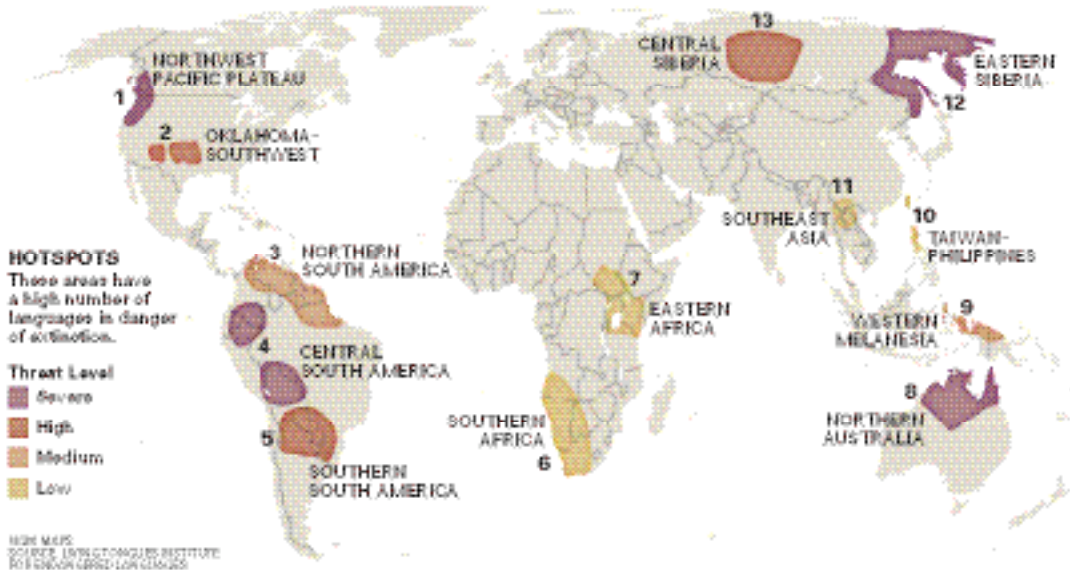


A World Loses Its Tongues

About every two weeks another language dies, taking millennia of human knowledge and history with it.



GOING SILENT

Falling numbers of speakers endanger these languages and many others.

1 Northwest Pacific Plateau	
Ktunaxa	10 speakers
Siletz Dee-ni	5
South Haida	10
2 Oklahoma-Southwest	
Cahuilla	20
Mohave	7
Wichita	3
3 Northern South America	
Tinigua	2
Totoro	5
Zaparo	5
4 Central South America	
Muniche	5
Taushiro	1
Uru	1
5 Southern South America	
Guató	50
Ofaye	20
Vilela	2
6 Southern Africa	
Nlu ("l" is a click)	8
Tswapong	2,000
Xiri	85



In her traditional Monchak language, this western Mongolian grandmother (above) has no word for "grandson" but several for goats with different colors or markings. That richness of vocabulary is typical of herders. She is one of the last speakers of the ancient tongue. Her grandson knows only Mongolian; within his lifetime, Monchak will be extinct. The Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages is working with National Geographic's Enduring Voices Project to map linguistic hotspots so resources can be directed to record fading languages and help those that can be saved. —A. R. Williams

7 Eastern Africa	
Ngasa	300
Nindi	100
Omotik	50
8 Northern Australia	
Gurdanji	5
Mati Ke	10
Nyikina	50
9 Western Melanesia	
Piru	10
Usku	25
Woria	10
10 Taiwan-Philippines	
Arta	5
Babuza	5
Pazeh	1
11 Southeast Asia	
Arem	40
Buxinhua	200
Red Gelao	20
12 Eastern Siberia	
Medny Aleut	20
Orok	20
Tundra Yukaghir	50
13 Central Siberia	
Enets	50
Os	15
South Selkup	20