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# NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMINEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

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Editor: Barbara Goodin

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## “Letter From The President”

Marawek

Taa Numu Tekwapuha Nomineetii?nuu isu  
tuasu nu ha haitsi?nuu

I recently found out that I’m going to be a great grandfather. That got me thinking about my great grandparents. What did I know about them? Absolutely nothing. Maybe that they were captives. That’s it. I would have liked to have known what their lives were like before their capture, and then how were they accepted into the Comanche band with whom they lived.

So now I’m thinking I may begin a documented account of my remembrance of my life, from the very earliest to the present, or up to the point of my demise. This documentation would be for those future great grandchildren so that they may know of the world that their Tsoo lived in. I believe that this would be a great gift. I only wish that I had that knowledge of nu Tsoo?nuu.

Below is one of the Comanche stories that the “Learning To Speak Comanche” families have been reading.

Taa Numuhabinu?nuu tsaa tunihar.

### AN ACCOUNT OF CHRISTMAS CAMPING

Soobe?su nuu tuu taa waahimaru?hka  
Long time ago we will have our Christmas

samu?a numu sokonaku noka?wi?eyu  
when one Indian band come together to  
camp

tsaa u huupaiku wituru?aru nobitu?eyu.  
good it timber in wind break came to  
camp.

Numu nanatenanuse numu tosakuni numi  
Our men folks our canvas tents us

yukwiku?etu tuasu  
put up for us also

sooku numu konooku?eyu.  
lots us hauled fire wood for us.

Pianuosa?a pukuku numu  
Big tent it in we

waahimaru?iha karuku?eyu.  
will have our Christmas in.

Nenu?se u wupitu?etu numu waahpita  
We it wait time for it our tree

wihnu maka?muki?etu  
trim fix up pretty then

uma numu hanitu?iha uma totsani?i?eyu.  
it on our what we will put on presents it on.

U tukanise nuu nanisutai?etu  
That night we pray

tuasu tunikwu?etu samu?a numuku  
also sing one us to

tekwa?eku wihnu kwasiku  
talks to then next

nuu waahima?eyu.  
we get our presents.

Oyetu tūbitsi tsaa nūusuka?eyu  
All very good feel

u pūetsikuse nūnū piarūka?eyu.  
that next morning we have big dinner.

I would like to thank all you that have been so supportive of the CLCPC efforts down through the years, and wish all of you a very Happy New Year.

Ura  
Ron Red Elk

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### THINK ABOUT THIS

by Barbara Goodin

If you think spelling words in Comanche is difficult, read on about the ENGLISH spelling of some words you use everyday.

There are 24 different ways in which the spoken “oo” sound in English is written. To get the full impact, say these out loud as you are reading.

|                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| moon (oo)      | group (ou)       |
| fruit (ui)     | glue (ue)        |
| drew (ew)      | two (wo)         |
| flu (u)        | canoe (oe)       |
| through (ough) | rule (u-e)       |
| lieu (ieu)     | loose (oo-e)     |
| lose (o-e)     | pooh (ooh)       |
| coup (oup)     | bruise (ui-e)    |
| jiujitsu (iu)  | deuce (eu-e)     |
| maneuver (eu)  | sleuth (eu)      |
| mousse (ou-e)  | rendezvous (ous) |

Now think about this. In the Comanche spelling system, our “u” makes that same “oo” sound as in English. And it’s always a u, never an ieu, ui, ue, oe, eu – but just plain “u”. Every Comanche word that has that “oo” sound in it is spelled with a “u.” Nothing more – just a u. Now what could be simpler?

For those of you that say learning to read or write Comanche is hard, just go back up to the little exercise above and see if you still say that.

Now let’s do another little exercise. The words “say,” “they” and “weigh” rhyme. Yet they are not spelled anything alike. But the words “bomb,” “comb” and “tomb” don’t. Why? They only have one letter different in them.

The American Literacy Council says English has “illogical spelling.” They claim “English has 42 sounds spelled in a bewildering 400 ways.” What did you say?

