

NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMNEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

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Editor: Barbara Goodin

“Letter From The President”

Marueweka,

Tsaaku Uka Tomopu. I’m so glad that so many of our people are finding it important to learn our Comanche language. I, too, am enrolled in Comanche Language II at the Comanche Nation College, and I enjoy it! It is really important to learn the language and then to learn how to say each word correctly.

I didn’t learn Taa Numu Tekwapu from my grandparents, or from my parents. I had to learn from the books. Then I eventually had many years of learning from my mother and father. It was one of my goals to learn the language of my mother because that was how her mother spoke, and her mother’s mother and on and on. But just because I say I know the language doesn’t mean that I will continue to know it if I don’t keep using it. That was another reason I enrolled in the language class, to keep using it, so I will still be able to converse with others. If you don’t use it you will lose it!

Ura, Billie Kreger

VALENTINE’S DAY

Each year about this time we start to get numerous requests via e-mail wanting to know how to say and/or write “I Love You” in Comanche. This year we have even more requests. So for everyone, here it is:

U Kamakutu nu

Now for a quick pronunciation lesson. The “barred u” (u) sounds like the “u” in the

word “undo.” The “a” sounds like the a in “father.”

The literal translation is:

U = you

Kamakutu = love (beloved, loved one)

nu = I, me, my

MESSAGE FOR ALL COMANCHES

by Ronald Red Elk

Haa Maruaweka Numunuu taasu Nanumunuu, ise taasu Na Haitsinuu.

Sobesu nu ikha Taa Numu Tekwapu?ha suabitai?kupu?a?suwaitu. Ukitsi nu usu suka Taa Numu Tekwapu?ha tsaa naka suabitai, isa bunu na haitsi Numu tekwa?yu.

It has been ten years since I first attended Comanche classes at the University of Oklahoma. I’m both proud and happy with what I have learned of the language and our Comanche Way (Taa Numu Pu?e). On the other hand, I’m both sad and disappointed that I’m unable to speak as fluently as I would like, or as good as our speakers of today speak. The same feelings of emotions come to mind when thinking about the CLCPC. We, as a group of Comanches working together to accomplish a goal, can be proud of what we have accomplished. But we have yet to attain our ultimate goal of all Comanches speaking Comanche. There is still that challenge to motivate us not to give up, but to carry on with this very important work.

On November 19, 2002, I was honored to receive the Oklahoma Governor’s Arts Award. Barbara wrote the nomination for that award listing all the work and accomplishments of the CLCPC. Since we

have always been a cooperative, collaborative group, this is OUR award! Especially you speakers! If not for your willingness to share your knowledge and your guidance, there would not be an award, nor for that matter, a CLCPC. ʘra

To all NʘMʘNʘʘ, we, the CLCPC, invite you to become a part of recapturing our very existence as a distinct, unique people. If we do not start producing new speakers, when the last speaker goes, so goes the Nʘmʘnʘʘ! Is blood quantum what defines a Nʘmʘʘ? I hope not! Our ancestors believed in a person's ability to live as a Nʘmʘnʘʘ. In today's world, I think this would mean that we should know Taa Nʘmʘ Puʘe. To do this would mean The People will be here forever.

This is probably the most important question a Comanche should learn to say. Hina tanʘ tʘkʘʘhutui?

Noo nʘ tʘasʘ punine

COMANCHE LESSON CD AVAILABLE

We now have the Comanche Lessons #1-#4 available on CD! Since the Comanche Lessons were developed in 1998, they have been accompanied by an audio cassette. Now you will have a choice of receiving a cassette or a CD when ordering. Be sure and specify "cassette" or "CD" when ordering. If we don't receive instructions from you, we will automatically send a cassette. See our "Products For Sale" section near the end of this newsletter for ordering information, or go to our web site at www.comanchelanguage.org and click on "Products For Sale."

