

# Langscape

*Unity in Biocultural Diversity*

Biocultural Diversity  
'On the Map' at the  
World Conservation  
Congress





## Table of Contents

Letter from the Director	3
IUCN World Conservation Congress	5
Terralingua Projects:	
Eco-Cultural Health in the Sierra Tarahumara	
Part 1 - Restoration of the Health of the Landscape	7
ILD: Index of Linguistic Diversity	8
VITEK: Vitality Index of Environmental Knowledge	9
Global Source Book on Biocultural Diversity	10
Support Terralingua	4
Recent Activities and Publications	11
Terralingua Members Forum	12
Terralingua Membership	14

Langscape is Terralingua's quarterly newsletter

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To receive our quarterly newsletter email: [membership@terralingua.org](mailto:membership@terralingua.org)

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To learn more about Terralingua please visit our website at: [www.terralingua.org](http://www.terralingua.org)

## Letter from the Director

Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada, September 2008

Dear Members and Friends of Terralingua,

As you might have surmised from the cover page, this edition of Langscape is mostly devoted to Terralingua's participation in the upcoming World Conservation Congress (WCC), which will take place in Barcelona, Spain, from 5-14 October. We're busy with final preparations before departure!

The WCC--the world's largest congregation of conservationists organized by the International Union for the Conservation of nature (IUCN), which happens once every four years--will have special significance for us this year. The idea and practice of biocultural diversity will be up front during the congress. An entire "Biocultural Diversity Journey", linking all bioculturally-oriented events, will be one of the main cross-cutting themes during the congress forum--the first week of congress activities, organized by IUCN member organizations (both governmental and non-governmental, as well as international agencies). As you will read in the interview with the director in the following pages, it took about 20 years from the time that the links between biological and cultural diversity began to be discussed, to the present time when biocultural diversity is about to be showcased prominently in a venue of this nature, where its policy implications will be highlighted.

We feel proud of the contribution that Terralingua's work over the past decade has given to raising awareness and understanding of the concept of biocultural diversity and its applications, and to promoting its mainstreaming. We also feel deeply grateful that one visionary charitable foundation, The Christensen Fund (TCF), has embraced this idea and has been working tirelessly to both support the stewards of biocultural diversity--the world's indigenous peoples and local communities--and to inject the biocultural approach into policy and institutional practice at the international level. The Biocultural Diversity Journey is generously sponsored by TCF.

With TCF support, Terralingua is organizing several events at the WCC. You will find details in this newsletter, along with links to IUCN web pages for further information. In a nutshell, we'll have an opportunity to showcase all of our current projects (described further in the following pages). The Eco-cultural Health in the Sierra Tarahumara project will be discussed in a "knowledge café", and the Cultural indicators project will be the object of a workshop. And we will be celebrating the conclusion of our Global Source book on Biocultural Diversity project with the pre-publication launch of the resulting 300-page volume. Terralingua will also have a presence at the Biocultural Diversity booth in the exhibitions space, where people will have an opportunity to learn more about our work and our publications.

Just as importantly, Terralingua, as a IUCN member, will participate in the Members' Assembly activities during the second week of the congress. This is where issues of policy and implementation are discussed and agreed. The draft IUCN Program of Work for 2009-2012 already makes reference to issues of cultural diversity and its links to biodiversity. But it is necessary to translate these statements of principle into policies and guidelines for action. In this context, we are co-sponsoring three biocultural-related motions, or proposed resolutions for members' approval. The three motions are: "Integrating Culture and Cultural Diversity into IUCN's Policy and Programme"; "IUCN Adoption of Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples"; and "Recognition and Conservation of Sacred Natural Sites in Protected Areas".



We will be on hand to help promote these motions and foster their approval, which would have direct implications for the work of IUCN, as well as of the many organizations and institutions worldwide that look to IUCN for guidance.

In our hard work, we find daily encouragement in the support of our members and other friends. We are delighted to see that our new website (the work of our wonderful web designer and manager Ortixia Dilts) and new membership system (set up by our tireless administrative associate and woman of many other talents, Tania Aguila) have been attracting new members and friends, several of whom have started contributing to our newly established discussion fora, the Round Table on Biocultural diversity and the members-only forum. In the following pages, you will find excerpts from the discussion threads that are taking place in these spaces, which will give you the flavor of the world of possibilities you can have access to by participating in the Fora. Please do take the time to read the postings and contribute to them, or start a new thread of your own. Make these spaces ever more lively with discussions of all things biocultural!

As always, we are also greatly indebted to our members and friends for the financial support you can provide. This support is the bedrock of our operations, and we encourage you to do as much as you can to provide us with this lifeline. The cover letter to this issue of Langscape contains our twice-a-year appeal for donations (we won't bother you more often than that!). Please continue to donate as generously as you can! Please note that for donations of US \$100 or more, we'll be happy to send you a copy of my edited book *On Biocultural Diversity*--as long as supplies last.