Our Comanche Alphabet and Spelling System uses 17 letters. The English alphabet has 26 letters. Comanche consonants are pronounced the same as in English. It’s the vowels that are different, and we only have six vowels in Comanche. So once you have those vowel sounds mastered, you’re on your way to reading and writing Comanche!

(\*excerpts taken from the Lawton Constitution, July 6, 2006 edition.)

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### HIDDEN VOICES CODED WORDS

The Oklahoma History Center in OKC previewed a traveling exhibit on Oklahoma’s Code Talkers, which included our Comanche Code Talkers, on Thursday, November 9, 2006. An invitation only affair, the early afternoon program featured the Choctaw and Comanche Color Guards along with the Comanche Indian Veteran’s Auxiliary. Several Comanches also sat at the drum. Speakers included dignitaries from both tribes, Choctaw Chief Greg Pyle and Comanche Chairman Wallace Coffey. Invocation was given by Bertram Bobb, Choctaw Tribal Chaplain, who preceded his prayer with a song in his native tongue. I smiled when I heard him say, “This is number so-and-so.” It reminded me of when we sing from our Comanche Song Books and refer to the songs by number rather than title, simply because most of them have no formal title. George Horse Capture of the Gros Ventre tribe, recently retired from the

National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C., gave the keynote address.

I was quite impressed with Mr. Horse Capture (I love his name!) and the things he had to say to all of us gathered there on that solemn occasion to honor and remember those who have gone on.

He said many things that are worth repeating, but I will share these five with you:

- 1) "Indian people have always fought for their country, first against Indian enemies, then white enemies."
- 2) "When children were taken away from the loving care of their parents, those children were deprived of learning how to be parents. Many suffer from this shortcoming today."
- 3) "Language holds people together as a special group and makes them unique. Without it, we began to fade together in an undistinguishable mass, with little identity."
- 4) "It's a struggle in this world to maintain our native language with all the other things going on around us. We must become more dedicated before it is too late."
- 5) "We are the end 'product' of all our people who came before us and we are more empowered and emboldened than ever before. We can't let our culture and language die, or we will be gone as well!"

Now I want to add my thoughts on these five profound statements:

- 1) This was very true with our Comanche people, and now in this day and age our men and women join the Armed Services to fight for their country. They are our modern day Warriors.
- 2) Indian children all over this country were taken from their families and placed in boarding schools in the late 1800s and early 1900s. This is a reflection on some of the social issues we, as Indian people, face today.
- 3) Our own late elder, Ray Nieto, said it this way, "Without our (Comanche) language, we're just another Indian."

4) We face this same obstacle here in Comanche country. We offer language learning material and classes, but we are competing with ball games, t-v shows, work, play, computer games, pow-wows, and numerous other activities that attract Comanche people and families. But our Special Project "Learning To Speak Comanche" is making a difference.

5) Right on, Mr. Horse Capture! That is why those of us involved with the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee are so adamant about what we do. Because we WON'T let our culture and language die!

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### **LOOKING BACK ON 2006**

2006 may have been a milestone for the CLCPC. We spent the first decade of our existence gathering and compiling information to help preserve our language and culture. The elder speakers who contributed to this endeavor are true treasures of the Comanche Nation. Unfortunately, many of them are gone now, and others are having health issues and transportation problems. In essence, we are diminishing. But we forge ahead knowing our job is not done.

The first part of this second decade was devoted to putting the information we had gathered into a format that could be easily utilized by Comanches wanting to learn their language. Where we started out using audio cassettes and video cassettes, we now had to move into CDs and DVDs. And of course, there was always the printed material.

Now we have come to a time when we need to get this information into the hands of Comanche people who want to learn. That's what we have done this past year.

