2010 President’s Distinguished Service Awards

2010 Recipient for the First Five Years – Outstanding Contribution

Christopher Coey

What would we do without Chris?” is a refrain that runs through the nomination package and reference letters for Chris Coey. He has clearly become an integral and indispensable member of the Department of Linguistics since signing on as a programmer and IT consultant in 2006.

On paper, Chris’s job calls for him to provide technical support for linguistics classes and in the Phonetics Lab, maintain equipment and instruments, offer technical training and create software applications for faculty and graduate researchers.

In practice, Chris goes far beyond the call of duty in assisting students and faculty and tending to the department’s hardware and software needs. A consummate problem solver, Chris is described as “kind, optimistic—always positive—with an idea or two for solving every task that comes his way,” said Leslie Saxon, Associate Professor, Linguistics.

Chris’s programming applications have also been adopted in Indigenous communities across the country for use in language revitalization projects. By integrating recorded audio files with text material, Chris created both an online dictionary, the Dogrib Multimedia Dictionary that speaks the words and phrases of the Dene language, and a recently developed ‘app’ for mobile devices such as the iPhone and iPad. Slated for release this summer, the app allows a scaled-down version of the dictionary to be available remotely, on demand. Chris’s technological innovations make Indigenous languages accessible not only to the communities involved in the research but to anyone with an interest and access to the Internet.

According to Lorna Williams, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge and Learning, Chris’s “artistry, creativity, technical wizardry, love of technology, knowledge, work ethic, good humour, patience and positive nature brings out the best in the work of the department. He helps us be better at the work we do with his kind and knowledgeable support.