’s languages and no way to gauge the data. The ILD tracks trends in linguistic diversity by following changes over time in each language’s share of the world’s population. It reveals that the respective shares of the vast majority of the 7000 or so currently spoken languages have been shrinking over the 35-year period covered by the ILD (1970-2005), while during the same period of time the top 16 of the world’s languages have increased their collective share from 45% to 55%. If this sounds a bit difficult to understand, you can go to the interview on the ILD with National Geographic News Watch editor David Braun, excerpted in these pages, and read about the colorful “jelly bean jar” analogy that ILD co-developer Jonathan Loh came up with to better explain how this measurement works. The bottom line is that, between 1970 and 2005, there has been a significant reduction in linguistic diversity globally: a downward trend of 20%. Most of this reduction is due to the shrinking share of indigenous languages, which represent 80-85% of the world’s languages. The ILD also computes data regionally and by country.

This information is crucial for researchers, policy makers, and language communities. Of course, many language communities are fully aware of the plight of their languages, and have been hard at work to reverse that situation. And many researchers have long shared that awareness, participating in language documentation and revitalization efforts and seeking to call attention to the global linguistic diversity crisis. But it takes solid quantitative data to better direct interventions and to advocate for policy action and the mobilization of resources. It is our hope that, as the ILD methodology and results become better known in all the relevant circles, it will begin to serve that very purpose, and thus provide a significant contribution to halting the loss of linguistic diversity. From a biocultural perspective, this means helping arrest the loss of the whole diversity of life.
Language Diversity Index Tracks
Global Loss of Mother Tongues

Excerpts from an interview with Luisa Maffi, David Harmon, and Jonathan Loh by David Braun of National Geographic News Watch*


Braun: What is language diversity, and why are we potentially on the brink of a mass extinction of languages?

Harmon: There are 7,000 languages, but there’s more to diversity than just separate languages. There’s diversity within languages and structures of languages, and all that.

The reason why we’re coming up to the brink of a mass extinction of languages is simply that there are a lot of pressures in the world that are enticing or even forcing people to switch from generally smaller, more geographically restricted languages to larger languages, especially global languages like Mandarin Chinese, English, or Spanish, or even languages more regionally dominant than smaller languages.

So we have 7,000 languages, which is the consensus number of discrete languages that are out there. But most of the people who study endangerment of languages are predicting that there is a potential for a mass extinction of these languages within the 21st Century. By extinction they mean that the languages are no longer going to be spoken by people as mother tongues, their principal languages.

Some of these languages might still be spoken after they are lost as mother tongues, in a restricted way, in ceremonies or in special usages like that. But in essence there is a strong possibility that we’ll lose languages that people are using as their main vehicle of expression, which they may regard as one of the linchpins of their self-identity.

*This abridged version of the interview is published here with permission of David Braun. The full text can be read at: http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2011/03/01/language_diversity_index_tracks_global_loss_of_mother_tongues/
The ILD is an index of the concentration of people across languages. It’s a landscape of languages of the world and people are shifting to different places in that landscape. Some languages are colonizing more of that landscape than others. Even if the numbers of people who speak a language are growing numerically, their portion of the overall landscape of languages that their language occupies is being compressed by the larger languages growing even faster than they are.

So all the pressures that are out there in terms of globalization, government policies that may favor certain official languages and actively or at least tacitly suppress smaller languages, economic pressures, all these things come together to put pressure on smaller languages. Therefore the diversity of languages is going to be compressed, from 7,000 separate languages to something much smaller than that.

But it is even more nuanced than that. There is also the factor of distribution of languages and how even that distribution is, and that is part of our conception of linguistic diversity. Most people talk about separate languages and they talk about extinctions. But one of the things that we are doing in this ILD is trying to move the conversation beyond those two factors, to try to get to a richer view of linguistic diversity.

Maffi: In some cases the shift to a dominant language can very much be part of government policy, and it can happen from one generation to the next. That’s what happened to native communities in North America, both Canada and the U.S., where the system of residential schools was put in place, and children were consciously taken from their families and communities and put in residential schools far away, where they were forbidden to speak their own language.

When they came home they were not communicating with their parents and grandparents in their own language, they spoke English. For some of them the pain and the shame were such that they didn’t want to speak their own language anymore, because they were told it was primitive, and anyway it was associated with all their suffering.

