

# **Analysis of contributions on the interconnections between languages, biodiversity and values**

## **Contributions received**

This document presents a subset of the contributions received to inform section 2.2.2 in the IPBES *values assessment*, on languages, values and biodiversity.

### **Contents**

- Submission on Aikanã language
- Submission on Basque language
- Submission on Dagaare, Dagbani and Kusaal languages
- Submission on Evenki and Even languages
- Submission on Iskonawa language
- Submission on Kuikuro language

## Submission on Aikanã language

### Contributing authors: Hein van der Voort

1. **Name of language and/or dialect:** Aikanã (Glottolog aika1237)
2. **Linguistic stock or family:** linguistic isolate
3. **Number of speakers (if known):** 250 (ethnic population 400)
4. **Country/ geographic region (geographic coordinates):** Brazil / southeastern Rondônia (12°22' S, 61°22' W and 12°34' S, 60°48' W)
5. **Are you a native speaker?** No

I am Hein van der Voort, native speaker of Dutch, living and working in Brazil as a researcher at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi in Belém, Pará, and working with the Aikanã since 1995.

6. **Other relevant information on the language and or its speakers:** The language is spoken by the indigenous Aikanã people in the south of the federal state of Rondônia, Brazil. First contacts with Westerners took place around the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The language and culture are threatened with extinction. Substantial research started only in the 1980s. Documentation and description projects are ongoing.
7. **Key publications or references that you could suggest to the Values Assessment (VA) on this topic (academic, non-academic, could include videos, songs, artworks, etc.):**

#### Publications

- Birchall, Joshua, Hein van der Voort, Luiz Aikanã, and Cândida Aikanã. 2017. Aikanã, in: *On this and other worlds: Voices from Amazonia*, ed. by Kristine Stenzel and Bruna Franchetto, 405-438. Berlin: Language Science Press. <<http://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/167>>
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- Grund, Lisa Katharina. f.c. A fala dos *anatukii'ene*: uma leitura das flautas sagradas Aikanã, in: *Mana*.
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- Reesink, Edwin. 2012. *Allegories of wildness: Three Nambikwara ethnohistories of sociocultural and linguistic change and continuity*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers.

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- Voort, Hein van der. 2016. Aikanã and Kwaza: Their ethno-historical and sociolinguistic context in Rondônia, Brazil, in: *Endangered languages and languages in danger: Issues of documentation, policy, and language rights*, ed. by Luna Filipović and Martin Pütz, 203-230. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Voort, Hein van der, and Aikanã Community. 2018. Formulário para a patrimonialização da língua Aikanã. [manuscript]. Belém: Museu Goeldi / Brasília: IPHAN.
- Voort, Hein van der. 2019. A relevância das línguas indígenas na biota amazônica, in: Ana Vilacy Galucio & Ana Lúcia Prudente (eds.), *Museu Goeldi: 150 anos de ciência na Amazônia*. Belém: Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. p. 351-385. <<https://www.museu-goeldi.br/assuntos/publicacao/museu-goeldi-150-anos-de-ciencia-na-amazonia.pdf>>
- Voort, Hein van der, and Joshua Birchall. f.c. Aikanã, in: Patience Epps & Lev Michael (eds.), *Amazonian languages, An international handbook*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

### Documentation projects

- Voort, Hein van der (project coordinator). 2012-2016. *The ethnolinguistic composition of southeastern Rondônia: The Aikanã, the Kwaza and their neighbours*. DobeS documentation project nr. 85.611. Host: Max Planck Institut für Psycholinguistik, Nijmegen. Sponsor: VolkswagenStiftung.
- Voort, Hein van der (project coordinator). 2017-2020. *The living ethnolinguistic heritage of the Aikanã and Kwaza of Rondônia, Brazil*. DobeS documentation project nr. 92.740. Host: Leibniz-Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, Berlin. Sponsor: VolkswagenStiftung.

### DVDs

- Aikanã, Cândida, & Lisa Grund. 2014. *Aikanã'ete ama'eteri / Plantas aikanã*. DVD about the various uses of plants in Aikanã culture, with subtitles in Aikanã and Portuguese. VolkswagenStiftung DobeS project nr. 85.611. Belém: Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi.
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- Birchall, Joshua. *Festa de menina moça: Tradições sabanê e aikanã*. 2015. DVD documenting an interethnic Sabanê and Aikanã girls' initiation festival. VolkswagenStiftung DobeS project nr. 85.611. Belém: Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi.
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- Voort, Hein van der, with Alessandra Janaú de Brito, Fabíola Azevedo Baraúna, Fabrício Aikanã. 2012. *Urui detiamã y ūraka'i bu'apapa'i - Festa da menina moça*. [DVD de documentação]. Belém: Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi.
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- Voort, Hein van der & Joshua Birchall. 2014. *Hiweru: A história da festa*. DVD of a video recording of a traditional story, told by Luiz Aikanã, with subtitles in Aikanã and Portuguese. VolkswagenStiftung DobeS project nr. 85.611. Belém: Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi.
- Voort, Hein van der, Fabrício Aikanã & Elisson Cleyton. 2015. *Hanutukii'ene: A orquestra indígena dos Aikanã*. DVD documenting the Hanutukai'ene sacred musical tradition of the Aikanã. VolkswagenStiftung DobeS project nr. 85.611. VolkswagenStiftung DobeS project nr. 85.611. Belém: Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi.

#### 8. Guiding questions (200 - 500 words per answer):

**What role does the language play in forming/transmitting/changing (Mother Earth / biosphere / biodiversity / land / territory) values?**

The Aikanã language is used by all generations, although not spoken by all members of the ethnic population. The elderly speakers, however, possess most of the (traditional) knowledge of the territory and its (original) biodiversity. Using the language, they try to pass that knowledge on to the younger generations, with varying success.

**At which extent the loss of your language could mean losing knowledge about biodiversity, ecosystems dynamics, processes, and / or products?**

Rondônia is one of the most degraded parts of the Amazon region. The threatened state of the Aikanã language and its decline bears a direct relation to the history of Western colonisation of the region, to the reduction of its speakers' lands, and to cultural and economic pressure from the national society. These same factors are at work to destroy biodiversity. As the Aikanã lose their territories and as biodiversity and ecosystems are destroyed, knowledge about those disappear, as well as the languages. In Rondônia, the process of the loss of land, culture, language, knowledge, and biodiversity are intertwined, and has led to the extinction or the critically endangered situation of over two thirds of its approximately 25 indigenous languages.

**Can you give a couple examples of concepts expressed in the language which you speak or study, that may convey distinct worldviews and values expressed in human-biodiversity interconnections?**

The relatively high degree of lexical distinctions in Aikanã of certain specific biological species, such as ants and amphibians, wasps, bees and certain families of birds, and the lack of generic terms for those, reflects the ecological context in which the language has emerged and with which its speakers have interacted. Also the lexical distinction of certain transformation stages of certain ants shows this. Furthermore, certain social roles in the community are connected with a highly detailed lexical and medicinal knowledge of plant species.

The grammatical system of directionals includes witness to a forested environment, as evidenced by verbal derivational suffixes like *-nape* 'at the edge of the forest', *-rüpe* 'through the forest', *-kape* 'on a forest path', and of a geographical orientation system based on minor rivers, as seen in suffixes such as *-ere* 'on the riverbank', *-rine* 'downriver' and *-wawa* 'upriver'.

Sometimes the lack of distinction of concepts can be noticed. For example 'night' and 'shadow' are expressed by the same word: *hikiri'i*. When in 2019 the translation for an international art project was requested of the sentence: "The night is the shadow of the earth.", it could not be given for lack of the relevant distinction in the language. In addition, the language lacks a word for 'earth' in the sense of a three dimensional object that could throw a shadow. An Aikanã translation of the poetic sentence would be meaningless.

Aikanã worldviews and values are expressed especially in traditional beliefs and mythology, which are recounted only in the indigenous language. One general theme frequently observed in traditional myths is the notion that the Aikanã had originally learnt from the animals all that is necessary for subsistence, such as hunting, making a swidden field, building a house, manufacturing objects, etc. Life used to be easy, until people became arrogant or lazy and made a serious error, after which the animals turned away from them and daily life and work became an arduous task.

**To which extent the erosion of languages might be connected to the erosion of values of biodiversity? Can you give a specific example evidenced in the language's list of words or vocabulary and/or grammar?**

To the extent that biodiversity is destroyed or the integrity of the community is diminished or both. The younger generations often do not know specific vocabulary for specific biological species, because those

are not encountered anymore and/or because their interaction with those species is minimal due to radical cultural societal changes, especially in the last 25 years. Also, the dispossession of the Aikanã of their original fertile lands in tropical rainforest and their relocation in a minor and less fertile area of which a part belongs to a more savanna-like region, has diminished access to the biodiversity reflected in the language of the elderly, who were born before the destruction of Rondônia.

### **What are the processes that are leading to the loss of this language?**

It is a complex, multifaceted constellation of ongoing processes that has started at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. First contacts with Westerners have invariably led to population decline due to epidemics of exogenous diseases to which the Aikanã and their neighbours had no resistance. Furthermore, Westerners opened up indigenous lands for colonisation, initially mainly for extraction of natural rubber and other forest products, using indigenous peoples as slaves. In a subsequent phase, from the late 1930s to 1970s, many indigenous peoples were driven off of their lands and sometimes deported to different remote regions. Finally, from the mid 1970s on, remnant populations were allowed to live in indigenous reserves, protected by law, but their societies had been thoroughly disrupted in the previous decades, and their original territories had been turned into pastures. Nowadays, the Aikanã have lost many aspects of their traditional way of life and have adopted various Western customs. During the course of a century, the Aikanã language has hence suffered from population decline, and has been losing terrain to Portuguese due to cultural, ecological and economic pressure. Due to the low population number, it is nowadays difficult for young Aikanã to marry within their own ethnic group. In mixed marriage families, the language used at home tends to be Portuguese. The Aikanã language is still alive, and is in various families even passed on to the youngest generations, but it has lost certain cultural domains, such as music, mythology, medicine, shamanic religion, of which only the eldest members of the community have knowledge. Ethno-historical and specialised cultural-linguistic knowledge is becoming lost with the passing away of these elder community members.

### **What are the processes that are leading to the maintenance or vitality of this language?**

The transfer of the language to the youngest generations in families where both parents speak the language natively is the primary key to maintenance and vitality. Often the grandparents are in favour of maintenance and like to teach their grandchildren the Aikanã language, also if the parents use only Portuguese. Since the 1990s command of the language has gained prestige, possibly in part due to research and documentation initiatives by linguists. Another crucial factor is the integrity of the community and their lands. Subgroups of the Aikanã that have been displaced since the 1940s have lost the language, and the last speaker in the large group that lives on the outskirts of the state capital Porto Velho has passed away in 2018. However, in the indigenous reserves in the original region in southeastern Rondônia, the language is very much alive. Finally, personal interest and love for the language by individuals is a factor of resistance or emancipation that fosters maintenance. The language has not only lost, but also gained certain domains of usage, such as local municipal politics, formal education, evangelical religion and especially social media, in spite of the cultural transformations these new domains entail.

### **Are there efforts undertaken to protect, ensure intergenerational transmission or revitalize this language? Please explain.**

Yes, in certain families, the language is valorised, and parents try to pass their language on to their children. These are individual efforts.

**What policies exist (if any) in your country/region aimed at valuing and protecting languages and the communities that speak them?**

The Brazilian constitution of 1988 grants the indigenous peoples the right to maintain their culture and language and requires the authorities to protect those rights and support maintenance of language and culture. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century this has been leading to policies and initiatives that foster language protection and maintenance. The Museu do Índio in Rio de Janeiro, part of the National Foundation of the Indian (Fundação Nacional do Índio – FUNAI), set up language and culture documentation programmes (PRODOCLIN and PRODOCULT) in 2009. The National Inventory of Linguistic Diversity (Inventário Nacional de Diversidade Linguística – INDL) was established in 2010 by the federal government in order to identify the languages spoken in Brazil and assess their sociolinguistic situation, under the responsibility of the National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional – IPHAN). Some efforts supported by different State Secretaries of Education (Secretaria de Estado de Educação – SEDUC) aim at language revitalisation and maintenance. Several federal universities and research institutes are involved in documentation and language maintenance projects.

