
NUMU TEKWAPEHA NOMNEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

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Editor: Barbara Goodin

(Editor's Note: Recently we received a letter from one of our readers, addressed specifically to Ronald Red Elk. He offered his thoughts on a subject we have heard discussed before in Comanche Country. He asked for Mr. Red Elk's response. We would like to take this opportunity to print both our reader's letter and the response from Mr. Red Elk. Because we have been unable to make personal contact with our reader for permission to use his name, we will omit his name.)

“Dear Ronald Red Elk,

Maruawe! My Comanche language and culture president. I received your newsletter in the mail and was impressed with it. I have been buying various items such as the dictionary and the flashcards, but I have an issue.

I am part Comanche myself, and I have a strong desire to preserve the culture of our people. I know you feel the same way. That is why I'm confused by the Christian words translated into our ancient language. The Christians and their missions destroyed all sorts of American Indian cultures and their languages throughout the whole Western Hemisphere. I would like to get back to the pre-Christian Comanche culture – the real culture. Maybe some old Comanche words for The Great Mystery, The Happy Hunting Grounds, The Thunderbird. The Christian culture has destroyed our nation with overpopulation and excess in a short 200 years or so. Our people lived here for 10,000 years earlier! Let's get primal, pure, and true! Let's research the old vision quest, practice riding and archery! These hearty old

traditions that existed before Christian complacency and modern technology stabbed us to death.

I was thinking of purchasing the Comanche Song Book, but I would like to recite some ancient chants and prayers in old Comanche, not biblical songs from a recent Mid East religion translated into our native language.

Please let me know what you think. Thank you.

Sincerely, -----.”

“Letter From The President”

Haa Maruaweku Numunuu. Ihka Taa Numarekwape?ha tubitsi nanisuyaketa.

Greetings to -----:

This is the response you requested, concerning the preservation of our language and culture. It is my belief that we cannot go back in time to live as our ancestors lived. But we can have the knowledge of our past to mold our lives to be the best Numunuu for the present and take (Taa Numu Pu?e) our Comanche way of life into the future. It is also my belief that this only can be done through the language. Comanches of the past had a direct connection to the spirit world and that was through prayer. One of the first things that the elders taught was that a Comanche always prayed first before any activity. Numu Ahpu from the ancient language: (Our Father) was one of the first words spoken in those prayers. Yes, the missionary system helped in the destruction of our language, so did the governmental education system. We cannot undo what has been done. By trying to resurrect the old

ways we can be better Comanches by understanding the events of the past.

Ok̄hi tan̄ tomoba?ati taa Ahp̄a nihpa
na?aitu?in̄. Ma tabeto?ikikuran̄,
ma tabemi?aniihku tan̄
Ma tabe?ika?be?tu tan̄ taa Nar̄mi?a
nihpana?aitu?in̄.

Translation:

Up in Heaven, we're going to praise our
Father.

As the sun comes up, As the sun travels,
As the sun goes down, we're going to praise
our Father.

Ronald Red Elk

SAVING DYING DIALECTS

Sisseton Wahpeton Day Care Center
In Dakota Language

*(*reprinted with permission from Mr. Bill
LoneFight, president, Sisseton Wahpeton
College, Agency Village S.D.*

Linda Obago-Nicolar remembers asking
her four year old daughter Felicity to pick up
a blue cereal box one day. "She said, 'the
TO box?'"

To, pronounced like "tow," means blue
in the Dakota Indian language.

It was one of Obago-Nicolar's first
memories of Felicity speaking Dakota at
home after starting the Dakota language
immersion program at the Siceca Learning
Center on the campus of Sisseton Wahpeton
College.

"The immersion program grew out of the
desire of the Dakota people to do something
to preserve the Dakota language," said Bill
Lonefight, president of the college.

He had been discussing a Dakota
immersion language program for a year with
Tammy DeCoteau, field manager of the
Association on American Indian Affairs'
Sisseton chapter. Dakota is the language of
the Dakota Sioux Tribe, which lives east of
the Missouri River, including the 11,000
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribal members.

"She came to me four months ago and
said, 'I have \$5,000, so can we start?'"

The college's day care for children of
the staff and students was then reformatted
around the immersion program, Lonefight
said.

Getting immersed: On a snowy day (in
December), the children's singing could be
heard outside the center located in a trailer
on campus.