In these pages, you'll also find out about a new, fun and educational way in which you can support Terralingua: through purchase of the "In a Word" greeting cards, part of whose sales will benefit Terralingua. These cards feature unique, essentially untranslatable words from a number of the world's languages, each of which conveys a wealth of meaning and the flavor of its culture. Several of these words are from endangered languages. Terralingua has been selected as the first non-profit organization to be supported by this venture. Thank you for considering this option!

In the next issue we'll report on the WCC outcomes, and we'll continue to keep you informed of Terralingua's projects and other activities. Please stay in touch with us, let us know what you think of our work, contribute to the discussion fora, and keep the exchange of ideas flowing!

All best,

Luisa Maffi, Ph.D., Director

# SUPPORT TERRALINGUA!

As a non-profit organization, we rely on public support to operate and to carry out our projects. Our funding comes from grants from foundations and other agencies, contracts for services to other organizations, and, most importantly, individual donors.

The contributions of individual donors like you are the solid foundation on which our operations rest. By sending us your donations, you show that you believe in Terralingua's mission to sustain biocultural diversity in this rapidly changing world, and want to support our work as much as possible.

To make a secure on-line donation,  
please visit [www.terralingua.org](http://www.terralingua.org).

Thank you for your  
generous  
support!

ON BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

*Linking language, knowledge, and the environment*

*Special Offer*

As long as supplies last!  
For donations of US \$100 or  
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classic book

*On Biocultural Diversity:  
Linking Language, Knowledge,  
and the Environment,*  
edited by Luisa Maffi

(Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001,  
544 pp.).

Just include your postal address  
with your donation!

Terralingua

Terralingua is a registered charity in the USA. We will acknowledge all donations.  
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## Biocultural Diversity “On the Map” at the World Conservation Congress



The office is filled with excitement these last few days before the World Conservation Congress. There are book launch materials to get together, power point presentations waiting for slides from the UK, and the night shift is still emailing notes back and forth until 1:00 am! I finally catch Terralingua’s director, Dr. Luisa Maffi, between final edits of the Global Source Book on Biocultural Diversity and travel preparations, to ask her a few questions:

OD: Biocultural Diversity is one of the key issues being presented at IUCN’s World Conservation Congress (WCC) in Barcelona next week. What is the significance of this to Terralingua’s work?

LM: Twenty years back, people were only speculating about the links between biodiversity and culture. A decade ago, the term “biocultural diversity” emerged from a group of academics and practitioners who formed the core of Terralingua. This year, the “Biocultural Diversity and Indigenous Peoples Journey” becomes one of the cross-cutting

themes at the WCC. IUCN now recognizes that “Cultural and biological diversity are deeply linked, and their interactions contribute to the resilience and health of our planet.” We have come a long way toward mainstreaming the idea of biocultural diversity!

OD: Terralingua will be hosting an “Aliances” workshop at the WCC, where yourself and Terralingua collaborators: David Harmon, Jonathan Loh, and Margaret Florey will be presenting three unique Biocultural Diversity Indicators. Could you tell us a little about this?

LM: Conservationists are well aware of the global biodiversity extinction crisis. What many may not know is that the world’s cultural diversity is just as imperiled, if not more so. Take as an indicator the state of the world’s languages: at least half of the roughly 7,000 languages still spoken today may become extinct by 2100. The result would be a massive loss of the diversity of cultural values, beliefs, and knowledge, including traditional environmental knowledge (TEK), which is embedded in languages at risk. The workshop we’re organizing at the WCC will explore three new tools that measure the status of and trends in cultural diversity at global and local levels. The Index of Linguistic Diversity (ILD) tracks changes over time in the number of speakers of the world’s languages, providing the first-ever time-series data on global language demographics. The Vitality Index of Traditional Environmental Knowledge (VITEK) provides locally appropriate, globally applicable quantitative measures of trends in retention or loss of TEK over time. The Linguistic Vitality Test (LVT) analyzes both current linguistic vitality and the transmission of linguistic knowledge from older to younger generations.

OD: How will these tools be useful in policy-making?

LM: There is a wealth of indicators out there about the state and trends of the world’s biodiversity. Conservationists realize that, in order to focus their efforts, they need to know what’s happening with biodiversity at different scales, from local to global. The emerging realization that biodiversity is interlinked with cultural diversity implies that we also need to know what’s happening with cultural diversity at different scales.

