



Our mission...

... is to provide web access to and information on a variety of indigenous and dying languages and cultures of the Caribbean through a set of four media for each language and culture:

- sound clips (with accompanying texts, transcriptions and translations where available)
- video clips of speakers
- photographs and maps
- descriptions of the demographics, and sociolinguistic and cultural contexts

The CIEL website supports UNESCO's programme to promote language diversity in cyberspace, engaging in the ongoing collection, storage and analysis of Caribbean language data, focussing on endangered indigenous languages, and creole languages, including Maroon languages from Jamaica to Suriname. The CIEL website makes these data widely available through the hosting and management of a regionally-based website which contains extensive, reliable and authoritative written, spoken and multimedia material in and about these endangered languages, using all existing technologies for storage and dissemination.

The Caribbean Indigenous and Endangered Languages (CIEL) website was created by The University of the West Indies in conjunction with UNESCO in 2006–2007 for educational and research purposes, and to provide online access to language materials and databases for researchers and students. Its activities are supported by grants from UNESCO.

CIEL is a project of the Jamaican Language Unit/Caribbean Language Research Unit.



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Caribbean Indigenous and Endangered Languages (CIEL) Website





The CIEL website is part of an education strategy to promote an awareness and understanding of the role and place of all Caribbean languages in Caribbean history, and their value to modern Caribbean society, in both the island archipelago and the Caribbean coastal areas of Central and South America.

The CIEL website functions as the prime portal for Caribbean indigenous language and culture documentation, description, and resources.

Our activities...

Education

The **indigenous Amerindian languages** of the Caribbean and the cultures which they transmit have taken thousands of years to develop. These languages have been threatened in a variety of ways. The traditional threat has been through the physical extermination of their speakers in the wake of colonisation. In modern times, this threat has receded, and has been replaced by new ones, including discrimination against and devaluation of the peoples, their languages and cultures, both within and outside of the indigenous speech communities.

Indigenous languages of the Caribbean are not historical relics standing in the way of the modernisation and development of the groups which traditionally spoke them. Rather, these languages and the communities which speak them represent an accumulation of communal knowledge of how to interact with Caribbean environments in a sustainable fashion. The endangerment of Caribbean indigenous languages ultimately threatens the chances of Caribbean people surviving and prospering in the geographical spaces they currently occupy. Protecting, preserving, promoting, and even reviving Caribbean indigenous languages is of importance to all Caribbean people, whether they are themselves of indigenous origin or not, and to mankind as a whole.

In the post-Columbian era, many new **Caribbean creole languages** developed through contact among peoples of three continents. Relatively new but native to the region, with input from a number of European, African and Amerindian languages, these languages reflect the history of the region, are in active, dynamic use within their communities and nations, and are at the centre of scholarly activity and debate in the region and overseas. Although the history of Caribbean creole languages is shorter than that of Amerindian languages, their value to their respective societies and to humanity is being increasingly recognised. Many of these languages have also been stigmatised over the centuries, and some are already extinct, with others facing extinction.

Two of the **Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity**, named by UNESCO, are **Garífuna language**, dance and music (originally Vincentian, now spoken in Belize and Guatemala), and **Jamaican Maroon** culture of Moore Town, Portland. The CIEL website is proud to focus on these Caribbean masterpieces of human heritage, and much more.

Our activities...

Research

The CIEL website supports and showcases the scholarly activities of researchers and students of The University of the West Indies (UWI) by providing access to materials collected, by providing a repository for research material, and by showcasing current and past research activities of UWI staff and students.

The aims of the CIEL website are to:

1. make available a large and easily accessible body data for speakers of these endangered languages, as well as for international scholars studying these languages, allowing them to know quickly what work is being done on which language, who is working on them and what progress has been made, thus avoiding duplication of research effort,
2. construct a repository of indigenous culture and knowledge stored and transmitted by indigenous languages,
3. quicken the speed with which research focuses on a particular language, proceeding to scientifically document and describe that language, and
4. give impetus to members of communities of Caribbean indigenous endangered languages to take part in the work being done and to expand the research so as to protect and promote these languages.

The CIEL website is supported by the CIEL Digital Archive. The Archive includes language and language-related materials in a variety of media. These materials form the output of UWI and other scholars, so organised and stored that they are accessible to both members of the endangered language communities, academic linguists and school children. The Archive thus forms the basis for collaboration across these normally separate groups in the tasks of documentation, description and promotion.

The website contains a wide range of materials, including audio recordings, video recordings, photographs, articles, bibliographies and links to related websites.

Features of the CIEL website

The website has a unique collection of over 100 documents on 28 Caribbean languages.

The website focuses on the five following indigenous and endangered languages.

- Berbice Dutch Creole of Guyana
- Arawak (Lokono) of Guyana
- Garífuna of Central America
- Kromanti of Jamaica, and
- Saramaccan of Suriname (including Matawari)

Basic data are provided for these languages:

Arawakan languages

Island Carib (Kalinago) of Dominica
Wapishana of Guyana

Carib languages

Akawaio of Guyana
Akurio of Suriname
Kalihna (Carib) of Guyana and Suriname
Macushi of Guyana
Patamona of Guyana
Pemon of Venezuela
Sikiana of South America
Trió of Suriname
Tunayana of Suriname
Waiwai of Guyana and Brazil
Wayana of Suriname

Mayan languages

Kekchí of Central America
Mopán Maya of Belize
Yucatán Maya of Mexico and Belize

Amerindian language isolate

Warao of Guyana

Creole languages

Kwinti of Suriname
Aukaans (Ndjuká) of Suriname (including Aluku (Boni) and Paramaccan)
Skepi Dutch Creole of Guyana

Research into all of the above languages is ongoing, and the website is constantly being expanded and updated. There will be the future addition of the European, African and Asian languages that are part of the linguistic makeup of the region, and that have gone into the development of modern Caribbean peoples and their languages.