COMANCHE KINSHIP

by Barbara Goodin

The Comanche language has many fascinating aspects, but the one most striking to me is the way kinship is acknowledged. I grew up in a home with an Indian mother and white father, so English was the

language spoken. My Indian grandparent's were Frank and Ada (Tivis) Bosin. My grandfather was Kiowa and my grandmother was Comanche. So, to bridge the communication gap of two very different native languages, again, English was the language spoken. Growing up I often heard my grandmother speak in her native language, and my grandfather spoke in his native language. But when they spoke to each other they spoke in English. I did not have the luxury of growing up in an environment where a native language was spoken on a daily basis.

My grandparents, one born in 1898 and the other in 1901, were products of an era when children were being snatched from their homes and placed in boarding schools to be "civilized." Their hair was cut short, they were dressed in little suits and dresses and told it was bad to speak the language of their ancestors. If they forgot and did so, they were harshly punished. This became the mind set in their young lives. To speak the language of their fathers and mothers was bad. So, they refrained from doing so. Because of this policy of the U.S. Government, today many native languages have been lost or are on the brink of obsolescence (not in current use).

The Comanche language is one of the languages considered obsolescent. We have fewer than 10% of our people who understand and speak the language fluently. This percentage could be even lower with a tribal enrollment of over 10,000. Over the years, sporadic efforts have been made to restore the language, but only since the inception of the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee have great strides been made. Today tribal members are pooling their resources to make restoration of the Comanche language a reality.

Back to when I was growing up: My grandmother always referred to my mother's sisters as my mother also. As a child I never questioned it. That's just the way it was, it was the Comanche way of life.

In Comanche, my mother was called *pia*, as were my mother's sisters, since they were considered my mother also, according to Comanche kinship. However, my aunt on my father's side (had he been Comanche) would have been my *paha*. Maternal and paternal sides are differentiated. My mother's parents were my *kaku* (grandmother) and *toko* (grandfather). Had my father been Comanche, his mother would have been *huutsi* and his father *kunu*. My older brother would be *pabi*, my younger brother *tami*, my older sister *patsi*, and my younger sister *nami*. Much simpler than saying "my grandfather on my mother's side," don't you think? A grandchild is called *kaku* for the daughter's children and *huutsi* for the son's children. It's the same word the child uses to call his or her grandparents. I know these terms are still used in many Comanche homes today as a continuing part of Comanche life.

Great grandparents and great grandchildren all call each other by the same name — *tsoo*. Great great grandparents and great great grandchildren, likewise, all call each other by the same name — *tami* for males, and *nami* for females. Then, according to Comanche kinship tradition, the circle begins again.

Comanche terms don't end there. It encompasses the whole of Comanche life. For example, one of our elders referred to my husband as nephew when he spoke to him or of him. His explanation to my husband was this: His sister and my husband's mother (now both deceased) were childhood friends and remained dear friends throughout their lifetime. They were as close as sisters, he explained. Therefore he considered my husband's mother his sister also, and considered my husband his nephew. Another example is my husband's cousin's husband, who calls my husband his brother-in-law. The explanation for that is in the Comanche kinship tradition, cousins are considered brothers and sisters. Therefore, he considers my husband the brother of his wife and calls him brother-in-law.

In the Comanche language the word *nanamsu* means simply "in-law." *Atanum* refers to a Comanche who is a stranger (or unknown), and *atabitsi* refers to an Indian of a different tribe. I would be interested to know if other tribes have kinships terms similar to Comanche.

We continue to work on a Comanche Dictionary put together entirely by Comanche people, and all the above words and many more will be included.

We are especially indebted to our speakers, who patiently repeat words so that we may listen and learn and record for future generations. Some of them express concern that they are unable to learn to spell the words or write the words. We don't expect that of them.

The little ones are our target age group, and the elementary, junior, high school and college students. Those are the age groups we encourage to learn to read and spell Comanche.

The speakers are our experts. They are our resources. They are the ones who have helped us bring our Comanche language into the Twenty First Century.

