

---

# NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMNEEKATU NEWSLETTER

---

January 2000

Vol.3 Issue 1

---

The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

---

*Editor: Barbara Goodin*

---

## "Letter From The President"

*by Ronald Red Elk*

Taa numu tekwapu?ha nomneekatü. Taa nu mu tekwapu?ha hani?sukwain. Taa türeetu makupu tai numu pu?e makwitso?ai sukwaitu. Taa Numu tekwapu?ha u suniitu taa nihwunuru mia?rui. Taa Numu pu?e makwitso?aipu?ha sukwaitu. Taa tekwapu, taa Numu tekwapu, taa Numu hubiye, taa naramuipe, soobesu taa nanahpu, taa naasutain. Itse taa Numu pu?e pütu taa kiman. Tüasu taa türeetii kesu tüpooru itse pesu tüpooru isuas. Taa Numu tekwapu masuabitai?ka?a sukwaitu. Haya kwasi wihnu tü asu usu tanu taa tekwapu?pu pumakuru uruu mia?ru tüpooru?ha hani?pu?a sukwaitu.

Reflecting on our past endeavors, not only the year just passed, but also since our beginning in August of 1993, it is my belief that our efforts have had a positive impact on changing the trend of losing our language to one of building awareness, creating advocates and, in some cases, developing new speakers.

Our successes can be attributed to the goals that were developed. These goals were created by Comanches working cooperatively and collaboratively to achieve the ultimate goal of all Comanches speaking Comanche.

Our greatest short coming has been that we haven't been able to get all Comanches involved. If you don't remember any other words that I have written, remember these! **IF YOU DON'T USE IT, YOU LOSE IT!** Taa Numu tekwapu.

---

"Soobesu Numunuu sumu oyetu Numu niwu nu?etu. Ukitsi nuu tüasu Numu niwunhutui. Ubanitu tüasu Numu niwanu hutuinuu."

Carney Saupitty Sr.

---

## VINCENT MARTINEZ'S PRAYER FOR THE LANGUAGE COMMITTEE

Haa tsu meeku unu numu Ahpu God. Ihka nu mu tekwapu, numu u tüituarui maku u nahni?niatsi. Numi sutai nu me nikwunu. Numi

nanu sutaika wihnu. Namu nakwu petutu sumai, naraituakatü. Tsaatu ihka numu tekwapu?ha nihta pooru mia he wihnu. Numi nomnetiinuu, tsaaku suatu maka mia he wihnu Ahpu God. Numu u uru u tüitua mian nanu. Tsaaku suabetai mia he wihnu nu Ahpu God. Tsaaku suabetaitsi wihnu naraituakatü. Numu hani?sukwain numu Ahpu a ne bunharu. Ukuse tüibitsi numi tüitukatü. Tu booru maku numu u tsaapuniiku mian nanu. Nu mi masubetai mia me unu nu Ahpu God tomoba?atu. Ihka nuu numu takwapu?ha wihnu poo?naatsi. Namu nakwu petutu u hani he mia he Ahpu God. Ususe numu nikwain. Tsaaku nuu nara?uruu?etu wihnu. Tüpooru tüboo kahni tu nara?uruu?etu mian. Ke nakwitsaitü, ke ai nasuakatü, ke tüasu. Kemaku naniipuanai tsaaku naku namai. Numu tekwapu ha nikwunu mia he pu?ha nu Ahpu God. Numi nuu suniiku sutaika wihun. Eeka numi tüitua sukwaitunuu, suaatu miatsi tsaaku. Oyoko eetsa numu tekwapu?ha suabetaitsi. Oka namu nakwu petutu numu tü reetii tsaaku puniiku mia he unu God. Osu tsa tsa numu nikwaitu nani numu nia. Numi sutainuu se bunharu.

---

## COMANCHE CODE TALKERS HONORED

....finally! The last surviving Comanche Code Talker, Charles Chibitty of Tulsa, was honored in December by the United States Government for the role he and 16 other young Comanche men played during World War II when they befuddled the Germans with their native language.

According to an article appearing in The Washington Post (sent to me by my niece Jane Comer who lives in the D.C. area), Chibitty, 78, was somewhat emotional when he spoke of his fellow tribal members — all of whom are now deceased — and his wish that they could have been present with him when this award and the recognition they so deserved was given.

Kevin Gover, Bureau of Indian Affairs Director and fellow Comanche, noted in his

address that for years the bureau had tried to force Comanches and other tribes to stop speaking their native languages. It's a "great irony," he said, that "only two or three generations after having been in conflict with the United States, our warriors would go forward and play such a crucial role in the victory over this country's enemies."

