

PRESERVING CULTURE FOR THE FUTURE



Emory Sekaquaptewa received the Lifetime Achievement Award at BARA's 52nd anniversary in 2004. Photo courtesy of Bill Havens.

Research anthropologist Emory Sekaquaptewa believed that a Hopi Children's Word Book is critical to achieving Hopi language and culture revitalization. The work of committed colleagues and gifts from Gordon Krutz and Arch and Laura Brown will help his vision become a reality.

Emory Sekaquaptewa, a Hopi elder and a research anthropologist in the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology (BARA), worked tirelessly throughout his life to preserve the Hopi language for future generations.

One of his major accomplishments during his 38 years at the UA was the Hopi Dictionary, published by the UA Press in 1998. The dictionary, which took more than 10 years to put together, is an incredible achievement, and one which, according to BARA Director Tim Finan, "will certainly mark Emory's legacy."

As important as the dictionary was in training teachers and increasing literacy among the Hopi people, it wasn't targeted to children. And teaching children to be literate in Hopi is essential to the future vibrancy of the language.

When Emory died on Dec. 14, 2007, he was in the middle of creating a Hopi Children's Word Book. His colleagues and supporters are determined to realize his vision for this project.

A Passion for Hopi Literacy

Emory, who was reportedly the first indigenous American to receive a J.D. from the University of Arizona College of Law, was born on Third Mesa on the Hopi Reservation in Arizona and stayed involved in all aspects of the Hopi community, both modern and traditional.

Throughout his life, Emory watched with dismay as each generation of the Hopi people seemed to suffer greater rates of language loss.

"Loss of the Hopi language in the community would definitely be against the Hopi teaching of our belief in our destiny in this world," said Emory in an interview conducted shortly before his death. "The Hopi religion teaches the survival of the Hopi people, and if we lose the language, we will no longer be Hopi."

"Emory was convinced, and the literature supports him, that a language community able to read Hopi and with access to a wide range of reading materials in Hopi will be able to preserve its language and its culture," says Finan.

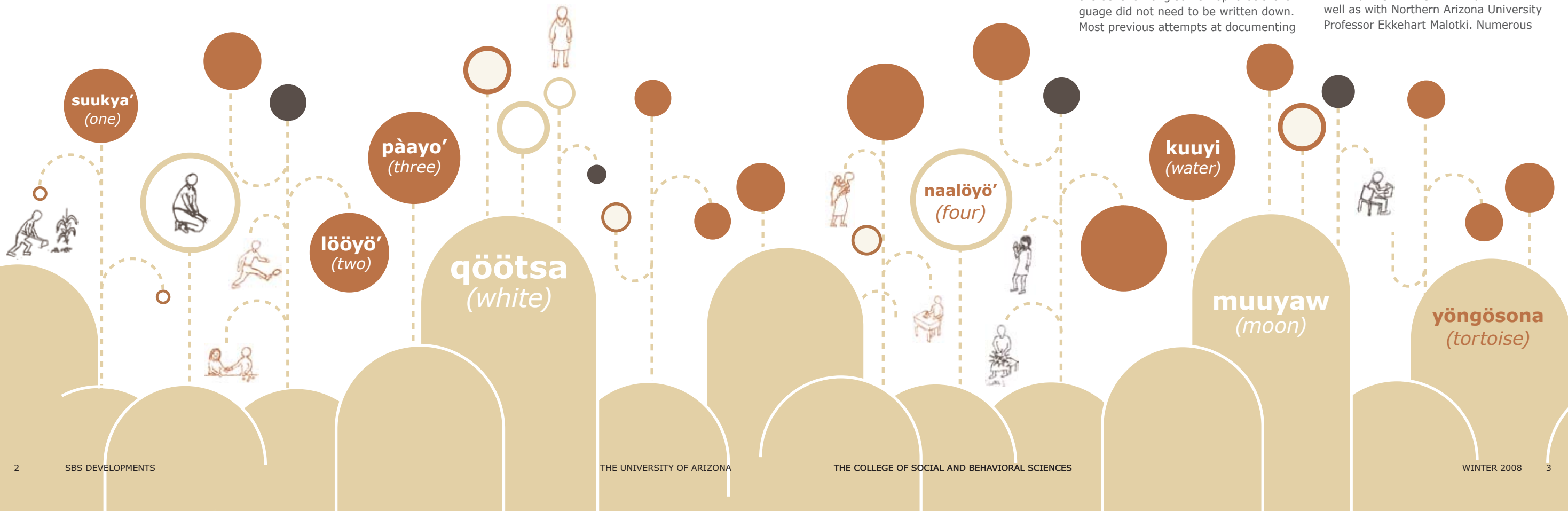
An early hurdle that Emory faced was the belief among some Hopi that the language did not need to be written down. Most previous attempts at documenting