Only after opening the door would
visitors realize that the melodies of the
songs might be familiar, but not the words.

Some children and the day-care
providers were singing "London Bridge Is
Falling Down" in Dakota as they each
crossed under the bridge formed of four
arms.

In the nearby table, three tribe elders
were sipping coffee, watching the children
and smiling. In another corner, two
drummers were showing little boys how to
beat a large drum with leather-wrapped
drumsticks.

On the walls, brightly colored pictures
are posted among papers with lyrics, words
and phrases, all in Dakota.

Lonefight smiled as he picked up a little
girl who ran over to give him a hug.

The Dakota language is in danger of
extinction because of years of boarding
schools and the forced assimilation of tribal
members into Anglo-American culture, he
said.

"Less than 10 percent of (the) tribal
population speaks Dakota and most of those
are over the age of 60," Lonefight said.
"Unless we do something, we are very close
to having it fade."

The center has since secured more
funding, including \$325,000 to construct a
new building for the day care.

However, they still need another
\$100,000 to complete and furnish the
building, he said.

Language part of identity: Native
American tribes are looking to preserve their

languages for various cultural and historical reasons, Lonefight said.

“Some of those (reasons) are fairly pragmatic, like the ability to communicate with your grandparents,” he said.

The language is also a substantial part of a tribal member’s identity.

“The elders repeatedly tell us that some of the solutions for current social problems are imbedded in our languages,” Lonefight said. “When people spoke Dakota, they truly knew how to treat one another. They truly understood where they belonged in relation to other people, to the natural world (and) to the spiritual world.”

Elders help, too: The center has six Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribal elders who visit regularly. They help the caregivers and the children with their pronunciations and translate books and songs into Dakota.

Because the language has different dialects for men and women, three elders involved are men and three are women.

Orsen Bernard, one of the six elders, said he got involved because he wanted to help keep the language alive. “Dakota language is so deep it comes from the heart,” he said. “Whatever I say in Dakota, it has a deeper meaning because that’s the way the Dakota language is.” It is a language without any swear words, Bernard said.

Improved abilities: Lonefight said another reason the college is getting involved is that research is proving bilingual children have added cognitive skills.

“They do better in school. They have increased higher order of thinking skills. They are able to make connections.” Cat scans have shown that bilingual people use more areas of their brains, he said.

“It’s a little odd that at the same time schools were pressing children to learn Spanish, French, Japanese and Russian, they were pressing the other way to extinguish the Dakota, the Cherokee, the Muskogee and Lakota (languages),” Lonefight said.

The loss of the tribal languages could also mean the loss of certain knowledge that’s only recorded in those languages, such as traditional medicines, he said.

The elders have also said that the Native American languages were the way they were taught to talk to God, Lonefight said.

“That doesn’t mean there aren’t other ways, but they were the ways that we were specifically given and (the elders) worry that if we allow our languages to fade we might miss something.”

The program has been a success in its first three months. It’s been successful not just in working with the children, but in creating awareness on the reservation that something practical can be done.

DeCoteau, the field manager for AAIA, said parents’ reactions have been positive.

“Most people want their children to learn the language,” she said. The parents receive a copy of the words and phrases the children are learning. A voice recording of the words and phrases is in the process of being created and the college will offer a course on teaching children Dakota next semester.

“We are trying to encourage parents to learn along with them,” DeCoteau said. “People as adult learners are embarrassed to talk in front of somebody who’s fluent. But I think people aren’t embarrassed to talk to their children.”

Delbert Pumpkinseed, another visiting tribal elder, said he enjoys helping the children learn Dakota. “Every morning I get good greetings from them,” he said. “They are happy to see us. They give us hugs.”

Elder Wayne Eastman said he loves seeing the progress children have made in the program. “You tell them to put something away in Dakota and they do it,” he said. “They are learning.”

Alfred Seaboy, who visits the center once a week with his brother Cody to teach the boys to play the traditional drum, said he likes the visits and the idea behind them. “We started playing drums at this age,” Alfred said.

Cody said he thinks the immersion program idea is great. “I kind of wish I was brought up and taught this way and was able to speak the language better.”

Obago-Nicoliar, chief finance officer of the college, said she is learning Dakota along with her daughter, Felicity. “Every day (she) comes home and teaches me something,” Linda said. “I need to keep learning to keep up with her.”

