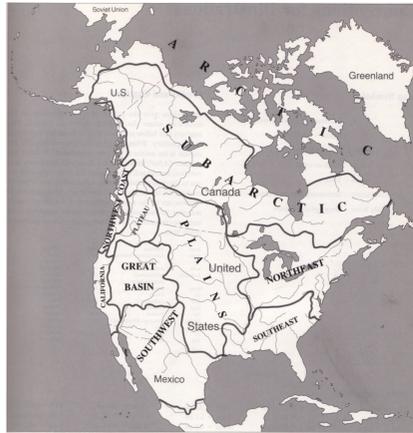


# American Indian Sign Language (AISL) Digital Corpus Project

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## American Indian Sign Language fieldwork and digital language corpus

The UT based project aims to raise awareness about indigenous sign language

The project maintains that documenting and describing AISL and other endangered indigenous languages contributes to language revitalization—potentially reversing colonial & hegemonic pressures that have put these heritage languages in their current state

It is widely recognized in the fields of anthropology and linguistics that one of the most important issues facing humankind today is the rate at which indigenous languages are vanishing or declining

If the present trend continues, during the 21<sup>st</sup> century more than half of the world's nearly 7,000 languages could become extinct

Most of these will vanish without being adequately recorded and documented, thus the extreme urgency of documentary linguistic fieldwork and revitalization

## North American Indian Sign Language

NWISL WCISL SWISL PISL SEISL NEISL

Northern Cheyenne  
Crow  
Hidasta-Mandan  
Blackfeet  
Gros Ventre  
Assiniboine  
Lakota



## Why study PISL?

- PISL has been long overlooked, understudied, and considered by many a primitive, emblematic, or dying language.
- Researchers who have studied it have focused on the alternative (ad-hoc) role of signing among male hearing community members only.
- Our research focuses on both alternative and primary acquisition patterns among deaf and hearing community members.

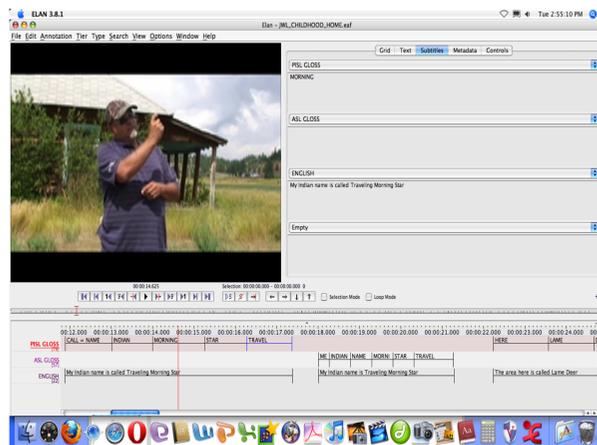
## Furthermore...

PISL offers insights about signed and spoken language contact; multilingualism and code-switching; the conveyance of human language in signed and spoken modalities; the interrelatedness and distinctiveness of speech, sign, and gesture; and also informs theories of language acquisition, contact, and change.

## Eudico Linguistic Annotator (ELAN)

ELAN is a tool for the creation of complex annotations on video/audio resources using captions, voice-over, slow motion, and annotations.

**Objective:** to train Deaf and American Indian students and linguistics students to use ELAN for the transcription, translation, and annotation of signed and spoken languages.



## 2009 – 2014 Documentary Linguistic Fieldwork

We have filmed more than twenty-five signers from among the

- Crow [Apsaalooke]
  - Assiniboine [A'aniinen]
  - Nakoda and Lak'hóta [Tetonwan]
  - Northern Cheyenne [Tse'tsehestahese]
  - Aapátóhsipikáni [Northern Piegan]
  - Aamsskáápipikáni [Southern Piegan/Montana Blackfeet]
  - Káínaa [Blood] and Siksiká [Alberta, Canada Blackfoot]
- Native collaborators have informed us that they know of hundreds of additional signers

## Project Objectives

- Conducting preliminary linguistic analyses to determine phonological parameters, morpho-syntactic underpinnings, semantic properties, and discourse features
- Integrating these findings into the digital archive of American Indian Sign Language documentary materials
- Making this important yet often overlooked part of American Indian linguistic and cultural heritage accessible to broader audiences and Native communities where indigenous sign language once thrived



James Wooden Legs  
Northern Cheyenne [Tse'tsehestahese]



## Presenter's Sample Bibliography and Research Website

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- Davis, J. (2015). American Indian Sign Language: Documentary linguistic methodologies and technologies. In M.C. Jones (Ed.) *Endangered Languages and New Technologies* (pp. 161 – 178). Cambridge University Press.

Research Website: <http://pislresearch.com/>

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