- We distributed hundreds of paper copies of our Comanche Language Newsletter throughout the year, plus sending out hundreds of copies via e-mail;

- We updated an early 1990s children's video and made it more "Comanche" and interesting and put it on a DVD to distribute to Comanche children;
- We obtained 568 pages of the Doris Duke collection of Comanche interviews that we've been sharing excerpts from in the Comanche Language Newsletter on a regular basis;
- We proposed and are administering a special one year project we've called "Learning To Speak Comanche" that is working with 15 Comanche families, a total of 70 people, to learn to read, write and speak Comanche;
- We converted many audio cassettes to CDs, and many, many video cassettes to DVDs, which we distribute;
- We sponsored a Comanche Language Conference in 2006;
- We contributed \$3,000 to the Shoshone Nations Reunion held in September;
- We developed three DVDs for language learning that we are distributing;
- We gave away 1279 items at the Comanche Nation Fair that included song books, picture dictionaries, flash cards, ink pens, dictionaries, bumper stickers, CDs and DVDs.
- We have distributed hundreds of language materials at other times during the year that includes Song Books, Flash Cards and Dictionaries;
- We provide Comanche Christmas Songs CDs to anyone that wants to learn them for the holidays;
- And, we give out pens and pocket calendars every year to keep our name in front of everyone throughout the year, to remind them we are busy at work preserving our language and culture.

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**"Sumu Oyetu Tana Nananumunuu"**

(We Are All Related)

Ronald Red Elk

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(\*Here is another story the families in the "Learning To Speak Comanche" Special Project have been working on...)

**INDIAN LIFE IN WINTER TIME**

Soobe?ukutsa?raa pabuetuu su?ana nomi?ayu.

Long time ago old time Indians somewhere were moving

Suruukuse sohohunu?baaiku uma nobituhupiti.

They cottonwood creek on camp

Situkuse utsu?ina maruu nanawa?ipu anuukuse sukoihumi?aru paa kahni namu siyukwikunu.

This cold them women folks are cold their house quickly set up

Situkuse paa kahniku paku kotoo?etanu.

These their houses inside make fire

Situu paa ta?siwoo

These them buffalo

soone uku paaiki sona?etanu.

blanket it inside spread each one

Suruukuse paa ta?oo?a tsapuyetsi si?anetu taka?etubuni.

They the pound meat taking out from this place each one was eating

Situu taka maatsi paa pukunii sohobita tukawupomi?ikunu.

These eating finishing them horses cottonwood are told cut down

Situkuse ma hoiki tobo?itsi ma po?aaraha taka?ayu.

They it around standing its bark was eating

Suniku suruu pabuetuu paa pukunii maka?eeyu.

That way they old Indians their horses were feeding.

(\*Following is a reprint from the “Anampa Achukma/Good News” online language newsletter, issue 2006.08, published by George Ann Gregory.)

“Singing is an aid to learning a language, so use songs...with...adults and certainly with children. Also, continue to create new songs. Songs are integral parts of who we are and an important part of language use.”  
(\*If you would like to read more of this newsletter, e-mail: [holabitubbe@gmail.com](mailto:holabitubbe@gmail.com) and request a copy be sent to you.)

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### **DORIS DUKE COLLECTION**

We bring you another excerpt from the Doris Duke Collection in this issue. You can go online and see the entire collection at <http://digital.libraries.ou.edu.whc.duke/>. We will continue to bring you more excerpts in the future.

#### **Doris Duke Collection Ruth Palmer interview August 2, 1967**

Background of Informant:

Ruth Palmer was born in Faxon, OK in 1913. Her first school was Fort Sill (Indian) School. She also attended Lawton High School. She has lived at Yellow Mission and Deyo Mission. Most of her life was spent with her grandmother Wakeqway (Womahwayah).

#### **CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES**

Ruth: When we lived at Deyo Mission we used to go fishing for crawdads and we'd sit on the bank, about 150 yards from the house. We'd sit up there and we'd fish and we'd throw (the fish) in a tank and we'd pull out a crawdad and we'd fill our bucket up with crawdads, and we'd go feed them to the ants. They be going back and forth on that bed, you know, (we) just laugh and think it was funny.