(*Editor's Note: We received the following note by fax, with a request to publish it in the next issue of our Language Newsletter. In reading it, you can feel the heartbreak the family is going through, but the warmth shown them by the Comanche people comes through very loud and clear, and their grief was eased somewhat by the compassion shown them on their short visit. We publish this in honor of Milton V. Pewo, 1941-2002.

Thank you

On December 17, 2002, our father, Milton Verle Pewo, passed away. We want to thank everyone who cared for and loved our father. We were so overwhelmed by the love and gratitude everyone showed us at his funeral. We met so many family members we hadn't met before, but they all made us feel welcome.

A special thanks to our Aunt Maddie, who always kept in contact with us. Her letters and cards were always a reminder she was there and that she cared for us. She

never forgot her nieces in Arizona. To our Uncle Dennis and his wife Mary, thank you for your hospitality.

On our drive to Oklahoma we worried about how people would receive us. We were always in contact with Dad, but not as much with the rest of the family. Our Uncle Donald told us we were never gone, just on vacation, and now we were home. Thank you Uncle! We spent time talking with Uncle Donald after the funeral. He is a wonderful person with an exceptional sense of humor.

A huge thanks to Sam and Joanna Redbone and family. They put their grief aside to help and comfort us. A special thanks to our "sister" Joanna, who was there from the time we woke up to the time we went to bed. We truly miss you. Thank you, Sam, for doing small repairs on my Dad's house. A special thanks to Vernon. Your sense of humor kept us laughing, even on our way home. Thanks to Tina and Henry for helping our father and always checking on him.

We have met so many good people in Oklahoma. People we did not know. But they knew our dad, came up to us and offered condolences. One person in particular, Rusty Wahkinney, gave us \$20 to help us on our trip home. We had originally thought, "now that our dad is gone there wouldn't be any reason to go back to Oklahoma." But family and people like Rusty made us feel welcome, so we will return again.

We are eternally grateful to the Comanche Tribe for covering the expense of our dad's funeral. We also want to thank the Comanche Funeral Home for a beautiful service and the Apache Reformed Church. We are grateful to everyone who helped say Good-bye to our dad, Milton Pewo. Thank you all!

Rebecca Pewo-Carrillo, Carolyn Pewo, and Melanie Pewo-Page.

(*Editor's Note: Wintertime is the traditional time for story telling among the Comanches, although we enjoy good stories any time of the year! Here are more stories for your reading enjoyment. They were taken from *The Comanche and His Literature*, a 1941 thesis by Herwana Becker Barnard, and with the permission of Mr. Glen Becker (now deceased), who

wanted the stories to be reprinted. We have attempted to correct the spelling when possible.

RED ROCK CANYON

as told by Mow-wat

Small, tall boys, runners on the warpath, were on their way back home along a red canyon. They heard calls for help in the distance, among the trees. "Is there anyone that could give me help?" they heard the voice ask. The calls had the tone of a voice in distress. Looking in the direction of the call, they noticed an eagle fly up and down and then up again. They went to the spot and found Nūnūpi standing there.

In a weak voice the dwarf said, "I thought my last hour had come. The eagle has been fighting and clawing me. I was about to give up when you came and frightened him away."

The boys saw that this peculiar person had a very small body painted red and wore very long hair. They batted their eyes in astonishment, and the little man vanished. They lost sight of him completely, for nowhere could they find him.

Wondering what had become of the creature, they continued their journey, but not for long. Because they were tired, hungry, and thirsty, they decided to spend the night there in the shelter of the trees.

In the vision of their dreams that night, a young man appeared to them. They recognized the dwarf in the form of a young man.

"You saved my life, and now I shall help you. I left two pieces of paint rock where you found me. Each of you take one and eat it. You, then will never become ill or die," said the man in the vision. "I will give you power to grow old and still remain healthy in age. Arise at dawn in the morning and go east until you find a creek. There you may have water. Beyond the creek and over the hill are some horses that you may catch to ride home to your camp."

They followed the command of the vision and arrived safely home.

