Our purpose is to preserve and study Plains Indian Sign Language (PISL).

Importance of this endangered language

Intertribal signed lingua franca

No fieldwork since 1930’s

No deaf or women signers previously involved

This project has been supported by two NSF research grants (EPSCOR-BCS 0853665) and (DEL-BCS 1027735).

Our Research Sites

- Northern Cheyenne Reservation
- Crow Reservation
- Fort Belknap Reservation
- Blackfeet Reservation

Gathering native signers of PISL/Sign Talk

Video-recording native signers in storytelling, tell history, in full PISL structure.

Documenting all videos in ELAN.

Do linguistic analysis of PISL

Discover sign dialects among tribes.

Preserve videos in our archival digital storage

Develop website

Gather native signers for more intensive study

Develop revitalization plan and curriculum materials for future generations (to be turned over to tribes)

North American Indian Sign Language

- Crow
- Hidasta-Mandan
- Blackfeet
- Gros Venture
- Assiniboine
- Lakota

North American Indian Sign Language

- Intertribal communication
- Storytelling
- Rituals
- Distance
- Communication during raids & wars
- Hunting
- Deaf Family Members

North American Indian Sign Language

(Past/Traditional)

- Storytelling
- Signing Lord’s Prayer/other prayers
- Tribal Princess performances
- Entertainment
- Native American Church
- Sawmill Industry
- Deaf Family Members