

September 12th  
Friday

12:00 – 1:00pm

MICHAEL M. AMES  
THEATRE, MOA

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ID at the MOA front desk.  
Backpacks, food and drink  
are not allowed in the MOA  
Theatre.

# Anthropology Colloquia

Dr. Gregory D. S. Anderson **Living Tongues Institute  
for Endangered Languages**



Dr. Greg Anderson and colleague Dr. Ganesh Murmu working with Mrs. Abamo Degio, speaker of Koro Aka and Miji (Sajolang) in Yangse village, East Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh, India. Photo by Dr. K. David Harrison, permission of Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages.

## Ethical (W)Holistic Linguistics: Endangered Languages at the Crossroads of Social Science, Humanities, Science, and Community Activism

### ABSTRACT:

The linguistics of endangered languages is an innately cross-disciplinary endeavor. Even within the narrow constraints of linguistics proper, the object of study interfaces with a diverse array of topics: acoustic physics (phonetics), the politics of ethno linguistic identity (sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology), the nature and extent of cognition (psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, typology) and the deep pre-history of individual communities (historical linguistics or linguistic archaeology). In this presentation I introduce the audience to a framework I have been developing called ethical (w)holistic linguistics. This phrase underscores that the investigation of endangered languages must cover a broad spectrum of disciplines. In order to develop a more fine-grained and nuanced understanding of language(s), it is necessary to understand the socio-historical contexts in which their speakers are embedded. I present some findings from recent and ongoing fieldwork in India, Siberia, North America, South America, Africa, Papua New Guinea and Micronesia. Discussion will move from long-forgotten migrations and population prehistory to examining the still powerful (post-) colonial legacies of the present day, from some of the ways that the language-culture interface is reflected, to key insights revealed by the formal and functional properties of language(s) that help define the extent of, and constraints on, our cognitive abilities. Finally, I finish my discussion with how, despite the many obvious threats to the complex tableau of diversity represented by and in the human ethnoglossosphere, there are still many causes for celebration as well, as emerging technologies open up new channels for community empowerment in the twenty-first century.

**BIO:** Founder and Director of the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, Dr. Gregory D. S. Anderson has degrees in Linguistics from Harvard (A.B. 1989) and the University of Chicago (Ph.D. 2000). He also served as lead scientist on the Enduring Voices project, a joint venture between Living Tongues and National Geographic Society where he served as a Fellow of the Society from 2007-2013. He currently holds a Research Fellowship at University of South Africa (UNISA).

Dr. Anderson has authored eleven books and approximately one hundred peer-reviewed studies. He has published widely in the fields of historical linguistics, descriptive grammar, morphology, verb typology, and the linguistics of Munda, Salishan, Ogonoid, Tibeto-Burman, and Nilo-Saharan languages and many other language families.

Dr. Anderson has conducted fieldwork and training sessions for indigenous language activists on every continent, having pioneered the development of multi-media Talking Dictionaries for over 80 languages to date. He was also the subject (along with his Living Tongues Institute colleague David Harrison) of the critically acclaimed film *The Linguists* by Ironbound Films. He is well known for his 2006 book *Auxiliary Verb Constructions* from Oxford University Press where he established an entirely new functional and formal typology of auxiliary verb constructions. He is currently completing a book entitled *Language Extinction: The Real Threat to Linguistic Diversity in the 21st Century* to be published by Cambridge University Press.

Part of the UBC Department of Anthropology Colloquium 2014-2015

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