...continued on page 6



Many international organizations have begun to recognize that biological and cultural diversity are closely linked, and even interdependent. For example, the United Nations Environment Program's 2007 GEO-4 Report defines biodiversity as including human cultural diversity, IUCN has identified cultural diversity as one of six key issues in its 2008-2012 program, and the Convention on Biological Diversity has made trends in numbers of speakers of indigenous languages one of the 2010 Biodiversity Target indicators. But until now there has been a dearth of cultural indicators that can be used to assess and monitor the state and trends in cultural diversity, and to correlate these data with the data on biodiversity. The ILD, VITEK, and LVT begin to fill this gap. Together, these indicators permit standardized assessments of cultural diversity and vitality based on empirical data. Judging from current policy developments, this is something that policy makers will be increasingly looking for.

OD: After five years of work, you and co-author Ellen Woodley will present Terralingua's Global Source Book on Biocultural Diversity at a book launch during the WCC. This book is a survey of projects all over the world that take an integrated biocultural approach to conserving biodiversity and sustaining cultural diversity. What prompted the writing of this book?

LM: Well, it's similar to the case of cultural indicators that we just discussed. There is increasing interest in the idea that on-the-ground conservation has to be biocultural conservation--that is, that conserving biodiversity can be better achieved by taking into account the cultural dimension of biodiversity and the intimate links between biological and cultural diversity, and thus by sustaining both. However, there is a significant lack of information about how to do this in practice. We thought that it would be good to conduct a survey of bioculturally-oriented projects from all over the world, to showcase the diversity of innovative approaches that people are taking and draw lessons and recommendations from them for the benefit of the larger conservation community. We didn't want to offer "models" or "best practices", but rather we intended to show what works in a diversity of contexts, what challenges and opportunities people are encountering, and how, collectively, these projects point the way to integrated biocultural diversity conservation. With the Source Book, we're also promoting a community of practice in biocultural diversity, through which people can exchange experiences and increase the visibility of the biocultural approach.

OD: At the WCC, you will also co-organize a "Knowledge Café" with Dr. David Rapport, "Diverse Planet, Healthy Planet: Biological and Cultural Diversity as Cornerstones of Eco-cultural Health--Implications for Assessment, Policy, and Implementation". How do the fields of biocultural diversity and eco-cultural health intersect?

LM: The idea of "eco-cultural health" is very closely related to that of biocultural diversity. Over the last few decades, it has become increasingly clear that "health" is a concept that applies not only to individuals and populations, but also to the ecosystems in which humans and other species live. A healthy ecosystem is one that maintains its life-sustaining functions. This can be expressed in terms of an ecosystem maintaining its organization (that is, structure), vitality (or function), and resilience (its ability to rebound from disturbance). We're now beginning to understand that these same characteristics also apply to human societies and cultures. As with ecosystems, healthy societies and cultures are ones that maintain organization, vitality, and resilience. And the field of biocultural diversity has stressed that people are part of, not separate from, ecosystems, and that diversity in both nature and culture is an essential requirement for the organization, vitality, and resilience of eco-cultural systems. So a healthy eco-cultural system is one in which biocultural diversity is thriving. During the knowledge café, we will be exploring these links with a lively group of participants.

OD: What do you hope to come out of this congress with? What would you like to achieve?

LM: Significant, measurable progress toward our vision: A just, equitable, sustainable world, in which the biocultural diversity of life is valued, protected and perpetuated for generations to come.

The IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) will take place in Barcelona, October 5-14. Terralingua's events are posted in the activities page of this newsletter. WCC Biocultural Diversity related events can be found at ([http://www.iucn.org/news\\_events/events/congress/forum/journeys/biocultural/index.cfm](http://www.iucn.org/news_events/events/congress/forum/journeys/biocultural/index.cfm)). For the overall WCC program visit IUCN's website at: [http://www.iucn.org/news\\_events/events/congress/index.cfm](http://www.iucn.org/news_events/events/congress/index.cfm)



Project Highlights from:  
**Eco-Cultural Health  
 in the  
 Sierra Tarahumara, Mexico**

Restoration of the Health of the Landscape:



**R**esponding to the wishes of the Rarámuri people in two communities in the Norogachi area, in the Sierra Tarahumara of northern Mexico, Terralingua has undertaken a project to support the Rarámuri's efforts to restore their landscape and revitalize their cultural traditions and language. The initial foci of the project "Eco-cultural Health in the Sierra Tarahumara" were revegetation, potable water, and hygiene and sanitation. Further aims involve the development of training opportunities and educational tools for the Rarámuri, focusing on eco-cultural health.

**H**ere we highlight the work we have been doing on revegetation. Beginning in November 2007, The project's PI, Dr. David Rapport, conducted an assessment of the health of the landscape in the two communities, with



the assistance of a consultant, Michael Nickels of Seven Ravens Farm (Salt Spring Island, B.C.), who has had considerable experience in restoring degraded, once forested, regions. It was clear at the outset that, owing to the combination of massive deforestation and severe overgrazing, much of the landscape has lost most of its topsoil.

The immediate vicinity of the two settlements is characterized by very large erosion gullies. In places, the roots of trees are standing above barren ground, as the layer of soil once supporting tree growth has been eroded by the action of winds and rains, following deforestation and overgrazing.