So they didn’t transmit their language to their children and grandchildren, and now we are faced with a situation in which many of these communities are beginning major efforts to re-acquire and re-affirm their languages as part of their identity.
You can make the argument that as part of that larger biocultural diversity language diversity is absolutely essential for both individuals and human groups to establish identity, to understand who we are, what our place is in both the larger civilization of humans and also the natural world. At that deep level is why you really need to be concerned about language diversity, because ultimately you are diminishing our own humanness.

Braun: Why should we be concerned about language diversity?

Harmon: Diversity is really the underpinning of all life on Earth. We've just come through the International Year of Biodiversity. There was a lot of focus on that concept during this year, but here at Terralingua we have a biocultural diversity approach. Our view is to emphasize those parts of biological, cultural and linguistic diversity that inter-penetrate one another.

You can make the argument that as part of that larger biocultural diversity

language diversity is absolutely essential for both individuals and human groups to establish identity, to understand who we are, what our place is in both the larger civilization of humans and also the natural world. At that deep level is why you really need to be concerned about language diversity, because ultimately you are diminishing our own humanness.

Braun: Why do we need a linguistic diversity index? What does it measure?

Loh: The idea of creating the index was the attempt to quantify the loss of linguistic diversity, which hasn’t been until now expressed in quantitative terms. But there was a sense that the world is rapidly losing linguistic diversity, that we’re heading to a mass extinction of languages.

We wanted to put this in quantitative terms. So we thought about measuring it by looking at data for the numbers of speakers of different languages around the world, and the index is based on trends in speaker numbers across a large sample of about 1,000 of the 7,000 languages. We then looked at these trends, and we said overall what’s the average trend across these 1,000 or so languages?

But it’s a slightly more sophisticated measure than that, because we had to take into account the fact that the world’s population is growing, and over the period which the index of linguistic diversity covers, which is 1970 to 2005, the world’s population roughly doubled. This meant that many languages, if not most languages, are increasing in numbers of speakers, just by dint of population growth.
What we really wanted to measure was the concept of evenness. How are different languages shared among the world’s population? What the index actually measures is how even is the distribution of speakers among the world’s languages. What we see is that that distribution is becoming more and more skewed.

In other words, some languages are growing faster than others, and for most languages the share of the world’s population speaking those languages is declining [against] a few dominant global languages which are increasing their share of the world’s population. So the distribution is becoming more and more uneven and speakers are becoming concentrated into an ever smaller set of languages.

Imagine languages are represented by different color jelly beans. You have a tall jar half filled by ten different color jelly beans. You add more jelly beans to the jar, but only red ones, until it is nearly full. Then you put only a couple more of each color on top, put the lid on and shake it up.

What happens is that the overall color of the jar has become redder and the diversity has reduced, because now the red jelly beans are dominating and the other color jelly beans occupy a smaller proportion of the total jar. Although the overall number of all colors has increased, the diversity is reduced. The evenness is reduced--and that’s exactly how the index of linguistic diversity works. It measures what is that evenness of jelly beans in the jar.

Languages come in many different sizes. Some have tiny numbers of speakers and they occupy a very small proportion of the jar. Now when that proportion reaches the lowest threshold, the jelly beans change colors, and either through their own volition or through coercion they switch to the dominant color, and that accelerates the process until the original color disappears.

Maffi: It is also [and some would say foremost] a matter of human rights for the speakers of the smaller languages to be able to continue to speak their languages. The UN Declaration of Human Rights states [Art. 2] that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including based on language.

From this one can infer that discrimination based on what language one speaks is against human rights. And the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples touches extensively on rights to own
Language revitalization programs need to be supported, even if there isn’t a realistic prospect of ever reviving such languages a mother tongue. They can still have a place in the world of linguistic diversity. They might be diminished in terms of richness, but languages of heritage can still be extremely valuable. Extinction in that sense is not the end of the story.

Language—and, as Dave and Jonathan point out in the ILD paper, 80%-85% of the world’s languages are indigenous! So to apply linguistic human rights to indigenous languages really means protecting an overwhelming proportion of the linguistic diversity that we have on this planet.

**Braun:** Your paper mentions that the language extinction metaphor does not necessarily imply absolute irreversibility. How can the ILD assist with irreversibility?

