



CoLang 2016 Practicum Syllabus

Practicum Title: Field Methods for Hän Athabaskan (ISO 639-3 haa), an Athabaskan language of Alaska and Yukon Territory

Instructor's name and email: Dr. Willem J. de Reuse (willemdereuse@my.unt.edu)

Dates and time: July 5 to July 23, 2016, from 9:30 a.m., to 4:00 p.m.

Location: TBA

Course materials: Pdfs of the course materials from the Alaska Native Language Archives (ANLA) will be made available during the pre-practicum workshop as well as during the practicum itself.

Supplies needed: A laptop, with an internet connection (for easy access to ANLA), and the First Voices Yukon Font installed. Notebooks and pens, black as well as colored. Digital recorders are welcome, but not required, since the instructor will bring his own.

Course goals: Experience in the discovery and documentation of the phonology, morphology, syntax and pragmatics of an endangered language through techniques of elicitation, text collection and analysis of data, with a particular focus on how such techniques will be valuable to indigenous researchers and communities seeking to preserve or revitalize their linguistic heritage.

Student learning objectives: By the end of the practicum, the participant will have gained not only a practical knowledge of linguistic description and documentation, but s/he will also have learned to appreciate the fact that this knowledge can only be gained through a constant back and forth between elicitation and text collection techniques, as well as through careful attention to discourse, language interference and other language in context phenomena encountered in the fieldwork situation.

Instructional methods: In this practicum, participants are in face-to-face interaction with a native speaker. They will ask questions about this speaker's language, and learn to record his/her responses in a notebook and with a recording device. The purpose of the questioning is both to learn about the structure of the language, as well as to practice documentary fieldwork in a relatively short period of time. Supervised by the instructor, participants will learn how to ask questions that are linguistically informed and pragmatically relevant, and questions that are socially and culturally proper, in an ethical and respectful atmosphere.

Students will start asking for and transcribing isolated words; they will then transcribe and analyze sentences, and finish transcribing and analyzing short texts.

The language we will study in this practicum is Hän, the Athabaskan language of Eagle, central eastern Alaska, and of the Dawson City area, Yukon Territory, Canada. Our native speaker consultant will be Ms. Ruth Ridley, with occasional visits from her sisters Ms. Ethel Beck and Ms. Bertha Ulvi, all from Eagle, and from Mr. Percy Henry from Dawson City. Participants will also be aware that Hän is not just a fascinating language for documentary fieldwork, it is also one of the most endangered Native languages of Alaska and Canada (with six fluent speakers remaining), and we will have the rare privilege to work with one (and hopefully up to four) of these speakers. This means that during the practicum, we will move very quickly into uncharted aspects of Hän documentation, since we owe it to the speakers (and to the community) to keep repetition of documentary work already done to a minimum.

Evaluation: Attendance is mandatory. On the basis of the collected information, supplemented by the existing documentation available in ANLA, participants will write a short paper (ca. 10 pages, double spaced) due on the last day of the practicum. The topic of this paper will be agreed upon in advance with the instructor, and can be either:

- (1) a description of some linguistic aspect of the Hån language; or:
- (2) an intermediate level language learning lesson; or:
- (3) another original documentary or applied linguistic product.

Disabilities services: “The Office of Disability Services implements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and insures that UAF students have equal access to the campus and course materials. The instructor will work with the Office of Disabilities Services (208 WHIT, 474-5655) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities.”