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# NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMENEEKATU 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”

Maḡaweka Numunuu tʰasʰ nu  
naʔnumunuu, isʰ tʰasʰ nu haʔhaisiḡunuu

We have been blessed with a fine group of young Numunuu suku sikaḡ taḡ Numuḡhabinḡunuu. These young families have done a remarkable job of learning to read our language. They have begun the process of learning to speak Comanche. This is a task that requires a huge amount of dedication and motivation, and it is my belief that they are up to the task.

For those of you who have not heard of the “Learning to Speak Comanche” Project, here is a brief description of it.

There were 15 families being served in this Project and their task was to learn to read and write in Comanche. The objectives were: 1. The parents were to learn the spelling system; 2. The parents were to learn to use the recording /play back device; 3. The parents were to play a wide variety of Comanche language sounds around their children as often as possible; 4. Once the parents’ reading skills were achieved, then they were to read to their children; and 5. The parents started replacing English words with Comanche words on a regular basis. These words would be language used in their daily lives. The target family is one with infants to six years old. By the way, three infants were born during this project year.

The CLCPC is proposing another project

year for 15 new families and the first-year families will serve as mentors for the new families. This project proposal will be going to the General Council in April! Your support at the Council meeting is very important to getting it on the ballot so that the Comanche people can determine if this project will continue. If you have an organization or group that would like to hear more about this project please contact the CLCPC. We can have some of the project family members demonstrate what they have learned through this experience.

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RON RED ELK

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## !! NEW ADDRESS !!

Please note that we have a new mailing address, effectively immediately. We have a forwarding order in place at the post office, but that will only be in effect for a short time. After that time mail will be sent back to the sender. Please make a notation for future use. Our e-mail address will remain the same, as will our web site address. Our new mailing address is:

1375 N.E. Cline Road, Elgin OK 73538.

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## THE ICE STORM OF 2007

The terrible ice storm of January 2007 that paralyzed much of the country reared its ugly head in southwest Oklahoma, also. Fortunately we didn’t lose power, but many weren’t so lucky. Even though we were iced in, my computer gave me the means of communicating with others, some in the

same boat, and some not. Our friend in Hawaii, Dr. James Warson, e-mailed to ask if we were okay. He recently suffered damage during an earthquake in his area, so he was well aware of the damage Mother Nature is capable of inflicting. Another friend, Kerry Kennington, wrote to inquire how we were, and I would like to share his thoughts from that cold winter night.

“Isn’t it amazing....when you think about how much more fortunate we are on a cold icy night, living in houses with heating systems, than the Comanche were living in teepees? Now, that seems obvious until you consider -- what if the power goes out?

The Comanche people had lived, for at least hundreds of years, without electrical power. Yet the Comanche people were completely at home in freezing weather because they knew how to do it. They were just as comfortable in their wood-fire heated kahne as anyone of us is in our gas or electrically heated home. In fact, because they had for so long mastered the art of living in this environment, they had more time to spend with their children. Not every hour of every day was required to eek out a living because the process had been perfected. There was time to spend with the young.

This may explain why so many captive white children became loyal Comanche members. They went from a life of constant daily toil to a people who had a system of living in a balanced environment. This is not to minimize the trauma that they would have experienced during their abduction. But with time, and the instinct for survival, I suspect that they would realize that the average Comanche of that day was as comfortable in their daily life as I am today. Even without the leather recliner and central heat. It was instead a buffalo robe and a fire. Different, but just as effective.

So does this mean we should give up these luxuries? No, of course not. But it does give a sense that maybe there are other ways to live. Maybe there are approaches to

life that are different or unique. Maybe you can live in a very different manner and yet still be just as comfortable and fulfilled in your life as anyone else. Maybe the life of the Comanche people of long ago is not so different than that of the people today. Maybe the only real difference is the language that is spoken. So learn the language of your ancestors. Speak the words that they spoke. Live as comfortable a life as they did. This is the way to honor your ancestors. This is the way to continue a way of life that need not be lost. This is a way to perpetuate the traditions and history of the Comanche people. Learn the language, and the Comanche people will live on to the end of time.” Well said, Kerry.

While we were ice-bound I took the opportunity to update our web site, and in reading it over, I began thinking of the activities that the CLCPC has been involved in over the years. I thought about the Immersion Camp we held at Fort Sill Indian School in 1994. At that time we had many of the elders with us who have since gone on.

One of the activities we did was a “naming ceremony” in which we received an Indian name if we didn’t already have one. Roderick “Dick” Red Elk was the elder that I worked with, and he asked me to tell him some things about myself. After listening he gave me the name of Nanam̄ Weekit̄ – “One Who Searches For Her Ancestors.” He named me that because of my work with genealogy and my search for my relatives. Dr. Alice Anderton spelled it for me and I wrote it down. I have that same piece of paper today. It got me wondering, how many other people received an Indian name that day? And how many still remember it? If you were one of those, I’d love to hear from you.

