
NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMNEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

P.O. Box 3610 Lawton OK 73502-3610

www.comanchelanguage.org fax: 1-580-492-5119 e-mail: clcpc@comanchelanguage.org

Editor: Barbara Goodin

“Letter From The President”

Maraweka Namanuu ise taas na ha haitsinuu.

The “Learning To Speak Comanche” Project is finally off and running. We have 15 families plus three alternate families involved. Two of the alternate families are going through the program as if they were one of the 15 families. The families have a total of 35 children, and with parents and/or grandparents included, the number totals 71 people learning our language.

We have many contributors to this project that deserves to be mentioned. Without their help the project would be sorely lacking: Barbara Goodin, who keeps everything running smoothly; Billie Kreger for her able assistance with the spelling system; Tomah Yeahquo for sharing the infant CD with all the families in this project; and Dan Bigbee for his help in developing the DVD for the orientation in the Comanche Sounds and Spelling System; and of course, to the many speakers that have shared their knowledge of our language so this project would have material to use and become a successful tool in reviving our dying language. To you Comanches that have supported our efforts down through the years by giving so generously of the funding that we have asked for and needed, Ura.

Also thank you to Carolyn Codopony for allowing the use of the Comanche Day Care Center for Orientation classes, and to Billie Kreger for the use of the Cahoma Building for the same purpose.

Now for a subject that may not be so positive, but needs to be addressed, at the

very least, for clarification (re: www.campcrier.net, letters to the editor).

Beverly Isaacs, your understanding of my involvement in the campaign between my ahra, Willie Nelson, and Keith Yackeyonny is totally incorrect. First of all, I have the same rights as any other Comanche when it comes to whom I support or nominate during the election process. Secondly, the C.L.C.P.C. is not mine. I am a member and Officer of this Comanche organization. When I’m representing this office I’m mindful of the duties and responsibilities. The CLCPC has a stated Mission Statement and has had since its beginning in 1993. The General Council has, since that time, allowed a budget of \$25,000 to go to the Comanche people for a vote of approval or denial. It may surprise you to know that every year since 1994 there has been an approval of that budget. In fact, this last year’s vote was by some 70%, and that was with the increased amount for the “Learning To Speak Comanche” Project. There has been two years when we did not receive our full allocation of funding voted on by the people. Guess who the Chairman was one of those years? Keith Yackeyonny. Wallace Coffey was Chairman the other year we didn’t receive our full funding voted on by the Comanche people.

Respectfully submitted to all Comanche people, Ron Red Elk

“**Samu Oyetu Tana Nananamanuu**”

(We are all related)

Ronald Red Elk

“LEARNING TO SPEAK COMANCHE” SPECIAL PROJECT

As mentioned above, the Special Project for “Learning To Speak Comanche” is finally in full swing, with 15 Comanche families, plus 3 alternate families, involved.

Back in the March 2005 issue of this newsletter, CLCPC president Ronald Red Elk outlined the Special Project. That proposal was taken to the General Council the following month and approved to go on the Tribal Budget in May. At that time 70% of the voters approved it to be included in the 2005-2006 Tribal Budget.

News Releases and Notices were sent out asking for 15 families willing to participate in learning the Comanche language. We were pleased with the response. We selected 15 families, plus 3 alternate families who are participating on their own, in case we have a family who has to drop out for some reason. They have all been provided with the same material, along with a tape recorder / CD player.

Here is a summary of our family statistics at the beginning of the project:

- 2 unborn children,
- 1 – 1 ½ week old baby,
- 1 – 8 month old child,
- 1 – 10 month old child,
- 2 – 12 month old children,
- 1 – 18 month old child,
- 1 – 19 month old child,
- 2 – 21 month old children,
- 4 – 2 year olds,
- 3 – 3 year olds,
- 3 – 4 year olds,
- 2 – 5 year olds,
- 2 – 6 year olds,
- 2 – 7 year olds,
- 1 – 7 ½ year old,
- 1 – 8 year old,
- 1 – 9 year old,
- 2 – 12 year olds,
- 1 – 13 year old,
- 1 – 14 year old, and
- 1 – 18 year old.

That’s quite an assortment of children! All 35 of them! When we were working with the parents to let them become familiar with the sounds and spelling system, Ron encouraged them to bring the children with them. We had some pretty noisy gatherings sometimes, but the children are really what this project is all about. THEY are our future, they are our speakers of tomorrow.

We will keep you updated as this project moves along.

COMANCHE SOUNDS & SPELLING SYSTEM DVD

Finally a reality! After many trials, errors and missteps, we finally have a Comanche Sounds & Spelling System teaching tool for those who want to learn the sounds of our language. It was developed with the expertise of Dan & Lilly Bigbee of Big Productions out of Stillwater OK. We knew what we wanted and they knew how to put it together for us. With that partnership we now have a teaching tool we can be proud to distribute to learners of the Comanche language.

We have called this first DVD Lesson #1, anticipating more to follow. We plan to develop others to complete a series of lessons/workshops to teach the sounds and spelling system.

Feedback we have received from the first people to view the DVD has been very positive. Twenty-five minutes in length, it is in a format that can be viewed over and over again to reinforce and instill those sounds needed to speak the language.

We plan to begin distribution of the DVD as soon as sufficient copies can be made.

CHILDREN’S VIDEO NOW ON DVD

The twelve minute Comanche Children’s Video we developed a few years back has now been transferred to a DVD format. We gave away many, many copies of the VHS

video, but it was time consuming to make copies and we needed to devote our time to other projects.

With the recent purchase of a DVD duplicator, we are now able to make many copies in a short amount of time. This will allow us to again distribute this unique teaching tool for children.

We will be setting up at future Comanche activities, so watch for us.

COMANCHE HYMN SINGING

The CLCPC will sponsor a Comanche Hymn Singing on Thursday, April 6, 2006, in the Gymnasium of the Comanche Nation Complex, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Everyone is invited to attend, and you are welcomed to bring your tape recorders.

You will not only hear the beautiful Comanche hymns, but a little of the history of some of the songs, too. Don't miss it!

2006 SHOSHONE NATIONS REUNION

The 7th Annual Shoshone Nations Reunion will be hosted by the Comanche Nation for the second time since it began in 1999. It will be held just prior to the Annual Comanche Nation Fair, whose date has not been set. Traditionally the Fair has been held the last full week-end in September, but it may be changed to the first week-end in October this year.

Meetings have been held to start the planning process, since a large number of our Shoshone relatives are expected to attend this year. For information on the next meeting you may call Dr. Reaves Nahwooks, coordinator for the Reunion, at 580-246-3529, or log onto our web site and look under "Upcoming Events" for the next meeting time and site.

All Comanche organizations have been invited to participate in order to make this reunion a success. If your organization has not been contacted, please don't hesitate to call Dr. Nahwooks, because they don't want

to overlook anyone. It will take many people in various capacities to bring the Reunion together.

DICTIONARY REVISION UPDATE

Work continues on the revision/additions to the Comanche Dictionary. Work is slow, but we are progressing well. Watch for the announcement that the revised Dictionary is completed in this newsletter and on our web site (www.comanchelanguage.org).

SOUNDS & SPELLING WORKSHOP

We have been holding the Comanche Sounds and Spelling System workshops in partnership with the Comanche Nation College. They have provided space for us to meet at the request of community members who were interested in learning the Comanche sounds.

We issue a News Release to notify everyone of the next workshop in order to reach the people who are interested. We also post a notice on our web site, in the "Upcoming Events" section.

SOMETHING OF INTEREST

A friend of ours called recently to tell us about a web site at www.geocaching.com that has hidden "treasures" that hobbyist using global positioning (GPS) search out. The reason he called was that one of the recent caches was called "Charles Chibitty, Code Talker" and the longitude and latitude to discover this treasure was given using the Comanche language!

I'm not sure who placed the cache on the web site, but I checked it out and it did use the language, although all the Comanche numbers were not spelled correctly.

To view this web site, go to the above mentioned web site, find the box in the upper right side that says "By Zip Code" and type in 73557. Click on Go, and when that page comes up, scroll down to the 6th item

and click on “Charles Chibitty, Code Talker.”

I didn't know that this site existed, but apparently our friend has been involved in searching out these caches for some time. In fact, when he discovered this one with the numbers written in Comanche, his first thought was to call us – but it was late at night so instead he searched the internet and found the numbers there. His detective work paid off because he was the first to discover the “cache.”

To learn more about this interesting hobby go to www.geocaching.com/faq/.

OUR RELATIVES

(*Below are excerpts from an American Anthropological Association publication, Volume 42, No. 3, Part 2, 1940. The article was titled “The Political Organization and Law-Ways of The Comanche Indians,” and had a list of Comanche informants. Here are some of the observations by those conducting the study of our relatives:

1. Herman Bluefoot* (Asenap), Born of a captive Mexican father and a full-blood Comanche mother, Herman served as our chief interpreter and go-between. Highly respected for his leadership abilities he was ideal in his role, for he never obtruded his personality upon the informant, but served always as a skillful transmitter of ideas between Comanche and ourselves. (*Editor's note: his name actually translates to Gray Foot.)

2. Eagle Tail Feather (Qwasia). A member of the Those who Moved Often band. Quiet, responsible and respected, one of the most reliable of Comanche informants, inclined however to resist rapport with whites. Age 56.

3. Slope (Nayia). Easy going, genial, a Comanche who sees all life in its humorous aspects. Generously helpful with the information he possesses (except the nature of his secret herbs), with his interest in people and things he was capable of

providing much anecdotal material. Of the Those Who Turn Back From Raids band. Age 57.

4. Rhoda Bluefoot. Wife of Herman Bluefoot, daughter of a well-known medicine man and warrior. Too young to have had a great deal of experience in the old culture, most of her information was secondary. Her services were as interpreter when working with women informants. Age 45 (?).

5. Post Oak Jim. An active, unusually extraverted Comanche with a colorful and notorious history, now a famous Peyote leader and singer. A willing and self-regarding informant. Of the Those Who Turn Back From Raids band. Age 64.

6. Koweno. A Yap Eater. Now deacon of the Mennonite Mission Church.

7. Breaks Something. His information centered mostly about his own personal experiences as a medicine man and in damage settlements. A most conscientious informant who provided valuable material. A member of the Antelope band. Age ?.

8. That's It. One of the finest of all possible informants, unassuming, intelligent and versed with an astounding knowledge of Comanche ways and events. Entirely cooperative and appreciative of the purpose of the study. One of the few surviving members of the Water Horse band. Age 79.

9. Skinny and Wrinkled. Interpreter. A Carlyle graduate. Age 45.

10. Gets To Be A Middle-Aged Man (Tenebeka). An obstinate and tantalizing informant, he is the “greatest” of the living Comanches, for he is the sole surviving member of the band of five warriors who stole all the 121 horses from the U.S. Calvary at Fort Sill in 1871. Buffalo Eater band. Age 89.

11. Get Your Neighbor. An effective woman informant from the Swift Stingers band, she gave much comprehensive information. Age ?. Her name is also translated as Visits Her Relatives.

12. Holding Her Sunshade. Captured as a seven year old child in a Comanche raid upon her schoolhouse in old Mexico, she has lived through a fantastic life history and at the age of 90 survives with her very active 75 year old daughter, born of a Comanche chief. A capable informant.

COMANCHE INTERVIEWS

The Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee recently acquired copies of transcripts from the Doris Duke Collection of oral histories from the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma in Norman.

From time to time we will print excerpts of various interviews. This issue we are publishing parts of interviews from Mary Poafpybitty Niedo.

Her background information stated: "Mary Poafpybitty Niedo (she is married to Joey Niedo) is Arapaho and half Comanche. She was born May 20, 1895, in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. She now lives south of Apache, Oklahoma, north of Porter Hill, along Chandler Creek. One of her brothers is James Isaac Poafpybitty. Mary is one of the last Comanche Eagle doctors." As a side note, Mary had a book written about her titled "Sanapia, Medicine Woman," by David E. Jones.

This interview took place on January 16, 1968.

SUBJECT: INDIAN POLICE

Q: Could you tell me something about the Indian policemen they had a long time ago?

Mary: He (Post Oak Jim) was a policeman, way back in years.

Q: Those policemen, were they just for Indian people or were they for ---?

Mary: For the Indians especially.

Q: Did they wear any kind of uniform?

Mary: No. Never did wear no uniforms.

Q: How did you know they were police?

Mary: Everybody just know. They was elected for police. There was four of them. Four Comanche policemen. There was

Post Oak Jim, and George Tukawana, and Wayne White Wolf, my uncle and then his name's Walkaro. And Henry Pohoxakut and this Buffalo. They were laws.

Q: When did they stop having them?

Mary: Oh, after everything settle down, they just quit. After a lot of white peoples come in so they just quit.

Q: You mean there were Indian police before there were a lot of white people here?

Mary: Yeah.

SUBJECT: COMANCHE BANDS

Q: What do the Comanches call themselves?

Mary: ~~Namunuu~~. It means "Comanche." And there are certain group of each Comanches like that. They got names. We here are Yapai Indians. Our fathers come from the Yapai Indians. Our grandfathers are Yapai. And there's another group - Kwahada means those Indianahoma people. They live out in the Plains. Out in the open in the hot sun. They live out like deers. Deer is antelope. Antelope is Kwahada. And they live out on Plains like them antelopes and that's why they call them that. And you come down this way at Walters, you know, (we) call them Wianu.

Q: What was that group way down south they called something like Penatuka?

Mary: Pena. They come from eastern part of Oklahoma and way back in Texas. Far southeast part of Texas. That's where they used to live.

Q: Are they in with the Walters people?

Mary: No. They altogether different bunch. Now there's a very few of them living around Apache. Most of them live around Texas. Few of them living and all the old peoples are gone.

LEARNING TO MAKE MOCCASINS

My grandmother (taught) me how to make moccasins and how to bead work. All those things I learned from her. And she had sinew, they sewed with sinew. She'd sew the soles onto the buckskin when she's making moccasins. She made thread out of (the sinew) about that long. She tears them off and makes thread and then she had a

little outfit about that long, it's pointed, made out of wood. She make that herself. She'd make a little hole and she put that needle in there and I don't know how it holds hard, but it stays in. And then she'd take the soles and the buckskin like that and ...just whip it ...all around the sole of the moccasins. And when she'd get through with it she's put leggins in it. She'd put it on my feet and I'd wear those moccasins in the winter.

Q: How long did it take to make a pair of moccasins?

Mary: Not too long. She could make a pair for me in half a day. She don't put no bead work on these, they're just my every day shoes. The buckskin is sewed to the sole and then she'd sew those leggins up this way. I wear that for my everyday. She got some pretty ones she made for me, that's what I wear when we go to town or anywhere, it's beaded (and) got fringes. It's like these grown up people (wear). You seen them when they dance. Like those, she makes them for me. She made me a little buckskin dress, too, when I was small. I had a shawl to go with it, and moccasins and a blanket. She made all those things for me.

Q: How many skins did it take to make a buckskin dress:

Mary: One, two, maybe four. You might say five because you might have fringes on it. If it's pretty good size, one could be the waist, and then one pretty good size for the skirt. And you got to cut a lot of those fringes, you got to put all those fringes around the skirt. You've got to fix the sleeves. If they're small, you could get small pieces, it would be enough for sleeves on both sides. And if you get a pretty good size one, still it would be plenty for the fringes all around the skirt and on your sleeves.