**M**ichael Nickels first demonstrated some of the initial simple steps to restore health to the landscape. This included creating swales by laying rocks and branches across the slopes to impede water runoff and capture soils, and finding small crevices within the rocks where seeds could be planted for seedlings to take root. The practice of swales may have been germane to traditional Rarámuri practices of building trincheras (ditches) along hillsides, which some of the local elders referred to.

**W**ith Michael, we set up a temporary tree nursery within an existing fenced area near the home of one community member, laying down a plastic sheet and using discarded tin cans and plastic bottles as seed. The containers were filled with top soil obtained from the riverbed of a nearby watercourse, and seeded with seeds from local pines, oaks, and other local species. Michael demonstrated how to prepare a compost pile using plant materials and manure for later use to fertilize the fields--another practice that, according to the elders, may have been germane to traditional practices, probably supplanted by the introduction of chemical fertilizers. Michael also demonstrated how to dispose of non-reusable garbage in pits created for that purpose, with

soil poured on top and tree seeds planted therein. In the pits, the garbage acts to retain rainwater, facilitating tree growth. Finally, he made initial demonstrations on home garden improvement, including use of an "A frame" to create parallel contours to retain water and soil, irrigation systems using rainwater from roofs and re-capture of grey waters, use of mulch, training of fruit trees for greater productivity, and more.

**W**e then focused on building an enclosed tree nursery near the home of one of the residents. We provided the fencing materials while community members provided the posts, and together we carried out the installation. The nursery includes an irrigation system with a pipe and a hand-held sprinkler engineered by the community. Four kinds of pines were planted: Engelmannia, Arizonica, Duranguensis and Cembroides. Each bed was carefully prepared by digging deep into the layers of soil and clay and adding nutrients from the riverbed, and then covered with pine needles from the area. A shade cover made with pine branches was added to protect the beds from direct sunlight and help retain moisture. Composted manure was also added to the nursery beds.

**I**n addition, we built two enclosed home gardens. The first one was established at the home of one of the women who had been most involved in project activities during our previous field trip. The wire-fenced garden uses grey water from clothes washing, which had previously gone into runoff. Different kinds of vegetables were planted, including beans, squash, garlic, and spinach. The intent here was that the family would harvest the food, but share the seeds with the community.

**T**he first priority when the trees in the nursery are suitable for replanting will be to place them around the existing dwellings (most of which have little or no shade or plant life around them), with the added possibility of bringing seedlings for sale in the nearby market town of Guachochi. Eventually, the tree nursery should supply the seedlings for hillside revegetation.

**I**t took a long time to establish a relationship of mutual trust with the Rarámuri--traditionally a rather reserved people-- and to successfully convey that this project had no other goal than to support activities they themselves would identify as beneficial for the eco-cultural health of their communities. We began meeting with them in 2004 and first visited the two communities in which we work in 2006, and concrete activities did not get underway until mid-2007. But by our two most recent working visits there was full participation in the labor involved to establish projects, and it appeared that a measure of friendship and enthusiasm had been achieved. The participants learned valuable skills in reestablishing vitality to their landscape, and recognized the fact that this was, as one elder (Erasmus Palma) put it, "a reawakening" to ways of sustainability practiced a long time ago, but almost forgotten.

**O**ur work with the Rarámuri will also be one of the topics at a "knowledge café" on eco-cultural health, organized by Dr. Rapport, to be held during the upcoming IUCN's World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, 5-14 October 2008).



## The Index of Linguistic Diversity (ILD)

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

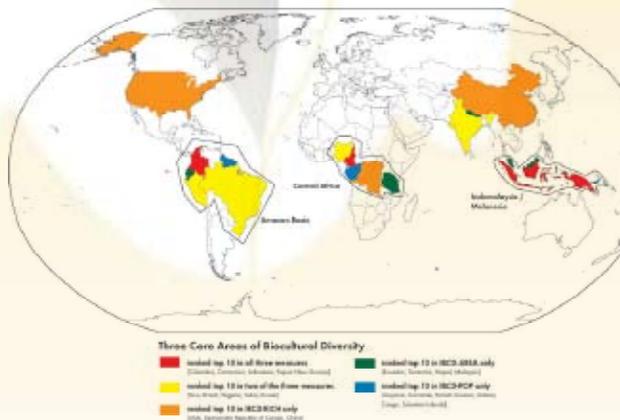
Concern about the future of the world's languages has been building for the better part of two decades. A large amount of qualitative evidence points to an impending major extinction of languages. The quality of this evidence ranges from the merely anecdotal to very accurate narrative accounts based on first-hand knowledge of the language demographics of individual speech communities. Overall, this evidence leaves no room to doubt that, for a variety of complex reasons, the diversity of the world's languages--and the cultural diversity they represent--is being severely compromised.