Unfortunately, the new right wing government that came into power in 2019 does not actively stimulate such initiatives, which now increasingly depend on the diminished budgets of institutions and dedicated individuals. In fact, the new government is propagating assimilationist policies towards the indigenous peoples, dismantling of public education and cancellation of environmental conservation, indirectly and directly favouring unconstitutional practices such as evangelisation, land-grabbing, mineral prospecting and lumbering in indigenous territories, nature reserves and other federal lands.

**What policies could or should be developed towards the valuing, protection and revitalization of indigenous and local languages?**

Professional documentation of language and culture is a prime demand of many indigenous peoples. Incorporating the local indigenous history in a differentiated national school curriculum. Conscientisation of both the indigenous population and the surrounding Western society about the value of indigenous language, history, culture and environment. Stimulating bilingualism involving indigenous languages. Providing sophisticated educational material in the indigenous languages at schools attended by indigenous peoples. Enlightened initiatives such as the INDL should be reinvigorated. The safeguarding of biocultural diversity is essential, hence the stalled processes of demarcation of indigenous lands should be reinitiated and concluded. Existing indigenous lands should be actively protected, and freed of illegal settlers, mineral prospectors, lumbermen, missionaries, and ‘development’ projects such as hydroelectric dams not authorised by the indigenous peoples. In general terms, the constitution should be upheld and international economic pressure on the Brazilian government to do so has proven to be the most effective.

## Submission on Basque language

### Contributing authors: Dylan Inglis

1. **Language** : Basque (Euskara).
2. **Speakers** – 750,000 bilingual Basque-speakers plus 435,000 passive bilinguals (1).
3. **Language family** – Language isolate
4. **Role in forming and transmitting biodiversity-related values** – Euskara has been a vessel for inter-generational knowledge transmission and interweaving of nature and culture in the region since pre-Roman times. The language remains a receptacle for knowledge about biodiversity. The language remains intimately connected with the regions where spoken, and feelings of place attachment and cultural identity – both key relational values about local nature – are deeply informed by an intimate relationship with Euskara (2).
5. **Loss of language and its impact on ILK** – Rich lexicon about local biodiversity and knowledge about diverse uses of plants and animals are mostly possessed by older Euskara-speakers living in rural areas (3). Non- or incomplete transmission of the language comes with loss of this knowledge and resulting alienation from local nature.
6. **Concepts for worldviews and values** – Although proto-Basque probably did not have equivalents for the Latin borrowings ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ (4), Western dualisms are now well-integrated into modern Euskara. However, recent research (2) on local value systems about Basque forests suggests that Euskara itself could constitute an important concept in relations with nature. As relationally linked to person, community, place and nature, the language informs peoples value preferences and interpretation of their connection to their locality.
7. **Links between the erosion of language, values, and biodiversity** – Decline of traditional lifestyles and uses of the language and faltering community transmission of Euskara leads to loss of the parts of Basque lexicon that historically developed to allow speakers to precisely identify and understand local biodiversity. The break in community transmission of tales and fables about local life and Basque mythology, which were best maintained in Basque-speaking regions (5), also weakens connections with the surrounding living environment (6).
8. **Drivers of language loss** – Use of Euskara has historically been prohibited in schools and stigmatised in society (7). At present, in France the language is excluded from most public education and state media (8). In Spain, Euskara enjoys co-official status and priority in public education (9), but even in Basque-speaking heartlands the prevalence of French and Spanish on social media and television has a detrimental impact on language-use (10).
9. **Efforts, actions and policies for supporting a language** – Most schooling in the Spanish Basque country is now in Euskara, and there are a growing number of privately-funded Basque-medium schools in France (11). Basques are dynamic in cultural activism – e.g. in 2019, 230,000 Basque speakers participated in a 2-week



social experiment to increase their day-to-day use of the language (12). There is Basque-language written press, radio and television, and dozens of local radio stations. Proficiency in Euskara is required for public jobs in most of the Spanish Basque country.

**10. Challenges** – While the break in inter-generational transmission is the key problem in France, it is the gap between knowledge and use of Euskara that is the main challenge in Spain (13).

**11.** Debates about Euskara remain restricted to socio-cultural and political spheres, with no explicit policy recognition of its potential links with nature. Yet in an increasingly post-materialist society (14), relations between values about Euskara and nature must be better reflected in policy. This links the parallel movements for biological and linguistic diversity in a dynamic bond which highlights the interweaving of relations with and through language, culture and nature (2).

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- Urla, J. (2012). *Reclaiming Basque: Language, nation, and cultural activism*. University of Nevada Press.
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## Submission on Dagaare, Dagbani and Kusaal language

**Contributing authors: Adams Bodomo, Hasiyatu Abubakari, Samuel Isaah**

1. **Name of languages and/or dialects:** Dagaare, Dagbani and Kusaal <sup>1</sup>
2. **Linguistic stock or family:** Niger-Congo Language subgroup Mabia languages
3. **Number of speakers (if known):** Dagaare (2 million), Dagbane (900,000), and Kusaal (500, 000 in Ghana)
4. **Country/ geographic region (geographic coordinates):** Ghana, Burkina Faso and Togo
5. **Are you a native speaker?** Yes, all three authors are native speakers, one each for the three languages.
6. **Other relevant information on the language and or its speakers:**

The information below is taken from Bodomo et al. (2020:1).

The MABIA languages, numbering about 80, are spoken as first languages by more than 30 million people who live mostly in the Savanna grasslands of West Africa, the Middle Belt between the forest to the South and the Sahara Desert to the North in present-day northern Ghana, northern Cote d'Ivoire, northern Togo, northern Benin, northwest Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mali. The major Mabia languages include (the top-20 in order of number of speakers): Moore (nine million), Dagaare (two million), Senari (1.2 million), Gurene (one million), Gurma (one million), Dagbane (900 000), Kabye (900 000), Baatonun (800 000), Mamara (800 000), Lobi (600 000), Konkomba (600 000), Kusaal (500 000), Kasem (400 000), Supyire (400 000), Mampruli (300 000), Moba (300 000), Sisaala (300 000), Koromfe (250 000), Buamu (200 000), and Buli (200 000). The data used in this project come from three of these languages: Dagaare, Kusaal and Dagbani. The selection of these languages is due to the availability of data. The three contributors each speaks one language as their native language. The term Mabia is a compound word composed of the words *ma* 'mother' and *bia* 'child'. The figure below is taken from Bodomo (2020) to show the genetic classification of the various Mabia languages.

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<sup>1</sup> Speakers of Dagaare are referred to as the Dagaaba; speakers of Dagbani are called the Dagbamba, and speakers of Kusaal are the Kusaas.

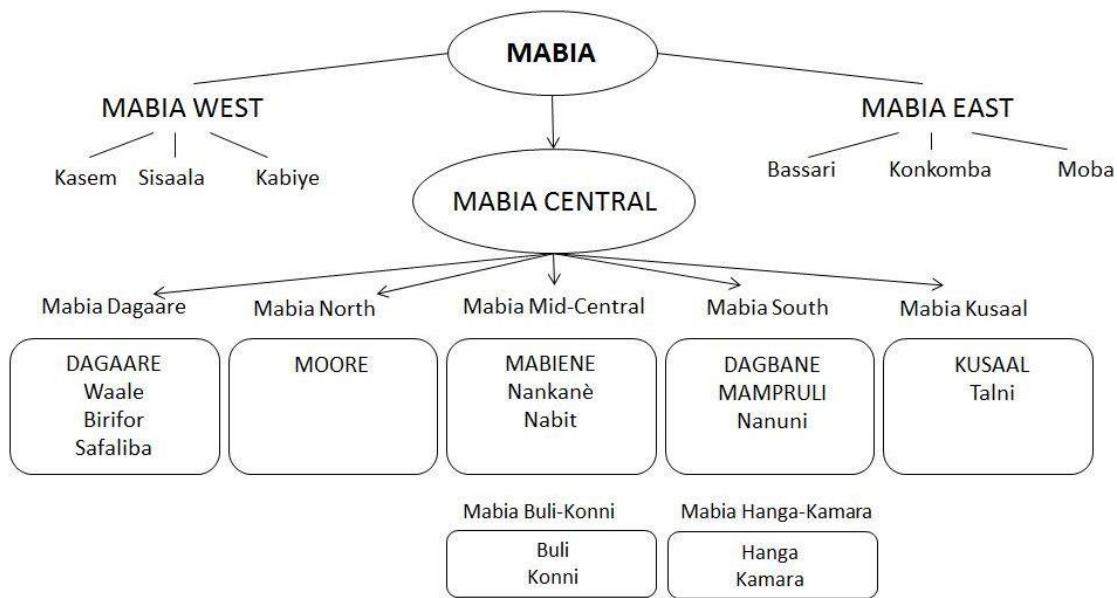


Figure 1. Mabia Languages (Bodomo 2020)

7. Key publications or references that you could suggest to the Values Assessment (VA) on this topic (academic, non-academic, could include videos, songs, artworks, etc.):

- Bodomo, Adams. & Luri, M. Dramani. (forthcoming). Linguistic and Cultural Notions of Environmental Conservation for the Promotion of Biodiversity: Evidence from Northwestern Ghana
- Bodomo, Adams, Abubakari, Hasiyatu & Issah, S. Alhassan (MS). Indigenous Methods of Environmental Conservation: Contributions from Mabia Linguistics and Literatures. University of Vienna, Austria.

8. Guiding questions (200 - 500 words per answer):

What role does the language play in forming/transmitting/changing (Mother Earth / biosphere / biodiversity / land / territory) values?

Language is a crucial vehicle for expressing notions of environmental protection/conservation and for packaging these as community values for current and future generations of the community where the language is spoken. Folk expressions are important in understanding how indigenous people conceptualize environmental conservation. These linguistic expressions and cultural notions, in various ways, point to some of the innate knowledge systems indicating how the people who speak these languages in their cultural circles think about the environment (the flora and fauna) around them. An understanding of this knowledge system or epistemology about environmental conservation could give insights into how these and other indigenous populations promote and sustain biodiversity.

Among the Kusaas, for instance, it is widely believed that aquatic habitats are children of the river, stream, lake or pond where they are found. Harming any aquatic life without performing the required ritual sacrifices will attract the anger and wrath of the ‘water spirit’ which is the mother. To this effect, aquatic life is well preserved and protected. Some water bodies have been identified as gods/shrines and require

some rituals and sacrifices performed to them occasionally. People pay total respect to their water bodies and ensure it is kept clean all the time. It is forbidden to poison water bodies. However, people are allowed to harvest fishes from these water bodies which is also used for domestic activities (Bodomo et al m.s)

Mabia languages transmit values relating to biodiversity and nature through folktales, proverbs, songs etc. The young generation gets to learn the names of animals in the eco-system through the various intangible cultural heritage of the language. Almost 60 to 70 percent of proverbs make reference to one animal or another, a tree, or other items in nature. Though some animals may be endangered, their names remain in the language and children get to learn or at least hear of them as illustrated in the following proverbs.

**Table 1.** Examples of proverbs

Akɔra ye, suogɔnlɔŋ pu kɔ'ɔgid nɔbire.	The <b>wolf</b> says, a long good road doesn't break the leg.
Nu'luyimir pu bɔbigid tɛ'ɛga.	One hand cannot encircle a <b>baobab tree</b> .
Gbanzaaug ye nif kanɛ nyɛ yɛl la mɔr o yɛl.	<b>Monitor-lizard</b> says eye that sees the problem should take its consequences.
Dindeog pu nyɛnɛ kata ka ye o zi' zuaa.	The <b>chameleon</b> is not chased and says he does not know how to run.
gumaanchuyu lu biligu ni, Naawuni m-mi o yaara.	The <b>chameleon</b> has fallen into a well, it is God who knows who will rescue it.

**At which extent the loss of your language could mean losing knowledge about biodiversity, ecosystems dynamics, processes, and / or products?**

Not all children who are born to speakers of the various Mabia languages learn the linguistic and cultural expressions as well as the traditional beliefs that are scientifically related to biodiversity. Some of these children who are raised in urban centres within and outside the Savannah regions of Ghana, are losing the language altogether, let alone understand these specific notions about environmental protection.

The knowledge of nature and the ecosystem is kept and transmitted from generation to generation through language. Losing the language means losing the knowledge associated to biodiversity and this could have serious repercussion on mother earth. The various taboos on felling trees, reverence to nature, and some animals, which are all transmitted through language, will all be lost and the sanctity accorded nature will also be lost. Speakers of Mabia languages

consider trees, water bodies, forests and valleys as deities. In the Kusaal customs and tradition, for instance, some trees are believed to have spirits and souls and cannot be felled without performing some ritual ceremonies e.g. the Dawadata tree ‘Pakia Biglobosa’ is considered as the ‘King of all trees’ (Bodomo et al m.s). The loss of these languages will come with the loss of these beliefs and nature will be under the mercy of people.