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ESHE-KOHNNAH (ASE KONO)

**by Herman Asenap
(June, 1940)**

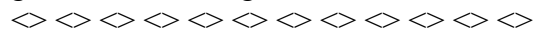
This is the story of Eshe-kohnnah (Ase Kono), the son of an Apache mother and Comanche father. The mother had no living children; each one died shortly after birth or in their youth. Finally with a newborn child, a healthy looking baby boy, she went to the Medicine Man for advice. She, also, was seeking a name to give the new-comer.

The Medicine Man told the woman to leave the boy in the grass where an Indian camp had very recently broken up.

“Soon an old woman with a stick will appear,” he said. “She will be looking for something among the remains of the abandoned camp. She will find the boy and then all will be well. She will also have a name for the child.”

The hopeful mother did as she was directed. After she hid the child in a bed of weeds, an old woman with a stick came poking around on the grounds. The old woman found the boy, gave it the name “Tatooh-oorap” (Tahtooahrup) and gave the child back to its mother.

The mother lived a happy life with her child, whom she reared with care until he grew to be a strong, brave man.



**PEAH-MOOPITZ KAHNIK
(PIA MOOPITSJ KAHNI)**

**by Daniel A. Becker
(May, 1940)**

A giant lived in a cave located on the southern slope of Elk Mountain in the early days before the white man came. Exacting two buffaloes every fortnight from the Indians living south of the mountain, he was a constant and fearful menace. As the years went by and the buffalo became more scarce because of the frequent buffalo hunts of the many different tribes of Indians, the fulfilling of the giant’s request was made increasingly difficult. Slowly the white men came in. They also organized buffalo hunts.

Finally, when the Indians found it almost impossible to furnish the required number of

buffalo, they held a council. A young brave was designated to confer with the giant concerning their problem. Cattle were to be suggested as a substitute.

Approaching the entrance of the cave, the brave called, “Great Giant, I come before you to ask an important question.”

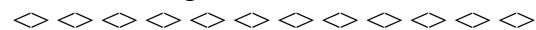
“What is it you want?” said the giant.

“There are not enough buffalo on the prairies or in the mountains. Will you accept the beef of cattle instead? We have been eating it for years and find it very delicious.”

“Cattle are very small, but I shall be satisfied if your tribe will bring me twenty,” replied the giant.

Cattle were thus substituted for buffalo, but the change of the diet did not agree with the giant. He became increasingly irritable and nervous and menacing. The coming of so many white men, bringing confusion to the quiet mountain country, was also disquieting to the giant. The Indians, trying to appease his wrath, brought him forty beeves.

Finding his new diet more and more disagreeable, and the encroachment of the white man unbearable, the giant left his cave for a more secluded spot in the larger mountain range farther west.



CHIEF BRAVE HEART

**by Randlett Parker
(November 1937)**

A long time ago, when the chief was a little boy, his name was not Brave Heart. He was called Clock Dock (?). He was the first baby in the family, and his mother was very proud of him. She wanted him to grow strong for the hunt and brave to defend his people in time of war. Soon he was old enough to play with other boys, and, as he became older, he grew taller and stronger.

One day when he had almost reached manhood, he was walking leisurely through the forest near the camp. Suddenly, from somewhere nearby, there burst upon the still air the frantic screams of children. Clock Dock (sic) flew like a deer toward the spot

where he saw three children trying to scale a high rock. Far off, through the trees, a wounded grizzly bear was ambling toward them.

Clock Dock had no weapons with him but he did not hesitate, for every minute was precious. He grabbed the nearest heavy limb that he could find, hid behind a tree near the rock, lifted his club, and waited for the bear to charge. The grizzly was so intent upon the children that it did not notice him. Just as the bear went by the tree, Clock Dock, with his club raised high, brought it down with all his strength upon the bear's nose. The bear fell to the earth, but was on its feet again in an instant, facing Clock Dock. Then when it started to rear up, Clock Dock brought his club down directly on its nose again, with even greater force than before. With that terrific blow, the bear fell again, and this time it lay still.

Clock Dock stood over it for a few moments, to make sure that it was dead; and then, gathering the frightened children together, he took them back to camp.