the language had been done by non-Hopi people.

"The young people felt very offended by having non-Indians delving into their language and writing it," said Emory. "Young Indians were very much threatened by a white man taking their language away, in their mind, as the white man has taken away things from the Indian in the past. They felt that the language is sacred, and it should not be written down."

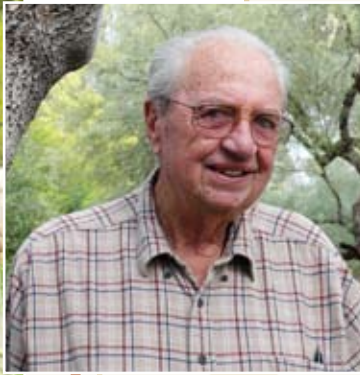
Emory said that the Hopi no longer have that attitude. "After all of these years, most people have accepted the idea that writing the Hopi language is the best way to preserve their language."

Early in his career, when Emory began reviewing the existing Hopi ethnographies, he was dissatisfied with some of the listed meanings for Hopi words. He started writing down Hopi words and their various meanings on 5 x 7 index cards. Before long, he had thousands of cards in shoe boxes. Colleagues at the UA encouraged him to find a more formal way to document the words, and the Hopi Dictionary project was born. He worked with linguist Ken Hill and anthropological linguist Mary Black, as well as with Northern Arizona University Professor Ekkehart Malotki. Numerous





At left: Arch and Laura Brown. Below: Gordon Krutz. Photos by Lori Harwood. Inset: Photo of Emory Sekaquaptewa courtesy of Bill Havens.



Illustrations: The drawings in this article were done by Emory Sekaquaptewa (to be shown to the Hopi artist who will illustrate the book).

Hopi speakers worked as consultants on the project, including two panels of older speakers, and helped to resolve questions regarding dictionary entries and their usage, suggested new entries, and provided example sentences, until more than 30,000 words had been recorded.

"The Hopi Dictionary is still considered to be the most scholarly, complete Native American language dictionary in existence," says Finan.

Reaching the Children

Today, Hopi children (except for a small minority) are no longer learning the Hopi language as a first language. Because of the presence of television and radio in Hopi homes and other outside modern influences, there is considerably less exposure to the language on a daily basis. Children, however, are still exposed to the language in the cultural practices of the Hopi, such as kachina ceremonies.

The Hopi schools are beginning to offer an opportunity for children to hear Hopi consistently and to learn Hopi as a second language.

Emory and his students worked on instructional materials for Hopi teachers. In fact, Emory taught in Hopi classrooms to help him develop more effective lessons.

Incorporating the teaching of Hopi into

the classroom remains an ongoing struggle because of a general education policy that does not give priority, much less support, to teaching a non-English language. The primary funding support of Hopi schools is the federal government, which puts emphasis on the state school curriculum requirements.

"We are arguing that by teaching the Hopi language in our Hopi schools we are not undermining the three R's," said Emory. "We are simply adding self-esteem to Hopi children so that they find some pride in being able to learn Hopi at the same time that they are learning their three R's. That is our argument. It is the same argument for teaching of the arts and humanities...these are all important for the whole education of the child."