It is therefore proposed that at the primary and secondary school levels these languages in northern Ghana and their accompanying linguistic notions expressing environmental protection should be rigorously taught to students. At the tertiary level, interdisciplinary undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Linguistic Diversity and Biodiversity must be established so that scholars of Linguistics, Anthropology, and Biology, among others, can work together to develop research for the promotion of environmental protection in northern Ghana and other parts of Africa.

**Can you give a couple examples of concepts expressed in the language which you speak or study, that may convey distinct worldviews and values expressed in human-biodiversity interconnections?**

We indicate notions of linguistic and cultural expressions that go to show how the speakers of the Dagaare language tackle environmental conservation. These are taken from Bodomo and Luri (forthcoming).

1.

Bà    bà    màrá    gàà-dáá    vùù  
2PL   NEG   V-IMP   ebony-stick   fire  
“It is a taboo to set fire with ebony wood”

Ebony is an important economic and traditional tree among the Dagaaba. Its fruit serves as food and when a person dies on the ground, an important mortuary ritual is necessary to process the body for laying it in state and later burying it, and this involves the ebony tree. The Dagaaba use its stick to lift the body up before touching it. To stop people from cutting this important tree, it is forbidden to use it as firewood.

2.

èng            dɔ̀rè            gbò  
Put-IMP    dawadawa    ban  
“Ban the harvest of dawadawa”

3.

Bε    bi    ŋmaari    ti-wala  
3PL   NEG   cut            tree fruit  
“They do not fell a tree that bears fruits”

It is also interesting to note in the data in (4), for Dagbani, that trees are so much protected among the Dagbamba that it is even wrong to uproot a tree and plant another in place of the uprooted. We interpret this saying to mean that only planting of trees is encouraged, but never the uprooting.

4.

Bε bi sibigiri tia ka sari tia  
 3PL NEG uproot tree CONJ plant tree  
 “They do not uproot a tree and plant another one”

Dawadawa is a kind of tree, which, like the ebony, has a lot of economic uses among speakers of Mabia languages. People are always eager to harvest its fruits even when they are not yet ripe. Therefore, to prevent people from harvesting these fruits prematurely, the elders of the community place a ban on its harvest till some time. This is celebrated by the people of Jirapa as Bongo festival. It is, however, a common cultural practice throughout in the entire Dagaare-speaking area.

To protect trees surrounding the living environment, they are metaphoricalized and personified among speakers of the various Mabia languages to announce the death of chiefs, landlords and family heads. The data in (5) illustrate the ways all three languages equate the death of a dignitary to a ‘big tree’ that has fallen.

5.

a. A yíri tékpòng lèè là Dagaare  
 DET house tree-big V-PERF FOC  
 “The big tree of the house has fallen”

b. Ti’kpiɛŋ lu-ya Dagbani  
 Tree-strong fall-PERF  
 “A mighty tree has fallen”

c. Titita’da liya Kusaal  
 tree-big fall.PERF  
 “A mighty tree has fallen”

These types of analogies prevent people from cutting trees around houses indiscriminately. This is considered to be an indigenous method of afforestation.

Dagaaba have a particular day known as bad day, or actually ‘bad market-day’ since the traditional Dagaare week comprises identification of days based on the particular days specific villages hold their markets. People in the Dagaaba communities are forbidden to work on such a day, be it farm work or other traditional duties. This is done to protect the environment. This day is also known as ‘Ta-ko-daa’, as mentioned in (6) below.

6.

Dà-fáá  
Day-bad  
"Bad day"

People rest, retreat, reflect and plan for the next week. It is a kind of traditional Sabbath day. This allows flora and fauna to regenerate and recover from continuous destruction and depletion.

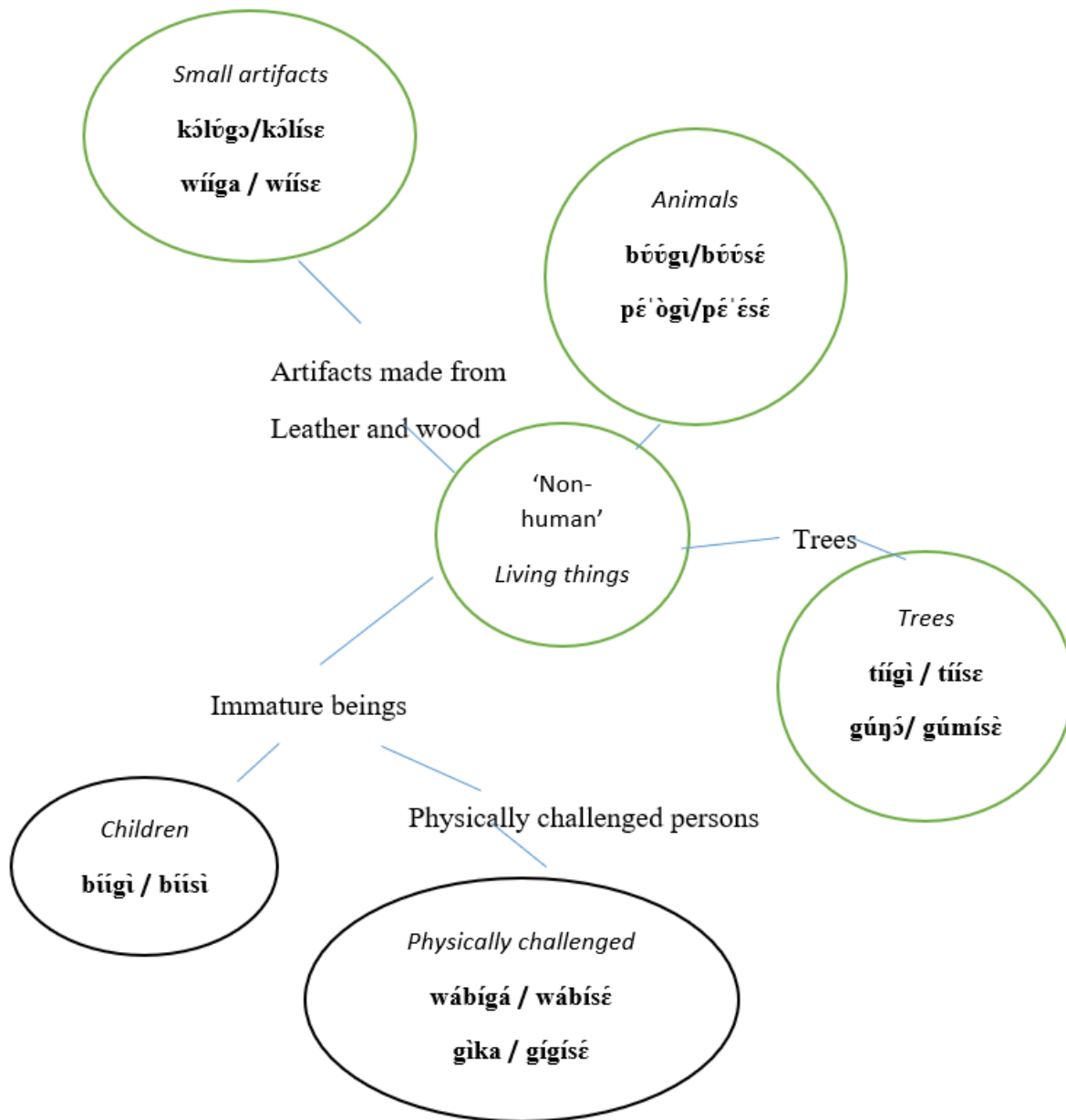
*Daga-bogi/bogi sulee* is a kind of grave that Dagaaba dig to bury dead bodies. One of this kind of grave takes uncountable number of corpses continuously, and it lasts for thousands of years. Dagaaba always dig this kind of grave to prevent wasting the land by digging graves for every corpse. The digging of graves requires clearing of land where flora and fauna are destroyed.

7.

Dàgàbògí/bògísùlèè  
Daga-hole  
"Dagaaba grave"

Evidence of the important values of biodiversity is observed in the nominal classification of Kusaal. Class 2 is a class of 'Non-human' living things. This class is the second highest after the human class. Membership include trees, and animals. Abubakari (forthcoming) argues that "trees are sources of food and also believed to possess protective powers (both medicinal and spiritual). The Kusaas, until the advent of Islam and Christianity, worshiped trees, river bodies and other deities. Trees are accorded great respect and it is a taboo to fell trees indiscriminately. Similarly, whilst some animals are sources of food and livelihood, others are objects of worship and by extension protection, for example the frog".





**Figure 2.** Semantic Network: 'Non-human' living things (Abubakari forthcoming)

Among the Dagbamba of Northern Ghana, there are pieces of evidence to show the important values they attach to biodiversity. Some of these are discussed below.

In the first place, it is not allowed for economic trees to be destroyed without a form of monetary compensation among the Dagbamba, even when it is in the context of putting up a house. Trees such as shea nut and dawadawa trees as conceived as economic trees among the Dagbamba. And in the course of building when these trees are on a piece of land, the one to put up the house is expected to see the owner of the tree (usually the landowner) and make some payment before the one can fell such a tree. This is assumed as a compensation for the income that the owner of the trees will be getting from the trees that are to be destroyed. In fact, the sheanut tree is so

much protected that it is forbidden to even cut its leaves for animals (goats and sheep) during their domestication period. Although the rearing of livestock is based on the free-range system, during the rainy season, goats and sheep are caged to ensure that they do not destroy the crops of other people. Owners will have to look for feed for them and there is a rule that outlaws the cutting of shea trees for animals during this season, born out of its economic value.

In addition, there is usually a group of trees, which are associated with the gods within every community and it is strictly forbidden to go and fetch firewood around this area. The myth of Spiritism that is built around the area instils some fear into community members to get around there to destroy trees. This is indeed, meant to ensure that there is some preservation of nature. To make forbidden nature of fetching firewood near the shrine more relevant, there is a proverb among the Dagbamba that captures this fact that firewood is not fetched from the shrine, which is in (6)

(6)

Be bi kabiri dari buguli ni  
They NEG break firewood shrine inside  
'They do not fetch firewood from the shrine'

Furthermore, the ebony tree is of great value among the Dagbamba. It is a source of food and has economic value as children sell the fruits as well. Because of this, the people have created some values around this tree to protect it. There are two of such known among the Dagbamba. First, it is said that the ebony tree has some dwarfs (evil spirits on it) and for that matter it is forbidden to fell it since an individual does so to his/her destruction. Closely connected to this is that it is forbidden to cook in homes with firewood from the ebony tree. The above mentioned are values designed to ensure the protection of this tree; that is of economic value for the people.

**To which extent the erosion of languages might be connected to the erosion of values of biodiversity? Can you give a specific example evidenced in the language's list of words or vocabulary and/or grammar?**

If people cannot speak their language they would lose these important notions of environmental conservation as indicted in section 1.3. Another example is when people talk of preserving bird and plant types. Yes, we may or may not be able to preserve these flora and fauna items but how do we talk of these types of birds and plants if we don't even know what they are called? Conservation should be about preserving both form and functionality. If we preserve a plant we should also be able to preserve what people use it for. Medicinal plants that are preserved without knowing what they are used for end up being a practice of dysfunctional preservation. Knowledge of language and culture is necessary for the promotion of meaningful conservation!

Additionally, the total loss of interest in the intangible cultural heritage of speakers of these languages is a major aspect and an indication of a serious threat which can lead to the loss of knowledge that are connected to biodiversity and the languages in general. The cultural beliefs of speakers of these languages are stored and traced in folktales, proverbs, riddles, music etc.

Unfortunately, these forms are giving way to foreign forms of entertainments such as video/computer games, telenovelas, movies etc. As indicated above, the names of many flora and fauna are learnt by the younger generation through proverbs and folktales since most of these animals are gradually getting distinct. The loss of these forms (folktales) means the loss of both cultural and scientific knowledge of the creatures in the ecosystem.

**What are the processes that are leading to the maintenance or vitality of this language?**

There has been growing interest in research on these languages which has resulted in several academic publications mostly concentrated on Language, Linguistics and Literatures. The University of Education Winneba also has a department dedicated to the teaching and awarding of degrees for the study of these indigenous languages. What has not received massive attention is studies on these languages in relation to biodiversity.