“We must be the change we hope to see.”
(Editor’s Note: To learn more about this program, visit www.swc.tc or e-mail President Longfight at: president@swc.tc.)

THE TURTLE STORY

(*from the Emily Riddles collection of stories)

Soobe?sukutsa tua su?ana wakare?ee tærbuhipuha hækikü hækikahtü.

Tütaatu ma tæ?tukuse su?ana ma kuma?kü karüü, animuiha pami pu pia?a maka?eku u tükübüni.

Si?anakuse mahri yükwihkaku, piakwasinaboo marükü, bitüü.

Sitükuse kwasinaboo, nü tühkarüharuku mü tühkayükarü, me uhri niikwiiyü.

Sitükuse wakare?ee nü pühu kwahikupüsu wekwinü, ke mama?ai niwünyü, suhka kwasinaboo?a tü?yayatu.

Sitükuse kwasinaboo, nüma?ai nü ke mühi niwünyü ümi nahru ahru?a piwokütsi, nuhkitü?i, me u niikwiiyü.

Sitükuse wakare?ee tühübükhanü. Tühübükütsikü pu puihoiküti ekapitüma pisaanü.

Sitükuse kwasinaboo, ke hina supana?iitü, nanahbiso?ai yüyümühkütü, nüü?mai wakare?ee, me u niikwiiyü.

Surükuse kwasinaboo maatu tunehtsünyü, pu kwasi ma kwasihoikü. wü?kwipunanü.

Suni u mühtsi, maai piwokütsi, puhikabaikü, maai tsahpo?tsemi?ü.

Sitükuse wakare?ee sun pami u müümi?aku, tæbuhipüha su?ana wünyü, mahoikü nüü?kwipunükwü.

Sitükuse kwasinaboo suni pami u müühka, pu kwasi tsahka?anü.

Si?anetü sitü kwasinaboo kwasiwaaitü, nukinü.

Sitükuse wakare?ee, nohi nanüsu?uyaa nü u münyü, me yükwiiyü.

Sube?sükuse suni uhka umüühka süsümü kwasinaboo pi?to?na?i.

Subetü.

Literal English Translation:

Long ago, it is said, there somewhere a turtle is sitting in the shade of little weeds.

As its mother is feeding, flies to her little child sitting beside her, it’s eating much.

As they are sitting here, a big snake arrived.

This snake said to them, you two are moving about eating my meat.

These two turtles entered in their backs and did not talk with him, and are afraid of that snake.

This snake said to him, as you two are not talking with me, I will run dragging your father.

This turtle got angry.

Getting angry, around his eye, which he applied with red.

This snake said to him, lazy turtle, you don’t (do) anything, you move slowly.

This snake ran towards him, twisted his tail around the turtle’s tail.

Acting on him that way, dragging him, he went bouncing him through the weeds.

As he went acting on him that way, as little weeds are standing there, this turtle went off wrapping himself around the weeds.

When the turtle acted on him that way, this snake pulled off his own tail.

At this place this snake is without a tail, and ran away.

This turtle said, I caused him to be very laughable.

From that time, when he acted on him that way, some snakes are bobtailed.

That is all.

