



The Prague Descriptive Linguistics Group

invites you to a lecture by

**Cynthia Hansen**

(Grinnel College)

**History hidden  
within numeral words:**

**Using archival records and gestural data  
to uncover language contact in Amazonia**

**17 May 2024, 4 pm**

**Venue: Na Příkopě 29, Room no. 215**

\*\*\*

Endangered numeral systems are not only highly susceptible to language contact (Comrie 2005), but can also be used to chart language contact within a region (Epps 2006). This talk describes the numeral system in Iquito (Zaparoan; Peruvian Amazonia), as it is currently used by speakers and as it is documented in historical word lists and grammatical sketches. I will discuss the evidence for language contact found within this numeral system, particularly in the terms for three and four. These terms are analyzable as 'fraternal' forms (cf. Epps 2006, Hanke 2005, Green 1997), where the etymological source for 3 correlates with not having a sibling and 4 correlates with having a sibling. While such a strategy is considerably rare cross-linguistically, it is surprisingly widespread within the Amazonian region, found in over 50 languages from more than a dozen different families (Epps and Hansen, in preparation). I will show how the Iquito terms in particular, along with gestures used in finger counting, provide an interesting data point for understanding this diffusional process.