
NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMENEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

Editor: Mark Wauahdooh

“A Word From the C.L.C.P.C. President”

Greetings Nəmənə,

From Taa Nəmə Tekwəpʰa Nomneekatə 1998! It’s been five short years since our C.L.C.P.C. formation, and a very active five years.

Listed are some of our activities and positive accomplishments:

1. First official spelling system adopted.
2. Tribal funding for language projects.
 - a. Summer language camps for Comanche children in five communities.
 - b. 20% tribal share of the Federal A.N.A. Pre-school project.
 - c. Assist communities in language classes.
3. Established non-profit tax-exempt status.
4. Sponsored a group of speakers to attend and make a presentation at two language conferences.
5. Provided training for speakers for each of our activities.
6. Applied for and received grants for work on a Comanche language dictionary, A.N.A. Pre-school for the Tribe, Master-Apprentice Team Project.
7. Sponsored a trip to Paint Rock, TX.
8. Plans are in the works for a language and cultural camp to be held this summer of 1998.
9. Planning a trip to Adobe Walls and Palo Duro Canyon, TX on April 8th, 9th and 10th, 1998.
10. A children’s video to be developed for distribution to 250 families.

As you can see from these varied above activities, the Committee has been busy trying to provide opportunities for Comanches to learn more about their language and culture.

However, the most disappointing and frustrating part of these efforts is that a large segment of the Comanche population doesn’t participate in these activities.

One of the most commonly made statements about (any) language is that language is so embedded in the culture that you can’t separate one from the other. What does this say about Taa Nəmə Puʰi.

Do we want to be known as Taibo Nə? I don’t think so! But time is running out on us! We have but a very few years for our speakers to help us remain Nəmənə Nəmə Tekwa. Taa Nəmə pu i nə suwaitu.

Sincerely,

Ron Red Elk,

C.L.C.P.C. President (1998-99)

“THE CFO REPORT”

by Barbara Goodin, sec-treas

As we near our 5th Anniversary as an organization, we can all celebrate the many achievements we have accomplished. We began with nothing more than our dreams and today we can boast of seeing some of those dreams come true AND money in the bank. But we didn’t arrive where we are without a lot of hard work by a lot of dedicated individuals.

It took all of us working together to accomplish what we have in these last five years. Some that began this journey with us are no longer living – and that only adds to the urgency of our mission. Along the way

we have picked up many “Friends” – people who share our desire to preserve our language – some of whom aren’t even Comanche. They have opened their hearts and their pocketbooks to us, and because of their generosity we have been able to realize our dream of preserving the Comanche language.

From within our ranks some have put in long hours searching out funding sources and doing necessary paperwork to secure said funding. And for those that believed in us and granted us funds we are grateful. To date we have secured four grants in the amounts of \$1,000, \$2,000, \$5,000 and \$35,000. In addition we are assured of two more \$5,000 and two more \$35,000 grants for a multi-year project. We have also received \$12,500 in tribal funds as mandated by a vote of the Comanche people.

The majority of our funds goes right back into the Comanche community in the form of salaries for our speakers and other Comanches.

Our greatest treasures are our speakers. Because they believe in what we are doing, they have stuck with us through thick and thin. They have been with us when there was no money and have shared in the rewards when there was money. We truly appreciate each and every one of them, and ALL the individuals who believe in us and our mission to teach the Comanche language. ǂra.

ORIGIN OF THE C.L.C.P.C.

The independent grassroots creation of the Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee (C.L.C.P.C.) arose on the premise that Comanches were seen as just becoming brown skinned people. Comanches, formerly proud, confident Lords of the South Plains, were rapidly becoming just “Indians” (generically unfocused). And, their language suffered and was dying needlessly.

Changes in the Comanche, or ~~Namunuu~~, language began in the late 1800s when children were taken from their homes and placed in federal boarding schools. They were discouraged from speaking their native language, and disciplined harshly for doing so. The children were taught that the language of their parents and grandparents was bad. With this indoctrination, the language was not spoken in the home. English became the language of preference.

By the mid 1990s elders who could speak the language fluently were dying at an alarming rate and children were not being taught the language in order to maintain speakers within the Tribe. In 1996, with a total tribal population of over 10,000 members, there are fewer than 7% who speak the language fluently.

In July of 1993 the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee was formed with the vision of reviving the Comanche language into a “living language” once again. The CLCPC proposed to change the direction of the language. We want, with Taa Ahpǂ/God’s help, to provide the opportunity for Comanche people of all ages to be able to speak, write and understand the language in order that it and our culture might live on. That change is to restore the ~~Namuu~~ Tekwapǂ as a living language once more and to take our language of heritage into the Twenty-First Century.