**Harmon:** The way we use the term language extinction, we are talking about extinction as a mother tongue. In other words, a first language people are using, not necessarily exclusively, because a lot of people are bilingual or multilingual, but are using it in their daily lives and would consider their allegiance to that language as their first language.

When you talk about extinction as mother tongues, you are talking about people who no longer use their ancestral language for the whole wide range of life-navigating purposes. They may still retain a language that was their mother tongue, but maybe they speak it only during religious ceremonies or special occasions. Or more likely, they will know just a few words of that language. Their competency in being able to produce sentences and express themselves in that language will decline.

What happens is that these languages are lost as mother tongues and they are assumed to have gone extinct. There are no more native speakers of whatever the language might be.

That doesn’t mean that those languages couldn’t be revived as mother tongues, as was the case, most famously I think, with Hebrew, which was dormant as a mother tongue for a long time, and then through some passionate advocacy in the early part of the 20th Century was revived and now is the mother tongue of a lot of people.

Languages can also be revived as languages of heritage, as I call them, which means they might not come back as full mother tongues of many people, but they might be a language retained by speakers and taught to children, and so remain vital in at least some domain. There are a lot of language revitalization programs going on around the world.

We can lose lots and lots of languages in the coming decades as mother tongues, and we should fight to avoid that as much as possible. But even if that happens, the languages might still be around as languages
There are still elders who are fluent speakers, and those elders have been put together with children in so-called language nests so that the children begin to learn their language the way they would normally, just by talking to adults and being spoken to by adults.

Work like this done by linguists and communities has been extremely valuable. I know for instance, of some Native Californian languages where the only extant documentation was really in pages of transcriptions by linguists done in the early 1900s or even earlier, and recordings on wax rolls. Members of those native communities have gone out to museums and archives to retrieve those materials, put them on computers and try to reconstruct as much as possible of the language, then train themselves by talking to a computer.

There are still elders who are fluent speakers, and those elders have been put together with children in so-called language nests so that the children begin to learn their language the way they would normally, just by talking to adults and being spoken to by adults. Or even putting together elders with teenagers in so-called master-apprentice programs where the youth are essentially in full-immersion mother-tongue medium, with the elders speaking to the youth and doing activities together so that the language becomes alive.

In a large number of cases, native-language communities around the world have established school programs. Just the other day I was visiting a school near where I am, on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia, on the west coast of Canada, run by the Saanich First Nation—British Columbia having been a hotbed of linguistic diversity, with 32 different languages, most of which are endangered.

In some cases like this one there are still elders around who speak the languages and who became language advocates and contributed to documenting their language and creating a script for the language, and on that basis language programs have been established in the schools. They are not getting all the financial support that they need in order to establish full-fledged language programs or teaching in the native language, but that’s the direction in which things are going. People express a lot of pride in this. It motivates them to get their language back.
“Language allows us to interact with the world in so many ways, almost like seeds adapted to local conditions, land races that make the best use of local conditions.”

Felipe Montoya Greenheck

The Index of Linguistic Diversity (ILD) is the first-ever quantitative measure of global trends in linguistic diversity. It measures changes in the number of mother-tongue speakers of a globally representative sample of the world’s languages. Its objective is to provide solid data that show whether the world’s languages (particularly indigenous languages) are losing speakers, and if so at what pace.

The ILD tracks trends in language demographics over the period 1970–2005. The key findings are:

Globally, linguistic diversity declined 20%.

The diversity of the world’s indigenous languages declined 21%.

Regionally, indigenous linguistic diversity declined over 60% in the Americas, 30% in the Pacific (including Australia), and almost 20% in Africa.

The top 16 languages spoken worldwide increased their share of the global population from 45% to 55%.

1. INTRODUCTION

Concern about the future of the world’s languages has been building for the better part of two decades. A large amount of qualitative evidence points to an impending mass extinction of languages. The quality of this evidence ranges from merely anecdotal to very accurate narrative accounts based on firsthand knowledge of the language demographics of individual speech communities. It is a highly valuable
body of evidence, leaving no room to doubt that the entirety of the world’s languages—not just their number, but also the linguistic and cultural diversity they represent—is being severely diminished.

For a host of complex reasons, people are abandoning their mother tongues and switching to other languages, almost always ones with larger numbers of speakers; thereby, more and more people are being concentrated into fewer and fewer languages.

