



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 4, 2014

**“LANGUAGE MATTERS WITH BOB HOLMAN” TO AIR ON PBS IN JANUARY 2015
—Special Live Performance Events in Cities Across the Country Highlight the
Cultural Diversity of Endangered Language Speakers—**

*where will the meanings be
when the words are forgotten*
—WS Merwin

New York—There are over 6,000 languages remaining in the world. We lose one every two weeks. Hundreds will be lost within the next generation. By the end of this century, half the world’s languages will have vanished. The die-off parallels the extinction of plant and animal species. The death of a language robs humanity of ideas, belief systems, and knowledge of the natural world.

David Grubin Productions is pleased to announce a series of events coinciding with PBS’ January 2015 airing of *Language Matters*, a two-hour documentary that asks: *What do we lose when a language dies? What does it take to save a language?*

The premiere event in New York—the most linguistically diverse city in the world—takes place at the National Museum of the American Indian on Wednesday, January 21, 2015. The documentary airs on THIRTEEN, the flagship PBS station based in New York, on Sunday, January 25th at 12:30 PM. Events are also scheduled in Los Angeles at the Hammer Museum; in Chicago at the Poetry Foundation; and in San Francisco at The Exploratorium. For further information check your local listings or visit languagemattersfilm.com.

Language Matters was filmed around the world: on a remote island off the coast of Australia where 400 Aboriginal people speak 10 different languages, all at risk; in Wales, where Welsh, once in danger, is today making a comeback; and in Hawaii, where Hawaiians are fighting to save their native tongue.

“Most people know that we are losing species,” says Bob Holman, a poet widely known for his expertise in oral traditions. “Ask schoolchildren, and they’ll know about the panda or the orchid—they’ll have done a project on it. But ask someone if they know that languages all over the world are dying, maybe one in ten might.”

Grubin, whose films include *LBJ*, *FDR*, *The Jewish Americans*, *The Secret Life of The Brain*, and *The Buddha*, says: “Most people in the world speak more than one language—monolingualism is a recent phenomenon. We’re really celebrating diversity, looking at the vast domains of creativity, knowledge and thought encoded in language and what is lost when a language disappears.”

Language Matters includes interviews with songmen, linguists, and poets, including songman Charlie Mangulda, the only living speaker of Amurdak, an Aboriginal language once common in Australia's Northern Territory. The film also features original music and songs in Welsh, Hawaiian, and Aboriginal languages.

"Language is the very essence of being human," says Holman, "and when we lose a language, we lose a part of ourselves."

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS and AIR DATES

New York / National Museum of the American Indian

Event: Wednesday, January 21, 2015

Airs on THIRTEEN: Sunday, January 25th, 12:30–2:30 PM

This premiere evening brings the documentary to life in New York City with endangered and mother tongue speakers performing and excerpts from the film introduced by director/producer David Grubin and host Bob Holman. A Native American blessing sets the stage for an event dedicated to showcasing local native speakers including the beauty of Hawaiian songs and chants; the colorful legacy of Yiddish; and the tongue twisting poetry of the Welsh language. In partnership with WNET, Poets House, and the Endangered Language Alliance.

San Francisco / The Exploratorium

Event: Saturday, January 24, 2015

Airs on KQED: Sunday, January 25, 2015, 6–8 PM

The event at the Exploratorium brings together Welsh and Hawaiian language poets/musicians—highlighting two languages featured in the film—as well as Native American storytellers to perform in Mother tongues. Director/producer David Grubin and poet/host Bob Holman will screen short pieces of the film and lead a discussion with language activists and the audience about Bay area communities who are working to save their identities. In partnership with KQED.

Los Angeles / Hammer Museum

Event: Tuesday, January 27, 2015

Airs on PBS SoCal: Thursday, January 29, 2015, 7–9 PM

This multimedia evening at the Hammer Museum's Billy Wilder Theater presents features performances by endangered language communities—including Welsh, Nahuatl, Hawaiian, Garifuna, and more—for an evening of multilingual poetry, film, and song. Director/producer David Grubin and poet/host Bob Holman screen short pieces of the film and lead a discussion about successful efforts to advance language preservation. In partnership with PBS SoCal.

Chicago / The Poetry Foundation

Event: Wednesday, January 28, 2015

Airs on WTTW: Thursday, January 29, 2015, 9-11 PM

Bob Holman gives a command performance of the poem he wrote for the Welsh Poetry Slam in the film and the program also features performances by Chicago native Peter Cook, "the Allen Ginsberg of Signed Poetry" and Parsino Carlos Peynesta, native Zuni speaker and leader of Chicago's *Been Na Undennah* (Song of the Wind) Drum Circle. Grubin and Holman screen sections of the documentary and lead a discussion following the performances highlighting the relevance and importance minority language speakers to the life of the city. In partnership with WTTW.

Credits:

Director/Producer/Writer: David Grubin; Executive Producers: David Grubin and Bob Holman; Executive Producer for PIC: Leanne K. Ferrer; Conceived by: Bob Holman; Editor: Deborah Peretz; Cinematography: James Callanan and Bob Richman; Director of Motion Graphics: Brian Oakes; Associate Producer: Oliver Grubin.

Funders Credits:

Language Matters is a co-production of David Grubin Productions Inc. and Pacific Islanders in Communications. Produced in association with The Endangered Language Alliance. Major funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities with additional funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and philanthropic individuals.

For a [SYNOPSIS](#) of the documentary, visit the [Language Matters website](#). For more information about endangered languages, visit [UNESCO'S Endangered Languages](#)

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For hi res images, interviews, and further information, contact MartinMPR:
Susan Martin, susan@martinmpr.com, 505 685 4664
Norma Kelly, norma@martinmpr.com, 818 509 0575



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