Charles, the Comanche people have always honored you. Congratulations on receiving the awards you so richly deserved, and for remembering your fellow warriors in doing so.

---

**"S̄um̄u Oyetu Tanu Nananum̄un̄u."**

*Ronald Red Elk*

#### **FROM OUR MAILBAG.....**

**From Ed Benz**, Director of the Hutchinson County Historical Museum in Borger TX to CLCPC secretary Deloris Karty: "I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for the many wonderful gifts that you brought us. It is very hard for us to obtain anything that is Comanche and now we have, thanks to your generosity. These items are now on display and drawing interest. I appreciate the leadership that you have shown through this endeavor. It makes us glad to have friends like you and I hope that we can continue to have a lasting friendship. I hope that you will come back to see us again soon. We enjoyed having you here for a visit. You have certainly made your mark on our museum. The group's regalia, music, and words spoken were especially memorable. Your group and the museum got some amazing news coverage."

**From Upward Bound students** at Cameron University, we received a thank you card from counselor Billie Moore after they attended the Fall Encampment: "Thank you for providing us the opportunity to learn more about the Native American culture. It was a great experience for all of us. We really appreciate the lunch - it was great! Thanks again for everything and especially your support of the Upward Bound program."

**From Leanne Hinton**, native languages immersion trainer from Berkeley CA: "As usual, what a wonderful time we had (for Year Three Training session of the Lannan Master-Apprentice Team Project). Thank you for a beautiful job of organization, and all the kind hosting and all the

little generous details that made it all so warm and friendly.

The experienced apprentices do us all proud, and some of the new ones look really promising. Richard has great potential as a school teacher, teaching Comanche. Billie is another who could be a good language teacher, and no doubt you could name others as well. But Richard is especially impressive because he is so outgoing, energetic, and talented in language.

I was wishing I had my tape recorder with me to record some of Ken's stories. I was telling him that I'd love my students at the University of CA, where we all speak such mamby-pamby English, to hear good old Oklahoma talk, which has so much character!

I love all you good folks, and wish you the very best for all time."

**From the Borger News-Herald** dated Wednesday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1999: "Comanches Visit Museum Bearing Gifts, by Janet Stephens. Fourteen elders from the Comanche Nation in Lawton, OK, traveled to the Texas Panhandle Tuesday to tour the Hutchinson County Museum and to visit Palo Duro Canyon and the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum in Canyon. The tour is sponsored by the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee and it commemorates the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Red River Wars.

The purpose of the organization is to preserve the Comanche language and culture. Members of the CLCPC visited the Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips school system last year and adopted West Texas High School. CLCPC (secretary) Deloris Karty presented PSP Superintendent Robin Adkins with a warrior spirit staff decorated with the three colors of the Comanche people; red, blue and yellow.

"Our prayers are that you will use this for years to come on behalf of the Comanche people," she said. "The warrior spirit staff was used to encourage warriors before hunting and raiding parties or before going into war. The staff is now used in things such as football games. The staff is only to be carried by someone who has honor and who is pure in heart."

Justin Amaro, a senior at West Texas High School, stood with Adkins as he received the warrior staff.

"I think that Justin represents the ideals that your committee represents," Adkins said. "We are very honored to receive this and to have been adopted by the Comanche people. I want all of you to know that you will always be honored guests at our schools."

Karty said that the group of Comanches had planned on arriving before 3 p.m. but had met with several delays. She said that her group came as lead scouts for the larger group which will tour Adobe Walls on June 26<sup>th</sup>, and they were glad to come back to Borger.

"Last year when we visited the Hutchinson County Museum, we were treated so graciously," Karty said.

Several Comanche-made items were donated to the museum, including two pairs of buckskin leggings that belonged to her twin granddaughters, a sample of a day cradle board, beaded moccasins, several dolls, a purse that was tied to a male relative's dance belt, a bag of cedar and a beaded gourd dance sash.

Ed Benz, director of the museum, was presented with a beaded ball cap and a copy of the Comanche dictionary and flash cards written in the Comanche language. Medicine bags were also presented to members of the Adobe Walls dancers.

There are only about 125 people who speak the Comanche language fluently, and several members have roots in the Texas Panhandle. One of the dancers, Geneva Navarro, said her great-great-grandfather, Chief Wildhorse, fought in the Second Battle of Adobe Walls. Navarro lives in Santa Fe, NM, and teaches the Comanche language both in Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

Benz expressed his appreciation of the gifts.

"I'm just stunned and thrilled to receive these items," he said. "We had just about given up on getting any Comanche items since they are extremely hard to come by. You have made a mark in this community. I just want you to know how much we appreciate these gifts."