However, there is much less quantitative evidence of a linguistic diversity crisis. Published estimates of the percentage of languages likely to die out during this century are really little more than informed conjecture. Categorical statements of the rate of extinction --"X number of languages are dying every year"--are widely quoted in popular accounts but never referenced to a rigorous estimate. It is hard to know whether such an estimate even exists. Therefore, while obtaining accurate rates of mother-tongue language extinctions is important, even more important is to have a quantitative measure of global trends in linguistic diversity, as a key component of biocultural diversity. Governments, international organizations, and the general public will likely take the decline of linguistic diversity--and, by extension, the loss of biocultural diversity--more seriously if there is a readily understandable global metric that captures the essence of the problem.

The ILD will provide exactly this metric. It is an easy-to-grasp quantitative explanation of trends in linguistic diversity since 1970. While the technical details and data nuances that underlie the ILD are highly complex, the basic graphs that depict it are simple trend lines. The ILD relies on a single variable that anyone can understand: the number of speakers of the world's languages. The importance of the ILD is that it provides a numerically based summary of a key trend affecting biocultural diversity. It provides the quantitative data needed to complement existing qualitative work that is being done to promote appreciation of linguistic and biocultural diversity.

These quantitative data can also be used to contribute to international processes that will significantly affect the actions of governments and other institutions vis-à-vis linguistic and biocultural heritage, such as the CBD's 2010 Target, the IUCN 2008-2012 program, the work of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and of UNESCO, among others. In particular, the CBD 2010 Target calls for the adoption of a series of global indicators in specific focal areas related to biodiversity levels and ecosystem quality in order to assess in an objective and targeted way progress towards the reduction of biodiversity loss. Focal Area 5 refers to the protection of traditional knowledge, practices and innovations. The only headline indicator in this area that has been formally endorsed by the CBD so far is "Status and trends of linguistic diversity and numbers of speakers of indigenous languages" (decision 30, paragraph 27). The ILD directly address the need for such an indicator.

The ILD will be presented at the WCC in an Aliances workshop, along with the VITEK (see next article) and Margaret Florey's Linguistic Vitality Test.



*Map: Core areas of biocultural diversity identified by the Index of Biocultural Diversity (Source: Original work by David Harmon, Terralingua, 2006) Zoom in on map for details.*

# VITEK

vitality index of traditional environmental knowledge



The Convention on Biological Diversity and other international organizations have acknowledged the importance of Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) for the conservation of biodiversity and the need to protect and promote it. But in the absence of appropriate indicators of the state and trends of TEK, it is impossible to know whether TEK is being retained or lost.

Motivated by the need for TEK indicators, we set out to develop a robust yet practical methodology for collecting, analyzing and managing data, leading to creation of a locally-appropriate, globally-applicable indicator directly focused on trends of retention or loss of TEK over time. The proposed index, which we call the Vitality Index of TEK (VITEK), focuses on rating the vitality status of TEK (that is, inferrable trends of retention or loss over time) within selected groups. It allows for relative comparisons of that status among groups at different scales of inclusiveness. Another important feature is the ability to disaggregate the vitality measurement of different thematic domains of TEK in order to identify which types of knowledge are most vulnerable or resistant to change. Priority is given to measuring knowledge that is directly implicated in sustainable use of biodiversity and therefore is logically associated with biodiversity conservation. This includes conceptual knowledge (plant and animal domains, plant-animal interactions, biological communities, soils, climate, ethnogeography, and so forth), as well as practical skills (for example, resource procurement or production techniques, craft and tool-making skills, food preparations, curing practices, and construction and architecture).



**TEK is  
knowledge  
handed  
down through  
generations  
about the  
relationship of living  
beings with one  
another and with the  
environment.**

For national and international policy makers, the VITEK affords an efficient tool for assessing the current and changing states of TEK in different places. Thus, it can be used to identify endangered situations and target conservation actions where they are most needed. The periodic application of the assessment would provide an objective basis for monitoring trends in traditional knowledge persistence or erosion over time at different geographic scales. It can also serve as a yardstick for evaluating policy performance or outcomes, thus contributing to the process of accountability.

A pilot implementation study has been planned to make a practical test of the VITEK assessment methodology in real-life field situations. The first pilot test is taking place in Venezuela. The plan is to implement it among four different biocultural groups in that country, representing a range of variation in terms of bio-ecological setting, economic orientation, ethnic composition, degree of acculturation, and linguistic situation. The pilot study began in August 2008, and will take approximately one year to complete.

A presentation on the VITEK will be delivered at the WCC during the same Aliances in which the ILD will be presented, offering a prime opportunity for informing researchers, practitioners, and policy makers about the VITEK and promoting further testing and adoption of this tool.