In addition, there is a conscious strive by speakers of the language to speak their L1 which they are proud of and see as their identity. This explains why people who are unable to speak their mother tongue are generally looked down upon in the speech community. The ability to speak one's mother tongue is therefore seen as a mark of self-consciousness and identity.

**Are there efforts undertaken to protect, ensure intergenerational transmission or revitalize this language? Please explain.**

As shown in the references above, one cannot boast of vigorous attempt in both academic and non-academic publications on language and biodiversity. The two studies that are currently known are:

- Bodomo, Adams. & Luri, M. Dramani. (forthcoming). Linguistic and Cultural Notions of Environmental Conservation for the Promotion of Biodiversity: Evidence from Northwestern Ghana
- Bodomo, Adams, Abubakari, Hasiyatu & Issah, S. Alhassan (MS). Indigenous Methods of Environmental Conservation through Mabia Linguistics and Literatures. University of Vienna, Austria.

**What policies exist (if any) in your country/region aimed at valuing and protecting languages and the communities that speak them?**

The educational policy in Ghana requires that children in the lower primary, nursery to class 3 are taught in their local languages and from upper primary, class 4 upwards, the local language becomes a subject and English language is used as the medium of instruction, at the moment, only about 5 Mabia languages have benefitted from this policy whilst same has not been implemented for other languages e.g. Kusaal. The children in Kusaal speaking communities are forced to learn other languages instead of their own. Without the necessary intervention, this could be a recipe for lack of interest in the language by the young generation as they may think their language is less important hence the need for them to learn other languages.

## **What policies could or should be developed towards the valuing, protection and revitalization of indigenous and local languages?**

In this present day and time, people should not be forced to learn languages other than their own in schools, especially, against their will. People should be made to cherish their languages and not feel some languages are superior over others. The cultivation of total confidence in expressing of views and opinions in national issues using indigenous languages is one sure way of having the younger generation develop interest in speaking and advancing their Indigenous languages. We should not wait for languages to near death before drafting policies to revitalize them etc. We should as a matter of urgency:

- (1) Introduce all indigenous languages in schools in the communities where they are spoken, and provide funding for the preparation of teaching and learning materials for them. These languages should be examinable which will make pupils attach more seriousness to studying them.
- (2) All activities at the legislative, judicial and executive arms of government should place premium at using indigenous languages. Legislators should be allowed to use their local languages in parliament with the aid of translators. Local people will feel proud of their indigenous languages for that high recognition and would love to associate more with them (the languages).
- (3) Entertainment packages should also be crafted using local languages. There is urgent need for the revitalization of [dying intangible cultural heritage of indigenous languages] - rephrase which are fast being replaced with European concepts in most African countries e.g. Ghana.

## **9. References**

- Abubakari, Hasiyatu. (forthcoming). Noun Class System of Kusaal. *Studies in African Linguistics*.
- Bodomo, A. (2020). Mabilia: its etymological genesis, geographical spread, and some salient genetic features. In Adams Bodomo, Hasiyatu, Abubakari and Samuel, A. Issah. (eds.), *Handbook of the Mabilia Languages of West Africa*. Galda Verla.
- Bodomo, A., Abubakari, H., and Issah, A. S. (2020). *Handbook of the Mabilia Languages of West Africa*. Galda Verla.

## Submission on Evenki and Even languages

**Contributing author: Alexandra Lavrillier**

1. **Name of language and/or dialect:** EVENKI, eastern dialects (51 dialects) and EVEN (12 dialects)
2. **Linguistic stock or family:** MANCHU-TUNGUS (called “Tungus” in the past), Altaic family
3. **Number of speakers (if known):** approx. 7-10 thousand for the two languages (recognized endangered by UNESCO)
4. **Country/ geographic region (geographic coordinates):** Russia, Siberia (all regions), Northern Mongolia and China.
5. **Are you a native speaker?** Yes (both languages)
6. **Other relevant information on the language and or its speakers:**
7. **Key publications or references that you could suggest to the Values Assessment (VA) on this topic (academic, non-academic, could include videos, songs, artworks, etc.):**
  - Bulatova, N., and L. Grenoble. 1999. *Evenki*. München: Lincom Europa (Languages of the world materials 140).
  - Grenoble, L. A. 2003. *Language Policy in the Former Soviet Union*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press.
  - Lavrillier 2005a      Dialectes et norme écrite en évenk contemporain [French: Dialects and written norm in contemporary Évenk language], in M.M.J. Fernandez-Vest (dir.), *Les langues ouraliennes aujourd'hui. Approches linguistiques et cognitives*, Paris, Honoré Champion (éd.), coll. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, p. 433-446. [I can send the pdf]
  - Lavrillier 2013      Anthropology and applied anthropology in Siberia: Questions and solutions concerning a nomadic school among Evenk reindeer herders in E. Kasten and T.de Graaf (eds) *Sustaining Indigenous Knowledge: Learning tools and Community Initiatives for Preserving Endangered Languages and Local Cultural Heritage* – Kulturstiftung Siberien SEC Publication, pp. 105-127. [online]
  - Lavrillier A. and S. Gabyshev, 2017, *An Arctic Indigenous Knowledge System of Landscape, Climate, and Human interactions. Evenki Reindeer Herders and Hunters*, [Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, Kulturstiftung Sibirien](#), Fürstenberg/Havel, Germany 467p. [online]
  - Lavrillier A. and S. Gabyshev, 2018 *An Emic Science of Climate: a Reindeer Evenki Environmental Knowledge and the Notion of an Extreme Process*, in A. Lavrillier, A. Dumont, D. Brandisauskas (eds)

*Human-environment relationships in Siberia and Northeast China: Skills, Rituals, Mobility and Politics among the Tungus Peoples*, EMSCAT, 49 URL:<http://journals.openedition.org/emscat/3280>

- Lavrillier A and D. Matic, 2013 *Even tales of Dar'ia Mikhailovna Osenina - Dar'ja Mikhajlovna Osenina nimkarni – Evenskie nimkany Dar'i Mikhajlovna Osenina*, Kulturstiftung Sibirien, Fürstenberg, Germany, 160 p.
- Varlamov A., K. Galina, and A. Lavrillier. 2020. Electronic Devices for Safeguarding Indigenous Languages and Cultures (Eastern Siberia). In Timo Koivurova, Else Grete Broderstad, Dorothée Cambou, Dalee Dorough, and Florian Stammer (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic*, London and NY: Routledge, pp. 58-75.
- **Film:** 2016 [\*Indigenous Evenki analysis of the snow cover in the Siberian taiga\*](#), 12 mn. Documentation du manteau neigeux.
- **CD** traditional songs and booklet in English with translations and explanations about the role and place of music and songs [strong relation to the natural environment]: Lavrillier A. and H. Lecompte 2002 *Évenks : Chants rituels des nomades de la taïga*, [French: Evenk. Ritual songs of the nomads of the taiga. Presentation text of the CD 3015792 and translation of the songs], Paris, Buda Records [28 plages + 35 p. [Musique du Monde, Sibérie 8]. (Recording: A. Lavrillier and H. Lecomte)

#### **8. Guiding questions (200 - 500 words per answer):**

**What role does the language play in forming/transmitting/changing (Mother Earth / biosphere / biodiversity / land / territory) values?**

Evenki and Even languages are the repositories of knowledge about the natural environment (i.e. classifications of its elements), also of the knowledge system: concepts about the functioning of the natural environment, perception of the many relationships between elements of the environment (including humans), and the many rules/ code of behaviours to respect a good balance in the environment-humans relationships and the respect to animals and plants.

**At which extent the loss of your language could mean losing knowledge about biodiversity, ecosystems dynamics, processes, and / or products?**

Loosing language means the loss of 50-80% of the knowledge of nature and its functioning, and attached values. In the middle stage before the complete loss of language I could notice some youth talking in Russian while when talking about nature they used the Evenki or Even wordings. Most of these vernacular words are not or very difficulty translatable.

**Can you give a couple examples of concepts expressed in the language which you speak or study, that may convey distinct worldviews and values expressed in human-biodiversity interconnections?**

The book we wrote with Evenki reindeer herders (Lavrillier and Gabyshev 2017) referenced here above is full of such examples. I can quote also the perception of the environment “buga” which is in the same time, the biophysical natural environment, including humans, the spirits inhabiting it. It is said to intentionally manage the environment by for instance provoking forest fires for its regeneration, or

stopping to give to some persons luck at hunting because they did not share hunting products or killed too many animals. The rule “Buga buneven ekel mulane” (i.e. “Always share what Buga gives to you!”) expresses the compulsory rule to share what Nature offers (an equivalent of the “ecosystem services” (“Buga buneven”). Furthermore, it expresses the idea (that is present among many Indigenous peoples in the world) that the natural environment belongs to everyone, and must be collectively managed, protected and shared. This phrasing is also a ritual rule, since Evenki and Even believe that if not sharing the product from Nature, the natural environment will stop giving services to humans. Buga is at the same time, the biophysical environment and the spirits inhabiting it; Buga is seen also as a spiritual entity governing the entire natural environment

**To which extent the erosion of languages might be connected to the erosion of values of biodiversity? Can you give a specific example evidenced in the language’s list of words or vocabulary and/or grammar?**

The erosion of languages can cause the erosion of values of biodiversity since it is the repository of knowledge and rules of good behaviours (sustainable uses of the environment, rules of seasonal hunting while leaving to each species the chance to survive or to breed, etc). Language as the recipient of the classifications of fauna and flora “transports through generations” also the knowledge about each taxon and specie (life cycle, menus, classification, property, interactions with other elements of the environment, etc).

**What are the processes that are leading to the loss of this language?**

The decrease of people leading a nomadic way of life in the forest (partly due to the impressive increase of extractive industries in the nomadic lands): In villages and towns most of the Evenki or Even terms related to the natural environment has no interest/application, and the Evenki/Even lack vernacular terms to designate the elements of settled ways of life. They don’t have commissions, like among the Inuit of Canada, to create and impose the use of new vernacular terms. The artificial creation of a standard Evenki and Even language leads youth to switch to Russian, because their parents do not understand the standard Evenki language (e.g. they are speakers of local dialects), so they cannot help them at school. Youth cannot know neither the dialect neither the standard language. Also, the only 1 h/week non compulsory teaching of Evenki/Even language in school does not help to pertain Evenki (be it dialects or standard language).

**What are the processes that are leading to the maintenance or vitality of this language?**

Maintaining a nomadic life (reindeer herding and hunting), the link between elders and youth, applied scientific projects based on community-driven initiatives, making higher the status of language and support from governments (governmental measures are the most effective, cf. the example of Kallalissut among Inuit of Greenland or Yakut in Yakutia) (see Varlamov et al 2020).

**Are there efforts undertaken to protect, ensure intergenerational transmission or revitalize this language? Please explain.**

We wrote recently a paper in English with Evenki scholars on that topic I can send you. Undertaken efforts are few. In contrast, the school teaching of native language is declining, there is a lack of school books, e-learning devices, initiatives come from scientists and Indigenous communities. Both lack funding and support for their initiatives – especially Indigenous communities (see Varlamov et al 2020).

**What policies exist (if any) in your country/region aimed at valuing and protecting languages and the communities that speak them?**

See above. There are laws, governmental texts and official conferences and symposium, but they are not implemented or efficient for the village peoples. With the cost of one conference, one could fund the development of one/two e-learning tool or linguistic documentation publication. Situations varies a lot from one region to another of eastern Siberia, and highly depends on the municipal policies/measures, if not the local schools initiatives. The most effective initiatives are those of local Indigenous peoples (like modern songs in Evenki or Even, whatsapp chat and so far, e-learning tools) and Government (reinforcing the daily uses of the language) (see Varlamov et al 2020).

**What policies could or should be developed towards the valuing, protection and revitalization of indigenous and local languages?**

See above. Also a better support (including funding) to documentation of language is necessary (there are a lot to be done, most Siberian cultures environmental knowledge were not enough, if not at all documented – because it is extremely long, requires fieldworks among nomads, also because a good knowledge of the local dialect is necessary, as well as a good knowledge of nomadic life and knowledge, a good contact and trust with nomads). Language must be better valued by the governments. A much better support must be given to the local Indigenous initiatives with or without scientists, and to projects that directly involved youth. Nowadays the calls for proposals for linguistic documentation and revitalization are very few and insufficient, and mostly not accessible to Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation due to 1. the lack of knowledge of English, and 2. the sanctions against Russia (cf. Ukrainian conflict). An exception of these Western sanctions could be done for the Indigenous community projects, so they could benefit from Western help for cultural/linguistic purposes (see Varlamov et al 2020).