However, there is much less quantitative evidence of a global linguistic diversity crisis. To help fill this gap we have created the Index of Linguistic Diversity (ILD), which we believe to be the first-ever quantitative index of trends in linguistic diversity based on time-series data on numbers of mother-tongue speakers. The ILD assesses trends in linguistic diversity by comparing changes in the relative distribution of mother-tongue speakers against a benchmark of the situation prevailing in 1970, the earliest year we could set the index based on the data available. The index does this by measuring changes in the number of mother-tongue speakers from a globally representative sample of 1,500 languages over the period 1970–2005. The ILD can be calculated at different geographic scales and for different groupings of languages; each of these versions of the index uses the same methods.

The main finding of this research is that linguistic diversity has seriously declined since 1970. The overall linguistic diversity of the world, as measured by ILD Global, declined by 20% over the 35-year period (see Figure 1). We also assessed the diversity of the world’s indigenous languages—which make up 80–85% of the total number—on both global and regional levels. We did this because the status of the world’s indigenous languages is important to global initiatives such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as to indigenous communities themselves. ILD Global Indigenous, which measures the diversity of the world’s indigenous languages, declined by 21% (Figure 2). The diversity of indigenous languages declined in all regions as well.

2. WHAT IS LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY?

Linguistic diversity is often viewed from three related perspectives: language richness, or the number of different languages spoken in a given geographical area; phylogenetic diversity, or the number of different lineages of languages found in an area; and structural diversity, or the variation found among structures within languages.

For the purposes of developing a quantitative measure such as the ILD, we departed slightly from these standard definitions of linguistic diversity, and borrow some related concepts from the field of ecology. Language richness can be thought of as being analogous to species richness, the number of species found in a given area. In addition to richness, a second component in species diversity is evenness, or the distribution of individual organisms among species. In the case of linguistic diversity, evenness is the distribution of individual speakers among languages. For example, two regions in both of which ten languages are spoken each have the same richness, but the region in which each language is spoken by 10% of the population has greater evenness, and therefore higher linguistic diversity, than one in which 91% of the population speaks one language and only 1% of the population speaks each of the other nine.

We think that this concept is critical in measuring changes in linguistic diversity over comparatively short time scales. Relatively few of the world’s languages have become extinct as mother tongues in the last few decades, so language richness in most areas of the world has declined only slightly. And yet, we would
**Figure 1: Declining Trend of Global Linguistic Diversity, 1970-2005**

**Figure 2: Declining Trend of Global Indigenous Linguistic Diversity, 1970-2005**
argue, diversity has declined much more than this because the distribution of mother-tongue speakers among extant languages has become more uneven: more speakers are becoming concentrated in fewer languages. While phylogenetic and structural diversity are important, these concepts are not currently incorporated into the index. In summary, for the purposes of the ILD, we define linguistic diversity as the number of languages and the evenness of distribution of mother-tongue speakers among languages in a given area.

3. THE NEED FOR A LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY INDEX

If there are already projections of the future magnitude of language extinctions, why is there a need for an index like the ILD? First, published estimates of the percentage of languages likely to die out during this century are, to date, little more than informed conjecture. Categorical statements of the rate of extinction—“X number of languages are dying every year”—are widely quoted but almost never referenced to a rigorous estimate.

Second, even if better estimates were available, merely tracking when particular languages go extinct does not account for the loss of linguistic diversity occurring during the course of pre-extinction language shift. A great deal of linguistic diversity is lost well before a declining language finally goes extinct, as speakers shift to other (usually larger) languages, intergenerational transmission declines, and usage becomes restricted to fewer speakers, domains, and functions. Quantifying changing distributions of mother-tongue speakers prior to extinction is therefore important.

Moreover, focusing on language extinction rates places undue emphasis on what is perceived to be the terminal state of linguistic diversity decline. If “language extinction” is to have any useful meaning, it must be specified that the term actually refers to the condition of a language no longer being spoken as a mother tongue.

So, while obtaining accurate projections of mother-tongue language extinctions is important, they need to be augmented by a quantitative measure of current global trends in linguistic diversity. Clearly, the claims of those who tout the loss of linguistic diversity as a major problem for the world would be strengthened if there were quantitative evidence to support their arguments. Government officials, other decision-makers, and the general public will likely take the decline of linguistic diversity more seriously if there is a readily understandable global metric that captures the current magnitude of the problem. That is what the ILD is designed to provide.

