



# Terralingua

UNITY IN BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

language environment  
culture



## Terralingua Annual Report 2011

Salt Spring Island, November 2011

Dear Terralingua Members and Friends,

As 2011 comes to a close, it's time to look back at the year's events and activities, and reflect on what we have accomplished here at Terralingua—and on where we go from here. I want to share with you both the excitement for our advances, and the undeniable challenges we face in going forward.

It is fair to say that 2011 was a pivotal year for Terralingua. Perhaps more clearly than we ever did since we started back in 1996, this year we felt that all our work is coming together and bearing fruit—and that this is happening not just in the ranks of the “already converted”, but also in the larger world. It is as if the seeds we had been scattering around for a long time have finally taken hold and germinated.

This has been true this year in more ways than one, through increasing attention to our work in both academic and policy settings, as well as in the popular media:

- Our [Index of Linguistic Diversity \(ILD\)](#), which was peer-reviewed and published last year, is being hailed as a tool that (in the words of one of its reviewers) “promises to have a significant scientific impact on the field of linguistics and on our broader understanding of the impact of global forces on biocultural diversity”. It was also the object of a colourful interview published earlier this year on [National Geographic News Watch](#). If you haven't seen the interview yet, do check it out—it's a good read!
- Our [Vitality Index of Traditional Environmental Knowledge \(VITEK\)](#), which continues to be tested in the field in Venezuela, is being praised as a tool that fills a major gap in our understanding of the processes that lead to the permanence or loss of traditional environmental knowledge (TEK). It has attracted the interest of researchers and students, a number of whom have been applying the methodology in their own fieldwork. It has also been the object of invited presentations at international meetings on indicators relevant to Indigenous Peoples.

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- Having just returned from a meeting of the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) in Montreal (Canada), in which I was invited to speak on both the **ILD** and the **VITEK**, I am glad to report that these two indicators are **well positioned to make an important contribution to biodiversity-relevant policy**, as they provide needed data on key aspects of cultural diversity that are intimately linked to biodiversity conservation: trends in the vitality of the world's languages and trends in the vitality of TEK.
- Our [Biocultural Diversity Education Initiative](#), which we launched only a few months ago with initial support from the **Berman Foundation**, is already calling the attention of educators and students in the USA and Canada. We are developing a variety of **educational curriculum materials on biocultural diversity for high schools**, to be tested in two or three schools next year. Based on that experience, we intend to develop a full-fledged curriculum, including both print and online materials, to be disseminated as widely as possible throughout school systems in North America and beyond. We expect that, with some modifications, the materials will also be useful to **college students**. It is very encouraging to work with keen young minds—as the future of the biocultural diversity of life is in their hands!
- Thanks to the grant we received in 2010 from the **Firebird Foundation**, we established the [Voices of the Earth](#) project. This project aims to **support Indigenous Peoples' own efforts to document and revitalize their oral traditions**, which are increasingly at risk of being lost. Recording these traditions from the remaining fluent Elders has a key role in **ensuring they are transmitted to younger generations**. It helps **maintain cultural continuity and identity**, serves to **rekindle people's connection with the land**, and in some instances it can also **support land title and rights cases**, such as in the defense of indigenous lands from unwanted development. In our initial work with the **Saanich and Tsilhqot'in First Nations of British Columbia**, Canada, we are already seeing these connections with real-life issues relevant to sustaining the biocultural diversity of life. We are working to expand this project through partnerships with Indigenous Peoples in other parts of the world.
- Our [Biocultural Diversity Conservation portal](#) (the companion to our 2010 *Biocultural Diversity Conservation book*) showcases a growing number of **on-the-ground projects that take an integrated biocultural approach to the conservation of both nature and culture**. It is regularly visited by interested people from all over the world, from whom we hear that it offers a wealth of inspiring and illuminating information about the “nuts and bolts” of biocultural conservation. We plan to continue to enrich this resource and to stimulate the “**community of practice**” that it is helping create among researchers, professionals, and on-the-ground practitioners.
- Last but not least, we've significantly enhanced our outreach through our **website, periodic e-news, twice-yearly e-zine Langscape, and presence on social media** (Facebook, Twitter, and soon YouTube). We are receiving excellent feedback on all our media, and our membership and social media following are growing. At this time, I want to especially call your attention to our new website, which is more beautiful and informative than ever, with independent sites for most of our projects, and much more to come. Please let us know how you like it!