## GLOBAL SOURCE BOOK ON BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY: Worldwide Experiences in an Integrated Approach to Sustaining Cultures and Biodiversity

by Luisa Maffi and Ellen Woodley  
a Terralingua publication, 2008

Over the past decade, the idea of “biocultural diversity” has emerged as a powerful concept to express the “inextricable link” of biological and cultural diversity—the sum total of the diversity of life in nature and culture. Biodiversity and cultural diversity are interconnected and interdependent, and they are jointly threatened. There is a growing recognition of the vital importance of biocultural diversity for planetary sustainability and of the need to protect and sustain it. Throughout the world, individuals, communities, and organizations are working to revitalize and maintain biocultural diversity, but much more must be done.

How do we bring about favorable change for biocultural diversity? One way is to increase the visibility of what people are doing on the ground to maintain and restore it. The innumerable efforts that are underway at the local level often fall “under the radar” for lack of visibility, and the lessons from these projects cannot easily be learned. Terralingua has written down the lessons learned from 45 projects from all continents in a Global Source Book on Biocultural Diversity, which is available to all those who want to learn more about these efforts and their global significance.

The Global Source Book on Biocultural Diversity is the very first resource of its kind. It is made available in electronic form, with a companion page on Terralingua’s website, where an interactive world map allows people to find the projects’ locations and learn more about them. New projects can be added by sending us the information, thus making this source book a “living resource”, constantly updatable and expandable. Terralingua’s website also hosts a discussion forum specifically devoted to issues relevant to biocultural diversity conservation. By creating a network of biocultural diversity conservation practitioners, we are also helping to “connect the dots” among people worldwide who are working to strengthen and recover the health and vitality of local cultures and environments.



Girls in the highlands in Cusco. Photo: Jorge Ishizawa

The Children and Biodiversity project has been successful in clarifying the challenges that must be faced by intercultural education. The incorporation of local knowledge into the school curriculum and the adoption of the local agricultural calendar has become a national policy and the three components identified in the case of rural education has inspired other institutions, especially in the southern Andes, to initiate training programs for rural teachers. Networks of rural teachers have been formed in the localities where the program was active and provide the surest guarantee of the sustainability of the program results. This process of cultural “regeneration” takes time since the communities themselves must find them relevant to their own life world.

excerpt from Project 15, Promoting Cultural and Biological Diversity: An Educational Program for Rural Communities in Peru

# Terralingua's Activities



## Innovative line of green greeting cards to put endangered words back in circulation; non-profits to benefit

"In a Word" by ConnectingDotz was developed to highlight the importance of language revitalization, and the close connection between culture and nature. The line features wonderful words from around the world which speak to values and experiences that are hardly expressed in English, if at all.

Printed on 100% post-consumer waste paper in a palette evocative of Mexico and India, each embossed card carries a single word, and highlights its meaning, source and context on the back. Part of the proceeds from card sales will benefit nonprofits whose work supports environmental, cultural and linguistic health of all people, with special emphasis on indigenous cultures.

Terralingua has been chosen as the the first recipient of funds, so we hope the line will be successful! It's off to a good start, having been picked up by a number of museums in the U.S.

Creator Susan Fassberg, a Terralingua Board Member, aspires to popularize the notion of biocultural diversity. "Linguistic vitality is crucial to our learning how to live lightly on this earth".

To see more, visit [connectingdotz.com](http://connectingdotz.com)

## Terralingua's Events at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona.

Workshops can be viewed online, live at the following address: <http://208.112.69.59/agenda/?sPhrase=terralingua&GO=GO&tp=ALL&st=ALL&jr=12>

#396: Diverse Planet, Healthy Planet: Biological and Cultural Diversity as Cornerstones of Eco-cultural Health-Implications for Assessment, Policy, and Implementation. Tuesday, October 7, 2008, 9.30-11, CIBC, First floor, Room 114/9

#182: The World's Cultural Diversity: New Measurements Show What's Happening and Why It's Important to Conservationists. Tuesday, October 7, 2008, 11.30-13.00, CIBC, First floor, Room 119

#385: Integrating and Sustaining Cultural and Biological Diversity: The Difficult Questions.  
IUCN - AMNH - Terralingua  
Tuesday, October 7, 2008, Room 129 , 18:30 - 20:00

Terralingua book launch: "Global Source Book on Biocultural Diversity: Worldwide Experiences in an Integrated Approach to Sustaining Cultures and Biodiversity", by Luisa Maffi and Ellen Woodley, Terralingua, 2008. Location: IUCN Bookstore Lounge, 2nd floor, CICB. Date and time: Wednesday, October 8, 17:00.

Terralingua at the BCD booth: Information about Terralingua, materials about Terralingua's work, and Terralingua publications will be available at the BCD booth. Location: Exhibition Hall, Area 3, ground floor, CCIB, stand # E-026, Date and time: Thursday, October 9, 11:00-13:00.