## Submission on Iskonawa language

**Contributing author: Carolina Rodríguez Alzza**

- 1. Name of language and/or dialect:** Iskonawa
- 2. Linguistic stock or family:** Pano
- 3. Number of speakers (if known):** La lengua iskonawa posee una comunidad de hablantes que difícilmente se ha podido definir a través de un número. Por ello, en lugar de ofrecer un número exacto aquí, brindaremos algunos datos sobre la tipología de hablantes según generacionales. Existen 5 ancianos que son considerados los últimos hablantes fluidos de la lengua. Ellos aprendieron el iskonawa como su lengua materna. Estos ancianos son sobrevivientes de un grupo mayor que sostuvo contacto con la sociedad Occidental, que tiene como un hito histórico el año 1959 en el que los iskonawa se encontraron con los misioneros de la South America Mission. Sus descendientes se calculan en alrededor de 100 personas. Todos ellos, quienes conforman la segunda y tercera generación del pueblo iskonawa, han nacido y crecido en comunidades junto al pueblo Shipibo-konibo y aprendieron su lengua en un panorama de discriminación lingüística frente a la lengua iskonawa. Sin embargo, en los últimos años, ellos forman parte de una iniciativa para retomar su lengua reconociéndose como hablantes de herencia. Una primera evidencia de ello está en los resultados del Censo Nacional del 2017, en el que 22 personas se reconocieron como hablantes de la lengua iskonawa. La cuarta generación del pueblo iskonawa está conformada por niños y jóvenes que han aprendido la lengua shipibo-konibo, pero que han crecido en un contexto en el que el pueblo está volviendo a reconocer la relevancia de darle continuidad a la lengua iskonawa como un importante legado cultural.

*The Iskonawa language has a community of speakers that could hardly be defined by a number. Therefore, instead of offering an exact number here, we will provide some data on the typology of speakers according to generational groups. There are 5 elders who are considered the last fluent speakers of the language. They learned Iskonawa as their mother tongue. These elders are survivors of a larger group that maintained contact with Western society, which has as a historical milestone the year 1959 in which the Iskonawa met the missionaries of the South America Mission. His descendants are estimated at around 100 people. All of them, who make up the second and third generation of the Iskonawa people, were born and raised in communities together with the Shipibo-Konibo people and learned their language in a context of linguistic discrimination against the Iskonawa language. However, in recent years, they are part of an initiative to retake their language by recognizing themselves as heritage speakers. A first evidence of this is in the results of the 2017 National Census, in which 22 people recognized themselves as speakers of the Iskonawa language. The fourth generation of the Iskonawa people is made up of children and young people who have learned the Shipibo-Konibo language, but who have grown up in a context in which the people are once again recognizing the relevance of continuing the Iskonawa language as an important cultural legacy.*

- 4. Country/ geographic region (geographic coordinates):** Perú, Ucayali.

Los iskonawa viven principalmente en dos Comunidades nativas:

Comunidad Nativa Callería (74°33'24" 8°4'19.6")

Comunidad Nativa Chachibai (74°28'12.1" 8°2'17")

También algunos iskonawa viven en las ciudades al interior del Ucayali: Pucallpa y Yarinacocha

*The Iskonawa live mainly in two native communities:*

*Native Community Callería (74°33'24" 8°4'19.6")*

*Native Community Chachibai (74°28'12.1" 8°2'17")*

*Also, some iskonawa live in the cities, within Ucayali: Pucallpa and Yarinacocha*

**5. Are you a native speaker?**

No. Trabajo junto a los iskonawa desde el año 2013.

*No. I work along with the Iskonawa since the year 2013.*

**6. Other relevant information on the language and or its speakers:**

El estado de vulnerabilidad en el que se encuentra la lengua iskonawa es consecuencia de diferentes procesos sociales e históricos que enfrenta su población. Entre ellos, el contacto con la sociedad Occidental ha significado para los iskonawa diversos episodios de violencia, los cuales han impactado en su demografía y así también en el número de sus hablantes. Otro proceso, que tuvo lugar luego de su contacto, es su participación en una misma área con los shipibo-konibo, otro grupo indígena predominante numérica, cultural y lingüísticamente. Los iskonawa convivieron en un ambiente de alta discriminación lingüística y cultural, por lo que asimilarse a los shipibo-konibo fue una estrategia de sobrevivencia.

*The state of vulnerability in which the Iskonawa language finds itself is a consequence of different social and historical processes faced by its population. Among them, contact with Western society has meant various episodes of violence for the Iskonawa, which have impacted on their demographics and thus also on the number of their speakers. Another process, which took place after their contact, is their participation in the same area with the Shipibo-Konibo, another predominant indigenous group numerically, culturally and linguistically. The Iskonawa lived in an environment of high linguistic and cultural discrimination, so assimilating to the Shipibo-Konibo was a survival strategy.*

**7. Key publications or references that you could suggest to the Values Assessment (VA) on this topic (academic, non-academic, could include videos, songs, artworks, etc.):**

- Mazzotti, José Antonio; Zariquiey, Roberto; Rodríguez Alza, Carolina (2018). Tradición oral iskonawa. Boston: Revista de Crítica Literaria.
- Rodríguez Alza, Carolina (org.) (2020). Los diseños de nuestra memoria. Registro y continuidad de los diseños de los Iskonawa del río Callería. Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

- Zariquiey, Roberto (2017). Vocabulario iskonawa-castellano. Boston: Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana.

#### 8. Guiding questions (200 - 500 words per answer):

##### **What role does the language play in forming/transmitting/changing (Mother Earth / biosphere / biodiversity / land / territory) values?**

La lengua iskonawa sin duda posee una serie de valores relevantes sobre su territorio. No obstante, no reconocemos en la actualidad que estos valores estén sintetizados en algún término clave como se conoce para otras poblaciones indígenas de la región. Esto podría deberse a la vulnerabilidad del contexto donde crecieron y se desarrollan las generaciones que hoy componen el pueblo iskonawa. Este contexto está caracterizado por periodos de violencia, situaciones de contacto, migración e influencia de otro pueblo indígena predominante. Los ancianos que hoy son importantes referentes culturales para todo el pueblo iskonawa crecieron en este contexto. Durante mis trabajos de campo junto a los iskonawa desde el 2013, no he logrado identificar una categoría o concepto que condense dichos valores. No obstante, sí se reconoce que la lengua juega un rol importante en el reconocimiento del territorio y que este está habitado en familia. Estos dos aspectos internos al pueblo iskonawa han repercutido también en su actual situación, en la que se encuentran lejos de tu territorio ancestral y sus familiares dispersos sin posibilidad clara de reencuentros temporales.

*The Iskonawa language undoubtedly has a series of relevant values about its territory. However, we do not currently recognize that these values are synthesized in any key term as it is known for other indigenous populations in the region. This could be due to the vulnerability of the context in which the generations that today make up the Iskonawa people, grew up and developed. This context is characterized by periods of violence, contact situations, migration and the influence of other predominant Indigenous Peoples. The elders who today are important cultural references for the entire Iskonawa people grew up in this context. During my fieldwork with the Iskonawa since 2013, I have not been able to identify a category or concept that encapsulates these values. However, it is recognized that the language plays an important role in the recognition of the territory and that it is inhabited as a family. These two internal aspects of the Iskonawa people have also had an impact on their current situation, in which they are far from their ancestral territory and their dispersed relatives with no clear possibility of temporary reunions.*

##### **At which extent the loss of your language could mean losing knowledge about biodiversity, ecosystems dynamics, processes, and / or products?**

La lengua iskonawa reúne conocimientos sobre la biodiversidad de un área interfluvial entre las cabeceras de los ríos Utuquinía y Abujao que habitó este pueblo indígena hasta alrededor de 1959. Después de ello, debido al contacto con la sociedad occidental, los iskonawa se desplazaron hacia un área ribereña en el río Callería, un afluente directo del gran río Ucayali. Estos cambios geográficos han tenido impactos sociales, culturales y lingüísticos. De ese modo, la lengua de los iskonawa continúa albergando el conocimiento sobre la biodiversidad de su territorio ancestral, pero encuentra dificultades para operativizar esos conocimientos en su uso cotidiano de la lengua, ya que su actual hábitat posee otras características. Asimismo, en los 60 años de convivencia en este nuevo territorio con otro pueblo indígena, los shipibo-konibo, los iskonawa han aprendido sobre la biodiversidad ribereña a través de la lengua

shipibo. Cuando existen denominadores en común entre las zonas interfluvial y ribereña, los términos léxicos para nombrar los ecosistemas en iskonawa y en shipibo se han superpuesto. Sin embargo, los iskonawa suelen emplear más comúnmente los términos en shipibo por varias razones: (i) les permite la comunicación con sus corresidentes shipibo, (ii) los ancianos tienen dificultades ya para recordar los términos en iskonawa debido a su uso más fluido del shipibo, (iii) los adultos y jóvenes iskonawa solo conocen o prefieren usar los términos en shipibo. Así, el debilitamiento o pérdida de la lengua iskonawa no significa una pérdida del conocimiento de la biodiversidad amazónica, pero sí la transformación de estos conocimientos que ahora se vinculan a un ámbito ribereño y a una nueva lengua.

*The Iskonawa language gathers knowledge about the biodiversity of an interfluvial area between the headwaters of the Utuquinía and Abujao rivers that inhabited this indigenous people until around 1959. After that, due to contact with Western society, the Iskonawa moved towards an area riverside in the Callería river, a direct affluent of the great Ucayali river. These geographical changes have had social, cultural and linguistic impacts. In this way, the Iskonawa language continues to house knowledge about the biodiversity of their ancestral territory, but finds it difficult to operationalize this knowledge in their daily use of the language, since their current habitat has other characteristics. Likewise, in the 60 years of coexistence in this new territory with other Indigenous Communities, the Shipibo-Konibo, the Iskonawa have learned about riverine biodiversity through the Shipibo language. When there are common denominators between the interfluvial and riparian zones, the lexical terms for naming ecosystems in Iskonawa and Shipibo have overlapped. However, the Iskonawa tend to use Shipibo terms more commonly for several reasons: (i) it allows them to communicate with their fellow Shipibo residents, (ii) the elders already have difficulty remembering Iskonawa terms due to their more fluent use of Shipibo, (iii) Iskonawa adults and youth only know or prefer to use Shipibo terms. Thus, the weakening or loss of the Iskonawa language does not mean a loss of knowledge of Amazonian biodiversity, but rather the transformation of this knowledge, which is now linked to a riverine environment and a new language.*

**To which extent the erosion of languages might be connected to the erosion of values of biodiversity? Can you give a specific example evidenced in the language's list of words or vocabulary and/or grammar?**

Los sistemas lingüísticos condensan los conocimientos que poseen las poblaciones sobre su entorno. En ese sentido, la erosión de una lengua está directamente vinculada con la erosión de los valores de la biodiversidad que poseen los pueblos. Los iskonawa poseen un conjunto de conocimientos sobre la biodiversidad propia del área interfluvial amazónica. Sin embargo, sus valores sobre la biodiversidad se han visto afectados por la migración a un nuevo territorio ribereño y su relacionamiento con los Shipibo-Konibo -un grupo indígena predominante social, lingüística y culturalmente-. En este nuevo contexto, los ancianos iskonawa han dejado de tener presente los valores sobre la biodiversidad interfluvial propia de su territorio ancestral en el uso de la lengua cotidiana. Esto de cara a que el nuevo territorio presentaba otras características y era necesario el aprendizaje de nuevos términos para describirlo. Una de sus repercusiones ha sido la fragilización de los procesos de transmisión intergeneracional, dado que los adultos y jóvenes dejaron de aprender el iskonawa y aprendieron shipibo-konibo en el nuevo territorio, y con esta lengua también los valores de la biodiversidad para este otro pueblo. De ese modo, se ha perdido el uso del vocabulario de accidentes geográficos como las cascadas (repeinti), características en el antiguo territorio iskonawa. También, se han venido perdiendo claridad sobre los términos sobre variedad de especies vegetales (aton 'lupuna roja', epe isan 'sinamilla', bokon 'irapay') con las que se elaboraban importantes artefactos de la cultura iskonawa como las cestas. En otros casos, se han superpuesto los

términos en lengua shipibo shipibo-konibo a los de la lengua iskonawa, siendo el caso que los iskonawa recuerdan más rápidamente los términos en la lengua shipibo-konibo para referirse al achiote (SK: maxe / ISK: ete bimi) o el huito (SK: nane / ISK: chehe bimi)