THE GRASSHOPPER STORY

*(*also from the Emily Riddles collection of stories)*

Soobe?sukutsa t̄a ahtakii
t̄m̄m̄mi?an̄.
Ibu n̄ tabe ihka petu manakw̄
nana?atahpu naboori kwasu?i
t̄m̄m̄kwatu?i, mek̄.
U pia?k̄se t̄a n̄ o?ana manakw̄
miasuwait?i, me u niikwiiȳ.
Sit̄k̄se ahtakii natsatsa taa nomi?eku
u?ana estis̄n̄?ik̄t̄, tah̄
na?n̄m̄n̄k̄abaik̄, n̄
ȳt̄sumia?eek̄.
Sit̄k̄se si?an̄et̄ ȳt̄s̄hk̄wa
t̄m̄m̄mi?at̄s̄i.
Sit̄k̄se ȳt̄sumi?ar̄, ȳt̄sumi?ar̄ u
piar̄pinoo?kar̄ku uma kar̄h̄upiit̄.
Maa ma kar̄k̄k̄se piawosa?aa?ra
mawakatu to?ih̄upiit̄, hina n̄ me u
niikwiiȳ.
Sur̄k̄kse t̄aa n̄ naboori kwasu?i
suwaait̄, me u niikwiiȳ.
Sit̄k̄se nana?atahputi t̄r̄et̄pihta
himan̄ uma sihka esi?ah̄tamuu?a
t̄?ekan̄.
Meeku nabuun̄i, mek̄se sur̄ u
niikwiiȳ.
Sit̄k̄se si?ana w̄n̄n̄,̄
nabuihw̄n̄b̄n̄i.
Nohi t̄aa nabuniyu n̄, mek̄se sur̄
esi?ah̄tamuu.
Us̄ n̄ p̄es̄ t̄aa naboori n̄
suwainihti kwas?utua?i, miar?i n̄, us̄
mek̄se suur̄.
Si?an̄et̄k̄se sur̄ pit̄s̄ ȳt̄s̄n̄k̄wa,
so?ana sehka esi?ah̄tamuu?a p̄k̄hu
sooyori?ikahtu pit̄n̄.
Sur̄k̄se esi?ah̄tamuu?n̄ os̄
hakar̄ nan̄is̄uyake naboora uk̄
tam̄k̄aba kaht̄.
S̄m̄?k̄se ur̄ u t̄m̄ko?i me
ȳkw̄iiȳ.
Sur̄k̄se p̄mi ur̄i nasuyakeku,
p̄nihku uhka p̄ nara?urak̄?i ha ur̄i
t̄?awek̄n̄.

Set̄k̄se esi?ah̄tamuu sebutu
tabe?ihka petutu s̄m̄yorin̄k̄wa,
ts̄n̄?ik̄t̄ set̄ s̄m̄koyaman̄,
nanan̄is̄uyake set̄ naboohk̄a.
Suku sehka naboori ahtamuu?a
naahkaku, atanaiht̄ ur̄k̄ bit̄n̄.
Sur̄k̄se m̄n̄ esi?ah̄tamuu?n̄
hakanihku nanan̄is̄uyake naboohk̄a me
ur̄i niikwiiȳ.
Sur̄k̄se, t̄m̄ko?ik̄t̄ n̄n̄ us̄
sube?s̄ suhka esi?ah̄tamuu?a
t̄m̄ko?ik̄t̄ nihan̄ t̄aa naboori u
kwasu?i t̄m̄hk̄a, me ȳkw̄it̄.
Subet̄.

Literal English Translation:

Long ago, it is said, grasshopper went to buy.

This way I sun towards going down far away different kind of designed coat will go buy, he said.

His mother said to him there, far away you want to go to, she said.

This grasshopper said no matter we move when there I appear grey our relatives I fly among.

This one at this place flew off going to buy.

This one, goes flying, goes flying, where that big rock sits, on it stopped and sat.

On it he sat, big grasshopper towards him climbed and stopped, what you want, said to him.

That one good I designed coat want, said to him.

This one different kinds of little stones took with it this grey grasshopper painted.

Now look at yourself, he said to that one.

This one, here stands, looking at himself much.

Very good, I look, said that grey grasshopper.

That I already good designed, I want, coat go, I thus said, that one.

At this place, that one, back, flew off, there, those various grey grasshoppers at this place fly a lot when they arrived.

Those grey grasshoppers, that, who pretty looks here among us, sitting.

One, that one it returned from buying, said.
One that they wish for in that way that one
he met them told.

These various, grey grasshoppers, various
ways towards the going down sun, all flew
off, they stay, ones all returned pretty ones
are designed.

There, those various designed grasshoppers
as one from a different kind to them came
up.

That one you grey grasshoppers how it is,
pretty designed, said to them.

Those ones, shopped around we thus at that
time that grey grasshopper is returned from
buying, named nice designed coat he
bought, are saying.

That is all.

**SECOND ANNUAL
OKLAHOMA NATIVE AMERICAN
YOUTH LANGUAGE FAIR**

April 19, 2004, is the date set for the 2nd
Annual Oklahoma Native American Youth
Language Fair. It will be held at the
University of Oklahoma Sam Noble
Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.
This year's theme is "I Am Speaking."

Over 200 students and teachers attended
last year's inaugural fair, and participants
are expected to double this year. The
sponsors are looking for both entries and
donations to help support the fair. The aim
is to provide each student participating with
tee-shirts and trophies. As we all know, that
can get expensive.

If you are interested in participating, or
would like to make a donation for the
children, please contact Mary Linn or
Jennifer Attocknie Siquah at 405-325-
7588. They will be happy to hear from you.

