
NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMENEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

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“Letter From The President”

Maruawekx Numunux

Hina ranu hani?hutui?

“What are we going to do?” is the question that has been asked many times by our Comanche language advocates. This, of course, is making reference to our dying language. What will bring our language back into use by the people? Is it important enough to keep? Why is it important? If your responses to these questions are in the affirmative, then what have you done to see that our language lives on in our daily lives into the future?

Thank you Julianna and W. for your response to the TAMU question in the September 2007 issue of this newsletter. We are in agreement that if he is raised as a Comanche, he is a Comanche. We all know that being raised Comanche today is not the same as it was sixty years ago. Times change, cultures change, languages change. But wait a minute (kesu), our language is not a living language. It is alive only in the hearts and minds of our speakers. When we have no more speakers of our language, does that diminish our identity as Comanches “NUMUNUX”?

Are we a sovereign nation of people? Will we remain sovereign after we lose our identity, our uniqueness as a group of people with our own language? Our

future and the future of our language are in our minds, our hands, our hearts, and our souls. Only time will tell if we respond to this challenge of keeping it and making it a living language.

URA

Ron Red Elk

IF WE GOT IT WRONG – TELL US!

We had about 200 people sign up to receive this language newsletter during the 2007 Comanche Nation Fair. While adding them onto our mailing list, I discovered I had trouble reading some of the entries. So...if your name is misspelled, or we got something else wrong, please let us know and we will correct it. I should have checked each entry as it was made to be sure I could read it later, but everything was so hectic that week-end that I just didn't have time.

I do appreciate all the good comments we received during the Fair, and at other times during the year, letting us know how much you enjoy reading the language newsletter. We enjoy putting it together with various articles that we hope interest a lot of different people.

WE ALREADY KNEW THIS

We already knew that the Comanche language was on the “endangered” list of indigenous languages. Oklahoma is

on a short list along with Australia, Siberia, South American and the U.S. Southwest. We are considered a “hot spot.” With an estimated 7,000 languages worldwide, it is estimated that one of those languages dies out every two weeks. Every two weeks!

The Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages and the National Geographic Society made an announcement in September 2007 that as many as half the current languages have never been written down. No dictionaries, no literature, no text of any kind. If the last speaker of any of those languages dies, the language will be lost.

Thanks to the forethought of several individuals within our Comanche community, we are not in such a dire situation. Because we DO have dictionaries, we DO have literature, we DO have text. We also have audio cassettes, VHS tapes, CDs and DVDs. We have prepared for the future. But it takes more than just preparation – it takes work to keep our language alive. It takes EACH of us doing what we can, learning the spelling system, learning how to write our language, and most important, using our language on a daily basis. Even if it is just a few words – use it!

2008 PROCLAIMED INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANGUAGES

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the year 2008 as an International Year of Languages.

What does this mean to us, as Comanche people? That will depend on what YOU want to do with that information. Possibly nothing, and things will remain the same.

Or maybe you will make a concerted effort to learn our language, and teach your children and grandchildren our

language. If you are a speaker, maybe you will start to teach those around you. Sometimes we feel like we are taking little baby steps, but if each of us would make a commitment, those baby steps will come together and make one giant step. I’ve often heard that any journey begins with that first step. Let’s make that journey together.

If you are an enrolled member of the Comanche Nation, we can help by providing you with the tools you need to begin that journey. We have put together a “Beginner’s Packet” that will include a DVD that teaches the Comanche Sounds and Spelling System, a Picture Dictionary with CD, the set of three flash cards with CD and a Comanche Dictionary with over 6,000 words, translated from Comanche to English and English to Comanche.

When you have mastered the Beginner’s Packet and can read and pronounce Comanche words, we have other DVDs and paperwork that will move you on to the next level of learning.

This is actually a self-teaching method where only YOU determine how successful you are. If you study and work at it, your success will show. If you don’t study and work at it, that will also show.

Currently we are administering Year Two of the “Learning To Speak Comanche” project, whereby we pay Comanche families to learn their language and in turn teach their children/grandchildren. Last year our project had 15 families complete the process, and this year, because of budget cuts, we are working with 12 families.

