



**Kashaya Dictionary**  
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**Advisor: Gene Buckley**

This summer I have been assisting Dr. Gene Buckley as a PURM research assistant in the Linguistics department. Dr. Buckley is focused on Kashaya, a Native American language originating from northwestern California. It is one of seven languages belonging to the Pomoan language family and can also be called Southwestern Pomo. This language is currently in danger of dying out, numbering only several dozens of native speakers. Not all of these speakers are necessarily fluent, meaning that with each successive generation more vocabulary, syntax, as well as the culture inherently attached to the spoken language are being lost. Therefore, the project's goal is to preserve both the structure of Kashaya as well as its vocabulary in written form for future generations of speakers and linguists. Much of this summer's work was focused on editing and standardizing a database of Kashaya words and their English definitions with the intention of eventually publishing an English-Kashaya dictionary, with one version aimed toward laymen and another toward linguists.

The project was relatively free flowing as I worked on and resolved issues as they came along. Accordingly, I learned quite a bit about various aspects of Kashaya as I bounced around different areas of the database. For instance, during the process of standardizing definitions, I spent a lot of time familiarizing myself with the structure of the kinship nouns in the language in order to make sure all the forms were accounted for. In Kashaya, family and how people are related to each other is very important; no relation can exist within a void. One cannot refer to a "mother" without specifying whether she is "my mother," "your mother," or etc. While fascinating, it was also a task that involved numerous entries; I had to practice a very systematic approach to ensure that nothing was left undone. I also went through a lot of verb entries to confirm that there were example sentences that showcased meaning and usage and if not, to insert them. I had to do a lot of cross-referencing to accomplish this, including but not limited to searching through various field notes written by both Dr. Buckley and Oswald, a linguist whose work we are building on. This really trained my research efficiency in trying to locate what was needed by wading through large amounts of information.

Aside from having the privilege to be exposed to the immense and frankly amazingly complex inner workings of Kashaya from a linguist's point of view, PURM has given me an eye-opening introduction into the process of research and what it means to be a part of a research university. I think that now having experienced it, not only do I have a clearer understanding of research itself, but I also have a clearer understanding of what it is I want out of my education and opportunities here at Penn for the next three years.