Last year's winners included the
Comanche Housing Authority's Day Care
Center ~~Namæ Tæretæ~~ group, under the
leadership of Geneva Navarro, and the
Elgin High School Comanche class, under
the direction of Rita Coosewoon. We are
extremely proud of both groups, and hope

they come home with tee-shirts and trophies
again this year!

**COMANCHE
SOUND SYSTEM WORKSHOPS**

Workshops continue to teach the sound
system of the Comanche language.
Currently workshops are being held at the
Comanche Nation College, 1608 S.W. 9th
Street in Lawton. The free workshop begins
at 6:30 p.m. on Monday evenings and lasts
for 90 minutes. The workshops will
continue for four weeks, take a short break,
then conclude with another four weeks.

Participants attending all twelve hours of
the workshop will receive a certificate of
completion.

Ron Red Elk and Billie Kreger are
teaching the Comanche sound system. The
goal is to teach students to read and write
using the Comanche language.

Participants are asked to bring a pencil,
paper and tape recorder.

**NATIVE AMERICAN
HISTORY & GENEALOGY
CONFERENCE**

The Friends of the Oklahoma Historical
Society Research Division, the Lawton
Public Library Research Room and the
Southwestern Oklahoma Historical Society
are sponsoring a Native American History &
Genealogy Conference on Friday evening on
March 12th and all day Saturday, March 13th
in Lawton.

Registration is \$35 for the conference
and will include a traditional Indian lunch
on Saturday, catered by Cable's Catering of
Cache. You may register prior to the
conference at the Lawton Public Library's
Research Room. See Paul Follett.

Several Comanche tribal members will
give presentations, including Delores
Sumner, Ava Doty, Juanita Pahdopony-
Mithlo and Barbara Goodin. Chairman

Wallace Coffey will give the keynote address Saturday at 1:30 p.m.

The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee will have a table set up Saturday during the conference with language learning material available.

For more information, go to www.cityof.lawton.ok.us/library/ and click on Native American Genealogy Conference.

COMANCHE CHILDREN'S VIDEO

A special show will preview The Comanche Children's Video on Saturday, March 20th, 2004, at the Comanche Visitor's Center, located just south of Comanche Nation Games in Lawton.

The preview will begin at 2:00 p.m. with continuous play until 4:00 p.m. Comanche families and other interested persons are invited to come out and see it.

The twelve minute video was originally produced about ten years ago, but has recently undergone changes and been updated. The preview will be a part of the monthly Fine Arts Exhibit at the Visitor's Center, which will be open from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. on that day.

Everyone is invited to attend and support our Comanche artists, and enjoy the Children's Video.

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 includes 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. If we don't receive your preference, we will automatically send an audio cassette. \$25 includes s&h.

Picture Dictionary. A primer for learning the language explains the Comanche alphabet and the sound of each letter. \$10 includes s&h.

Comanche Song Book. Collection of 116 songs written in Comanche with an English translation for each song. \$10 plus \$3 s&h.

Comanche Flash Cards, set #1. A set of 48 cards showing a picture and the spelling of simple Comanche words. \$5 includes s&h.

Comanche Flash Cards, set #2. A complete new set of 48 different cards. \$5 includes s&h.

Comanche Flash Cards, set #3. Now available! \$5 includes s&h.

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 plus \$3.50 s&h; Adult sizes small through XL \$12 plus \$3.50 s&h; Adult sizes 2X and 3X \$15 plus \$3.50 s&h. Specify color and size when ordering.

Authentic Handmade Comanche Dolls. Beautiful 20" soft bodied dolls, dressed in traditional clothing. Both girl and boy dolls available. \$40 each plus \$3.50 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 \$3.50 s&h.

Ball Caps. Three styles: Men's royal blue with red bill; Men's turquoise with southwest design on bill; and Lady's solid royal blue, all with Language Logo on front. \$10 plus \$3.50 s&h.

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

Note: If you are ordering multiple items, please e-mail us a list of items you will be ordering so we can give you a better price on shipping and handling. Our e-mail address is:

clcpc@comanchelanguage.org.

**Please include your e-mail address when ordering in case we need to contact you.*

REMINDER

To everyone who receives their mail in Comanche County and is now using a Rural Route address, the deadline is nearing when those addresses will no longer be valid. Please send us your new street address if you wish to continue to receive this newsletter.