It’s very special that Roderick gave me my Indian name. He was an elder that I greatly respected. All of the elders that we worked with during that era were quiet, unassuming and respected by all of us who

worked with them. It is sad that we can never go back to that time when they were with us, that time is gone forever – like they are. But we can remember them, and we can honor them by continuing on this journey that we began together – to preserve and keep our language alive. I think they would be proud of us.

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### **THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE**

There are three kinds of people:  
Those that make things happen,  
Those that watch things happen,  
And those that wonder what happened.  
What kind are you?

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### **A SUCCESS STORY**

One of our tribal members in Hawaii, Dr. James Warson, wrote a while back and said he would like to learn to say a prayer in Comanche. He was asked to give the invocation at a yearly conference he attends and had witnessed others do the same in their native language. I gave him some suggestions and he studied diligently, and this is what I heard from his recently: “ZOOOWWWEEEE! I did it! I just stood up, opened my mouth, and out it came. It must have been good, because I had people come up to me afterward and say how impressed they were! Now you can tell the ones who complain about the difficulty of the language, “If a 65 year old man on an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with only books, CDs and DVDs is relearning his language, you can too.” It was a great experience yesterday, and I was really proud. Jim.”

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### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

An organization succeeds, not because it is big, or because it is long established, but because there are people in it who live it,

sleep it, dream it, and build future plans for it.

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### **KIOWA DOCUMENTARY**

The Kiowa, who are our neighbors to the north, our friends, and in many cases, our relatives, have one of their own documenting their oral history and traditions. In a recent article in the Lawton Constitution Donna Rowell was featured as a Kiowa filmmaker who is working to preserve her tribe’s oral history before it is too late.

You can learn more about this endeavor by going to [www.vanishinglink.com](http://www.vanishinglink.com) or [www.emerginglinks.com](http://www.emerginglinks.com).

We wish Ms. Rowell much success in what must be a project of the heart.

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### **DORIS DUKE COLLECTION**

We have more interviews from the Doris Duke Collection from the University of Oklahoma. You can go online and see the entire collection of Comanche interviews at: <http://digital.libraries.ou.edu.whc.duke/>.

### **JOE ATTOCKNIE INTERVIEW**

**June 9, 1969**

(\*Background information: Joe Attocknie was born September 11, 1911, near Apache, Oklahoma. He has lived in this area all of his life.)

I was fortunate in learning (about Comanches) by living with and being raised by my Grandmother Quer-her-bitty, which means “arise to capture.” She was a Comanche from the Rooteater band of Comanche. After she passed away I learned more from my father, Albert Attocknie, who was a Rooteater Comanche from both sides, his father and mother, which makes me a Rooteater Comanche.

I was given the name Joseph Attocknie from my father, and was baptized as Joseph Attocknie. I was also given the name Pah-e Tuh-uh-yah from my father. Pah-e is the water and Tuh-uh-yah is a fear of water, which is the name he gave me, naming me

after a Rooteater Comanche of still further back. Pah-e Tuh-uh-yah was a Comanche of about the age of one of our great-great-grandfathers, Ten Bears.

Ten Bears was the grandfather of Quer-Her-Bitty, who raised me. She raised me about the way Ten Bears raised her because she had lost her mother when she was still an infant.

Ten Bears, their mother's father, raised both her and her older brother, Cheevers. You will find reference to him in various books on Comanches.

I have always felt very fortunate in that I was in the position where I could learn first hand, many things and many practices of the Comanches, and also much of their music because my grandmother was very musical. She loved to sing. And almost every song that she sang, there was usually a little comment – a little story along with it. When she (would sing), it would remind her of an incident that took place way back, an incident would impress her in the way that the music would remind her.

I asked my grandmother one time about what the people worshiped before they adopted the Christian religion, which she done, probably about 1890 or 1895, but before 1900. She readily told me about it.

We worshiped the Sun, we were sun worshipers. I am quite convinced that the Sun Worship has not altogether died away or been forgotten among the Comanches. We still, to this day of 1969, we still take oaths. Oaths are still made to the sun, placing the hand on the Bible and raising the right hand.

Someone will come up to me and seem to be an authority on Comanches. Maybe they have done research. I always try to find out just how much they have found out about the Comanches. One of the questions that I bring up to test (their) knowledge of the Comanche is to ask about our Sun Dance rituals. People that seem to have done a lot of research and found out a lot about the Comanche have put down on paper that

Comanches did not Sun Dance, or maybe just tried it one time. Nye, Wallace, Hobel and, I believe, Wright have said that. Which may not be a fair way to judge their knowledge of the Comanche tribe's past.