4. WHAT THE ILD MEASURES

The ILD uses language evenness in conjunction with language richness as a proxy for linguistic diversity. Because the goal of the index is to measure trends in linguistic diversity, it must account for changes in evenness and richness: that is, changes in the relative distribution of mother-tongue speakers among discrete languages within the total population, as measured from the starting point of the index (currently 1970) to its ending point (currently 2005). The ILD indicates the rate of change in linguistic diversity by measuring how far, on average, the languages in a given grouping deviate from a hypothetical situation in which each language is neither increasing nor decreasing its share of the total population of that grouping.
How the ILD is calculated:

Scenario 1: Stable Equilibrium

The ILD indicates the rate of change in linguistic diversity by measuring how far, on average, the languages in a given grouping deviate from a hypothetical situation in which each language is neither increasing nor decreasing its share of the total population of that grouping. Scenario 1 shows that hypothetical situation. Imagine a world with just 10 languages, here marked A through J. The largest of these languages, Language A (in dark blue) has 500 speakers at the beginning of our imaginary survey; this is shown on the left-side graph. It, along with the other 9 languages, gets bigger over 10 years (time is the X axis, at the bottom of all the graphs). But each languages gets bigger at exactly the same rate, so that each one’s share of the total population — shown in the middle graph — is flat across the 10-year span. This is the condition of hypothetical stability against which the ILD measures change. As you can see in the rightmost graph, the ILD remains unchanged under this stable equilibrium scenario.

Scenario 2: Steady Erosion

In Scenario 2, we see something very similar to what is happening in the real world. Here, the 3 largest languages are increasing in population while the rest remain flat (leftmost graph). This is shown in the middle graph, where the amount of available space is being taken up more and more by the three largest languages (dark blue, orange, and yellow). The ILD in this scenario declines by 20%.

Scenario 3: Serial Extinction

In Scenario 3 of our illustration of our simplified world we look at what would happen if the 3 largest languages really increase their share of the world’s population at the expense of smaller languages that go extinct one after another. The blue, orange, and yellow bands in the middle graph bulge dramatically, literally helping to squeeze out small languages as more and more of the world’s people become concentrated in fewer and fewer languages. The ILD in the rightmost graph plunges dramatically.
For example, ILD Global, an index of the world’s overall linguistic diversity, measures the average deviation of the world’s languages from a hypothetical situation in which each language is neither increasing nor decreasing its share of the global population.

The ILD can be said to measure the concentration or distribution of mother-tongue speakers among the world’s languages. What does it mean to say that ILD Global declined 20% over the period 1970–2005? It means that, for all languages spoken worldwide in 1970, their average share of the world’s population declined by 20% over 35 years.

It is worth noting again that the ILD is not a measure of language extinction: a 20% decline in the index does not mean that 20% of languages went extinct over the period being measured. For example, it is possible to imagine that most of the world’s languages could decline until only a few speakers of each are left, while a few languages become dominant with many millions of speakers: the ILD would show a marked decline and yet the total number of extant languages would remain constant. In that case the number of extinctions would remain zero, yet the ILD would indicate that almost all linguistic diversity had been lost.

5. THE ILD DATABASE

The ILD database of time-series data on language demographics, which we believe to be the world’s largest to date, contains information from nine editions of Ethnologue, the most comprehensive compendium of the world’s languages, as well as five other compendia of speaker numbers.

The ILD is based on a sample of 1,500 languages selected at random from the 7,299 languages listed in the 15th edition of Ethnologue (2005). (The 16th edition, 2009, appeared too late for us to include in this study.) This sample size—representing just over 20% of the world’s languages—is higher than is needed to constitute a statistically representative global sample. Having a sample size much larger than required for global analysis allows statistically valid analysis of subglobal samples.

Our long-term aim is to base the ILD on a variety of data sources, not just Ethnologue. However, we decided to restrict the first version of the ILD to Ethnologue data to minimize potential inconsistencies in language-status assessment that could come from incorporating multiple sources of data into a single time series.