The material developed for this project is now available for you to study on your own. What do you get out of it if you can’t be paid like the families in the project? Hopefully the satisfaction that

you are doing something so that our beautiful Comanche language, the language of our ancestors, does not die out like many other natives languages.

**LONNIE RACEHORSE
THE PASSING OF A FRIEND**

We recently learned of the passing of one of our Shoshone relatives from Idaho. Excerpts from his obituary follows:

Fort Hall, Idaho – Lonnie Charles Racehorse, 70, passed away on Tuesday, December 11, 2007, at his home in Gibson. He was born February 8, 1937, to Nettie Lucy Diggie Racehorse and John Racehorse Jr., at the Fort Hall Bottoms on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. He was a loving father, grandfather, brother, uncle and friend. He was a quarterback for Chemawa's state championship football team, and received an engineering degree while working at Boeing in Seattle, Washington.

He enjoyed watching football, going hunting, golfing, Indian relay horse racing, spear fishing salmon, pari-mutual horse racing, cutter racing and traveling. He also enjoyed attending Shoshonean Reunions and Bannock Gatherings.

He is survived by four daughters, and several grandchildren and great-grand children.

He will be missed by many family members and friends.

*(*Following is a reprint from "Comanche Oral Narratives," a dissertation by Galen M. Buller, 1977. Consultants for the stories were Lillie Asee, Edith Gordon, Dorothy Martinez and Ella Pewewardy.)*

GIFT GIVING

Somewhere, it is said, some Indians camped. Their little daughter went

towards the creek. There, on a small sand hill, a little hackberry tree stood. She chopped it down with her little axe. Since she was carrying a little bucket, she picked the hackberries, and after having picked them all, she went home. At home, she told her mother, "Pound my pickings. Fix them for us." Her mother pounded them in her wooden bowl, mixing the berries with marrow fat. She found some little switches and gave the children these sticks. These children roasted this food over a fire. It cooked to a nice brown. Then they ate it. The children said to their mother, "It really tastes good and sweet." Then they went to feed their neighbor's children the leftovers. The neighboring mother said to them, "You all fed my children. I also will make you feel good." She pulled out, from inside a bag she had, a buffalo blanket. "I will give you this blanket," she said. She gave the two boys beaded moccasins. When they got home, they showed their parents what they had received. Their father said, "I think our children were treated very good." Early the next morning, the father got up and rode to the neighbors. "Get ready, we will dance," he announced to them. "In this direction are four fat cattle we will butcher." The man asked, "Why are you doing this?" He answered, "Even though we're poor, that woman made my children feel good, so I'm celebrating." They danced and butchered a lot. The neighbor Indian said, "Very little children fed us good." They gave each other much clothing. When it was evening, they quit dancing. From that little girl's pickings, they all were happy and had a big celebration. That is all.

*(*The following are stories from "Comanche Texts" as told by Emily*

Riddles. They are under the chapter heading of 'Morals and Manners.')

Story #XXIII

Long ago, it is said, somewhere Indians had a camp. Their son went to fight and was gone five years. His relatives said, "We ought to just go look for him. Many young men, driving up their horses, carrying food, went looking for him. They traveled many nights. They traveled through many mountains. When they came to a big creek, they said they would camp along the other side of it. The men told their women folk to quickly build a fire and feed them. It was about sundown when they ate, and someone said on the other side something was shining. One young man said, "Hurry up, let's go see it." As he spoke, on the other side of the creek a big bugle sounded. The men told their women to mount their horses and run – it was white soldiers! Just as they spoke, something bright on one of the soldiers came out in sight. That young man's father ran to them. The soldiers unhorsed (lanced) him, and as he is lying there, one of them happened on them suddenly. This man said to him, "Is this you, Son?" His son answered, "I thought you were another tribe." The white soldiers that had captured him had caused his father to be killed, and had killed many of his very own relatives. One young man who recognized him said, "When your father came looking for you, you very pitifully caused him to kill himself." The young man was saying, "No, we can't do anything and feel good." They went looking for this young man and shot him. One white soldier, running on to the one who shot him, unhorsed him with his sword. When the soldiers captured him, the son, his own people would be killed by them. The soldiers set the teepees on fire and sounded their bugle. Then they

marched off. Their own son had caused many of them to be killed.