The CLCPC was incorporated under Oklahoma State law in 1993; and it also received federal I.R.S. approval as a non-profit corporation in 1996. Our 1998-99 officers and staff/committee are as follows:

- President – Ron Red Elk (Anadarko)
- V.P. – Billie Kreger (Cache)
- Sec-Treas- Barbara Goodin (Lawton)
- Language Preservation – Ed Tahhahwas, Jr (Lawton/CBC Member)
- Ad Hoc Committee Chairs:

- + Long Range Planning – Dr. Reaves Nahwooks & Jo Vickers
- + Budget & Finance – Robert Tippiconnie
- + Newsletter – M.G. Wauahdooah
- + Transportation/Tours – Verna Ann Cable
- + Summer Immersion Camp – Esa Attocknie (Apache)

Membership and dues in the CLCPC are open and voluntary. CLCPC meets three times a month: for its first Tuesday business meeting and the second and fourth Saturday for dictionary development meetings.

Please join us! We would appreciate hearing from you and hope to feature your comments in upcoming newsletter brochures. All contributions are federally tax deductible, receipt upon request. *Ura*ko!

CLCPC'S FLAGSHIP:

The Master-Apprentice Team Project

A definition of language immersion = keta Taibo Tekwa!

In late 1997, the Lannan Foundation of Santa Fe, N.M. funded a three year \$35,000 grant program for the CLCPC to team a fluent Comanche speaker (the Master) with a Comanche (the Apprentice) who desired to learn to speak their native language. This was the one language immersion technique chosen by the CLCPC over conventional classroom lectures or a high tech "talk-back" computer/hardware-software. The immersion technique generally provides greater retention and leads to practical usage. And, this was the technique largely hoped to re-energize the Comanche language and self-esteem.

Between December 1997 and January 1998, CLCPC quickly set guidelines and recruited 18 Masters and nine Apprentices who would spend 20 hours a week for 20 weeks communicating only in Comanche in an informal non-classroom setting (i.e. at the Apprentice's home/attending pow-wows, church, etc.). They included:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Masters: | Apprentices: |
| Carney Saupitty Sr. | Jo Vickers |
| Marie Parton | Ozmun Parton |
| Rosalie Attocknie | Esa Attocknie |
| Buddy Yacheschi | Verna Ann Cable |
| Gloria Cable | Deanna Jones |
| Lucille McClung | Billie Kreger |
| Margaret Poahway | R. Codopony Jr. |
| Edith Gordon | Carney Saupitty Jr |
| Rachael Poco | John McClung |
| Marguerite Parker | |
| Ray Niedo | |
| Leonard & Eva Riddles | |
| Geneva Navarro | |
| Marie Haumpy | |
| Hope Taylor | |

Before actual immersion, the Lannan Foundation provided the above Masters and Apprentices three days pre-training (January 23-25, 1998) at the Great Plains Area Vo-Tech by specially trained members of the Karuk and Hoopa Tribes of California, and by a linguist from the University of California at Berkeley. Obviously, with fewer than expected Apprentices enrolled, this has caused a temporary excess of trained and available Masters needing assignments.

On February 9, 1998, the first CLCPC group of Master-Apprentice Teams began with seven teams. Ideally 0% English communication was supposed to happen. However, as of March 3, the Masters reported to the CLCPC continued use of some English (as high as 30-51% of the time). The CLCPC has since encouraged the Masters to systematically reduce each week the English so that by the time the 400 hours training is over only 0-1% English is used. Particularly, Apprentice "note-taking" (a non-Indian literal concept) should be discouraged to a more Indian "oral" teaching method with much repetition. This first group is scheduled to conclude 400 hours of training on July 27, 1998. A celebratory lunch gathering at Meer's Territory Restaurant is planned.

The CLCPC plans to announce, recruit and pre-train a second group of Masters and Apprentices starting around July 31, 1998. Much greater interest in the Master-Apprentice Team Project is expected then!

1998 SUMMER IMMERSION CAMP

On June 4th through 7th, both Comanche youth and adults are encouraged to attend the fun but educational 1998 summer language immersion retreat at a yet unchosen location. CLCPC is underwriting the cost of the Retreat which comes from part of the \$12,500 funding approved by the 1997 Tribal General Council. The immersion retreat is to provide the opportunity for ~~Namunuu~~ of all ages to learn to speak, write and understand the Comanche language.

Last year, in 1997, five multiple sites provided a four week long day camp. Those classes were six hours daily, four days per week and were taught by paid Comanche elders and volunteer aides to 100 youth, ages six to thirteen, with mixed results.

The CLCPC has opted this year to consolidate all the human, food, training material and dollar resources into a four day (with three overnights) hands-on language immersion camp retreat. The Retreat is expected to overlap with the on-going Master-Apprentice Team Project. 150-300 Comanches are expected to enroll for this year's four day summer retreat.