*Linguistic systems condense the knowledge that populations have about their environment. In this sense, the erosion of a language is directly linked to the erosion of the biodiversity values that people possess. The Iskonawa have a body of knowledge about the biodiversity of the Amazonian interfluvial area. However, their biodiversity values have been affected by the migration to a new riverine territory and their relationship with the Shipibo-Konibo - a socially, linguistically and culturally predominant indigenous group. In this new context, the Iskonawa elders have stopped bearing in mind the values of interfluvial biodiversity typical of their ancestral territory in the use of everyday language. This in view of the fact that the new territory had other characteristics and it was necessary to learn new terms to describe it. One of its repercussions has been the weakening of the processes of intergenerational transmission, since adults and young people stopped learning Iskonawa and learned Shipibo-Konibo in the new territory, and with this language also the values of biodiversity for these other people. In this way, the use of the vocabulary of landforms such as waterfalls (repeinti), characteristic of the ancient Iskonawa territory, has been lost. Also, clarity has been lost on the terms on a variety of plant species (aton 'lupuna roja', epe isan 'sinamilla', bokon 'irapay') with which important artifacts of the Iskonawa culture such as baskets were made. In other cases, the terms in the Shipibo-Konibo language have been superimposed on those of the Iskonawa language, being the case that the Iskonawa remember the terms in the Shipibo-Konibo language more quickly to refer to achiote (SK: maxe / ISK: ete bimi) or huito (SK: nane / ISK: chehe bimi).*

### **What are the processes that are leading to the loss of this language?**

El primer proceso que identificamos como uno de los que han conducido fuertemente al debilitamiento de la lengua iskonawa es el contacto con la sociedad nacional peruana. Los iskonawa han sostenido una serie de contactos con foráneos en su territorio entre los ríos Utuquinía y Abujao (cerca de la frontera entre Ucayali-Perú y Acre-Brasil). Los últimos contactos que presenciaron los ancianos iskonawa, quienes en ese tiempo eran muy jóvenes, fueron con una serie de foráneos a quienes denominan brashicos. Este término requiere tomarse con mucho cuidado para no asumir únicamente que alude a personas que provendrían del Brasil y para más bien considerarlo como una posición de alteridad extrema fuera de los alcances de la frontera social iskonawa (véase Rodríguez Alza 2017:102-108, 123-129). Estos brashicos son para los iskonawa, principalmente, personas que invadían su territorio para extraer madera. Cuando los iskonawa se encontraban con ellos en el bosque, los madereros tuvieron actitudes sumamente violentas y acabaron con la vida de muchos iskonawa, principalmente hombres. Asimismo, los iskonawa comenzaron a experimentar una serie de enfermedades antes desconocidas, por las que muchas personas fallecieron. Así, los iskonawa comenzaron a desplazarse más rápidamente en el territorio donde antiguamente vivían, desarrollando una dinámica que he denominado "vivir huyendo" (Rodríguez Alza 2017). Como resultado de estos contactos, de acuerdo con los iskonawa, ellos se fueron acabando, es decir que la población sufrió una disminución demográfica.

Otro proceso sumamente importante para comprender el estado de la lengua iskonawa en su interacción con la lengua shipibo-konibo. En 1959, los iskonawa sostuvieron contacto con misioneros evangélicos y se desplazaron de su territorio hasta asentarse en el río Callería para convivir con el pueblo shipibo-konibo. En esta área de contacto lingüístico, los iskonawa fueron posicionados desventajosamente frente

a los shipibo, debido a que se les consideró un grupo indígena que vivía hace muy poco en una situación de “aislamiento” y se estigmatizaron sus prácticas culturales (alimenticias, principalmente) señalándolas de “salvajes”. La lengua iskonawa indexó así todos estos valores negativos que el pueblo shipibo-konibo puso sobre los iskonawa. Por ello, los iskonawa no encontraron mejor estrategia de adaptación a su nuevo territorio que aprender la lengua de los shipibo-konibo. Mientras que los ancianos fueron aprendiendo shipibo para comunicarse con sus corresidentes sin dejar de lado el iskonawa, sus descendientes fueron centrándose en aprender únicamente shipibo para dejar atrás el estigma sobre la lengua iskonawa. El aprendizaje de la lengua shipibo que experimentaron los descendientes ha sido también mediado por instituciones formales como la escuela que cuenta con docentes shipibo y cursos que son sobre la lengua y los valores de dicho pueblo. De tal modo, aunque a partir de la segunda mitad del siglo XX la demografía iskonawa fue nuevamente incrementándose, el número de hablantes sufrió una experiencia compleja en un contexto de diglosia lingüística entre las lenguas iskonawa y shipibo-konibo.

*The first process that we identify as one of those that has strongly led to the weakening of the Iskonawa language is contact with the Peruvian national society. The Iskonawa have had a series of contacts with foreigners in their territory between the Utuquinía and Abujao rivers (near the Ucayali-Peru and Acre-Brazil border). The last contacts that the Iskonawa elders witnessed, who were very young at that time, were with a series of outsiders whom they call brashicos. This term needs to be taken with great care not to assume only that it refers to people who come from Brazil and rather to consider it as a position of extreme otherness outside the reaches of the Iskonawa social border (see Rodríguez Alza 2017: 102-108, 123 -129). These brashicos are for the Iskonawa, mainly, people who invaded their territory to extract wood. When the Iskonawa met them in the forest, the loggers were extremely violent and took the lives of many Iskonawa, mainly men. In addition, the Iskonawa began to experience a series of previously unknown illnesses, from which many people died. Thus, the Iskonawa began to move more rapidly in the territory where they formerly lived, developing a dynamic that I have called “living on the run” (Rodríguez Alza 2017). As a result of these contacts, according to the Iskonawa, they were ending, that is, the population suffered a demographic decline.*

*Another extremely important process to understand the state of the Iskonawa language in its interaction with the Shipibo-Konibo language. In 1959, the Iskonawa maintained contact with evangelical missionaries and moved from their territory to settle on the Callería River to live with the Shipibo-Konibo people. In this area of linguistic contact, the Iskonawa were positioned at a disadvantage compared to the Shipibo, because they were considered an indigenous group that lived very recently in a situation of “isolation” and their cultural practices (mainly food) were stigmatized by pointing to them of “savages”. The Iskonawa language thus indexed all these negative values that the Shipibo-Konibo people placed on the Iskonawa. For this reason, the Iskonawa found no better strategy to adapt to their new territory than to learn the language of the Shipibo-Konibo. While the elders were learning Shipibo to communicate with their co-residents without leaving Iskonawa aside, their descendants were focusing on learning only Shipibo to leave behind the stigma on the Iskonawa language. The learning of the Shipibo language that the descendants experienced has also been mediated by formal institutions such as the school that has Shipibo teachers and courses that are about the language and the values of said people. In this way, although from the second half of the 20th century the Iskonawa demography was increasing again, the number of speakers suffered a complex experience in a context of linguistic diglossia between the Iskonawa and Shipibo-Konibo languages.*

**Are there efforts undertaken to protect, ensure intergenerational transmission or revitalize this language?  
Please explain.**

Existen diferentes esfuerzos para la protección de la lengua iskonawa que ha desarrollado el pueblo en alianza con varios investigadores e instituciones:

Entre los años 2013-2017, se desarrolló un proyecto de documentación de la lengua denominado "Documenting Isconahua (isc) in Peru: An Interdisciplinary Project", el cual contó con el financiamiento de la National Science Foundation y estuvo dirigido por José Antonio Mazzotti (Tufts University) y Roberto Zariquiey (PUCP). Durante el desarrollo del proyecto, los ancianos iskonawa tuvieron un rol fundamental por ser ellos los portadores y referentes de los conocimientos tradicionales, así como los hablantes más fluidos de la lengua. También participaron los adultos y jóvenes en las actividades de documentación: registro audiovisual, transcripción en lengua iskonawa y traducción al castellano. De ese modo, la participación de los diferentes miembros del pueblo iskonawa fue un espacio propicio para la transmisión intergeneracional de la lengua. A través de este proyecto, se conformó una colección de la lengua iskonawa que incluye historias de vida, cuentos, cantos y vocabulario. Esta colección está almacenada en el Archivo de Lenguas Indígenas de América Latina (AILLA) y el Archivo Digital de Lenguas Peruanas de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP). Asimismo, resultaron de este proyecto las siguientes publicaciones: Bosquejo gramatical de la lengua iskonawa (Zariquiey 2015), Vocabulario iskonawa-castellano (Zariquiey 2017) y Tradición oral iskonawa (Mazzotti, Zariquiey y Rodríguez Alzza 2018).

Varios miembros del pueblo iskonawa han cursado estudios superiores técnicos; sin embargo, tuvieron serias dificultades para culminarlos. Entre los estudios que han realizado destacan las áreas de salud y medio ambiente. A partir del año 2017, un grupo de jóvenes iskonawa ingresa a la Universidad Nacional Intercultural de la Amazonía (UNIA) a la carrera de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe Primaria. Esta universidad, ubicada en la ciudad amazónica de Pucallpa tiene una larga historia en favor del desarrollo educativo de los pueblos indígenas. Los jóvenes iskonawa comenzaron sus estudios con el objetivo de enlazar su desarrollo personal y profesional con el fortalecimiento de su pueblo. Así, están buscando no solo ser los primeros profesores de su pueblo, sino también generar un movimiento entre las generaciones más jóvenes del pueblo iskonawa para retomar y revitalizar su lengua y su cultura.

En el año 2017, el Ministerio de Educación del Perú convocó al pueblo iskonawa para el proceso de oficialización de un sistema de escritura para su lengua, en el marco de las acciones que el Estado peruano viene realizando junto a todos los pueblos indígenas del país. Fue así que las diferentes familias del pueblo iskonawa se reunieron en la ciudad de Pucallpa, capital de la región Ucayali, para participar de cuatro talleres. En los talleres, se discutieron aspectos de la historia del pueblo, la situación de vulnerabilidad de la lengua, las características sociolingüísticas del iskonawa, los rasgos sonoros de la lengua. Finalmente, se discutió sobre las grafías que debían formar parte del alfabeto oficial de la lengua iskonawa a través de diferentes ejercicios de escritura. Así se aprobó un alfabeto con 18 grafías que fue reconocido oficialmente por el Estado Peruano a través de la Resolución Ministerial N° 163-2018-MINEDU el 19 de abril del 2018.

En el año 2018, el Ministerio de Cultura del Perú le dio el reconocimiento de Persona Meritoria de la Cultura a Nawa Nika (Nelita Campos Rodríguez), una de las ancianas del pueblo iskona. De esa manera, se le reconoció por ser una destacada activista en el rescate, salvaguardia y promoción de la lengua y la cultura del pueblo Iskonawa.

Entre los años 2018-2020, se desarrolló un proyecto de registro y revitalización del arte tradicional iskonawa, el cual contó con el financiamiento de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú y estuvo dirigido por Carolina Rodríguez Alza (PUCP). Este proyecto de carácter colaborativo se gestó en la iniciativa del grupo de mujeres artesanas del pueblo iskonawa, quienes se propusieron registrar los diseños tradicionales y revitalizarlos en la actual producción de arte que realizan. Esto dio paso a una serie de encuentros intergeneracionales donde mujeres ancianas y mujeres jóvenes dialogaron sobre las técnicas, procesos y repertorio del arte tradicional. En todos ellos, la lengua fue un hilo conductor entre el saber de las ancianas y el hacer de las jóvenes, ya que conforme iban aprendiendo sobre los conocimientos en torno al arte, iban surgiendo una serie de términos de la lengua que no conocía antes. El conjunto de mujeres iskonawa constituyó la Asociación de Artesanas Iskonawa Pari Awín y a través de esta ha ido ganando un espacio visible en ferias de arte tradicional en el Perú. El libro “Los diseños de nuestra memoria. Registro y continuidad de los diseños de los Iskonawa del río Callería” (Rodríguez Alza org. 2020) reúne la experiencia del proyecto, el registro de diseños y la revitalización de estos conocimientos.

