

Lessons on the Cherokee language

March 26, 2015

As fluent speakers of Native American languages decline, efforts to save these valuable languages are increasing.

Tulsa City-County Library Chief Executive Officer Gary Shaffer saw an opportunity to advance preservation efforts of the Cherokee Nation, the largest Native American tribe in the United States with about 315,000 registered citizens around the world.

Through a collaboration of Tulsa City-County Library, the Cherokee Nation and Mango Languages, users can now learn the Cherokee language from their home computer, laptop and mobile device. Mango Languages software is available to Tulsa City-County Library customers, <http://www.tulsalibrary.org/language>, as well as 3,000 other libraries nationwide, to learn to speak and write Cherokee.

Mango Languages is an online language-learning system that can help you learn by listening to native speakers and engaging in the interactive lessons offered through this user-friendly language interface.

Shaffer, working with Teresa Runnels, Tulsa City-County Library's American Indian Resource coordinator, reached out to the Cherokee Nation to form a language preservation partnership.

"The collaboration certainly would not have come about if it were not for the backing of Cherokee Principal Chief Bill John Baker, the belief in the project exhibited by Dr. Candessa Tehee, director of the Cherokee Heritage Center and Roy Boney Jr., Cherokee Language Program manager," said S. "We are excited to have helped bring the Cherokee language project to fruition and celebrate as libraries in Tulsa and around the world can now begin to learn Cherokee through Mango's free language app available from their local public library website."

Throughout 2014, Mango worked with Cherokee elders Anna Sixkiller and John Ross to develop the app. Sixkiller and Ross also are the voices heard during each conversational lesson.

"Anna and John each liked the process for the language lessons. It was a neat experience for the Cherokee language speakers to see what second-language learners go through to learn the Cherokee language," said Boney Jr. "They are two of the most trusted language experts the Cherokee Nation has. Both are Cherokee Nation National Treasures."

Now that the language-learning app is available on Mango Languages, non-Cherokee's have curiosity. "This is the first time they have seen the Cherokee syllabary and some people are hearing the language for the first time."

"Mango Languages has made it possible for the tribe to reach a wider audience," said Boney Jr. "We are now getting library cards so they can use Mango Languages to learn Cherokee."

Mango Languages features more than 60 languages from around the world and continues to grow. "New languages and courses often begin with requests from libraries and curious learners."

"Mango is always listening for what new content our users want," said Robert Thayer, Cherokee Public Libraries Division director. "We're proud to offer lesser-known and endangered languages across the globe. Given the positive response the Cherokee course has received, more Native languages are definitely a possibility."

For more information on learning the Cherokee language, call the AskUs Hotline, [918-549-7300](tel:918-549-7300).

Tulsa City-County Library's online language learning center featuring Mango Languages,
<http://www.tulsalibrary.org/language>.

News | News Briefs

« [High ranking for cases of the flu - Absentee applications for April 7th](#) »

© 2014 Tulsa Beacon