Word of Clock Dock's brave deed spread rapidly around the camp. When the Chief heard of it, he called Clock Dock to him and told him that for his act of courage he would henceforth be called "Brave Heart." This was his first real name, and he was very proud of it.

Several years later, when the chief of the tribe died, Brave Heart was chosen to succeed him because of his strength, his courage, and his love for the people. Thus it was that little Clock Dock became Chief Brave Heart and won the highest honor of his tribe.

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THE CINDERELLA BOY

told by Mow-wat

interpreted by Rachel Mow-wat

(June 1940)

There once was a very poor boy who lived and traveled with his grandmother. One day, when the Indians were camped near a mountain stream, some of the hunters of the tribe found an eagle perched atop a

tall tree. All of the most skilled arrow shooters attempted to bring down the eagle, but all failed. The chief, taking an interest in the contest, announced that he would give his daughter as a prize to the warrior who was successful in bringing down the eagle.

This poor boy, greatly moved, ran home to his grandmother to tell her of the remarkable contest and the coveted prize.

"I want to enter the contest. Will you make me some fine arrows?"

"Why, son? You will have no chance in a contest where so many of our best hunters are entered. But if you insist, I shall help you," said his grandmother.

The grandmother made four arrows and a bow. As she watched the delighted boy leave, she knew her hopes were right with him.

All the old warriors and experienced hunters laughed as the young man approached.

"Who is that?" they jeered.

"A ragged, unknown boy like that can't do anything," said another.

"Let him take his chance like the rest of you," said the leader. "This is a fair and open contest."

The boy aimed and shot. No eagle fell. The men laughed louder. After carefully aiming the last arrow, he let it fly. The eagle dropped down at the feet of the astonished warriors. All of the men, jealous of the poor boy's good fortune in winning the chief's daughter, protested that he was not worthy. The chief, however, declared his intention of keeping his word.

The boy, torn between the joy of his success and fear lest he should not be worthy of the prize he so desired, returned to his grandmother, who was a "medicine woman."

"They laughed at me because I looked poor. Then they said I was unworthy of the daughter of the chief. Could you give me some clean clothes so I will make a better appearance when I go for her?"

“Don’t worry, son. You go to the creek and wash. Then bring all your old clothes to me,” she commanded.

When he brought back his clothes, the grandmother dipped them into a pot of boiling water that she had prepared. The water instantly transformed the rags to a complete buckskin suit with beautiful colored decorations. The worn shoes turned into elaborately finished moccasins; an old buffalo hide, dipped into the same boiling water, came out a bright colored blanket; and his shabby head-dress became a magnificent war bonnet.

“Bend over,” she directed, “and let your hair touch the water.” Immediately the dusty braids became long, black, and glossy.

“Now get some ashes,” his grandmother said.

The astonished boy obeyed. When he returned, she turned them into dried aromatic herbs with which she scented his new complete regalia.

No brave in the memory of the tribesmen was ever seen in such fine array. His athletic body, his graceful step, his manly bearing, all showed the courageous spirit of this ambitious youth, whose determination was undaunted in the face of difficulty. Everyone now realized he was more worthy than all the others to make the chief’s beautiful daughter his bride.

RESPECT & CONSIDERATION

This has nothing to do with language, but a lot to do with respect and consideration for our fellow Indian people. I have been hearing how some people who have handicap stickers are finding the spaces full at the Lawton Indian Hospital because people who are not eligible to park there are doing so anyway. Maybe the people who are illegally using the handicap parking are in a hurry, maybe they’re just lazy, I don’t know. But when someone who is perfectly able to walk any distance knowingly takes the space, I think it shows great disrespect for others. I even heard of one lady (can I

really call her that?!?) who told a man that pointed out her “crime” to her, that “she would be gone before the security could come out to remove her, so go ahead and call them!”

I know this isn’t a problem only at the Indian Hospital parking lot, but with parking lots all over town. So, if you don’t have a valid handicap parking sticker, please don’t park there! Let the people who truly need them utilize those spaces. Show respect and consideration for our fellow Indian people, and others. It’s the right thing to do.