*There are different efforts for the protection of the Iskonawa language that the people have developed in alliance with various researchers and institutions:*

*Between 2013-2017, a language documentation project called “Documenting Isconahua (isc) in Peru: An Interdisciplinary Project” was developed, which was funded by the National Science Foundation and directed by José Antonio Mazzotti (Tufts University) and Roberto Zariquiey (PUCP). During the development of the project, the Iskonawa elders played a fundamental role as they were the bearers and referents of traditional knowledge, as well as the most fluent speakers of the language. Adults and youth also participated in documentation activities: audiovisual recording, Iskonawa language transcription and Spanish translation. In this way, the participation of the different members of the Iskonawa people was a propitious space for the intergenerational transmission of the language. Through this project, a collection of the Iskonawa language was created that includes life stories, tales, songs, and vocabulary. This collection is stored in the Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA) and the Digital Archive of Peruvian Languages of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP). Likewise, the following publications resulted from this project: Grammatical Sketch of the Iskonawa language (Zariquiey 2015), Iskonawa-Spanish vocabulary (Zariquiey 2017) and Iskonawa Oral Tradition (Mazzotti, Zariquiey and Rodríguez Alza 2018).*

*Several members of the Iskonawa people have received higher technical studies; however, they had serious difficulties in completing them. Among the studies they have carried out, the areas of health and the environment stand out. As of 2017, a group of Iskonawa young people entered the National Intercultural University of the Amazon (UNIA) to the Primary Intercultural Bilingual Education career. This university, located in the Amazonian city of Pucallpa, has a long history in favor of the educational development of indigenous peoples. The young Iskonawa began their studies with the aim of linking their personal and professional development with the strengthening of their people. Thus, you are seeking not only to be the first teachers of your people, but also to generate a movement among the younger generations of the Iskonawa people to retake and revitalize their language and culture.*

*In 2017, the Ministry of Education of Peru summoned the Iskonawa people for the process of formalizing a writing system for their language, within the framework of the actions that the Peruvian State has been*



*carrying out together with all the indigenous peoples of the country. It was indeed that the different families of the Iskonawa people met in the city of Pucallpa, capital of the Ucayali region, to participate in four workshops. In the workshops, aspects of the history of the town, the vulnerable situation of the language, the sociolinguistic characteristics of Iskonawa, the sonorous features of the language were discussed. Finally, the spellings that should be part of the official alphabet of the Iskonawa language were discussed through different writing exercises. Thus, an alphabet with 18 spellings was approved, which was officially recognized by the Peruvian State through Ministerial Resolution No. 163-2018-MINEDU on April 19, 2018.*

*In 2018, the Ministry of Culture of Peru recognized Nawa Nika (Nelita Campos Rodriguez), one of the old women of the Iskona people, as a Meritorious Person of Culture. In this way, she was recognized for being an outstanding activist in the rescue, safeguarding and promotion of the language and culture of the Iskonawa people.*

*Between the years 2018-2020, a project for the registration and revitalization of traditional Iskonawa art was developed, which was funded by the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru and was led by Carolina Rodríguez Alzza (PUCP). This collaborative project was conceived at the initiative of the group of artisan women from the Iskonawa people, who set out to register traditional designs and revitalize them in the current art production they carry out. This led to a series of intergenerational encounters where older women and young women discussed the techniques, processes, and repertoire of traditional art. In all of them, the language was a common thread between the knowledge of the old women and the actions of the young, since as they learned about the knowledge around art, a series of terms of the language that they did not know before emerged. The group of Iskonawa women constituted the Iskonawa Pari Awin Association of Artisans and through this it has gained a visible space in traditional art fairs in Peru. The book "The designs of our memory. Registration and continuity of the designs of the Iskonawa of the Callería River" (Rodríguez Alzza org. 2020) brings together the experience of the project, the registration of designs and the revitalization of this knowledge.*

**What policies exist (if any) in your country/region aimed at valuing and protecting languages and the communities that speak them?**

La Constitución del Perú reconoce la oficialidad de las lenguas indígenas. Sin embargo, el inicio de las políticas destinadas al reconocimiento de las lenguas indígenas y los derechos lingüísticos de sus hablantes nos remite al 27 de mayo de 1975. En esta fecha, el presidente Juan Velasco Alvarado promulgó la ley N° 21156 declarando la oficialidad del Quechua en el marco de muchos cambios políticos y sociales que dieron lugar al reconocimiento de los derechos de la población campesina y nativa. A partir de entonces, se han presentado nuevas leyes que abordan la cuestión lingüística en el Perú hasta finalmente llegar a la ley N° 29735 "Ley que regula el uso, preservación, desarrollo, recuperación, fomento y difusión de las lenguas originarias del Perú" promulgada en el 2011. Seguido a ello, en el 2017, se aprobó la Política Nacional de Lenguas Originarias, Tradición oral e Interculturalidad

Esta ley constituye el marco legal vigente que reconoce y ofrece las garantías para los derechos individuales y colectivos de los hablantes de lenguas indígenas en el país. De ese modo, se reconoce que las lenguas indígenas son oficiales, al igual que el castellano, en aquellas zonas donde predominen y se explica que dicha "oficialidad" se refiere a que el Estado debe garantizar su implementación en la esfera

pública e institucional, es decir que sus servicios deben ser brindado con pertinencia lingüística. Para ello, se propone la conformación de un Mapa Etnolingüístico que fue aprobado en el 2018 dotando al Estado de información cualitativa y cuantitativa sobre las lenguas y sus hablantes, de modo que facilite la planificación de acciones a nivel nacional y regional. Además, desde el 2012, se ha avanzado en la formación de intérpretes y traductores de lenguas indígenas a través de cursos anuales con la finalidad de contar con personas capacitadas que faciliten y garanticen el diálogo entre el Estado y los ciudadanos hablantes de una lengua indígena. Asimismo, desde el 2018, se ha avanzado en la certificación de competencia de servidores públicos bilingües.

Esta ley también ha dispuesto el marco normativo para promover el estudio y documentación de las lenguas indígenas en el Perú. Si bien estas investigaciones lingüísticas ya se vienen realizando desde las universidades y en alianza con organizaciones internacionales, el marco normativo actual ha puesto en marcha proyectos de documentación de lenguas en serio peligro de extinción desde el Ministerio de Cultura. Un ejemplo de ellos son los proyectos de documentación de las lenguas Taushiro.

*The Constitution of Peru recognizes the officiality of indigenous languages. However, the beginning of the policies aimed at the recognition of indigenous languages and the linguistic rights of their speakers refers us to May 27, 1975. On this date, President Juan Velasco Alvarado promulgated Law No. 21156 declaring the official status of the Quechua in the framework of many political and social changes that gave rise to the recognition of the rights of the peasant and native population. Since then, new laws have been presented that address the linguistic issue in Peru until finally reaching Law No. 29735 "Law that regulates the use, preservation, development, recovery, promotion and dissemination of the original languages of Peru" promulgated in 2011. Following this, in 2017, the National Policy on Native Languages, Oral Tradition and Interculturality was approved*

*This law constitutes the current legal framework that recognizes and offers guarantees for the individual and collective rights of speakers of indigenous languages in the country. In this way, it is recognized that indigenous languages are official, like Spanish, in those areas where they predominate, and it is explained that that "officiality" refers to the fact that the State must guarantee their implementation in the public and institutional sphere, which means that their services must be provided with linguistic relevance. For this, the creation of an Ethnolinguistic Map that was approved in 2018 is proposed, providing the State with qualitative and quantitative information on languages and their speakers, in order to facilitate the planning of actions at the national and regional level. In addition, since 2012, progress has been made in the training of interpreters and translators of indigenous languages through annual courses in order to have trained people who facilitate and guarantee dialogue between the State and citizens who speak an indigenous language. Also, since 2018, progress has been made in certifying the competence of bilingual public servants.*

*This law has also established the regulatory framework to promote the study and documentation of indigenous languages in Peru. Although these linguistic investigations have already been carried out by universities and in alliance with international organizations, the current regulatory framework has launched projects to document languages in serious danger of extinction from the Ministry of Culture. An example of these are the documentation projects of the Taushiro languages.*

## **What policies could or should be developed towards the valuing, protection and revitalization of indigenous and local languages?**

Se deberían desarrollar políticas que promuevan el apoyo de los Estados a los pueblos indígenas para que sean ellos mismos quienes realicen acciones para valorar, proteger y revitalizar. Esto es de vital importancia dado que muchas veces los Estados organizan acciones nuevas dirigidas jerárquicamente hacia las poblaciones, sin conocer de las iniciativas que las poblaciones ya vienen realizando. Este apoyo debería de ser del tipo logístico, financiero e institucional. En tal sentido, sería importante que el Estado peruano reconozca institucionalmente las iniciativas que ya están siendo ejecutadas por pueblos indígenas a nivel local en sus propias comunidades a través del trabajo voluntario de sus miembros a lo largo del tiempo. Asimismo, debería brindar apoyo logístico para que estas iniciativas puedan articularse con las agendas de los organismos estatales y gocen así de su asistencia. Finalmente, tendría que dotar de financiamiento para que estas iniciativas locales puedan repotenciarse y se pueda asegurar su continuidad.

*Policies that promote state support for indigenous peoples should be developed, so that they themselves can take actions to value, protect and revitalize. This is of vital importance given that many times the States organize new actions directed hierarchically towards the populations, without knowing about the initiatives that the populations have already been carrying out. This support should be of the logistical, financial and institutional type. In this sense, it would be important for the Peruvian State to institutionally recognize the initiatives that are already being carried out by indigenous peoples at the local level in their own communities through the voluntary work of its members over time. Likewise, it should provide logistical support so that these initiatives can be articulated with the agendas of state agencies and thus enjoy their assistance. Finally, it would have to provide financing so that these local initiatives can be re-powered and their continuity can be ensured.*

## Submission on Kuikuro language

### Contributing author: Bruna Franchetto

1. **Name of language and/or dialect:** Kuikuro, one of the varieties (dialect) of the Upper Xingu Carib Language
2. **Linguistic stock or family:** Carib family
3. **Number of speakers (if known):** 600
4. **Country/ geographic region (geographic coordinates):** Brazil/Latitude -12.35; Longitude -53.21
5. **Are you a native speaker?** No
6. **Other relevant information on the language and or its speakers:**

Kuikuro is the name by which one of the dialects of the Upper Xingu Carib Language, Xinguan Southern Branch of the Carib family, is known (Meira and Franchetto 2005; Meira 2006). It is spoken by approximately 600 people, distributed in six villages in the region known as “upper Xingu”, in the headwaters of the Xingu river, Southern Amazonia, Brazil. They inhabit the southeast of the Xingu Indigenous Land (TIX), between the Culuene and the Buriti rivers, where they have lived since at least the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Archaeological, linguistic and ethnological research all point to the upper Rio Buriti region as the homeland of the Kuikuro’s ancestors. This region was occupied by Carib groups who had travelled from the west of the Rio Culuene, possibly in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The denomination ‘Kuikuro’ derives from the toponym for the place where, in the middle of the 18th century, the first Kuikuro village (*Kuhi ikugu*, ‘Needle Fish Creek’) was erected as the residence of a recognized autonomous member of the Upper Xingu system. Upper Xingu Carib dialects – spoken by Kuikuro, Kalapalo, Naukua and Matipu local groups - are distinguished mainly by different prosodic structures (Silva and Franchetto 2011). The speakers of these varieties are part of the Upper Xingu Carib sub-system, which is, in turn, tied to the multilingual and multiethnic regional system known as the Upper Xingu, characterized also by common ritual practices, domestic life, material culture production and world view. This comprises the drainage basin of the headwaters of the Xingu River, itself one of the largest southern tributaries of the Amazon. Thanks to the collaborative work of archaeologists, linguists and anthropologists (Franchetto and Heckenberger 2001; Fausto et al 2008; Franchetto 2011), we are beginning to understand the historical origins of this regional system. We can now confidently claim that this system was formed in the last four hundred years, incorporating people from different origins, in a continuous and dynamic process. Speakers of languages belonging to the three major linguistic groupings in South America (Arawak, Carib and Tupi) and one linguistic isolate (Trumai) created a unique social system that remains functional today. Kuikuro should be considered a stable, albeit vulnerable, language/variety. All the members of Kuikuro communities speak the Kuikuro dialect/language. Linguistic endogamy is prevalent: marriages with Kuikuro or members of other Upper Xingu Carib Language speakers are preferred. Non-kuikuro individuals married with Kuikuro and living in a Kuikuro community continue to speak her/his original language,

although they understand Kuikuro (passive bi or even multilingualism). A 'stranger' cannot speak Kuikuro and this is the norm in all the Upper Xingu communities.

