

UBC participates in UNESCO's new language preservation initiative

By Jackie Hoffmann (jackie.hoffmann@mail.arts.ubc.ca): posted to www.arts.ubc.ca | May 04, 2009.
Story courtesy of UNESCO.

UNESCO's Register of Good Practices in Language Preservation allows all to contribute, including UBC Creative Writing Assistant Professor, Rhea Tregebov.

With over 6,000 languages in the world - each supporting a unique culture and world view - preserving each and every one is essential, especially when over 50% are in danger of extinction. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Endangered Languages Programme does just that.

In line with its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, UNESCO has launched a world-wide call for submissions to its new 'Register of good Practices in Language Preservation.' Through this initiative, UNESCO is part of the effort to provide a safeguard for languages in danger of extinction. The publicly available register will serve as a starting point for future preservation projects to launch from, better equipping the next generation of activists.

The Register's rationale

A collection of positive experience reports from past and current project agents shall provide a rich source of problem-solving approaches, hands-on solutions, practical information, adaptable models, and do's and don'ts of language preservation, to be easily accessed as a self-help tool by current and future project agents, empowering them in their ongoing efforts.

Recognizing the importance for such an initiative, UBC Creative Writing Program Assistant Professor, Rhea Tregebov and the Winnipeg Yiddish Women's Reading Circle group submitted, [Arguing with the Storm: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers](#), an anthology of translations. Both the Winnipeg Yiddish Women's Reading Circle and the anthology itself are now part of the Register.

Publishing 14 stories by nine early to mid-twentieth Yiddish women writers, the anthology which was funded by a UBC HSS Grant, drawing from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) was edited by Tregebov and released in 2007.

"Language diversity is the repository of cultural heritage, and in these times of globalization, I believe the local needs preservation," said Tregebov who is fluent in Spanish, French, and some Italian and Hebrew. "There is a real hunger to preserve languages and the rich cultural basis informing them. The registry provides grass-roots models for language preservation, but it has the imprimature of UNESCO, giving it a very broad audience."

As Yiddish as the sole endangered language she works with, Tregebov potentially sees working further with the registry. "The website is receiving an awful lot of traffic, it will no doubt be keeping the site up to date, so I will remain in touch with them," said Tregebov. "More work with Yiddish is a definite possibility." The call for submissions to the Register, being circulated through international networks and list-servs is accessible through the Register's website, hosted by the Endangered Languages Programme.

For more details please visit the [UNESCO communication and information site](#). For the **Register of Good Practises of Language Preservation** please [click here](#).



UBC Creative Writing Assistant Professor: Rhea Tregebov.