"This diversity of solutions itself offers the most poignant lesson to be learned from a biocultural perspective: that cultural diversity is not a matter of superficial, if aesthetically pleasing, exotic flavours; it is the deep reflection of human creativity and inventiveness put to the service of enduring issues of adaptation - and increasingly of pressing issues of planetary survival." Luisa Maffi, Cultural Vitality, Resurgence Magazine, October 2008

# Terralingua Members' Forum

Hello All,

I would like to highlight some of the interesting conversations that have come up on our forum recently. Join the discussion at [www.terralingua.org/tldyn/index.php](http://www.terralingua.org/tldyn/index.php)

ortixia.

## Successful Conservation Through Integrated Projects

How does the integrated nature of these projects make them more successful at conservation than projects that focus only on either biodiversity conservation or the conservation of cultures (practices, knowledge, beliefs, and languages)?

I think if we are going to be at all successful in building a sustainable society, then we need to forget about working with "biodiversity conservation" or "cultural conservation", these terms in and of themselves don't make sense anymore. Cultures are changing, and will continue to change, and the pressures on all cultures are greater than ever before. Consumer culture isn't really "American" or "Western" per se; yes, that is the cultural origin of it, and as such much of consumer culture (Benjamin Barber's "McWorld", his descriptions of which, contrary to Tom Friedman or Thomas Barnett's depictions, are much more damning than those of "Jihad") is portrayed in that fashion and in that language.

I have studied and spoken the Quechua language for over 7 years now. After 500 years of colonization and amalgamation, that language only vaguely resembles the more regal and descriptive tongue spoken by the Incas in the time of Huyana Capac, as it is now littered with Spanish words for which the Quechua analogs have not developed (e.g. television or car), but in many cases and some

communities those analogs are just being forgotten (e.g. rooster or fish). Mothers and fathers in these communities don't want their children taught in Quechua in the schools. They claim this is the path to ignorance and poverty; just look at my own life, they point out. Is this the case? Are indigenous languages actually hindering the development of rural communities? Some people in those communities seem to think so. These are tough questions, with no easy answers.

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A post symposium interview with Luisa Maffi can be listened to at: [http://agroinnovations.com/component/option,com\\_mojo/Itemid,182/p,37/lang,en/](http://agroinnovations.com/component/option,com_mojo/Itemid,182/p,37/lang,en/)

I would like to respond to the previous message.

I am Welsh, and the point about speakers of Quechua thinking that their language would lead to ignorance and poverty reminded me very much of the attitudes of my grandparents' generation towards the Welsh language, and its usefulness when compared to English. Their messages were much the same, i.e. don't bother with the Welsh language because it will lead to ignorance and poverty. Speaking English was the only way to 'get on in the world'.

This, alongside compulsory English-medium education in schools, meant that the percentage of Welsh-speakers in Wales fell from about 66% to 26% of the population between the 1860s and 1960s. It continued falling to 18% before it started to recover as a result of campaigns to save it. There's still a long way to go.

I don't believe that indigenous languages hinder the development of

their communities (although the word 'development' means different things to different people). The status of the language, rather than the language itself, is the hindrance. In Europe, for instance, broadly speaking, the only languages in danger are those which are not official languages of a State. So Icelandic, with about 300,000 speakers, is healthy, while Breton, with maybe twice that number of speakers, is in serious trouble due to its lack of status in France.

From what I have read, Quechua is 'the official language of the Incas, spoken by about 8 million people from Colombia to Chile'. That sounds pretty impressive to me, but exactly how 'official' is it? Do speakers have the right to communicate with all levels of government in it? Is it visible on road signs, in documents, in shops etc? Is it used in the media at all?

My ultimate question would be: If speakers of Quechua could use Quechua in all circumstances on an equal basis with Spanish, which language would they pick then?

I don't know of anyone who woke up one morning and decided that they were fed up of their mother tongue and would rather speak another one - that only happens because circumstances, often deliberate government policies, force them to change.

I understand that your circumstances may be very different to ours, so please forgive me if my questions are inappropriate, but good luck, and I'd be interested to hear your comments anyway.

Andrew Currie

## situation of saami communities in northern norway

i have been reading the book "linguistic suicide..." by t. skuttnab-kangas. there she stated that apart from a minority-friendly seeming rhetoric of the state representatives the norwegian politics towards the sami people is just another example of deprivation of basic human rights (i.e. easy access to, what we would today call, additive multilingualism in education among others).

i wonder, and ask you, how the situation is in norway, finland and russia today as with regard to the sami minority?

i would also appreciate any recommendations concerning current literature dealing with the topic. thanks in advance,

samuel

Dear Samuel,

I wonder where your interest in the Saami people comes from? I'm doing a masters in language endangerment studies and am also interested in how these languages are being supported. If you go to the following website: <http://www.languagecharter.eokik.hu/> you can see all the countries which are signatories of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. You can access the official reporting and monitoring documents for all the Scandinavian countries to see how they are implementing the charter with regard to the Saami (and other) languages spoken within their territories.

