

Regarding Removing and Restoring SAIVUS' Lakota Pronunciation Guide and Ambitions to Create Future Materials

Mathias Bullerman (Lead Course Developer):

On Monday, September 21st, 2009 SAIVUS launched a Lakota pronunciation guide at <http://lakota.saivus.org>. Per protocol, we added this link to the Lakota Language Wikipedia page (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lakota_language). However, it was promptly removed by the user 'Thiyopa' under the rationale "Site contains major inaccuracies [*sic.*] and misleading info, linked by its author", so we added it again, and it was again removed under the rationale "the site contains major inaccuracies [*sic.*] and esp. misleading info, obviously linked by its author".

Other users had similar experiences, for instance, when 'Thiyopa' removed a link posted by 'Cancega' under the rationale "Web with highly inaccurate [*sic.*] content," 'Cancega' complained "Not inaccurate, leave the vote to the majority since you are biased." The aforementioned link was Lakota Iyapi (<http://www.elexion.com/lakota/iyapi/index2.html>), which SAIVUS considers to be an excellent resource for learning Lakota; in fact we added it to our own Links page (<http://saivus.org/saivuslinks.html#q4>). The history of Wikipedia edits of the Lakota Language Wikipedia article is viewable online at the following link: http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lakota_language&action=history.

Upon further investigation, I discovered 'Thiyopa' is also the administrator of the Lakota Language Forum (LLF) (<http://lakotadictionary.org/forums/>), run by the Lakota Language Consortium (LLC) (<http://www.lakhota.org/>). In clicking on the link to the LLF I instantly found I was banned from admission even though I had never broken any rules. Apparently 'Thiyopa' immediately banned my IP address using the IP address from my two Wikipedia edits. I emailed the LLC to inquire a) what mistakes my Lakota tutorial contains, b) why I was banned from a forum I have never visited, especially since 'Thiyopa' considers it to be the only source of "accurate information" on Lakota.

At once my ban from the LLF was lifted, yet I received an email from Jan F. Ullrich beseeching me to abandon SAIVUS' Lakota project so that only the LLC's materials remain available to the public, under the principle rationale other materials contain mistakes that 'confuse' Lakota who are trying to teach and learn their language. Mr. Ullrich did not specifically identify any mistakes in SAIVUS' lessons.

Since Mr. Ullrich is an experienced professional, and the LLC is a reputed non-profit with extensive community involvement and a long history of positive press, on Monday, April 26th, 2010, SAIVUS members voted to remove our Lakota materials and abandon our Lakota project at the LLC's request, displaying the following disclaimer in its stead:

SAIVUS has removed our Lakota pronunciation guide and abandoned creation of subsequent lessons. We are honoring our policy never to publish or to remove existing materials on Native languages provided the Native group associated with that language is predominately opposed, as expressed to us by [Jan Ullrich](#) of the [Lakota Language Consortium](#). Please refer to our [Links](#) section for leads on learning Lakota. Only a significant community response on behalf of distance learners in favor of our work can restore them. Please email comments to webmaster@saivus.org.

Although the decision damaged our public reputation, it was a sincere attempt to honor our policy "...never to publish language resources if the majority of the native group pertaining to that language is opposed."

Yet upon further investigation, SAIVUS concluded that the LLC has a tainted track record and does not in fact represent the majority of Lakota. Take the following 2002 “Lakota Journal” article by Cal Thunder Hawk, which is one of many sources documenting the fraudulent, territorialistic and imperialistic practices of the LLC.

Sinte Gleska University to reject Lakota Language Consortium membership

Story and photo by Cal Thunder Hawk
Lakota Journal Staff Writer

ROSEBUD — “The Lakota Language Consortium has created the misleading impression that Sinte Gleska University is one of the schools that supports their organization,” said Randy Emery.

Emery teaches in the Cultural Resources Management Program of Lakota Studies at SGU on the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation.

The Lakota Language Consortium, based at Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, is sponsoring an Inaugural Meeting & Workshop, October 10-12 in Rapid City. It will be conducted in conjunction with the Oglala Nation Education Consortium and the Black Hills Pow Wow.

Emery said, based on their review of “Lakota Language Revitalization: General Overview,” a document published by the LLC and widely circulated in Lakota country by LLC this spring, Lakota Studies will not recommend SGU participation in the consortium.