The ILD database and methodology are described in the appendixes to the published version of the ILD. The ILD data tables can be found at www.terralingua.org/projects/ild/Database/ILD_alpha.html.
6. RESULTS

Global Linguistic Diversity. ILD Global (see Figure 1 above), which covers all the languages in the sample, both indigenous and non-indigenous, shows a slow decline from 1.0 to 0.95 between 1970 and 1988, but a steeper decline from 0.95 to 0.80 between 1988 and 2005. The upper and lower confidence limits show the boundaries of the 95% confidence interval, and are depicted in this and the other graphs as small lines above and below the main trendline.

Global Indigenous Linguistic Diversity. ILD Global Indigenous (see Figure 2 above), which covers only the indigenous languages in the sample, declined from 1.0 to 0.94 between 1970 and 1988, and from 0.94 to 0.79 between 1988 and 2005. It shows a marginally greater decline than the global ILD, but the two trends are largely similar as most of the languages in the global dataset are indigenous languages.

Regional Indigenous Linguistic Diversity. Changes in indigenous linguistic diversity differ among regions. ILD Africa Indigenous increased from 1.00 to 1.07 between 1970 and 1985, and then declined rapidly from 1.07 to 0.83 in 2005 (Figure 3). The increase in the 1970s and early 1980s suggests that African indigenous languages were becoming more equally distributed in terms of speaker numbers during that period, but from the mid-1980s on the distribution became increasingly skewed, with many languages’ share of the total African population declining.

ILD Americas Indigenous shows the steepest decline of any region, falling from 1.00 to 0.71 between 1970 and 1980, and from 0.71 to 0.36 between 1980 and 2005 (Figure 4).

ILD Eurasia Indigenous, like its African counterpart, showed an initial increase from 1.00 to 1.10...
between 1970 and 1981, suggesting that there was a slight gain in the proportion of the total population speaking an indigenous language. It flattened out for about a decade between 1981 and 1991, and then declined very slightly to 1.07 in 2005 (Figure 5). Overall the index shows little change in linguistic diversity in Eurasia.

ILD Pacific Indigenous (which includes Australia) shows the second steepest decline after the Americas. The index fell steadily from 1.0 to 0.82 in 1999, then dropped steeply from 0.82 to 0.70 between 1999 and 2005 (Figure 6). The widening confidence intervals in the last few years of the index suggest a higher degree of uncertainty in the trend after 1999, which would be reduced with additional data.

The four regional ILDs are compared in Figure 7.

7. DISCUSSION

Decline in Global Linguistic Diversity. Figure 1 shows the global trendline for the ILD. ILD Global shows a slow decline from 1.0 to 0.95 between 1970 and 1988, but a steeper decline from 0.95 to 0.8010 between 1988 and 2005. The overall decline of 20% in the space of 35 years shows that linguistic diversity is being lost at a significant rate, but even more importantly, the rate of loss has increased from about – 0.3% per year in the 1970s and 1980s to more than – 1.0% per year in the 1990s and 2000s. This is a stark indication of the scale of the recent loss of global linguistic diversity. The rapid disappearance of one-fifth of the linguistic diversity that existed in the world in 1970 is a quantitative depiction of the continuing widespread shift from smaller languages to larger languages. The more the ILD Global declines, the more the world’s mother-tongue speakers are concentrated into fewer languages.

Decline in Global Indigenous Linguistic Diversity. Figure 2 shows that the decline in the diversity of the world’s indigenous languages has been similar, which is unsurprising in that most of the languages in the
The acceleration in the loss of linguistic diversity indicated by the ILD Global Indigenous implies that this particular CBD target could not be met. Prospects remain uncertain for the next CBD target (2020).

**Declines in Regional Indigenous Linguistic Diversity.** A comparison of the various regional indigenous ILDs (see Figure 7) shows some interesting results. Some regions are declining more rapidly than others, particularly the Americas, which declined by 64% over the period (Figure 4). The fact that the Americas showed the greatest overall decline should not necessarily be interpreted as meaning that linguistic diversity is, consequently, lower there than in other regions. It simply means that the Americas underwent the most rapid decline of all four regions between 1970 and 2005. It may well have been the case that the Americas were much more linguistically diverse in 1970 compared with other regions, such as Europe for example, in which the majority of linguistic diversity was lost prior to 1970.

The Pacific region (Figure 6) shows the second greatest rate of decline, 30% over 35 years, while ILD Africa Indigenous (Figure 3) declined by nearly 20%. This suggests that indigenous languages are in very rapid decline in comparison to total population growth in the region as a whole in the Americas, and in rapid decline in Africa and the Pacific.

