



RECOVERING VOICES



Eduardo Rivail Ribeiro

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presents:

**Language and prehistory in South America:
an investigation of the Macro-Jê hypothesis**

Tuesday May 26, 2015

12:00pm - 1:00pm

Rose Room, NMNH

Seminar Series
in Endangered
Languages
and Indigenous
Knowledge

Macro-Jê is arguably one of the lesser-known language groups of South America, its very existence as a genetic unit being still “a working hypothesis” (Rodrigues 1999: 165). Reporting on an ongoing comparative study, based on a recent surge in descriptive materials on most of the extant Macro-Jê languages, this talk provides an overview of the currently-available evidence for the existence of Macro-Jê as a set of genetically-related languages. Topics include methodological issues typical of long-range historical comparison, the comparative consequences of language extinction, the crucial role played by the documentation of severely-endangered languages, and new insights into the cultural past of lowland South America. Image: Heí and Hegueí Ofayé, two of the last speakers of the Ofayé language.

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