I have read through the documents of the three monitoring cycles for Finland, and can see much progress and other areas needing more support. I live in Australia, so by comparison to language policy and support for indigenous languages in my own country, the European model looks positively enlightened!

I will be preparing to undertake a research project and short thesis starting mid 2009. It will involve planning and carrying out a project of practical benefit to the speakers of an endangered language. If anyone would like to suggest an area or people group which would like some help of this kind please let me know. I would be pleased to hear your suggestions.

Thank you, Jasmin

## Are World Heritage listed 'natural landscapes' bioculturally diverse?

The work Terralingua and others have been doing mapping the spatial correlations between linguistic, cultural and natural diversities (life's diversities) is both sensible (ie appeals to our shared common sense) and fantastic (in visually displaying that which makes so much sense!)

The overlapping of life's diversities displayed in the work Terralingua & others have been doing appears to apply at the global scale, and, at least in North-East Queensland, can be shown to apply at the more local, regional scale (900 000 hectares of wet tropical forested landscape).

The correlation clearly exists and would seem to have self-evident ecological knowledge and ecological management connotations for those peoples who may be charged with transmitting life's diversity into the long term, globally warmer, rapidly changing future (as are nation states for areas listed as World Heritage under the World Heritage Convention)

Within North-East Queensland, unfortunately, it would seem to be an unintended, unfortunate, and possibly regrettable effect of the World Heritage listing processes that the 'natural values' have been formally listed and favoured, at the expense of all other correlating linguistic and cultural diversity -with increasingly evident, environmentally and socially detrimental 'distorting' effects as:

i. environmental scientists & natural resource managers seem to be fighting a losing battle struggling to secure biological diversity into a globally warmer, increasingly rapidly changing future.

ii. environmental scientists and natural resource managers appear to be stumbling, still discovering, still learning at the limits of their locally specific, ecological understandings and knowledge -many times altering or changing (and diminishing?) The very diversity they are seeking to better understand and preserve

iii. environmental scientists and natural resource managers who are primarily focused on the core 'world heritage listed' natural values to the exclusion of correlated (more peripheral?) linguistic and cultural diversity appear 'blind' to the rich paradigmatic, longitudinal ecological understandings

and knowledge still coded into this region's unique, dense, linguistic and cultural diversity (the Dyribal language, for instance, is from this region)

iv. over almost 20 years of World Heritage listing, an effort, these distorting effects arising out of a World Heritage inscription' process that can effectively sever key correlations in life's diversities. These distorting effects:

- are becoming evident with some of the increasing loss of local biological diversity  
- are becoming evident in the way some of us are being made witnesses to the passing of the last generations of unique, endangered languages and language speakers, who find the 'treasures' they hold undervalued

We seek to initiate this roundtable discussion, because we believe this may not be a phenomenon limited to north-east Australia's world heritage listed 'natural landscape', and it may not be a phenomenon limited to the other world heritage listed 'natural landscapes' in Australia, but may in fact be a phenomenon across all/most other world heritage listed natural landscapes across the world?

Some provision has been made by the World Heritage Committee over the last decade to incorporate some of the more 'cultural' dimensions of otherwise 'natural' landscapes within World Heritage inscriptions, should those cultural values also qualify as 'universally significant, but we never-the-less put this topic on the roundtable to raise the question:

1. is the above 'distorting' phenomenon a matter that might be usefully raised with the United Nation's World Heritage committee and/or their expert advisory bodies (IUCN & ICMOS) in this international year of languages (linguistic diversity)??

2. might this be a global phenomenon, out there, now particularly pertinent with the recent declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, inviting a collaborative study and/or compilation of data of some kind to be presented within World Heritage forums (being forums within which much might be done to see some of this world's most significant biocultural diversity more effectively transmitted into the long term future?)

Bruce,

BioCultural ConneXions



## Become a Terralingua Member!

Our Membership campaign continues, and we are very enthusiastic with the ongoing communication with this great network.

If you would like to become a member of Terralingua, please complete the membership form on our website  
<http://www.terralingua.org/tldyn/index.php/member/register/>

Terralingua members receive our quarterly newsletter Langscape, are entitled to discounts on our publications and other special offers, and get occasional updates on “hot off the press” news.

Members have exclusive access to the Members' Discussion Forum, which is devoted to how Terralingua and its members can work together to achieve our shared goals.

If you want to know more about how to become a member, send an email to: [membership@terralingua.org](mailto:membership@terralingua.org).

For information about Terralingua's work, please send an email to [info@terralingua.org](mailto:info@terralingua.org).

Next Issue of Langscape:

Biocultural  
Diversity in  
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