Benz said teaching about Indians draws young people like a magnet. In return for the Comanches' generosity, Benz presented them with a copy of a video that was shot the last time the group came to Hutchinson County. He also told everyone present that he had written letters to politicians and other officials about doing

something special for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Red River Wars.

Billie Kreger, vice president of the CLCPC, next addressed the group:

"We've been looking forward to returning to the canyon and the museum," Kreger said. "We take every opportunity to return to the lands of our ancestors. We teach our young people about the Comanche culture and cultural activities, such as singing and dancing."

After her speech, three members of the group performed sign language as the rest of the group sang a hymn in the Comanche language. The festivities moved outdoors where members of the CLCPC and the Adobe Walls dancers performed several traditional dances."

*\*(Editor's note: Wintertime is a time for story telling among Comanches. In keeping with that tradition, we have included several for your wintertime reading enjoyment.)*

## COMANCHE STORIES

by Tommy Wahnee (deceased)  
via tape from Carney Saupitty Sr  
**BLIND LADY**

Once upon a time, there was a family of Nūmū nūū, who lived a happy life on the open plains. They had a daughter, who was beautiful, but blind. They had to do everything for her and watch out for her when they were doing things.

They were getting ready to move when she told them they should go without her. She asked them to leave her some food and water, where she could find them. They did not want to leave her, but she insisted. So they did as she instructed them. They put some food and water where she could find them with no difficulty, and then they moved away.

It wasn't long before she had eaten the food they had prepared for her and drank all of the water. She thought maybe she could find her way to the river, which was nearby, so she started to go out when she fell over something. She didn't know what it was, but when she touched it, it spoke to her. It was a Peyote Button. It asked her why she was there and why she hadn't gone on with her people. She explained that she was blind and that she had become a handicap to her family, so she stayed behind when they moved away.

The Peyote Button said he could help her if she would follow his instructions. He told her to go to the river and wash for four days. She did as he directed, finding her way to the river and then washing, at first very little and very carefully. Then she was able to find her way better each day and washed better. Each time she found that her eyesight was coming back, and on the fourth day, she could see completely.

That's the way they told the story.

### **SNAKE WOMAN**

The story goes that when one young man was at a Peyote meeting, he went outside for a break and saw a beautiful young woman standing near the water. He went over to her and began talking with her and became acquainted. He thought she was the prettiest thing he had ever seen. It wasn't long before he was holding her hand and then he kissed her. She did not refuse his advances and seemed to enjoy his company. He had to leave her to go back inside the meeting, but asked if he could see her again. She asked him to come to the Big Mountain the next evening and she would be waiting for him.

When the young man told his friends about his new friend and that he was going to see her again, they urged him not to go. They told him he knew nothing about this girl and that he shouldn't go to see her. But he insisted he was going, so the next evening he went to the Big Mountain. There she was as beautiful as he remembered. He went to her immediately and held her in his arms and began kissing her, with his eyes closed. When he opened his eyes, he saw that he was holding a big snake. He was terrified and ran away.

That's the way they told the story.

### **STORY ABOUT THE DEER**

There was a young warrior who fell in love with a deer. They played together in the meadows and in the woods. One day, the leaders said they needed to find food - some buffalo. The young warrior said he could help them find where the buffalo were (because the deer could help him find them). They did find a big herd of buffalo just where he told them they would and they were able to kill several buffalo, but in the process they also killed the deer. They had enough food for their people. The young warrior was devastated, because his friend, the deer, had been killed. He said hereafter he would not help them find the

buffalo because they had killed the deer.

That's the way they told the story.

---

### **NAUTS PUNEE STORY**

There was a story about a war party who set out to raid in Mexico. They didn't come back and there was no word from them.

Several warriors went in search of the missing war party and came to an area near the Rio Grande, where they found a teepee that was aglow. There was a nice fire going and there were people inside.

The warriors carefully approached the teepee and called to those inside. "Who's there? We're looking for our people. We're coming in." The response was remarkable. Someone said, "Come in, we've been expecting you. Come on in and rest." When they went inside they saw all the members of the missing war party. They were sitting around the fire, eating and talking, with no care in the world. When the warriors asked how long they had been there and were they coming back with them, they responded they had been there for some time but they would not be going back. They said they were alright, everything was fine, but they would stay there.

The warriors went outside to take care of their horses and get ready to spend the night, but when they came back to the site of the teepee, they found a burned-out camp and bones. Their people had been killed when they first came out on the war party, and had been dead for many days.

That's the way they told the story.

### **THE STORY OF LOUD SINGER**

told by Carney Saupitty Sr.

Loud Singer, a Comanche in the Ohnono (Cyril area clan), was a skilled craftsman who made his own flute and composed some very beautiful music. During his time, he was considered an outstanding flute player.

