ACBLPE Conference in Aruba

The ACBLPE annual conference took place as a joint meeting with the SCL and the SPCL in Aruba, 5-8 July.

Of the approximately 75 papers given at the conference, 23 ACBLPE members were involved in 14 of those presentations. Thus, our Association was well represented at the meeting.

The first evening, the honorable Fredis Refunjol, governor of Aruba and former educator, and the honorable Michelle Hooyboer-Winklaar, Minister of Education, Lifelong Learning and Family Affairs of Aruba, discussed at length the issues of Aruban identity, the role of Papiamento, and the difficulties involved in status and corpus planning for Papiamento in Aruba. Minister Hooyboer-Winklaar also described the project now being implemented in some primary schools in Aruba through which Papiamento is used as the language of instruction in order to teach Aruban children in their native language. Following the addresses of the dignitaries, the presidents of the organizations (Hubert Devonish of SCL, Rocky Meade for SPCL and Clancy Clements for ACBLPE) spoke to these issues as well, citing case studies of using minority languages in school settings and the positive impact it has had for minority communities.

The SCL-SPCL-ACBLPE joint conference in Aruba was historic in that it was the first time ever in a major meeting of any of these organizations that the keynote speakers – Manuel Veiga (“Prusésu di Afirmason y Valorizason di Kriolu di Kabu Verdi”), Ronald Severing (“Logro di papiamento den milenio nobo”) and Ramon Todd Dandaré (“Papiamento y identidad”)—gave their keynote addresses in their respective creole languages.

Apart from the individual and joint research studies presented at the conference, a group of ACBLPE members, under the direction of Carlos Figueiredo, gave an overview of their “LIBOLO PROJECT”, a research endeavor focused on studying the nature and status of Portuguese in and around the village and municipality of Libolo, Kwanza-Sul Province, Angola.

The conference ended with a panel discussion in which the presidents of their respective organizations spoke about ways in which information and research on our creole languages could be shared more effectively. Some of the suggestions mentioned were:

- collaborate on publications, especially with the idea of submitting book-length manuscripts to university presses;
- create databases and make them digitally available for research and teaching;
- take greater advantage of the internet to disseminate information of all types on creole cultures, languages, and communities.

The Local Organizing Committee did a wonderful job maintaining a smooth-running conference and we congratulate and thank them for their expertise and their effort.

Next year, ACBLPE will participate in the organization of another joint conference, with the SPCL, that will take place in Graz, Austria (the home of the University of Graz and the Schuchardt Archives). All are invited, and strongly encouraged, to submit abstracts. The first call for papers will go out in December of this year. In 2016, ACBLPE is planning the annual conference in Cape Verde. Dr. Manuel Veiga is now a member of ACBLPE and has agreed to help us organize the conference there. We are very much looking forward to that conference, as well.