**7. Key publications or references that you could suggest to the Values Assessment (VA) on this topic (academic, non-academic, could include videos, songs, artworks, etc.):**

- <http://nupeli-gela.weebly.com/liacutenguas-karib-do-alto-xingu.html>
- <http://nupeli-gela.weebly.com/kuikuro-bibliografia.html>
- Pennywise Foundation Amazon Hopes Collective
- <https://www.pennywisefoundation.org/amazon-hopes-collective.html>
- The Xingu Firewall: A Story Map
  - <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d13c50b64ada4e53856b3d4d64a08bcb>
- <https://dobes.mpi.nl/projects/kuikuro/?lang=pt>
  - PROJECT STATISTICS
    - *Sessions: 113*
    - *Audio recordings: 99*
    - *Video recordings: 18*
    - *Annotations: 41*
    - *Images: 30*
- It is possible to watch several videos in Kuikuro language, mostly subtitled, on the web, all made by the Kuikuro video-makers (Coletivo Kuikuro de Cinema). Just some of them:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8l7fFluFcPo>
  - <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/kideneacademiakuikuro>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08Ft52v53k4>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pb8QAjmiLOU>
  - <https://ayalaboratorio.com/2018/08/17/as-hiper-mulheres/>
  - <https://ayalaboratorio.com/2018/08/17/as-hiper-mulheres/>

**8. Guiding questions (200 - 500 words per answer):**

**What role does the language play in forming/transmitting/changing (Mother Earth / biosphere / biodiversity / land / territory) values?**

The Kuikuro language/dialect is still spoken by all Kuikuro, it is still the first language for all, it is still the most important mean for conveying, transmit from one generation to the next one and preserve cultural crucial values, oral history and an impressively rich and complex knowledge of the environment and biodiversity. The Kuikuro lexicon contains hundreds of terms for fish and birds and about 50 terms for mammals. In addition, it is necessary to mention more than 10 terms for varieties of native bees, dozens of terms for reptiles, amphibians, spiders and insects. Other than human living beings are classified into the following native categories (hyperonyms): *kanga* (fish), *hikutaha* (freshwater turtles), *tolo* (birds), *ngene* (mammals), *gogi-gogi* (bees), *okõ* (wasps), *aguta* (lizards), *eke* (snakes), *akügü* (small insects), *hototo* (butterflies), and other smaller categories. Each non-human living being, including plants, is defined with its associations to mythical narratives, with its micro-environments, its use and possible food consumption, restrictions of use and consumption for certain categories of humans, cosmological and social values and meanings.

**At which extent the loss of your language could mean losing knowledge about biodiversity, ecosystems dynamics, processes, and / or products?**

The loss of any language means the loss of knowledge. Considering what was mentioned in the previous item, the impoverishment of the lexicon leads to the loss of terms and all the knowledge and values associated with them. This is happening in the younger generations, whose contact with the older ones weakens, the chain of transmission of knowledge is broken. Younger people are more and more exposed to what is passed through the media and in the school, where the Portuguese language prevails as well as non-native knowledge that clash with traditional one.

**Can you give a couple examples of concepts expressed in the language which you speak or study, that may convey distinct worldviews and values expressed in human-biodiversity interconnections?**

Ex. 1: Each tree has its own *oto* (master), the *in oto*, an *itseke* (spirit, hyper-being). Some big and valued trees are *tüngonginhü*: they are powerful *itseke* and dangerous, can cause illness and even death for those who do not approach them with due care. These trees are always drawn together with their *oto*. Before cutting any tree, it is necessary to ask permission from the *oto* using chanted traditional spells. The wood of *tüngonginhü* trees is used to make seats of chiefs and posts of the *tajühe* (the large house of the main chief), the effigies that represent outstanding dead in the intertribal kuarup ritual, and other culturally significant artifacts.

Ex. 2: Bitter manioc (*kuigi*, generic/general name in Kuikuro, *Manihot esculenta* ranz) is the main source of food and the main item of the Kuikuro dietary system. 24 varieties, at least, of wild manioc are known and named in Kuikuro language, like, among them:

*tihagi tuhi*: manioc garden of the stingray (fam. *Potamotrygonidae*)

*uagiti*: manioc garden of the fish matrighã

*agapisu*: manioc garden of the fish *Hoplias*, *Erythrinus* sp.

*eginkgo*: fish “little pacu”

The denominations above are connected to the main mythical narrative on the origin of manioc, the primordial manioc was brought, from the deep water of lakes, by a human married to a woman of the Fish-People. Other manioc varieties are named from names of birds and mammals, as shown by the examples below:

*agaka*: type of parrot

*agatü*: bird Rusty-margined Guanjacupemba (*Penelope superciliaris*)

*ijali hutisü*: tapir’s leg

connection with historical memories, the first contact with Trumai people, an indigenous group who joined the Upper Xingu at least 200 years ago.

Some denominations are connected to historical memories, the first contacts with Agahütü (Yawalapiti) and Trumai people, two other local groups of the Upper Xingu.

*tugumai tuhi*: Trumai’s manioc garden.

*agahütü hutisü*: leg of Agahütü people (old Yawalapiti)

### **To which extent the erosion of languages might be connected to the erosion of values of biodiversity?**

See itens 8.2 and 8.3, above.

### **Can you give a specific example evidenced in the language’s list of words or vocabulary and/or grammar?**

Young people, increasingly disconnected from the knowledge of generations above them, no longer know how to identify hyponymes of native categories of animals and plants, with each term Young people, increasingly disconnected from the knowledge of generations above them, no longer know how to identify hyponymes of native categories of animals and plants and all the knowledge and values associated with each of them. Young people are also losing knowledge of historic and prehistoric sites as well as the many terms that identify micro-environments associated with animals and plants. Another type of knowledge that is extremely valuable and highly threatened with disappearance concerns the names and identification of many plants used in traditional medicine.

### **What are the processes that are leading to the loss of this language?**

Its vulnerability is due to the unequal conflict between the Indigenous language and the dominant language (Portuguese), mainly in schooling, and due to the growing presence of written media and television, to the increasing mobility of individuals and families between villages and towns, and to prolonged stays in town. Another extremely relevant and ambiguous factor related to the preservation or weakening of the Indigenous language is contact with missionaries, which has become increasingly intense. We know that the most vulnerable to Covid-19 are the elderly, women and men, the guardians of the most conservative variety of the language, as well as, above all, knowledge, memories and verbal

arts. There are formal registers and styles in different verbal arts, poetics and genres; differences in the speech of older and younger generations. Television has a high impact on the every day life and on the changes in culture (loss of transmission of traditional knowledge). Formal registers and styles in different verbal arts, poetics and genres are among the most threatened knowledge.

### **What are the processes that are leading to the maintenance or vitality of this language?**

All the members of Kuikuro communities speak Kuikuro. Non-kuikuro individuals married with Kuikuro and living in a Kuikuro community continue to speak her/his original language, although they understand Kuikuro (passive bi or even multilingualism). A 'stranger' cannot speak Kuikuro and this is the norm in all the Upper Xingu communities. There are formal registers and styles in different verbal arts, poetics and genres; differences in the speech of older and younger generations.

The stability of the indigenous language derives from the protection of the Kuikuro territory over the last fifty years, the gradual and late start of formal schooling in the last twenty years, and a linguistic and cultural heritage that is highly valued, both internally and externally, since the Kuikuro are part of the Upper Xingu region, which has been constructed as a Brazilian national icon of "Indianness".

Every language changes in time. Old Kuikuro (above 50) speak an internal generational linguistic variety distinct from the one spoken by younger generation (under 50/40). A more subtle internal diversity is shown by allomorphy of some functional morphemes (ex. some personal proclitics), as well as by the phonological shape of some words (for example, the loss of velar nasal consonant in intervocalic position and the spreading of vowel nasalisation). The "mixed" variety spoken by the youngest has already included many lexical borrowings and some grammatical elements from Portuguese. The percentage of bilingual Kuikuro in their language and in Portuguese grows rapidly. Today, they are more than a half of the entire population, mostly men. Only very old people, approximately 30% of women and children up to 10 years old can be considered still monolingual in Kuikuro. Changes are inevitable and show the surviving vitality of the language, but we cannot predict the extent to which these changes and the increasing exposure and use of Portuguese will not interfere with the very survival of the language, in the future, we hope, not so soon. The Kuikuro language, like many other indigenous languages, is used in social networks (facebook, twitter, etc.), and this is another factor of linguistic maintenance.

### **Are there efforts undertaken to protect, ensure intergenerational transmission or revitalize this language? Please explain.**

A practical orthography has been developed since the end of the 90<sup>th</sup>'s and didactic and para-didactic printed material in Kuikuro has been developed. Children are exposed to the written form in the villages schools and they are developing literacy in schools. Kuikuro is still the teaching-learning language, even when Portuguese is taught. Portuguese used to be taught as a second language; recently Kuikuro teachers began to teach at the same time Portuguese and Kuikuro or even only Portuguese. There is some pressure from parents in favour of the exclusive teaching of Portuguese at school ("we must learn Portuguese in order to defend ourselves, to understand White people, etc....we already know our language, we don't need to study it at school...").



Kuikuro is not used in public administration, but a bilingual formal agreement between the Kuikuro Association and the Brazilian federal government for language/culture documentation (digital archives at the Museu do Índio, FUNAI, Rio de Janeiro) was published and, as far as I know, it is the second and last case of an indigenous language use in federal public administration. A comprehensive grammar and an encyclopedic dictionary are ready to be published and used in indigenous schools. A corpus of hundreds of sessions is in the web, DOBES ([www.mpi.nl/dobes](http://www.mpi.nl/dobes)) as a result of a Documentation Project (2001-2006); a complementary corpus, archived at the Museu do Índio (FUNAI, Rio de Janeiro) and in Ipatse village, is constantly fed and actualized. Since 2001, no less than 50% of the Kuikuro at the Ipatse village participate actively in collaborative projects of language/culture documentation and research, with indigenous researchers and consultants, as well as skilled video makers. Projects of this kind are also present in the Ahukugi village, even if with less intensity and continuity.

In communications through local radios, besides Portuguese, all the Upper Xingu languages and other indigenous languages are heard and used. In national, regional radio, only Portuguese. In contrast, initiatives which seek to strengthen the Indigenous language have been put into effect by researchers (linguists and anthropologists) in participative projects for documentation, including the production of videos via the training of Indigenous film-makers, publications and the supervision of Indigenous researchers. This process needs to continue in order to effectively safeguard the Indigenous language. The production of videos in the indigenous language grows, in quantity and quality, thanks to collaborative documentation projects and the training and creativity of Kuikuro filmmakers.

**What policies exist (if any) in your country/region aimed at valuing and protecting languages and the communities that speak them?**

In Brazil, there is no explicit and articulated governmental policy. In the late 1990s, a national policy for indigenous school education began to be developed, developed slowly and in stages in the first decade of this century, with some incentives for the use of indigenous languages in village schools, beginning with the process of literacy. Unfortunately, much of what has been defined in laws and other administrative measures has not left paper and official rhetoric and has not reached indigenous schools, with a few exceptions. The publication of teaching materials in the indigenous language has grown somewhat, much less than necessary, and has progressively declined over the past ten years. There is no literature in the indigenous language. There are no media in the indigenous language (radio or television programs). The principle of national security, inherited from the military dictatorship, still prevents the use of these languages in the official media. Much of the successful positive initiatives are due to the efforts of non-governmental organizations and indigenous communities themselves. Indigenous protagonism and activism, in fact, are increasingly relevant and effective.

The emergence of several specific undergraduate courses for indigenous teachers and affirmative policies implemented by graduate and undergraduate programs, in different Brazilian public universities, are positive points. These programs and courses aim to guarantee the presence of native languages, even if still with many limitations.

**What policies could or should be developed towards the valuing, protection and revitalization of indigenous and local languages?**

- The teaching of indigenous languages in urban schools, in small towns close to indigenous areas and in large urban centers. The teaching of these languages in universities, from undergraduate to graduate courses. Little has been done to reduce or eliminate prejudice and misinformation about indigenous peoples' languages, cultures and ways of life.
- production and publication, made available to indigenous communities and schools, of competent and good quality written materials for literacy and on the different fields of traditional knowledge.
- Incentives for the production of documentaries and films in indigenous languages.
- Creation of radio and television media in indigenous languages.
- Greater support for indigenous and non-indigenous researchers involved or interested to document and study these languages.
- Creation of indigenous languages documentation centers in villages and in the cities, especially in those closest to indigenous communities.
- Publication of research results and materials for the general public to make widely available and reasonably accessible information on indigenous languages (almost 160 native languages are still spoken, in varying degrees of vitality, in Brazil, diversity and heritage unknown outside the circles of specialists).