Loud Singer's flute playing came to the attention of the Kiowas. In particular, one man came to see Loud Singer and wanted to know how much he wanted for one of his flutes. Loud Singer told him they were not for sale, that he enjoyed playing the flute and composing his own music.

The Kiowa man came several times and wanted to bargain with Loud Singer for his flute. Finally, Loud Singer said he would teach him the music and trade his flute for six horses, which had

to be the finest he could find. In time, the Kiowa man came with six beautiful horses and traded Loud Singer for his flute and music.

Some time later, Loud Singer heard that the Kiowa man was saying that he had come by his beautiful flute and flute music in a quest to the far North, that he had received his special gift from the Gods of the Mountains.

Loud Singer knew where the flute and music came from and he felt honored to be referred to as the "God in the Mountains."

---

(\*The following stories were taken from *The Comanche and His Literature*, a 1941 thesis, by Herwanna Becker Barnard. With gratitude we acknowledge Mr. Glen Becker, Lawton, who granted permission for us to reprint these wonderful old Comanche stories.)

### **THE ORIGIN OF DAYS AND SEASONS**

as told by Rachel Mow-wat in 1940

When this world was still cold and in darkness, all the animals got together for a big council. Some were dissatisfied with the darkness and wanted light. Others were dissatisfied with continuous cold. All the animals were represented — birds, bears, turtles, opossums, raccoons, coyotes, and many others. Seated in a circle in the tent they asked, "What shall we do? How shall we settle the question so that all will be satisfied?"

The coyote, who wanted darkness so that he could do his mischievous work, knew there would be several animals on his side. "Let's have a hand game in the tepee," he suggested, "and choose up sides."

They started the game. The bear, turtle and humming bird, among others, were on one side—the side that wanted the light. They kept losing until the bear went out of the tent to "make medicine." When he returned his side began winning. Then the bear arose with confidence, put his head forward in an impressive gesture, and then thrust it toward the door.

"It will soon be dawn," he told the other players. We shall then have daylight. Watch my mouth when day breaks; you will see, there, the yellow streak which henceforth will be the sign of dawn."

The humming bird, pleased with the bear's speech, added, "My friends, when daylight comes,

look at my mouth. You will see six tongues that will indicate six months of warm weather and six months of cold weather."

When dawn came, the animals saw the yellow streak on the bear's mouth. The humming bird opened his mouth to shout, "Hurrah!" and the other animals saw that he really had six tongues. Then the humming bird flew happily out the door. The animals on the losing side ran away frightened.

---

That is how we happen to have day and night and winter and summer.

### **ORIGIN OF ARROWHEADS**

as heard from Wer-que-yah, 1938

Far away in the mountains lives Nūnūpi, who is so small he would not stand as high as your knee. He sits high up on a rock, and on bright days he works all day chipping on a special kind of stone shaping arrowheads. He uses them at the tips of his arrows when he goes hunting. You may not believe it, but (he) uses buffalo ribs for bows.

You can never really see him, but you may hear him chipping, chipping, chipping. Suddenly, then, you may hear his little footsteps as he runs away as fast as he can.

If you are bad you may be shot in the breast by the little man with his small arrows. The Medicine Man would not be able to cure you and you would be in great pain until death would finally overtake you.

### **THE GIANT COMES FOR MAIDENS**

by Abe and Grace Hoah-wah, 1959

Once upon a time there was a great giant that lived in the mountains.

Every spring when the Indians had a festival, the giant would come down from the hills and take away a group of maidens to feast upon.

On one occasion, after tragic losses had been suffered by the tribe repeatedly, at an especially elaborate celebration for which much buffalo meat had been prepared, the great giant appeared again. When the giant entered the village, the Indians, young and old, cried and pleaded with him.

As a last resort they offered all the beef that had been cooked or dried if only he would promise never to molest them again. The giant consented to their proposition, and carried away all the beef in the great bag that he carried. The

giant, true to his word, never devoured any more maidens.

---

### **WHAT BECAME OF THE GREAT GIANT**

by Mow-wat

No trap, arrow, lance, or other method of destruction that the Indian could devise was strong enough to conquer Pia Muupitsu, the great giant that for so many years had molested the tribe.

One day, however, while the giant was sitting

under a large cottonwood tree, a big storm arose. The heavens grew dark with clouds, but it was not yet night. (Pia Muupitsu) enjoyed the sound of the thunder, so much like his own voice. The lightning flashed; he thought it magnificent. Then suddenly a bolt of lightning struck the tree.

A great ball of popping, cracking fire appeared. In an instant it disappeared as if it had evaporated into the air, and in place of (Pia Muupitsu), there sat an ordinary owl.

---