The Hopi Dictionary has been the primary tool for teacher training; however, the Hopi teachers find this dictionary in its technical treatment of the Hopi vocabulary to be beyond the comprehension of elementary school children.

Emory believed the teachers were in critical need of a Hopi children's book that could attract the attention of children. The book will be modeled after the popular Richard Scarry children's books.

The work on the project is sufficiently advanced that Emory's colleagues — Tim

Finan, Ken Hill, Mary Black and Sheilah Nicholas (a former student of Emory's, who is also Hopi) — will see the project through to completion.

"The Hopi Children's Word Book — by its very existence — will demonstrate to the children in a tangible way that the language is valued and can be both read and written," says Black. "By bringing the printed Hopi word to children in their classrooms, we hope to get them excited and engaged in ultimately creating and recording their own stories in the language that is their cultural heritage."

The Hopi Children's Word Book will incorporate words and sentences with drawings depicting typical Hopi scenes and activities, as well as a pronunciation guide that includes the sounds of the letters in their representation of Hopi speech sounds. The Hopi alphabet is much the same as that used for writing English, with a few additions (such as the vowel 'ö') and some omissions (for example, 'p' is used rather than 'b' to depict the Hopi sound that is somewhere in-between). Because the writing system is completely phonetic, there are no spelling "tricks"; Hopi words are spelled exactly as they sound.

Emory's colleagues plan to hire a Hopi artist to do the illustrations. Emory felt that it is not only important for children

to see their language in its written form, it is important for them to see pictures of children that resemble them.

Supporting a Vision

The lead gifts for this project have come from two different sources: a former colleague of Emory's and a Tucson couple who met him on a Hopi tour.

Gordon Krutz hired Emory to be the assistant coordinator of Indian Programs at the UA in 1970. The program represented The University of Arizona to the tribes.

"Emory was an anchor for Hopi students who came here. He was a symbol. He made himself available," says Krutz.

He recalls well the years when Emory was writing Hopi words on index cards. "In the beginning he had a lot of trouble with people on the Hopi reservation. Some felt that the language is sacred and should never be written," says Krutz. "I remember one time we went to the Hopi mental health conference, and we passed around printed Hopi. He showed them you could read the Hopi language if you could speak it."

Krutz remained friends with Emory after retiring in 1992 and was one of the first to give financial support to this project.

Laura and Arch Brown have followed and financed Emory's work since they met him on a tour of the Hopi Reservation in 2001.

"We were extremely impressed with Emory, his enthusiasm and dedication to his people, his education skills, his intelligence and his family hospitality," says Laura Brown. "These attributes left us determined to support whatever programs Emory decided would help his people."

Laura Brown adds that they were drawn to Emory's "twinkle." "I have never met a man with a more amazing expression. He had a twinkle. His twinkle was hope. His twinkle was 'thank you for helping me with this.' His twinkle was just pure Emory."

The Browns, who have lived in Tucson since 1972, have a long history of philanthropy. They support activities and organizations in the community that represent education, conservancy, theatre and breast cancer.

When the Browns were asked to donate to Emory's project, they didn't hesitate. "This project is important because the Hopi language and history have historically been oral only, and we agreed with Emory that the foundation of a written language is important for the long-term survival of the language and the culture of the Hopi people," says Arch Brown. "This project will ground the young to support the written word from infancy."

To support this project, please send a check in the enclosed envelope (put Hopi Children's Word Book on the memo line), give online at www.sbs.arizona.edu (select "Quick Links" and then "Make a Gift to SBS"), or contact Ginny Healy at 520-621-3938.

Tutuqayhoya penta.
(A student is writing.)

Pam Hopiikwa penta.
(He is writing in the Hopi language.)

Pam Hopilavayit tutuqayi.
(He is learning the Hopi language.)

Tutuqayhoya túngwanta.
(A student is reading.)

Pam Hopiikwa túngwanta.
(He is reading in the Hopi language.)

Pam pu' Hopilavayit tuuqayta.
(He speaks in Hopi now.)

