Interviews with Awardees of AAAL's Indigenous Language Scholar Support Fund

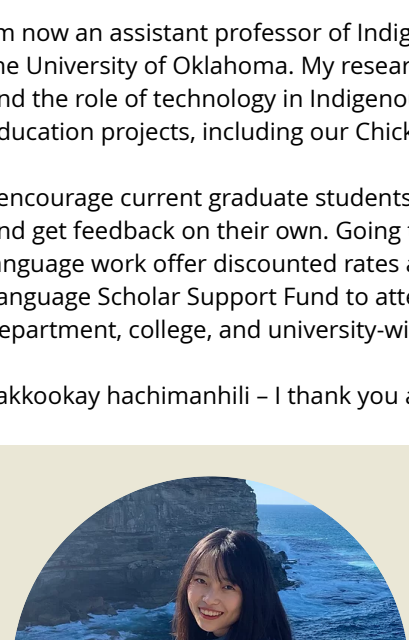
The Indigenous Language Scholar Support Fund (ILSSF) enables Indigenous scholars to present and participate in the annual AAAL conference. It facilitates presentation of papers, posters, and roundtables on Indigenous languages. The ILSSF is intended for scholars who have very limited or no access to funding. Priority is given to community-based language experts. In the section below, we feature the 2020 and 2021 recipients of the ILSSF. Some of the awardees have also kindly agreed to be interviewed about their work. We asked them about their academic and professional backgrounds, about their research in Indigenous language(s), how they learned about the fund, and how it has supported them in their career. We would also like to use this opportunity to congratulate all award recipients!

2020 AWARDEES

- Anne Marie Guerrettaz, Washington State University
- Candace Galla, University of British Columbia
- Kari A. B. Chew, University of Oklahoma
- Keiki Kawai'ae'a, University of Hawai'i, Hilo
- Kelli Finney, Simon Fraser University
- Simao Elias Luis, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

2021 AWARDEES

- Belinda Daniels, Cree immersion summer school Saskatchewan, Canada
- Dianah Kitiabi, University of South Africa
- James McKenzie, Diné Tribal College & University of Minnesota Twin Cities
- Kelli Finney, Simon Fraser University
- Peter Turner (with Belinda Daniels), University of Regina
- Rebecca Elena Tapia Carlin, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla
- Sixuan Wang, University of New South Wales
- Valeriya Minakova, Pennsylvania State University
- Willy Ngaka, Uganda Technology and Management University
- Yuliana Kenfield, Western Oregon University



Kari A. B. Chew

University of Oklahoma
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
2020 Recipient
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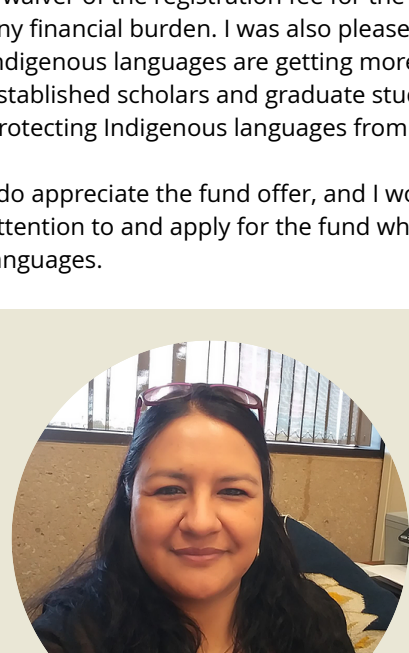
Homepage: https://www.ou.edu/education/people/kari-chew

Chokma, sahollhchifoat Kari Chew. Chikashsha saya. Chikashshanompa' ithanali. Greetings, my name is Kari Chew. I'm a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and a learner of Chikashshanompa', my ancestral language. Because my family did not speak the language when I was growing up, I didn't hear Chikashshanompa' until I was a young adult. I was in college at the time and the experience led me to graduate school to study Indigenous language education and linguistics. I earned my Ph.D. from the University of Arizona in 2016.

I'm now an assistant professor of Indigenous education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Oklahoma. My research focuses on adult Indigenous language learners, Indigenous language curriculum, and the role of technology in Indigenous language education. I work closely with the Chickasaw Nation on language education projects, including our Chickasaw Rosetta Stone courses.

I encourage current graduate students to apply for funding to attend conferences where they can hear about others' work and get feedback on their own. Going to conferences can be very expensive, but, fortunately, several relevant to Indigenous language work offer discounted rates and awards for student and/or community members to attend. The Indigenous Language Scholar Support Fund to attend AAAL is a great example. In addition, I encourage graduate students to apply for department, college, and university-wide support, if available, at their home institutions.

Yakkookay hachimanhli – I thank you all for doing good work on behalf of our languages.



