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## Experts find 5 hot spots for endangered languages

**RANDOLPH E. SCHMID, The Associated Press**

WASHINGTON - When all known speakers of the language Amurdag get together, there's still no one to talk to.

Native Australian Charlie Mungulda is the only person alive known to speak that language, one of thousands around the world on the brink of extinction.

From rural Australia to Siberia to Oklahoma, languages that embody the history and traditions of people are dying, researchers said Tuesday.

An estimated 7,000 languages are spoken around the world today, but one of them dies out about every two weeks, according to linguistic experts struggling to save at least some of them.

Five hot spots where languages are most endangered were listed Tuesday in a briefing by the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages and the National Geographic Society.

The research is funded by the Australian government, the U.S. National Science Foundation, the National Geographic Society and grants from foundations.

Losing languages means losing knowledge, says K. David Harrison, an assistant professor of linguistics at Swarthmore College and associate director of the Living Tongues Institute.

"When we lose a language, we lose centuries of human thinking about time, seasons, sea creatures, reindeer, edible flowers, mathematics, landscapes, myths, music, the unknown and the everyday."

As many as half of the current languages have never been written down, he estimated. That means, if the last speaker vanished, the language would be lost, he said.

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