Maybe we have corrected an error here, but the Comanche have naturally been reluctant to go find their past. For one thing, they resent somebody else finding out something we know among ourselves. And Comanches don't trust the purpose of people coming to talk to them. They (Comanches) went through the pretense of talking to people doing research on the Comanche (but they) just gave them a token amount of information and kept most of it to themselves.

I know people will come around and pay, offer payment of different kinds, sometimes good, and sometimes maybe pretend to offer friendship in order to learn something about the Comanches. But the Comanches have long been on the alert for something like that. So efforts to research Comanches have actually not had enough success to present a true picture of the Comanche.

#### **ABOUT THE SUN DANCE**

Now this Sun ritual, or you might say Sun Dance, some books said only one time has the Comanches tried, and that it (the Sun Dance) was something they didn't do. But the one that they refer to, I believe, took place down on the north fork of the Red River, just before it enters into the Red River on the west side of the creek. They had Sun Dance there just before they went into the Texas Panhandle. I believe White Eagle and Quanah Parker led this expedition into the Texas Panhandle. Not too much success in their mission, but they had a large group of people to go there. It turned out to be an intertribal affair but the Sun Dance, close to Red River, was the Comanche affair.

This is the Sun Dance people usually refer to, the interpreters who would come

around pretending friendship. But actually they had to work for someone who would pay them, which was the Army. And they would pass on information just as fast as they could to the military authorities.

So the Army knew about that Sun Dance down on Red River. Now that was just one, one that (was written in) the books. But besides that, we had other Sun Dance leaders that would Sun Dance in different parts of the country.

One they had that escaped the notice of the interpreters, (and) of course the military authorities, took place about three miles straight west of Post Field, there at Fort Sill. Somehow the people didn't (notice), and that was fairly recently.

I have seen some of the dancers that took part in that dance, some of my relatives took part. Another Sun Dance took place fairly recently, toward the end of the reservation days.

East of Anadarko, there is a place called Indian City. It was pointed out to my father where they had these Sun Dances. These were the Honeyeater Comanches that had the Sun Dances there.

Another Sun Dance leader we had was more known than most other Comanches. He was a (Comanche word) which is "Birds of the Head." One of his descendants, I believe it was an adopted son, and I say he was adopted because he was a Mexican captive, died recently. His name was Semeno. He became an Indian doctor, a medicine man, later on in life. We also have another one who has relatives living now, Toh-Sah Koh-noh-e. Means the inside, the lining or inside of an object. His relatives living today probably know about their grandfather who held Sun Dances.

Another Sun Dance leader who had Sun Dances was Goes To See His Son. Several of the books on Comanches refer to him because he was a fairly well known Comanche.

Now still another Sun Dance leader was a woman. Too-Koo-Nah-Pheet-At-Peh-Tah,

which is Daughter of the Sky, or you might say Straight Over-head Sky. Daughter of the Sky was the name of this woman. She was a member of the No-Yu-Ka or the Wandering band of the Comanche.

I am going to show you how deeply the Comanches worshipped the sun. We have Sun Dance songs still that we know. We have so far seen no need to go into that, although we know the songs and I believe that I have recorded as many of them as I could. Comanche songs, they have Comanche words.

The general plan or practice of these Sun Dance leaders would be dance by themselves in a lodge prepared by somebody that wanted a prediction and forecast, which is the main reason for the Comanche Sun Dance ritual. Not to heal, not for war dances, not for any purpose other than to foretell the future. Foretell events that have not taken place yet.

People would lose, or have overdue relatives or sons that went off to enemy country or dangerous countries. They would call upon the Sun Priests, bring them gifts and tobacco and then ask them to locate or tell them something about their overdue loved ones. This is the way everyone that I have mentioned so far, Bird's Head, Goes To See His Son and Daughter of the Sky, they all practice reading the future by calling upon the sun to give them information.

One of the last Sun Dances put on took place just about a mile and a half northeast of the old fort (Fort Sill). There on Cache Creek and Medicine Bottom (\*he may have been referring to Medicine Bluff) there at Fort Sill. A group of young men, including some of my relatives (it got pretty close to my family there), called upon the leader. He was going to hold his Sun Dance ritual there at this Comanche Village on the east side of Cache Creek and Medicine Bottom there at Fort Sill.

They had made preparations. One thing must be made clear here. When you are going to put on a Sun Dance, all of the Sun

Dancers know how they were to dress, which is down to the bare skin, except for a breech cloth and a belt to hold up the breech cloth. And then the reed, the sage brush, the reeds for the dancers. And a whistle about four or five inches long made from a bone, an eagle bone, the collar bone of an eagle.