Story #XXII

Long ago, it is said, some Indians had a camp somewhere. They had to carry water far. When it was almost evening, one of the mothers said to her oldest daughter, "You cook for us." With her little son, the mother went to get water for them. When these two arrived at the place where they got water, she got their water for them. When they were about to go back, her little son said, "Lead us, I will just travel behind you." So his mother went, leading them. Her son dallied behind her. His mother looked back at him, and he was not coming, but stood there in the path. She said, "Hurry, it is about to get dark." Then she became suspicious and wondered why it was that when her son was leading her he ran on ahead of her, but when he was behind her he dallied along. His mother stopped and waited for him. The little boy, coming towards her, came to a stop. When he set down his water load, his mother said to him, "What are you taking behind you?" The little boy said, "Nothing." His mother told him, "You're lying. You must be taking something behind you. As he showed her he was not, she went towards him. The little boy had a little play wagon behind him. His mother said to him, "Where did you find that wagon?" The little boy said, "It was at the place where we got water. I took it." While they were standing there arguing with each other, it got dark. His mother said to him, "Take this back and put it where you found it." He started crying and said he was afraid. She told him not to cry, but go back and put the wagon where he found it and then run back to her. When she could not see her son any longer because it was dark, she said, "My little son is afraid, poor

thing.” As his mother followed his trail he went running along and threw the little wagon beside the spring. He ran back and found his mother waiting for him along the trail. His mother said to him, “Next time, don’t take something that belongs to someone else.” The little boy never really forgot what his mother said to him when he stole something. Now, when his friends play badly, he goes to his mother and says he won’t play with them. That is all.

*(*Here are a couple of Comanche stories about Navajos)*

COMANCHES MEET NAVAJO

story teller unknown

Long ago, when the Comanches were at war with the Navajo, Pocotosapti, a runner on the warpath, took his wife with him to climb to the top of a mountain where he would be able to search the countryside for signs of the enemy. As they climbed, they didn’t know that on the other side of the mountain a Navajo warrior and his mate were climbing toward the same peak. Both couples had left their horses tied at the foot of the mountain.

Suddenly, without even the warning of noisy footsteps, the two couples stood face to face at the top of the mountain. So astonished that none could speak, they simply stood there for a short while.

Finally the Comanche said, “Well, I’m a warrior. I suppose you are one, too, but I am at a loss to know what to do. Let us sit down here and smoke while we decide upon the action that we, as brave warriors, should take.”

They sat in silence, smoking and thinking. The Comanche smoked the Navajo’s long red peace pipe, and then he spoke again. “We shall wrestle right here. Whoever is defeated must submit

to having his throat cut.” The Navajo agreed. While they wrestled, the wives watched, but they never interrupted or disturbed the progress of the fight.

The Navajo soon found it impossible to fight any longer. “You are the winner,” he said. “You may do what we agreed upon before the fight.”

“I shall not take your life,” the Comanche warrior said. “We have witnesses to prove to your people and to my people that I was the victor. You go back and tell your tribesmen what our agreement was; tell them of our fight; and then tell them that I spared your life.”

“The honor that is due you is as great as it would be if you had killed me. I shall tell them so.”

They shook hands and parted with friendly feelings, but they never promised to be friends.

THE CAPTURED NAVAJO

by Mow-wat

interpreted by Rachel Mow-wat
(1940)

Three men, long ago, went buffalo hunting. They succeeded in killing one at the foot of a mountain among some trees. Being a long way from camp, they prepared to eat there. Peesamaka built the fire, and Yerekwasee cooked the meat. Ekane?a, the third man, was a medicine man.

Navajo riders came by, surrounding the three men. The first two men jumped up and ran for their horses, but the medicine man kept eating. “What’s the matter?” said one as he came back. “The enemy is here, and you do not intend to fight?” But the medicine man remained calm. When he had finished eating, he rose with dignity and washed his hands.

The Navajo began shooting with their guns but their bullets did no harm.