Eurasia was the only region to show an increase in its indigenous ILD (Figure 5). There, indigenous languages are growing at the same rate as the overall population.

**Some Caveats and Limitations.** While we expect the ILD to prove a useful tool to communities, analysts and academics, policymakers, and the general public, any index is only as good as the underlying

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**Figure 7: Comparison of Regional Trends of Indigenous Linguistic Diversity, 1970-2005**

![ILD Regional Indigenous 1970 - 2005](image-url)

world (by our estimate, 80–85%) are indigenous languages. ILD Global Indigenous declined from 1.0 to 0.79 between 1970 and 2005—a 21% decrease. The average annual rate of decline in indigenous linguistic diversity was slightly faster than the global average in the 1970s and 1980s, but only by a fraction of a percent per year.

Indigenous communities themselves would certainly want to know the status of indigenous languages. Moreover, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) identified stemming the rate of loss of linguistic diversity and in the number of speakers of indigenous languages as one of its indicators for assessing progress toward meeting its 2010 Biodiversity Target.
data available at the time. *Ethnologue* is the best single source for data on the numbers of speakers of languages around the world, and information from its various editions is an indispensable part of any analysis of recent trends in language demographics. Nonetheless, *Ethnologue* data come from a variety of primary and secondary sources and are, inevitably, uneven. We believe that *Ethnologue* time-series data are valid, but without question language demographic data in general can be improved. It should be borne in mind when using the initial version of the ILD that better data will, in the future, produce even more accurate trendlines.

It is also important to acknowledge that global indices such as the ILD should be used to provide broad contextual background for policy frameworks, rather than as guidance for on-the-ground policy decisions. No large-scale language index can hope to fully represent the complexities that must be accounted for in any policy affecting individual language communities. Nor can a global or regional index do more than outline the state of linguistic diversity at these levels; much more fine-grained analyses are required to get a complete picture.

Quantitative analyses such as the ILD must be supplemented by knowledge derived through other methods. This is especially relevant with respect to languages because most linguistic diversity is tied to traditional knowledge systems of indigenous people. These systems primarily rely on non-quantitative observational science and narrative, often transmitted orally rather than in writing. Therefore, any global numerical index, including the ILD, runs the risk of being irrelevant [or, worse, antithetical] to the needs of indigenous communities if it is not properly qualified—and, in addition, supplemented by other information that is generated by the communities themselves.

The ILD and similar global indices that deal with potentially controversial phenomena, such as language policy, must carefully be placed in context whenever they are used as an educational or policy-orientation tool, and should never be used as a sole source of information.

**Future Development of the ILD.** As part of future work, we plan to add data from the 16th edition of *Ethnologue* and to expand the database to achieve complete coverage of all the world’s languages. We also intend to enter into the ILD database all available speaker-numbers data from other global compendia of language statistics, as well as information from UNESCO’s *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger* and other UNESCO-led data-gathering efforts. All of these will provide data with which to compare, or add to, those from *Ethnologue*.

But the full potential of the ILD methodology won’t be realized until we are able to expand it to include other language demographic data in addition to counts of mother-tongue speakers. To fully understand the status of and trends in the world’s linguistic diversity, we need to go beyond using language richness [the number of discrete languages] and language distribution as a proxy. For example, it may be possible to create versions of the ILD that address phylogenetic diversity by using data on language family affiliations that are already included in *Ethnologue*. The methodology could also be applied to certain special language categories, thus producing versions such as ILD Creoles or ILD Isolates. There may be scope for incorporating structural diversity into the ILD by drawing on data from the *World Atlas of Language Structures*. Even better understanding will come when we are able to augment speaker-numbers data with deeper knowledge about all the factors that determine language demographics and drive trends in linguistic diversity.
According to the 16th Edition of Ethnologue,* there are 6,909 known living languages in the world and another 500 that have recently become extinct. While the debate continues on whether specific languages are classified as a language or a dialect, or how to classify an extinct versus endangered language, we can still understand the bigger picture.

The Index of Linguistic Diversity is mainly concerned with the distribution of speakers among the world’s languages. That distribution is getting more and more skewed. Though approximately 85% of languages are indigenous, the majority of the world’s population speaks but one of a handful of languages.