PRIVATE CLASSES EXCEL

Four ~~Namunuu~~ language classes are meeting in conventional classroom settings (non-immersion) without benefit of funding support, and are attracting many language-hungry students. They include:

- 1) Albuquerque NM classes. Every Monday, 6:30 to 8:30 pm at LaDonna Harris' home in Benalillo.

- 2) Santa Fe, NM class. Every Thursday, 7-8:30 pm at I.A.I.A in Ed Wapp's classroom.

*Note: Geneva Navarro is teaching both the NM classes. She is also with the University of New Mexico Native American Studies Department and next Fall will be doing video conferencing with the Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee instructors and speakers from Cameron University.

- 3) Indianoma OK class. Every Monday from 7 to 9 pm. At Post Oak Mennonite Church Annex. Formerly taught by the late Forrest Kassanavoid and now taught by three teachers: Rhoda Tate, Morrison Tahmahkera and Virgie Kassanavoid. Marlene Ulloa, coordinator.

- 4) Walters OK class (adult). Every Monday from 7 to 9 pm at the Comanche Community Center. Ray Niedo, teacher, and Bud Yackeschi, coordinator.

All four classes are "free" and employ phonetics/linguistic oral and written materials and enjoy much fellowship, too! They are open to all ages and encourage ~~Namunuu~~ and friends to attend.

COMANCHE CHRISTIAN HYMN SINGING CLASS FOR BEGINNERS

Every Thursday from 7 to 9 pm (unless pre-empted by an occasional prayer service or bad weather) 40 students of all ages and religious denominations, and from three southwest Oklahoma counties, descend into the basement of Lawton's Comanche Reformed Church (I44 & Lawrie Tatum Road). There they learn to sing just two Christian songs – one translated hymn and one original Comanche composition. Many of the songs originate on or after 1894. The class follows the 116 songs "listed" in the ~~Namuu Huyiyannuu~~ Songbook compiled in the 1940s by self-trained linguist Reverend Elliott Canonge.

The class has ten reasons for learning the 116 songs as follows:

1. The pure joy of singing (to one's God).
2. Re-connect cultural ties to religion.
3. Posterity's sake (maintain family singing legacy).
4. Funeral support participation.
5. Establish uniformity ("Deyo-Post Oak-Yellow Mission" style).
6. Develop song leaders.
7. Dispel timidity (sing "for-to" God and not to audience).
8. "Fine tune" or expand one's repertoire.
9. Collect and develop audio library (with "Canonge" and uncataloged composers).
10. Language learning re-enforcement.

The private class began in 1995 at the inspiration of elder Dorothy Lorentino who witnessed too many "zombie quiet" funerals. Among the over-aculturated/assimilated younger Comanches, probably if asked today, only one to five songs would be known among 80-90% of the Tribe.

Volunteer co-ordinator, M.G. Wauahdooah, a minimally speaking Lawton Comanche, provides both phonetic and linguistic visual cue cards and audio tape soundtracks dating back to 1947. English translations are also provided for non-speaking Comanches. The class uses a rote "sing along" method to insure hands-on participation by all students. The 12 month long free independent class, with fellowship food break, is open to all and is scheduled to conclude August 27, 1998. Lastly, it is important to note the class is just a class – not an entertainment group hired to travel to and fro. However, individuals are encouraged to spread the singing gospel anytime/anywhere! And, they have.

In the future plans include conducting a class on the un-cataloged 50-100 plus Comanche songs.

TEXAS HISTORICAL TRIP

April 8, 9 & 10, 1998. Traveling to historical sites in the Panhandle of Texas. Day One: Cheyenne, OK: Antelope Hills; Borger, TX: Hutchinson County Museum; and Stinnett, TX: Adobe Walls.

Day Two: Canyon TX: Panhandle-Plains Museum; Palo Duro Canyon.

Trip is being arranged by the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee. Your travel money should be received no later than April 4th. We have openings for approximately 18 more people, on a first come, first served basis. Hurry! You'll not want to miss out on this historic event!!!

NEW MEXICO COMANCHE URBAN POPULATION

There are approximately 300 Comanche tribal members in the Albuquerque and Santa Fe area. We have named ourselves the Toyah Band of Comanches. The majority are voters in the Comanche Nation government. We meet often, especially when important Comanche issues come up such as political, social or cultural activities of the Comanche Nation. We provide a social setting to reinforce our identity, especially among our children. Our classes in Albuquerque and Santa Fe meet weekly. Our leaders are Nikki Vigil, Jan Solis, Barbara Borgeson, Laura Harris and Walter Bigbee.