The singers at that time did not use the big drum, but small hand drums, as we called them. And if it wasn't agreeable (to use a small drum) they might beat upon a raw hide, hard rawhide.

Now the pole itself, the lodge itself, is usually stripped of all the branches and stuck into the ground to form a circle. A circular enclosure for the ritual.

There would be no place to hide anything, no place to hide weapons or anything that could be mistaken for a weapon on the person of the dancers or on the lodge itself.

The leader I am talking about is Paa Tsukotubætæ, which is Black Otter. This took place sometimes in the 1780s. I have the exact date somewhere. This relative of mine made preparations to take part in the Sun Dance at this time, because that was his group, you might say, his little close circle of friends that were going to take part. Being a member of that group, he made his plans and was talking about how he was going to take part. But his mother and relatives interfered with him.

They told him that something's not right, there was some uneasiness, some little reason they felt that he should not take part. So, they delayed him, although he was getting ready. He was going to go anyway, but he delayed long enough that the dance started.

The musicians arrived and started singing their songs, and dancers began to dance. After the dance had been going on, word got out that troops were coming up Cache Creek toward (where) the dance was going on. The troops were also pulling a big wagon. There was some animals, mules, pulling a big wagon with a body of troops at

the head of the column. Although people began to get uneasy, it was also seen that the Sun Dance lodge was built so that people could see in, plainly see all over the lodge. Also, the dancers were unarmed with no place to hide weapons on their person, being bare footed, no leggings, and nothing but a G-string under which to hide anything.

The fact that they had to dance and blow whistles at the same time, they saw no need to stop their dance because troops were approaching. They kept singing and dancing.

Now the Comanche Sun Dance, unlike some of the other Sun Dancers around, Cheyenne, I guess, Kiowas, too, and the Poncas, practiced the Sun Dance where they stood stationary and danced from one place. The Comanche, after starting a dance song, dance toward the center pole and then back to their starting point, at the wall of the lodge. When the song starts again they would start toward the pole again and dance their way back at the start of each song. They would stand stationary.

While they were dancing, the troops had gotten closer, maneuvered and surrounded the Sun Dance Lodge, Black Otter's Sun Dance Lodge. The Comanche dancers thought there was no reason to stop dancing, being unarmed.

The purpose of the Sun Dance, a high sun ritual which would be to me like a High Mass or some of the American churches or some other high religious ritual. But here these Comanches were, surrounded by what might be mistaken for sightseers or people that came to watch the ritual. The Comanches could see that they were armed soldiers.

Then all at once, the soldiers began to fire at them, and shot them all down, just wiped them all out of there. One of the leaders, in fact it was Black Otter himself, came to some time later. When he came to, a white man sitting over him spoke to him. It was Horace Jones, interpreter for the military troops at Fort Sill. He told Black

Otter to lay still, they had already killed him. Black Otter realized that the rest of the dancers were laying there, all dead. It was thought he was dead, too. So he just discontinued his Sun Dances, and I believe he became a user of peyote later on.

But this is just a little here that we will say about the Comanche's worship of the sun and also the way in which they used the Sun Dance, not as a healing ritual but as a ritual to foresee the coming events.

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## DANA CHIBITTY INTERVIEW

October 7, 1967

(Background Information: Dana Chibitty was born in 1897 at Richard's Spur. Her Indian name is Tah-da-tas-I, which means "Real Little" in English. Her father was Piekie-u (Comanches call it Pikauhu) and her mother was Pa-ha (Pet-stu-co-ni).

Q: What kind of things did they sell at the Red Store?

DC: They sell groceries and dry goods, and shoes and everything that a person needs. On the northeast side was old Man Cox's store and on this side, on the southeast side was Pascal's Store. On the west side was the Lawrence Store, I don't know what his first name was. His boy's name was Arthur Lawrence.

That's three stores there, and everybody go there to get our money.

I remember, too, that was the time the small pox killed a lot of people. I remember it like a dream – there was a building just east from that Pascal's Store. East from that building there was a lot of camps through there, lots of Indian camps through there. They taken all their kids to have them vaccinated. My mama took us up there and I was crying, I was scared of it. (Later) I was asking my husband, "Was that the time those people died from that smallpox?" and he said, "Yes." I was just a little girl, I wasn't going to school when that happened, I remember that.

## 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.** 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 "Nem̄ Tekwapu" in center. \$5 includes s&h.

**COMING SOON!** New lapel pins.

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**Attention Tribal Members: Please contact us before sending in your order, as we give discounts to enrolled Comanches.**