“The (LLC) documentation strongly implies that there are no fluent speakers younger than the elder age group and the presentation implies that the Lakota cannot deal with the problem themselves; therefore outside help must be brought in to lead the program. This appears to us as a sugar coated attack on sovereignty,” he said.

He continued, “The presentation suggests that a goal for the program is standardization of the language. We feel that this approach will cause problems because the language is utilized diversely. If standardization is determined to be the approach of the organization, then the question is whose version will be adopted? This will cause dissent and politics to become a factor in the process.”



Randy Emery

of anthropology and associate director of American Indian Studies and Research Institute, UI, is one of several organizers of the LLC.

He said that LLC had gotten no funding on the behalf of SGU and that the inclusion of SGU in the list of schools in the “Memorandum of Consortium” was for the proposed consortium only and did not imply SGU endorsement or support of it.

Parks said, “We want them in the consortium. That’s the thing. Rosebud has such a large population that I think it’s very crucial that they join this effort because the goal is to get all of the reservations together into a united effort.”

About LLC’s statistical analysis—the first item in the unfavorable review—Parks said, “It was based on a survey of speakers conducted by Oglala Community College at Pine Ridge about eight or ten years ago. The majority of speakers are that older generation. And, if you look at it statistically in another 10 years the average age of speakers will be 70. Every decade the age of speakers gets older and eventually the language is not going to be a living language. That doesn’t mean there won’t be any fluent speakers around. All it means is that you’re not going

started putting together any teaching materials yet. We’ll wait until we get an agreement on a single orthography. That’s one of the first issues that we’re going to have to address.”

He continued, “Each language has an inventory of significant sounds. Those sounds differentiate meaning between words. On the whole, the Buechel system, the old Rigg’s writing system and most of the systems that the schools themselves have devised don’t make all of those distinctions. Taylor and Rood does because it’s linguistically based. A writing system needs to make all of the distinctions that are necessary to learn how to correctly pronounce the words.”

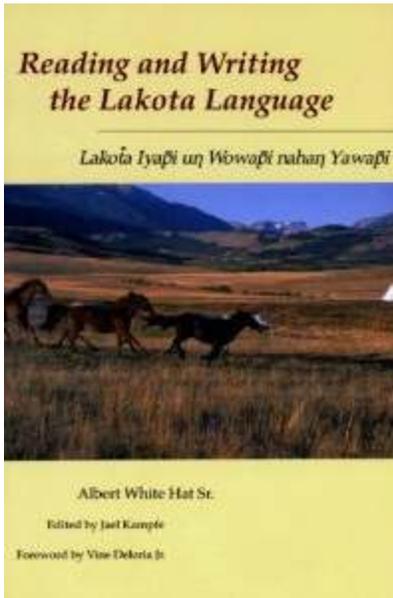
He said, “The first thing we’re actually going to work on is a dialect dictionary. It will take account of the variations among the different communities on the different reservations. The dictionary can be used in all of the communities. The same will be true of the teaching materials. They will be adapted for the speech of each community. This is something that we’ve planned for from the very beginning and not something that we have any intention of ignoring.”

“The consortium will produce teaching materials and they’ll be in a variety of formats. There will be multimedia lessons on CD. There will be printed textbooks, dictionaries and that kind of thing. All of that will be paid for from consortium fees. Each school gets those materials free so that there’s not an additional charge for consortium schools. If people outside the consortium want to buy those materials they will be made available or sold and the profit goes to the consortium. Not to Indiana University but to the consortium,” he said.

About the future of the LCC he said, “Eventually, in about 16 years, it’s going to move from Indiana University—where

http://calthunderhawk.tripod.com/articles/aug30-sept06/sgu_llc.html

Sinte Gleska University, Rosebud, is where Lakota language instructor Albert White Hat Sr. teaches, who is renowned for developing his own orthography and self-study course for Lakota:



Reading and Writing the Lakota Language
Albert White Hat Sr.