During the fight, five of the Navajo warriors were killed and the sixth one, bewildered, was captured. The Comanche warriors scalped the dead men and buried the scalps at the foot of the mountain.

Anxious to take the prisoner back to camp, they began packing their meat on a packhorse to make ready for the trip. They tied a rope around the Navajo and led him on foot. Late that night, when they arrived at their camp, they called for Ohatsuma, a captive Navajo that had lived with the Comanche tribe for many years.

Ohatsuma shook hands with the newcomer and then spoke to him in his native language. "Where did you come from, and how do you happen to be here?" he asked.

"It was a strange fight," the captured Navajo said, as he told his story. "The three warriors stood their ground and never ran. Nothing seemed to harm them while we fired all around them. They must be the warriors who, we have heard, never run from the enemy."

"Yes, that is their way," said Ohatsuma. "Tell me, friend, what is your name and what was your father's name?" As soon as the captive mentioned his father's name, Ohatsuma recognized it to be that of his own father's brother.

"Why, we are cousins! Your father and my father were brothers," Ohatsuma said, and then he turned to the Comanche warriors with whom he had lived so long. "What must be done?" he asked.

Previously the warriors had decided to tie the captive to a tree, build a fire, and dance around him. But now, the captive's relationship to the Navajo they had learned to love and respect caused them to reconsider the problem.

"Let us all do our part in giving my kinsman gifts and clothes," Ohatsuma

suggested. "Then, tomorrow, I will accompany him half way to his own people. To them he will tell the story of his unusual experiences." The warriors agreed.

The next morning several Comanche warriors rushed to the spot where the five Navajo had been slain. They took the rider's horses that were still there, and then searched for the buried scalps. Each warrior wanted one for a souvenir, but there were not enough for the number of warriors. Two had to divide one scalp, and then all were satisfied. Each one tied his scalp with its long hair to the bridle under the horse's chin and after dividing the saddles, shields, knives and guns, rode home to show their fellow tribesmen the evidence of their success.

The Comanche and Navajo, to this day, have remained enemies.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

The CLCPC held our Annual Christmas Party and Banquet in December with nearly 80 people in attendance. Catering services were provided by tribal members Clorinda Tsatoke and Lisa Lookingglass.

In addition to those who regularly attend functions of the CLCPC, families who participated in Year One and Year Two of the "Learning To Speak Comanche" project were invited. Several members of the Post Oak Language class were also in attendance.

Following the meal, gifts were exchanged and special recognition was given to nine speakers of Comanche who have been with our organization for many years. They were Rosalie Attocknie, Gloria and Vernon Cable, Rita Coosewoon, Edith Gordon, Marie Haumpy, Reaves Nahwooks, Betty Pete and Bud Yackeschi. Several of them

gave short speeches, with all emphasizing the importance of preserving our language.

Door prizes were later given away, with ten people walking away as winners.

It was an enjoyable evening for all.

PRAYERS NEEDED

We have learned of several tribal members who are ill and in need of special prayers, especially those who are dealing with cancer. We ask that you remember each of them in your prayers. Ura.

ALASKAN NATIVE LANGUAGES

(*from the Associated Press)

Anchorage, Alaska – Alaska's highest court struck down a central provision of a state law requiring only English to be used for all government business.

Attorney Doug Pope said the ruling means that his clients in Togiak can continue to conduct city council meetings largely in Yup'ik, the only language some of them speak. And while public records must be in English, versions in other languages also can be provided and maintained in the same government files.

The dissenting Chief Justice said the entire law should have been thrown out as violating the U.S. and Alaska constitutions. Instead, the majority focused on two sentences in a provision defining the scope of the law, the first of which reads: "The English language is the language to be used by all public agencies in all government functions and actions."

The court found that to be unconstitutional because it violates federal and state right of free speech.

*Information from: <http://www.adn.com>

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 using 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 Order: 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 \$5 s&h.

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

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

New Lapel Pin. 1 1/8" Silk screened lapel pin with clear epoxy finish. Exact replica of our colorful CLCPC logo complete with feathers, on gold plating. \$5 includes s&h.

***Please Note:** We give discounts to enrolled Comanche Tribal Members. Contact us at 580-492-5126 before ordering.