Broom weeds used to grow all through that place, and I had rag dolls that I played with and I had a little fish can, sardine can, and I'd sit my rag dolls in there and I'd be

dragging it between them broom weeds. I'd have a little tent or something to play with my rag dolls. I had a basket full of rag dolls, and then I had a cradle and I didn't have no doll for it. I had a (part black) doll and part white doll, you know, it was back to back. I had that in there. And I'd play.

At Christmas my mother would buy all of my friends baby buggies. You know you fold them up. She'd buy each one that kind, and she'd buy about nine. And she'd give them all to my friends. And we'd all have a baby buggy. And that was Christmas.

The old folks would have a big pot, like these wash pots. They'd fill them with meat and boil it. And all the campers that was camping would get a bowl full out and take it to their camps and they'd all eat. Sure have a nice time at Christmas at Big camps.

From there, at my school age, about seven years old, we had to move to Yellow Mission (Comanche Reformed Church). My grandmother took me there and we live there, stayed in a tent, you know. It had a floor in it. Around it there was a wind break. Blood weeds, they were tall and my grandmother would cut them and stand them for windbreak around the tent. She put logs on there and it was a nice wind break. I would play in there with my girlfriends.

We had a cellar. We always had to have a cellar because my grandmother really feared storms. She was scared of them and we lived there.

In the summer time she'd make the same blood weed into an arbor. She'd make an arbor and we'd stay under there in the summer and in the winter time she'd make it back into that what-you-call-it. They never would break.

Finally she bought a house. It was (someone's name inaudible) house. You know him? He had a lot of cattle and grain in his days. But we bought his house. It was there at Yellow Mission. We bought that and we had to have a cellar, too. She made the broom weed into an arbor, and it stayed there for the rest of the time. We

lived there for a long time. In 1929 when I was going to school at Fort Sill, my grandmother passed away. I thought I lost the greatest love I ever had then.

Q: What was her name?

Ruth: Wakeqway was her name. Womahwayah, they call her. I was going to Fort Sill then and my little brother was going there, too. She raised two of us, and I had another grandma. Her name was (?). See, my grandfather was married to two women. And this other one didn't have no children. She adopted my brother and another cousin of mine. She raised them as her own. She would have candy hanging in a flour sack, a clean flour sack. We'd go see her and she'd say, "This is your brother's but I'll give you a little of it." We don't hardly go to town all the time. Oh, she'd give a little (candy) and we'd go home and play. Then when we go into town we would catch a street car for six cents, for the grownups.

Q: What town was this?

Ruth: Lawton. We'd catch a street car to town and then we'd buy a lot. My grandmother had a trading place there at Livingston's Grocery. She'd buy groceries there and then across the street was the meat market. The name of it was Henry Spane's Meat Market. We'd go there and we'd buy our beef all on credit till the first of the month. We'd buy on credit and then we'd just fill up this taxi, we called it "jitney" then. We'd fill it up and we'd come home with a lot of groceries. Then the first of the month we'd go pay our bills. Pay our debts.

When I started school at Fort Sill (Indian School) my grandmother and my little brother were there. After awhile he started school and then that was when my grandmother passed away.

Before I went there, my grandmother would take me over there to visit two of my aunts, Maggie and Mabel, at the school. In the back campus, there was a lot of tents, little toy tents, just covering the whole back campus, and I'd play there. We stayed there

close to sundown, then we'd go home. They had rag dolls and everything there to play with.

That was the most beautiful sight you ever saw, little white tents just covering the back campus. Them girls made their own tents and everything. I'd play there and then at sundown I'd go home.

When I started school they didn't have all them tents, just a few. But before my time there was a lot of them.

I was about in the third or fourth grade when my brother started school. We used to go eat at the dining hall. He'd cry and say, "Come on, come on." I'd look the other way and he'd cry loud in the dining hall. They tell me to go take him home, up to the girl's building and play with him to sundown. So he'd go with me and he'd play till sundown. At sundown he'd be willing to go slow toward the boy's building. He'd finally go, and it was that way.

We had to all drill, we had to march to the dining hall and the school building. We have to all march. At the end of the school year, we'd have competitive drills to see who marched the best. The girls who marched the best got ice cream and the captain got stockings. We had to stay all through the year at school.