In the summer of 2010, SAIVUS bonded with prominent Lakota leaders on various American Indian reservations in Montana, who expressed that their people were very open to digital Lakota language lessons, notably:

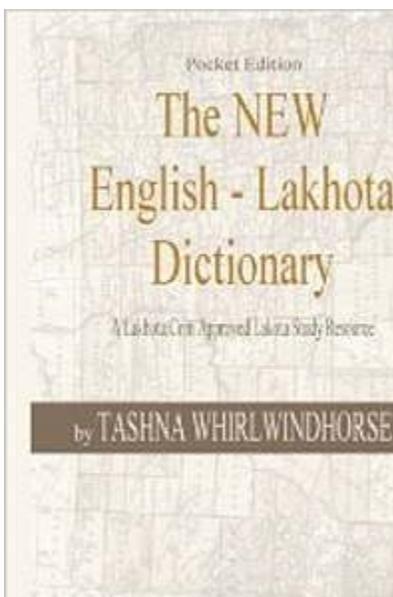


Blu Wakpa (*Powder River*) a.k.a. Dr. Jessie Johnson (center): a Linguist

from the University of Arizona who concentrated on language immersion and revitalization among the Cheyenne River Lakota, and his uncles Floyd War Eagle (left) and Douglass Clown (right): two native speaking Cheyenne River Lakota descendents of Crazy Horse.



Tashna Whirlwindhorse a.k.a. Tashna LaVaux (center): a fluent Lakota speaker from Haskell Indian Nations University with decades of community involvement among the Lakota who founded Lakhota.com and has written copious books on the language, chiefly a dictionary intended for native speaker reference, (as opposed to the LLC's materials which are intended for second language acquisition).



The New English - Lakota Dictionary
Tashna Whirlwindhorse

Without mentioning any details of my interactions with ‘Thiyopa’ nor the LLC, I emailed Ms. Whirlwindhorse to inquire why links to Lakota.com had been repeatedly removed from the Lakota Language Wikipedia article. She informed me that ‘Thiyopa’ had commandeered the Lakota Language Wikipedia page, and cautioned me about the LLC with complaints ranging from, unwarranted hostility, excessive harassment, fraud, organized slander, and other miscellaneous unprofessional behaviors, which were needless to say, highly reminiscent of my own dealings with them.

“It’s felt a lot like stalking and intimidation. A lakota language colleague of mine says, LLC determined I was competition and has been trying to snub me out since.”

- Tashna Whirlwindhorse

Since the LLC’s demonstrated prerogatives of a) dictating Lakota language school-of-thought, b) mandating the Ullrich orthography, and c) monopolizing Lakota language pedagogical materials are not aligned with SAIVUS’ values, we have rescinded their request to remove our materials and are green-lighting our mission to create digital Lakota lessons.

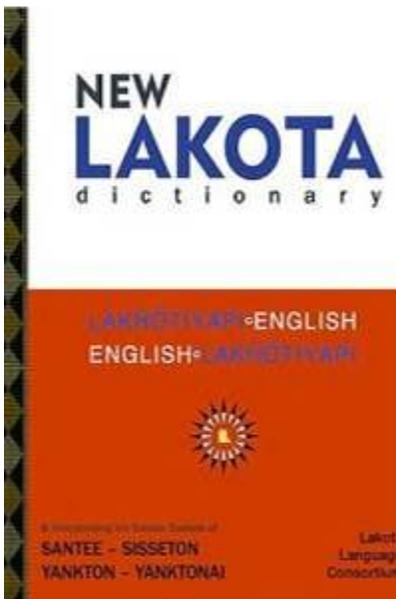
On Friday, April 29th, 2011, SAIVUS republished our original Lakota pronunciation guide and green-lighted our Lakota language project, now at:

sioux.saivus.org

We will soon be modifying it into a general tutorial of the sound systems of Lakota, Dakota and Nakota and their dialects.

For more information on SAIVUS’ interactions with the LLC please contact us at webmaster@saivus.org. For information on Lakota.com’s interactions with the LLC please contact them at <http://www.tnwcreations.com/>.

SAIVUS maintains that the LLC is in fact making a positive impact on the Lakota language by training teachers, establishing immersion schools and creating reliable pedagogical materials geared toward children and non-native speaking individuals that SAIVUS members consult ourselves, such as:



The New Lakota Dictionary
Lakota Language Consortium, edited by Jan F. Ullrich

SAIVUS ended our interaction with Mr. Ullrich and the LLC on a positive note. We encourage their efforts to revitalize Lakota and laud them for the positive goals they have achieved. However, we are severely opposed to their negative tactics and are attempting to expose their misconducts for the purpose of warning the general public of their misbehavior, through a press release. Please email webmaster@saivus.org if you would like to get involved.

A digital version of this article is viewable at <http://lakota.saivus.org>.