* http://www.ethnologue.com/ethno_docs/introduction.asp

Distribution of Speakers Among Languages, Top 25. © Terralingua 2005.

Basic information about languages*

* There are 6-7,000 spoken languages, and perhaps as many sign languages
* The median number of speakers of a language is probably around 5-6,000
* Over 95 % of the world’s spoken languages have fewer than 1 million native users
* Some 5,000 spoken languages have fewer than 100,000 speakers
* Over 3,000 spoken languages have fewer than 10,000 users
* Some 1,500 spoken languages and most of the sign languages have fewer than 1,000 users
* Some 500 languages had fewer than 100 speakers in 1999
* 83-84 % of the world’s spoken languages are endemic: they exist in one country only.

*from the publication Sharing a World of Difference, Terralingua, UNESCO and WWF, 2003.

So, why is this important, and how does it relate to Terralingua’s mission of conserving Biocultural Diversity?
As we can see from the map above, the distribution of languages across the world overlaps significantly with the distribution of biodiversity (represented here by plant diversity). Regions with the highest concentration of plant diversity also have the highest concentration of different languages.

Today, we are confronting a converging extinction crisis of the diversity of life in all its manifestations: biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity. As more and more people around the world are speaking only a few dominant tongues, we are becoming an increasingly homogenized society. Losing languages also means losing the depth of local knowledge that could be used to create innovative solutions to many of the environmental and social problems the world faces today.

"Since the dawn of human history, everywhere on Earth people have interacted closely with the natural environment as the source of all sustenance: the source of air, water, food, medicine, clothing, shelter, and all other material needs, as well as of physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being.

Through this vital dependence on the environment, over time human societies have developed detailed local knowledge of plants, animals, and ecological processes. They have also developed cultural values and practices that stress respect for and reciprocity with nature—taking care of the natural environment that sustains us.

This diversity of local knowledge, values, and practices is expressed and transmitted in the thousands of different languages spoken on our planet—7000 different languages, to be more exact, the vast majority of them spoken by small indigenous and local communities." Luisa Maffi
Become a Terralingua Member

Join our diverse worldwide membership and contribute to our efforts to support biocultural diversity!

Terralingua members receive our two semiannual issues of Langscape, are entitled to discounts on our publications and other special offers, and get periodic “hot off the press” updates through our e-news.

If you want to know more about how to become a member, contact us at members@terralingua.org.

Individual Memberships

Individual membership is free of charge and open to all those who support our purposes and want to further Terralingua’s work. Our goal is to encourage as many people as possible to join, so we don’t require the payment of membership dues. However, for those who can afford it, we suggest a minimum donation of US $50 per year to support our operations.

Organizational Memberships

Organizations wishing to join Terralingua as Organizational Members are asked to make an annual donation of US $100 or more to underwrite our activities.

If you would like to become a Terralingua member, please complete the membership form on our website http://www.terralingua.org/html/member.html or send us an email to members@terralingua.org.

See next page on how to donate to Terralingua.

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Support Terralingua’s mission to sustain the Biocultural Diversity of Life!

Join Terralingua’s pioneering efforts around the world by making a donation through our secure online server. Your donation will support our cutting-edge work in research, policy, education, and on-the-ground action. You will contribute to the development of our unique and innovative projects, including the documentation and revitalization of indigenous oral traditions, the production of biocultural diversity education curriculum for high schools, and the development of indicators of the state and trends of the world’s languages and traditional ecological knowledge.

Why Give

We are losing the unique ways of life and identities of the world’s diverse peoples. It’s a matter of human rights, and a profound diminishment of what it means to be human.

We are losing both the rich biodiversity that supports humanity and all other species, and the traditional knowledge that helps sustain biodiversity. It’s a matter of our survival.

In a time of crisis, we not only desperately need healthy ecosystems. We also desperately need all the voices of the planet and the ancestral wisdom that they express.

Losing biocultural diversity means a major weakening of the whole fabric of life—the web of interdependence that is absolutely vital to our common future. It means losing our options for life on Earth. It’s like losing our life insurance when we need it most.

How to Give

Support Terralingua by making a credit card donation safely, securely, and quickly on our website through Secure Donations by Network for Good or by sending us a cheque to:

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Donations to Terralingua are tax-deductible in the U.S.A.

www.terralingua.org