Sixuan Wang

University of New South Wales
Language Studies, Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting
2021 Recipient
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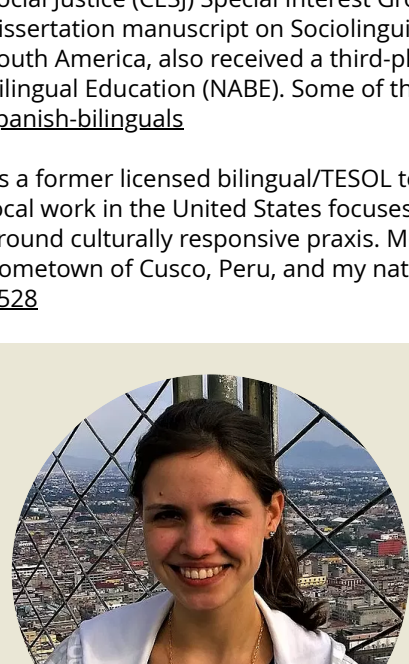
My name is Sixuan Wang. I am a third-year Ph.D. candidate in Applied Linguistics in the School of Humanities and Languages at the University of New South Wales, Australia. My research interests include language use, language attitudes, language maintenance and shift, and language policy and planning. My Ph.D. project is focused on language maintenance and shift of the Bing language from a sociolinguistic perspective. Bing is a minority language with only 42,000 speakers in China (Ethnologue, 2019).

I learnt about the Indigenous Language Scholar Support Fund from the website of AAAL when I was submitting the conference abstract for the 2021 AAAL conference. It's an honour to be selected as one of the recipients. The fund provided a waiver of the registration fee for the virtual conference in 2021, which will enable me to attend the conference without any financial burden. I was also pleased to see special funding for projects on Indigenous languages, as this suggests that Indigenous languages are getting more attention from the academy. I believe this funding opportunity will motivate more established scholars and graduate students to work with Indigenous communities across the globe and put effort into protecting Indigenous languages from different perspectives.

I do appreciate the fund offer, and I would like to encourage those who are working on Indigenous languages to pay attention to and apply for the fund when possible, as it is a great opportunity to let more people know about vulnerable languages.



Yuliana Kenfield

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I earned a bachelor's degree at the Universidad Nacional San Antonio Abad del Cusco in my hometown of Cusco, Peru. I moved to the United States in 2005 and later earned a teaching license in New Mexico, where I taught in bilingual classrooms for seven years. While working on my doctorate in educational sociolinguistics at the University of New Mexico, I taught classes on educating linguistically and culturally diverse students and qualitative research methodology. I also taught courses at Central New Mexico Community College in Albuquerque and at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. I am currently a faculty member in the College of Education at Western Oregon University.

I learned about the Indigenous Language Scholar Support Fund from the AAAL email announcements. During this time, when our salaries and our funding for scholarly activities have been reduced, I appreciate that this fund is allowing me to present my work at the AAAL conference in spring 2021.

My research employs Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and photovoice with a focus on sociolinguistic practices, identities, and ideologies of Quechua-Spanish college students in Cusco, Peru. By coupling post-structuralist concepts of linguistic ideologies and decolonial thinking, I utilize mixed methods to implement a dual approach to this research: quantitative (survey study) and qualitative (interviews, photovoice, observations). These efforts aim to deepen our understanding of the complex contention between sociolinguistic ideologies within higher education from asset views to bilingualism.

Particularly, my doctoral research (soon to be published as a book in the Multilingual Matters series) aims to offer an account of an innovative participatory photovoice study carried out by diverse Andean participants. It helps us better understand how Quechua-Spanish bilinguals in higher education make sense of, and speak against, the ways in which coloniality threatens the way they language, Quechua epistemologies and ontologies, as well as the ways they imagine and create decolonial spaces where alternative practices are valued, heard, and celebrated. These insights are grounded in an original Indigenized photovoice methodology which can offer valuable lessons for other researchers interested in engaging in participatory research with Indigenous communities and individuals in the Andes and beyond.

My dissertation manuscript recently received the 2020 Distinguished Dissertation Award from the Critical Educators for Social Justice (CESJ) Special Interest Group (SIG) within the American Educational Research Association (AERA). My dissertation manuscript on Sociolinguistic Ideologies and Decolonial practices of Quechuans, an Indigenous people of South America, also received a third-place honor for 2019 Outstanding Dissertation Award by the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE). Some of this research can be found here: https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/quechua-spanish-bilinguals

As a former licensed bilingual/TESOL teacher in New Mexico as well as an immigration paralegal and translator, my current local work in the United States focuses on collective sociolinguistic self-explorations with pre-service bilingual teachers around culturally responsive praxis. Most of my bilingual published work of both my international research in my hometown of Cusco, Peru, and my national research in the U.S.A. can be found in here: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8373-5528

