7 September 2009

Dear Institutional Review Board:

The research proposal for which I am seeking IRB approval involves a methodology for endangered language documentation—careful oral presentation to narrators of the purpose of the research and the uses planned for the recorded material along with a written explanation which all narrators are to sign and keep a copy—that has been applied to two previous National Science Foundation projects on endangered languages. In both cases the Gettysburg College IRB approved the proposal.

In a letter of 22 December 2003, the IRB approved my research entitled “Linking Nahuatl Lexicon and Corpus in a Multi-sited Learning Environment”. The Committee added that it "was impressed with [the] procedures for obtaining consent." Then, in another letter dated 5 October 2004, the IRB approved the same methodology and project, stating that "The project meets all of the necessary criteria for human subject research under 45 CFR 46.111, including confidentiality and informed consent. This approval is provided under the FWA 00002006." Finally, on 14 September 2007, the IRB approved a similar methodology for the NSF proposal "Nahuatl Language Documentation Project: Sierra Norte de Puebla" stating that it met all necessary criteria for human subject research under the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45, 45.111 including confidentiality and informed consent. The approval was provided under the FWA 0002006.

The present application for IRB approval is essentially unchanged from the previous three petitions. The major difference, in fact, is that a new language—Yoloxóchitl Mixtec—is being documented. Please note that work has already been done on this language with support from the Hans Rausing Endangered Language Fund, administered by the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. As a result of this ongoing work, which has followed the protocol elaborated here, the authorities of the community of Yoloxóchitl have extended a document of support and collaboration, which is attached to the present petition.

The following documentation is provided with this letter:

* completed form of the Institutional Review Board for Human Investigation
* copy of letter (in Spanish) from the authorities of Yoloxóchitl expressing support for the project
* copy of letter (in Spanish) from the authorities of Yoloxóchitl documenting receipt of gift of recordings in Mixtec previously made
* copy of letter (in Spanish) from the director of the Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas expressing support for this project
* copy of consent form that is given to narrators to sign

Thank you in advance for your kind attention,

Sincerely,

Jonathan D Amith