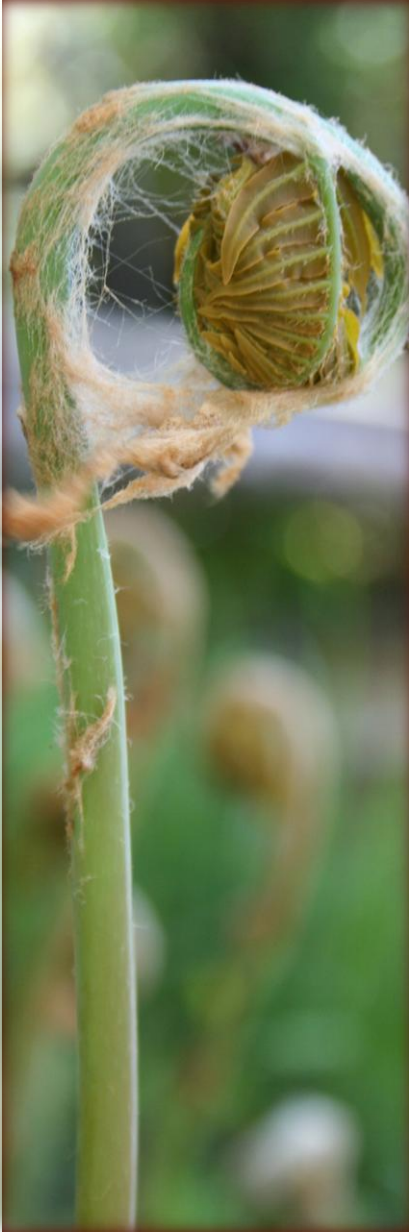
It is elating to see how the **idea of biocultural diversity, which was at best quaint if not utterly obscure when we began to propose it fifteen years ago, now seems to be taking off in these and many other directions**. The concept is now popping up in all kinds of places—whether or not people realize that it first came from Terralingua. When something like that happens, **it's actually a sign that an idea is coming of age and penetrating into collective consciousness**, so we're witnessing this with great joy and pride.

Needless to say, what Terralingua has done and continues to do wouldn't be possible without all the hard work that our extraordinarily dedicated **Terralingua team** has put into making it happen. This is a good time for me to thank them all. They are:

- Our staff members Tania Aguila and Ortixia Dilts, with whom many of you are familiar through our membership and media services (and who do much much more behind the scenes!)
- Dave Harmon and Jonathan Loh, the brains behind the **ILD**
- Stanford Zent, the intrepid developer of the **VITEK**
- Jen Hegarty and Carla Paciotto, the two wonder women working on our biocultural education curriculum
- Ellen Woodley, co-author with me of the book *Biocultural Diversity Conservation* (2010)







I also want to acknowledge the unwavering support of our **Board of Governors**: Chair Prof. Annamalai, Vice Chair Prof. George Appell, Secretary-Treasurer Susan Fassberg, and At-Large members Jessica Brown, Dr. Christopher Dunn, and Cristina Mittermeier. A supportive Board is the bedrock of an organization's success, and Terralingua is truly fortunate in this way as well.

There's no doubt that **things are looking up for Terralingua and the mission we all share: sustaining the biocultural diversity of life for generations to come.** We are poised for major breakthroughs with all of our projects, and for continuing to have a leading role in mainstreaming the value of biocultural diversity in the "real world". I feel that the next few years will be decisive in this respect.

However, **precisely at this auspicious time, we're confronted with a major challenge when it comes to securing the means to do the work that lies ahead.** Coinciding with the global financial crisis that has enveloped the world since 2008, the past three years have been hard on us in terms of fundraising. Some of our most reliable sources of grant monies have dried up—at least for now—and our existing reserves have been eroding. **This situation is not sustainable. If we're not successful in turning it around soon, Terralingua will not be able to stay around long enough to make the breakthroughs we're positioned for—and to continue to work for a bioculturally better future.**

We are rising to the challenge. **We developed a multifaceted fundraising strategy,** and are deploying it in earnest with help from our Board and other supporters. We have had some initial success, but more is needed. **The key is maximum diversification of our sources of funding, through partnerships with a large variety of donors who share our goals.** We're approaching like-minded foundations to let them know about Terralingua's work and how it can help them achieve their philanthropic goals. **And we are coming to you, our trusted members and friends, to urge you to renew your generous support at this critical time. We need partners like you to ensure that, together, we can move our shared agenda forward and continue to pursue our mission.**

Consider this: as you can see from the annual financial report included here, **we continue to spend our funds very judiciously, and to put most of our resources into program development (nearly 80% in 2011).** Then consider this: **our anticipated budget for 2012 is a mere US \$240,000**—a small amount with which, as we have done in the past, **we'll be able to advance all of our projects, and to maintain our international leadership in biocultural research, education, policy, and on-the-ground work.** But, as grant monies are increasingly difficult to come by, **we need to substantially increase the amounts coming from individual donors, both large and small.** At present, **the proportion of our funding that comes from individual donations and major donations combined is 10%. We want to raise that proportion to 20% in 2012.** So now consider this too: it is feasible! **Today, our Terralingua family counts over a thousand members.** As you know, we don't require a membership fee, but rely on your voluntary contributions. We do realize that some of you can do more, others less. But **please chip in as generously as you can. We'll welcome your donations, no matter how large or small!** And remember, your donations to Terralingua are tax-deductible in the USA, and may be deductible in other countries as well, depending on your tax code.

I count on you. **Please be an active partner, and make your contribution to Terralingua today.** There are several convenient ways you can do this: through the secure "Donate now" service on our website ([www.terralingua.org](http://www.terralingua.org)), or by sending us a check or money order by mail. You can choose to support our general program of work, or specifically earmark your donation for any of our projects. **And you can rest assured that your donations will be put directly to work to further our mission!**

**Imagine. Sustaining biocultural diversity, the true web of life. Together, we can do it.**

With warm regards, and best wishes for the holidays,



Luisa Maffi, Ph.D.  
Co-founder and Director

# TERRALINGUA DONORS

Over the years, we have been fortunate to receive the support of many foundations, organizations, and individual donors who share Terralingua's mission. Here we want to directly acknowledge as many of them as possible. But our heartfelt thanks go to all of them, whether their names appear here or not!

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