



# Supporting language revitalization of Great Basin indigenous language through archival materials:

## A catalogue of language records at the UNR Special Collections

Lauren Harvey, laurenharvey@nevada.unr.edu  
University of Nevada, Reno

### Introduction

*Language revitalization* is the process of reviving dormant or endangered languages. Four major Great Basin indigenous languages – *Northern Paiute, Southern Paiute, Washoe and Shoshone* – are among these endangered languages and are understudied and under documented. The purpose of this project was to document the availability of linguistic information about these languages in the University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections.

### Objectives

This study was conducted to identify...

- *What linguistic materials are present in the university Special Collections.*
- *How those materials are relevant to the overall project of language revitalization.*

### Methodology

- UNR Special Collections
  - Used online database to search for keywords relating to project
  - Pulled materials from archives using MARS
- Recorded findings in spreadsheet
  - Catalogued information such as title, language group, location, content, and usefulness for project
- Worked closely with Special Collections staff and research partner

### Findings

- Variety of materials such as dissertations, death records, ethnography notes, books, films, music, journals, etc.
- Content included vocabulary, band names, plants, legends, hymns, and phonemic and morphological inventories.
- *Items potentially useful for revitalization include typological studies, books on grammar, phonology and morphology and glossed (morpheme by morpheme) translations of native legends.*
- Nearly half of materials recorded pertained to Northern Paiute showing that it is vastly overrepresented in Special Collections.
- There was an abundance of language materials but a majority of it was short phrases or vocabulary in IPA.
- Majority of findings were of historical relevance as an attempt to preserve the economic, cultural, and subsistence aspects of native peoples.
- *Majority of information was published indicating that it is already known to linguists.*
- Information found may be more useful for anthropologists or historians as it is most relevant for studying the cultures of Great Basin people.
- *Of the linguistic material found, there was a lot of information about language structure but not about the use of the language.*

### Discussion

In order to better support revitalization efforts in the Great Basin, it would be important to collect or create more oral recordings of individuals speaking the language as well as transcriptions of oral stories.

### Conclusion

My findings were helpful in assessing the availability of language materials in that they indicated that *more materials are needed for revitalization efforts*. Based on research results, *more information containing both cultural and linguistic significance* is needed. This newfound knowledge contributes to the broader topic of language revitalization of the Great Basin languages as it shows the *need for resources regarding the lived experiences of people who speak these languages in addition to information gathered from an outside perspective*.

### Acknowledgments

- Ignacio Montoya, Faculty Mentor
- University of Nevada, Reno Office of Undergraduate Research, Pack Research Experience Program
- Brenna Adams, Research Partner
- University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections

