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# NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMNEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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September 1999

Vol. 2 Issue 3

The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

## "Letter From The President"

M-A Training Workshop

August 27,29, 1999

Horse Shoe Bend Community Center

Shawnee, OK

On the evening of August 27, 1999, three Comanche M/A Teams will be helping Dr. Leanne Hinton of the University of California at Berkeley conduct a training workshop on the M/A concept. Gloria Cable (Master) and Billie Kreger (Apprentice); Carney Saupitty Sr. (Master) and Apprentices Richard Codopony Jr. and myself are the M/A teams involved in this workshop. The tribal groups to be trained are the Eastern Shawnee, Absentee Shawnee and Chickasaw.

The Saturday sessions will begin at 8:30 a.m. and run all day, concluding with a cultural sharing and stomp dance at 7:00 p.m. Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> sessions will begin at 8:30 a.m. with the final session concluding at 12:00 noon.

Usu tanu ika taa Numu pu?e. Eka taa Numu tekwapu?ha suumai tuawetui.

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## DELICIOUS REMINDER

Don't forget the ANNUAL LAWTON-FORT SILL BUFFALO BURGER COOK-OUT is scheduled for Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup> beginning at noon until 5 p.m. The public is invited to buffalo burgers cooked on the spot (mmmmm! I can smell it already!) and served with all the fixin's by the platter full. It will be held at the Co-Op Park on Fort Sill. Bring your chairs, there will be plenty of entertainment during the afternoon.

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## PANEL DISCUSSION HELD

A panel of eight held center stage when the CL&CPC, in cooperation with the Museum of the Great Plains, held a panel discussion recently in the Museum auditorium. Participants spoke on a variety of subjects, followed by a brief question and answer session. Those participating were Rosalie Attocknie, Lucille McClung, Theresa Saupitty, Ron Red Elk, Billie Kreger, Gloria

Cable, Bill Southard and Carney Saupitty Sr.

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## LANNAN M-A TEAM PROJECT

Year Two of the Lannan Master-Apprentice Team Project concluded on July 31<sup>st</sup> with a Final Evaluation. The morning began at 10 a.m. with each apprentice making a presentation to the group assembled. We began with the apprentice logging in the least amount of hours (118.5) and concluded with two apprentices who had logged a total of 822.5 hours each during Year One and Two combined.

Previous evaluations had been done in a private setting with very few people present. We felt this allowed the apprentice to feel more at ease. The Final Evaluation took place in a group setting, and some apprentices were noticeably more nervous than others. But it was our contention that if each apprentice carries out their commitment to teach others what they have learned, they need to become accustomed to speaking in front of others.

It has always been our policy not to criticize or laugh at someone who is trying to speak and mispronounces a word. Of course, many times we laugh at ourselves, but we encourage our speakers to not be critical and to let new speakers know in a good way of his/her mistake. In the Comanche language (probably as in other languages), one slip of the tongue and you've said something completely different than what you intended. That's why we sometimes laugh at ourselves!

As you read the following summaries, remember only Comanche was spoken by each apprentice, except when songs or prayers were used. Then we required they be translated.

The first apprentice to speak was Ray Niedo's apprentice, Kenneth Goodin (118.5 hours). He used the pictures on the flash cards to name things, then told his family ancestry and talked about a large stuffed horse he used as a prop.

Next was Marie Parton's apprentice, Barbara Coker (156.5 hours). She sang a song, told stories about camping, picking pecans, buying groceries

and cooking.

Bud Yackeschi's apprentice, Bill Southard (375.5 hours) followed. He said a prayer, sang a Christmas song, "Joy To The World," plus a hymn and told a story about conversations with his Master.

Kathryn Sovo (422.5 hours), the apprentice of Edith Gordon, introduced herself and spoke on her family history and named all her relatives in Comanche.

Carney Saupitty Sr.'s apprentice, Ron Red Elk (422.5 hours) — seen here saying "cheese," was next. He spoke on the role of his classmates in his learning process and presented gifts of thanks to them and his Master. He then passed out gifts of Comanche yard sticks to the audience — you'd have to see it to believe it! (Ron, were you just killing time?) He then told several stories.

Rosalie Attocknie's apprentice, Esa (822.5 hours), followed with a story about three bears. Here she's seen gesturing during her story.

Last was Billie Kreger (822.5 hours), apprentice of Gloria Cable. Billie was video taped earlier as she was out of state on vacation on Final Evaluation day. We watched as she sang a song and the Lord's Prayer, then translated them into English.

Our hope that each apprentice would gain at least a basic proficiency in the Comanche language has been realized, much beyond our expectations! The earlier evaluations focused on the apprentice learning the basics of the language.

The Final Evaluation allowed them to use those basics and form sentences.

The presentations given by the apprentices were both creative and unique, and extremely well done. We were all quite impressed with the learning level each had achieved.

After lunch, we moved into the Master segment of the day. Each Master was allotted 15-20 minutes to tell stories in Comanche. Although they were not evaluated, it served two purposes: (1) to allow the apprentices to hear nothing but Comanche spoken over the next two hours; (2) to give the Masters the opportunity to sharpen their language skills and speak nothing but Comanche over a period of time. It was a most enjoyable afternoon with much laughter heard due to the

many humorous stories that were told.

The following Monday we began working on the final report to Lannan, with a deadline just under two weeks away. Due to "technical difficulties," the video we planned to include was delayed a few days, but all has been received by Lannan.

Now we are anxiously awaiting news to learn if we are successful in receiving the final grant for Year Three.

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## FALL ENCAMPMENT SCHEDULE

October 8-9-10, 1999

Thursday evening, October 7<sup>th</sup>:

Set up time for campers.

Camp Crier - Bud Yackeschi

Friday, October 8<sup>th</sup>:

8:00 a.m.- Breakfast served.

9:00 a.m.- Registration

10 a.m.- Brush Dance

11 am- Tee-pee Set Up (Tosee & Heminoky)

Noon - Lunch Served.

1:00 p.m.- Cradle Making-Edith Gordon

2:00 p.m.-Bow & Arrow Making- Ray Niedo

3:00 p.m.- Meat Slicing-Rosalie Attocknie

4:00 pm- Fry Bread Demo-Margaret Poahway

5:00 p.m.- Supper Served.

7:00 p.m.- Mini Hand Game

8:00 p.m.- Story Telling

Saturday, October 9<sup>th</sup>:

8:00 a.m.- Breakfast Served.

9:00 a.m.-Herbs & Remedies-Wekeah Bradley

10 a.m.- Men's Regalia-Bernard Kahrahr

11 a.m.-Women's Regalia

Noon- Lunch Served.

1:00 p.m.-Buckskin Dress-Rita Poor Buffalo

2:00 p.m.- Finger Weaving-Josephine Wapp

3:00 p.m.- Flute Making-Carney Saupitty Sr.

4:00 p.m.-Dried Corn Demo-Lucille McClung

5:00 p.m.- Supper Served.

7:00 p.m.- Mini Pow-Wow

8:00 p.m.-Story Telling

Sunday, October 10<sup>th</sup>:

8:00 a.m.- Breakfast Served.

10:00 a.m.- Comanche Hymns - Vernon Cable

Noon- Lunch Served.

1:00 p.m.- Closing Remarks and Break Camp.  
Camp Chairman Billie Kreger has been hard

at work getting everything ready for the Camp.

There is not a charge for attending this Encampment, but we do need to know how many will attend so we can be sure we have sufficient food for meals. To get your name on the sign up sheet for the Encampment, **call Billie at 429-3866** or send e-mail or a fax to the addresses at the top of this newsletter. Be sure and include a phone number where you can be reached, in case of any changes.

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### **ELLIOTT CANONGE REMEMBERED**

*\*We received a letter from Viola Canonge Frew a while back and would like to share its contents with you:*

"Thanks for the...Comanche Language Newsletter. It was great to see names I remember.

It came to me some folks might be interested in information concerning Elliott Canonge, Kuisai', friend of the Comanches.

Elliott, after Bible School and Seminary, went to the University of OK at Norman in 1943. There he trained in linguistics under Doctors Kenneth L. Pike and Eugene Nida. We went from Norman to Walters where he started analysis of the Comanche language. We returned the following summer to Norman where we had further training. After that he was on the teaching staff.

We were members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics which was affiliated with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc. Then the group had workers only in Mexico and a couple of language groups in the United States. The membership was at the most 200 workers. Now the personnel are over seven thousand, working throughout the world.

We enlisted language teachers to go to Norman to help train workers for doing Bible translations. Comanches, Kiowas and Cheyennes were a vital part of the training sessions. I could name some who went but I do not remember all involved so I will not name any of them. We greatly appreciated their willingness to leave home and spend time with these students. Classes are no longer held at Norman but at other locations including the University of Texas at Arlington.

Besides the "Comanche Hymnal" Elliott did "Comanche Texts," printed by the University of Oklahoma and now out of print.

Elliott had a ruptured aorta at the age of 50, ending his life here on earth. Our son was able to have replacement of his valve at the same age. We are thankful for advances in medicine making this possible.

Our children are all doing well and have fond memories of their years among the Comanches. Don is with Wycliffe in Huntington Beach, Sue along with her daughter has a business in Portland, Oregon; Sanna lives in Sydney, Australia, and is editor of "Christian Woman," a magazine. Gini, after losing both her husband and daughter to cancers, now has a new family. She has a pastor husband and three daughters. I remarried 22 years ago and have retired.

I have heard from some Comanches through the years but would be glad to hear from more of them. Sincerely, Viola Canonge Frew, 15750 N. Columbus Blvd., Tucson AZ 85739-9776.

### **AMAZING GRACE**

(words by Dorothy Komacheet)

1. Jesus tsa ʉ wəhtuikatʉ u;  
ʉpitu tʉyaaitʉi.  
Okʉ tomobaʔa ʉ wəhtuikatʉ  
ʉ kamakʉtʉ u.

2. Jesus tsa ʉ nimaikatʉ u.  
ʉ pihi u tsawikʉ  
ʉ makwitsoʔaitui u tsu,  
Pʉmi ʉ tokwʉsuaka.

English Translation:

1. Jesus is waiting for you;  
He died for you.  
Up in Heaven, he is waiting for you,  
He loves you.

2. Jesus is calling you.  
Open your heart to him.  
He is going to save you,  
If you truly believe.

### **WEEK-END TRIP TO AMARILLO**

by Deloris Karty

Recently I made a trip to Amarillo, Texas,

with my nephew, Thomas Owen, to attend the Texas Inter-Tribal Association Pow-Wow. The head man dancer was Morgan Tosee. We are all very proud of him. The Comanche were well represented at this gathering. Melvin Kerchee and his family; Verna Cable and Myra Burgess; Deloris Aitson and her son, J.R. and Michael Morris, to name a few. Kevin Connywerdy was there to participate in the War Dance contest and should have won first place. Billy Evans Horse and his drummers sang beautiful Gourd Dance songs. Jo Jo Rice did a great job of handling the Emcee duties and kept things going in proper order.

Bill Turpin, the President of the Texas Association, participated in the dancing, as well as taking care of all his necessary duties. His beautiful daughter was the head lady dancer.

Of course, Ed Benze, Director of the Hutchinson County Museum, was there and danced on Saturday, but said he couldn't stay on Sunday as he needed to go home and mow the lawn. He complimented the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee for coming to the Museum in June and for their participation in the activities of the observance of the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Red River Wars. He invited the group to come back to Borger, Texas, any time. "You're always welcome," he said.

The Texas Inter-Tribal group is planning another dance on the week-end of October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, to be held at the Senior Citizens Center, in Amarillo, and have invited us to come and participate with them. My uncle, Emmett Howry, originally from Fletcher, and Teresa Parker, from Apache, are associated with The Texas Inter-Tribal Group, as are other Indians from Oklahoma, and are doing well. They really enjoy visiting with Comanches and hearing Indian news from Oklahoma.

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## **THE BLACKFEET LANGUAGE**

by Dorothy Still Smoking

The elders view their native language as very important to their existence. Therefore, switching over to English was very difficult for many people. The devaluing of the Blackfeet language by not being able to speak it affected many

people. This is especially so because the language has so much meaning and importance to everyday existence.

The language is not being taught to the children, in the home, or in school. The generation before the elders, which was made up of the elders' parents, literally had to protect the language and ceremonies by hiding this knowledge. Crucial punishment was rendered whenever anyone in school spoke the Blackfeet language. Punishment included such acts as kneeling on a broom stick and hands and knuckles being whipped, or it was through other punishable means such as going without food and standing in a corner for a long period of time. Speaking the language meant too many negative experiences for many older Blackfeet; therefore, English prevailed. It can be said that Blackfeet people gave up speaking the language because they loved their children. They did not want their children to face or experience what they went through. The parents did not want their children to be beaten by authorities. Three generations later, people wonder why the Blackfeet language is disappearing. As one elder said, "I blame myself for not pushing my children to speak Blackfeet."

Failure to speak the native language has the elders worried about the future of tribal knowledge. They are anxious to train or take on apprentices for the different ceremonial events that must be carried on. The elders realize that they may be the last generation with this knowledge which is embedded in the language.

"In my opinion we began to lose our language when it was taken from us at the mission schools we were forced to attend. English was forced upon us in that we were severely punished if we spoke Blackfeet." The days at the Mission School located in the Two Medicine area were not reflected upon by the elders as memorable. The staff consisting of nuns and priests did not all have compassion for what the children were experiencing by leaving home at an early age, breaking ties and connections with the families, and most importantly not knowing how to speak English. The land on which the Mission School was built was donated by Chief White Calf because he advocated education. Nevertheless,

the religious people who ran the Mission School were mean to the children as witnessed by all of them. Therefore, how could effective learning take place?

The language was targeted as a means to break down the tribal ways. Within the intricacies of the language is the blueprint for many of the Blackfeet ways. If one knows the language, it will speak back to you. This concept reveals the close connection between language and culture and indicates that the two are virtually inseparable. To deprive anyone of the right to speak and acquire knowledge will never be understood by the elders. Once the language is lost, a complete breakdown of the tribal ways, ceremonies, rituals, customs, values, and more will occur, and these things will become nonexistent. New ways will evolve to replace the old ways. "If you talk the language, don't talk it here....So we grew up that way. That was one of the first things that was taken away from us, the Indian language, and not only at the boarding school, but everywhere."

There is hope, and that is through the Blackfeet language. This is what the elders are counting on for saving Blackfeet knowledge. "Times have changed from the dog days to now. We cannot ever go back, but we can continue our way of life. We need to try hard to learn our language like we learned English. It is not good to give up."

Respect is one of those terms that seems to be self-explanatory, but (a) different meaning for it comes about when describing respect through the language. Respect will come about in many forms because the language supports it. For example, elders are respected because they are keepers of sacred knowledge. Respect exists for all animate and inanimate objects as described in giving thanks in prayers. Respect comes about in ceremonies because of the protocol required; failure to follow such protocol is disrespectful. The use of the language must be proper; anything other than proper is disrespectful. Speakers of the proper Blackfoot language feel injecting slang or other forms into Blackfeet conversation is degrading to the language. Language has life. It is through the speakers that life becomes active.

If a language is lost, it will take with it many teachings, lessons, knowledge, sacredness, and ways of behaving as people. It will take away a complete mind view in relationship to the environment and the world. A whole race will suffer because of the loss. For these reasons, elders support the learning of the language in a proper way.

Language revival is possible due to the fact that there are still elders to lift the language out of this depressed state of existence. Active use of the language through producing children speakers provides hope. "My grandfather used to tell me that our way of life in the future would change drastically, but what he didn't tell me was that we would lose our language. Maybe he knew that our future generation would try and revive the language just like what's happening today."

*(Note: The above is an excerpt from a thesis by Dorothy M. Still Smoking, April 1997, in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Education from Montana State University--Bozeman, Bozeman,*

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## SYMPOSIUM

The University of Texas at Arlington is sponsoring a symposium, The Spirit of Place: Appreciating the Comanche Relationship to the Landscape of the Southern Plains. Carney Saupitty Sr., Reaves Nahwooks and Ronald Red Elk from our group will be making presentations.

Others making presentations will be Thomas Blackstar, Linda Pelon and Daniel J. Gelo. For more information contact Ronald at 1-405-247-5749.

## SPECIAL NOTICE

We regret to inform you that our President Ronald Red Elk and his wife Frances lost their youngest child, Michael, age 24, in an automobile accident. Please keep them and their family in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. Ura.