(*From the Journal of American Folk-Lore, Vol XXII, of the American Folklore Society. Comanche/Shoshone Tales. A Comanche Story:)

THE HOODWINKED DANCERS

Coyote met a skunk. "Halloo, brother! I am very hungry. Let us work some scheme to get something to eat! I will lead the way, do you follow." – "Well, I will do whatever you propose." – "Over there is a prairie dogs' village. We will stay here until daylight. In the morning you will go to the prairie dog village and play dead. I will come later and say to the prairie dogs, 'Come, let us dance over the body of our dead enemy!' Well, go there, puff yourself up, and play dead." Skunk followed his directions. Coyote got to the prairie dogs. "Come, we will have a dance. Stop up your holes tight, let every one come here. Our enemy lies dead before us. Do you all stand in a big circle and dance with closed eyes. If any one looks, he will turn into something bad." As they were dancing, Coyote killed one of them. "Well, now all open your eyes! Look at this one; he opened his eyes and died. Now, all of you, close your eyes and dance again; don't look, or you will die!" They began to dance once more, and Coyote commenced to kill them. At last one of them looked. "Oh, he is killing us!" Then all the survivors ran for their holes. While they were trying to get, he killed them. Coyote and Skunk gathered all the corpses and piled them up by a creek. They built a fire and cooked them.

"Well," said Coyote, "Let us run a race for them! The one that wins shall have all the good fat ones." "Oh!" replied Skunk, "you are too swift; I am a slow runner, and can never beat you." – "Well, I will tie a rock to my foot." -- "If you tie a big one, I will race with you." They were to run around a hill. Coyote said, "Well, go on ahead! I will catch up to you." Skunk began to run. Coyote tied a rock to his foot, and followed. Coyote said, "The one that is behind shall make a big fire, so there will be lots of smoke, and we shall be able to see where he is." Skunk got far ahead, and turned aside to hide. When Coyote had run past him, Skunk turned back to the meat

pile. Looking back, he saw a big column of smoke rising on the other side of the hill. He took all the meat and carried it home. He cut off all the tails and left them sticking out, with two poor little prairie dogs for Coyote. Coyote thought Skunk was ahead of him. As he ran along, he said to himself, "I wonder where that fool is! I did not know he could outrun me." He got back to the pile, and saw the tails sticking out. He seized one, and it slipped out. He tried another one. "Oh, they are well cooked!" He tried another one. Then he got suspicious. He took a stick and raked up the fireplace, but could only find the two lean prairie dogs. He thought some one must have stolen the meat. He ate the two lean prairie dogs. Skunk, lying in his den, was watching him. As Coyote was standing to look around, Skunk threw one of the prairie dog bones at him. Coyote then espied him lying in his camp. He saw all the meat around him. "Give me some of them!" -- "No, we have run a race for them. I beat you, I am going to eat them all." Coyote begged him in vain for some food. Skunk ate it all. He was a better trickster than Coyote.

Another Version. – Coyote was knocking about on the prairie. There was a prairie dog village there. Coyote got there. "Well, a bad disease is coming to us," he announced. The chief of the prairie dogs, who was named Elk Meat, went among his people, saying, "Coyote says a bad disease is coming to us." Coyote said, "Oh, tell your people we are going to dance." The chief told his people. "We will have it right in the center of the camp." Then they gathered a lot of wood. Towards nightfall Coyote said, "Well, we are going to dance, a bad disease is coming." Then they gathered there and began to dance. While they were dancing, Coyote developed a scheme. As they came around to one side, he killed them with a stick while standing at the far end. Two little ones had just lost their mother. The younger of the two, peeping at Coyote, said,

"O brother! They are killing us. What are we going to do? Let us run away!" He took the lead, and they fled. Looking back, one of them said, "Why, he is destroying all of us! He was merely deceiving us."

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. \$34 incl. s&h.

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. \$25 includes s&h.

Picture Dictionary. Primer explains the Comanche alphabet and sound of each letter. \$15 includes s&h and your choice of audio cassette or CD.

Comanche Song Book. Collection of 116 songs written in Comanche with an English translation, plus set of 3 CDs of songs. \$30 plus \$5 s&h.

Comanche Flash Cards Set. Three sets of 48 flash cards each with simple Comanche words. \$15 includes s&h and your choice of audio cassette or CD.

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 & add \$4 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 \$4 s&h.

Ball Caps. Royal blue with red bill and Language Logo on front. \$10 plus \$4 s&h.

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

Note: We give discounts to enrolled Comanche tribal members. Contact us.

**Please include your e-mail address when ordering in case we need to contact you. Contact us if ordering multiple items, as we can usually ship cheaper than quoted here (e-mail address at top of newsletter).*