Winter time we'd skate around – summertime we'd be barefooted in the grass. I shouldn't tell you, but one time we wanted to learn how to smoke. We went to the trash pile and it was burning. We got a bucket of fire and took it to the back campus. It was Alice Poco, Cynthia Locke, Mabel Tahkofper, myself and Roxie. Five of us, we sat down and got catalogs. We put this blood weed in this catalog, we'd light it and puff. We just learning to smoke. And one of us dropped fire on the grass and the others got this catalog and start to hit it, trying to put it out, and it wouldn't go out. It just burned and I tell you that whole back campus burned. We all got scared and Alice and I ran to the ditch and we sat there. It was recess. Everybody came from the

school buildings. We had to carry buckets of water to put it out. There was a boy named Harry Tobi, he was in the fire department was in the engineer room. We went down there and told him the back campus was on fire. He ran out there and he tried to put it out, and we all carried water and finally we got it out. They whipped us and asked us how come we done it and we just told all kinds of lies.

Q: What did you tell them?

Ruth: We didn't tell them we took it out there. We told them that papers blew out there, and we just told all kinds of lies. Next spring that grass grew so green, oh, it was beautiful, and that's when they learned to burn the grass and make it green. Make it all grow even. We taught them that.

And then we used to steal peaches, green peaches. And we'd steal pears. In the fall we'd go down in the creek and pick pecans. It was timber then and it had lots of big pecans. And you know what pecans taste the best? Where there's a green limb that's got pecans on it. The limb breaks down and falls on the ground, and these pecans get dry. When you open them they're sweet. I like that. They're sweet.

We used to have parties on Friday nights. We have carnivals, bazaar or parties. We have cake and ice cream. For bazaars they'd have little booths with different things, and the fishing pond, and chili and hamburgers and all that.

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### PRODUCTS FOR SALE

**Comanche Dictionary.** Compiled entirely by Comanche people, this dictionary contains over 6,000 Comanche words with Comanche to English and English to Comanche sections. \$30 plus \$5 s&h.

**Comanche Lessons, set #1.** A set of four Comanche Lessons, complete with a word list for each lesson and a CD. \$20 plus \$5 s&h.

**Picture Dictionary.** 26 page Primer explains the Comanche alphabet and sound

of each letter. Includes a CD. \$12 plus \$3 s&h.

**Comanche Song Book.** Collection of 116 songs written in Comanche with an English translation, plus a set of 3 CDs of the songs. \$20 plus \$5 s&h.

**Comanche Flash Cards Set.** Three sets of 48 Flash Cards each with simple Comanche words, accompanied by a CD. \$12 plus \$3 s&h for all three sets.

**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; Adult sizes small through XL \$12; Adult sizes 2X and 3X \$15. Specify color and size when ordering and add \$5 per shirt s&h.

**Authentic Handmade Comanche Dolls.** Beautiful 20" soft bodied dolls, dressed in traditional clothing. Both girl and boy dolls available. \$40 each plus \$5 s&h. (Special orders only, allow 6-8 weeks delivery.)

**Tote Bags. Not Available at this time.** Navy with red trim. 16"x12"x5" with back pocket. Front has the Comanche Language logo. \$12 plus \$5 s&h.

**Ball Caps.** Royal blue with red bill and Language Logo on front. \$10 plus \$5 s&h.

**Lapel Pins.** 1 inch Cloisonne pin with colorful C.L.C.P.C. logo and "Námꞩ Tekwapꞩ" in center. \$5 includes s&h.

\*For faster service, please send orders with check or money order to: **CLCPC Attn: Barbara Goodin, 1375 N.E. Cline Road, Elgin OK 73538.** Orders will be shipped the following day, most by Priority Mail. Please include your e-mail address when ordering in case we need to contact you. If ordering multiple items contact us first at [www.comanchelanguage.org](http://www.comanchelanguage.org), as we can usually ship more items less than quoted here.

Please Note: We give discounts to enrolled Comanche Tribal Members.