TAA NŪMŪ TEKWAŪ Comanche Language Classes Resume for the Spring Semester

by Geneva Navarro

I am Geneva W. Navarro, Adjunct Professor of the Comanche Language I night class at the Comanche Nation College. Sam DeVenney and DeRoy Atauvich are my volunteer teaching assistants. DeVenney also teaches the Comanche language classes in Norman, Oklahoma. Atauvich is preparing to become a Comanche language teacher. There are thirty students enrolled in the night class. Most are Nūmū, but there are also some Kiowa, Cherokee and Kiowa/Apache tribes represented.

We are teaching the Comanche Alphabet of sounds and preparing students to read and write the language as one way of preserving it. I am very impressed with all the many people who recognize the importance of learning the Comanche language and the preservation of our heritage.

We are extremely grateful to the esteemed Dr. Linda Warner, PhD, Comanche, and Educator of the year in 2001, for her generous donation of grants to the Comanche Nation College language students receiving credit for the class.

We need more speakers to teach the language. My hope for these students is for them to continue speaking and one day become teachers and continue to pass on our beautiful language.

PRODUCTS FOR SALE

Comanche Lessons, set #1. A set of four Comanche Lessons, complete with a word list for each lesson. Specify audio cassette or CD when ordering. If we don't receive your preference, we will automatically send an audio cassette. \$25 includes s&h.

Comanche Dictionary. A 133 page soft bound dictionary begins with an introduction of the spelling system and the alphabet sounds. Offers a Comanche to English section, followed by an English to Comanche section. \$22 plus \$3.50 s&h.

Picture Dictionary. A primer for learning the language explains the Comanche alphabet and the sound of each letter. Examples of many simple words and brief sentences. Includes worksheet/coloring pages and an English to Comanche vocabulary list. \$10 include s&h.

Comanche Song Book. Collection of 116 songs written in Comanche with an English translation for each song. \$10 plus \$3 s&h. "Coming Soon! An audio tape/ CD to accompany song book!

NEW! Comanche Flash Cards, set #2. A set of 48 cards showing a picture and the spelling of simple Comanche words. \$5 plus \$1 s&h.

Comanche Language Tee-Shirts. Comanche Language logo in full color on left chest. Available in solid red or royal blue. Children's sizes small (6-8), medium (10-12), and large (12-14), \$10 plus \$3.50 s&h; Adult sizes small through XL \$12 plus \$3.50 s&h; Adult sizes 2X and 3X \$15 plus \$3.50 s&h. Specify color and size when ordering.

Bumper Stickers.* NŪMŪ TEKWAPE in large letters, with Comanche Language Preservation on the second line. \$2 each includes s&h.

Authentic Handmade Comanche Dolls. Beautiful 20" soft bodied dolls, dressed in traditional clothing. Both girl and boy dolls available. \$40 each plus \$3.50 s&h. (Special Orders Only, allow 6-8 weeks delivery)

Tote Bags. Navy with red trim. 16"x12"x5" with back pocket. Front has the Comanche Language logo. \$12 plus \$3.50 s&h.

Ball Caps. Three styles: Men's royal blue with red bill; Men's turquoise with southwest design on bill; and Lady's solid royal blue,

all with Language Logo on front. \$10 plus \$3.50 s&h.

Collar/Hat Pins.* Language logo complete with feathers, 3/4" long. \$4 includes s&h.

Earrings.* Same design as collar/hat pin. \$8.

Lapel Pins. 1 inch Cloisonne pin. \$5 includes s&h.

Buttons.* Two styles. #1: "NŪMŪ TEKWAPE" and #2: "Ihka Niha, NŪMŪ TEKWAPE". \$2 each includes s&h. Specify style number.

***Limited number available.**

If you have an e-mail address, please include it in case we need to contact you about your order. We are running extremely low on the products that have an asterisk beside them. They will probably not be offered again in the future.