Valeriya Minakova

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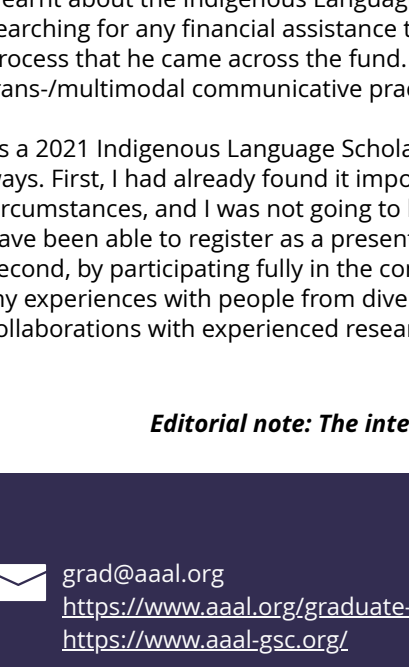
My name is Valeriya Minakova, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Applied Linguistics at Penn State. In my dissertation project, I examine the dynamics of multilingualism and the role of Indigenous languages in Russia by conducting an ethnographic case study in the Republic of Adygheа in the North Caucasus. In particular, I focus on language ideologies and teaching practices of the Adygheа people (aka Circassians), autochthonous to the area, to understand how linguistic minorities in Russia engage with issues of language maintenance under the pressures of the nation-state and globalization. Like many other Indigenous languages of Russia, Adygheа is categorized as "vulnerable" by UNESCO. The local government and scholars are taking active measures to encourage Adygheа language use in families and to improve the quality of language teaching in schools. My project examines the motivations for these efforts, how they are implemented and by whom, and what responses they elicit from teachers, parents, and children.

I learned about the Indigenous Language Scholar Support Fund (ILSSF) while visiting the AAAL website. As a novice scholar, I really appreciate getting the award. Apart from the opportunity to present at the 2021 AAAL conference, it showed me that the kind of research that I do is valued by the professional community. The award was especially welcomed because conducting fieldwork in the midst of a pandemic is a very challenging task, and one needs encouragement to keep going. The fund gave me the motivation to persevere, and I am very grateful for that.



Willy Ngaka

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I hold a Ph.D. and an M.Ed. from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa; a PgD and a Master's degree in Project Monitoring and Evaluation from the Uganda Technology and Management University, Uganda; an MPA and a BA. from Makerere University, Uganda; and a Diploma in Education from the Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo. I am a member of the academic staff in the Department of Adult and Community Education, School of Distance and Lifelong Learning under the College of Education and External Studies of Makerere University in Uganda.

My research interests include: non-formal, adult and lifelong learning; literacies and language education; qualitative research; and integrated approaches to learning and education. I have published a number of articles in the area of literacy and language education, some of which include:

- Ngaka, W. (2020). The role of communities in Uganda's mother tongue-based education: Perspectives from a literacy learning enhancement project in Arua district. *Applied Linguistics Review.* https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2020-2005
- Ngaka, W., Graham, R., Masagazi, F. M., & Anyandru, E. M. (2016). Generational, cultural, and linguistic integration for literacy learning and teaching in Uganda: Pedagogical possibilities, challenges, and lessons from one NGO. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, *12*(1), 79-103.
- Ngaka, W. & Masaazi, F. M. (2015). Participatory literacy learning in an African context: Perspectives from the Ombaderuku primary school in the Arua District, Uganda. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education, 11*(1), 89-108.
- Ngaka, W., Openjuru, G., & Mazur, R. E. (2012). Exploring formal and non-formal education practices for integrated and diverse learning environments in Uganda. *The International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations, 11*(6), 109-121.

My Indigenous language research addresses the dilemma of youth in the global south, who for decades have used exoglossic languages for learning in school at the expense of appreciating their endoglossic languages, in large part driven by colonial ideology and hegemony. These youth are now under a new language in education policy and are required to receive instructions using their mother tongue, which they have for long been made to feel is less valuable than English. The research analyzes data from videos, chats and focus group discussions of Ugandan youth living among poor communities and participating in an initiative dubbed 'Global StoryBridges project' in which interactions and communications are transnational and transmodal. It adopts an ecological approach which views languages and communication modes as part and parcel of the community that uses them, as negotiated in and shaped by local and transnational interactions, and as mediated by technological affordances. It aims to explore interactions between transmodal practices and youth's valuing of them; transmodal interactions with and understandings of diverse global others; community views and understandings; local educational practices and policies; and participants' views of benefits and constraints.

I learnt about the Indigenous Language Scholar Support Fund from two sources. The first source was through randomly searching for any financial assistance that he thought could help him participate in the 2021 AAAL conference. It was in this process that he came across the fund. The second source was from a global research network that focuses on trans-/multimodal communicative practices using experiences of youth in different global locales.

As a 2021 Indigenous Language Scholar Support Fund recipient, I anticipate that the support will help me in two important ways. First, I had already found it impossible to renew my membership because of the current undesirable economic circumstances, and I was not going to be able to register for this year's AAAL conference. However, through this fund, I have been able to register as a presenter and will have the opportunity to participate fully in the forthcoming conference. Second, by participating fully in the conference, which wouldn't have been possible without this fund, I will not only share my experiences with people from diverse professional backgrounds, but also connect with and establish international collaborations with experienced researchers in the field of applied linguistics.

Editorial note: The interviews in this section were edited for brevity, clarity, and readability.

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