
NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMNEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

Editor: Barbara Goodin

"Letter From The President"

On January 1, 2000, a letter to the editor appeared in the Lawton Constitution signed by Gladys Narcomey of Elgin and "several others" that criticized the Comanche Language Committee. We all felt very strongly that a response was needed, and it follows:

Friday, February 11, 2000

Lawton Constitution, Letters To The Editor "Raising Awareness"

In response to the Letter to the Editor, January 1, 2000, by Gladys Narcomey and "several others."

The Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee (CL&CPC) has been very active, not only in just the past few months, but for the past six years. We use the news articles as a means of communicating with the Comanche people, that there are many opportunities for them to be involved in Taa Nūmū Tekwapū (our Comanche language). We are not trying to be boastful, we are trying to build awareness and participation. We honor those that came before us and began this very important work of Taa Nūmū Tekwapū (our Comanche language). We do this by carrying on what they started.

As in all projects involving language initiated by non-Comanches, the main purpose is to study the language. Once the study is concluded there is very little information given to The People. The main purpose of the CL&CPC is to have Comanches speaking Comanche. We will be actively involved in this work until such a time that Nūmūnū sūmū oyetū Nūmū niwūnū?etū (all Comanches speak Comanche). The Language Committee shares all information and resources to all people that want to learn to speak Comanche.

To Gladys Narcomey and "several others," you left out several projects from the past that were equally important, but you mention other projects that we are unaware of. If you would share that information with us -- let's cooperate, collaborate. Taa Nūmū Pu?e (our Comanche way)

is so much more important than to allow individual bias' to cause barriers to impede the successful conclusion of Taa Nūmū Tekwapūha makwitsoaitū (saving our Comanche language).

Your letter of 1-1-2000 had two objectives. 1) Recognition of past efforts in language work. 2) Criticize the CL&CPC's use of news articles. Not knowing your motivation for writing the letter I can only surmise that your lack of knowledge of the Language Committee's work gave you an erroneous opinion of us.

Come join us, help us — "Sūmū oyetū tanu nana Nūmūnū" (we are all related). If you can not do that, then if you know taa Nūmū tekwapū (our Comanche language) teach others what you know. If you don't use it, you lose it.

Signed, Ronald Red Elk, Anadarko

LANGUAGE CLASSES

by Barbara Goodin

Comanche language classes began January 1st in area communities and continue on a weekly basis. All classes are held Monday evenings from 6:30 until 9:30 in the following communities:

CACHE: at the Cache Housing Authority meeting room, with Edith Kassanavoid Gordon of Indianahoma teaching, assisted by Margaret Poahway of Cache.

APACHE: at the Comanche Community Center, with Rosalie Attocknie, of Apache, teaching.

LAWTON AREA: classes are held in the old conference room at the Comanche Nation Headquarters north of Lawton, with Sandra Karty of Geronimo teaching.

WALTERS: at the Comanche Community Center, with Winfred "Bud" Yackeschi of Walters teaching.

Actually, the Walters class has been ongoing for a period of time, although I haven't had the opportunity to visit it since January 1st. I have visited the other three sites.

On the night I visited Cache, there was

standing room only with over 20 people signed in. (Sign-in sheets at all sites give the Language Committee the statistics to know how many Comanches and other interested persons we are reaching.) That particular night was a get-acquainted session with people telling who their family was, why they wanted to learn Comanche and the teacher expressing her love of the language and willingness to share it with others. This class had a few children in attendance, but most participants were adults. Since that night I understand Billie Kreger, a Lannan apprentice, has taken an active role in the class. She exemplifies the goal we set down when we began the Master-Apprentice project, which is to teach Comanche to those who wanted to learn so they in turn could teach it to others.

My visit to the Apache class was brief, but Rosalie Attocknie had well planned lessons for her students. When I arrived she was working with the children, with several adults arriving about mid-way through the class period. (They were attending another function in a different part of the building.) Rosalie indicated she had separate lesson plans for the adults when they arrived. Unfortunately I had to leave and wasn't able to stay for the adults' session.

On the night I attended classes at the Comanche Headquarters, I found Sandra Karty had a well planned session with hand-out sheets for all her students. That particular night there was only one youngster, but about 15 adults present. She speaks in Comanche most of the time and is quick to explain or answer any questions her students might ask. She uses teaching aids from other classes she's taught, in addition to developing some on her own.

One thing I particularly like about this class was the number of tape recorders being used. When we announced the classes were being offered in the various communities, we also provided notebooks, pens and blank cassettes. If you hear the words being spoken, your ability to retain them is much higher. And although I saw a few tape recorders going at all the sites, Sandra always encourages her students to use them.

As of the middle of February, we had a total of 292 students attend the classes, and I expect

that number to exceed 375 by the end of February when the class reports are due.

If you live near one of the class sites and have a desire to learn the Comanche language, we encourage you to attend. You will not only learn our beautiful language, but share fellowship and leave with a good feeling inside.

LANNAN MASTER-APPRENTICE UPDATE

by Barbara Goodin, coordinator

We are well into the third and final year of the Lannan Master-Apprentice Team Project, and have completed our first evaluation of all six teams. We've scheduled three evaluations this year, with the final one taking place after the end of the 40th week, on August 12th.

The six teams participating are (listing master, then apprentice): Theresa Saupitty and Mycah Saupitty, both of Cache; Lucille McClung and Susan Nahwooksy, also both of Cache; Marie Parton and Barbara Coker, both of Apache; Ray Niedo, Cache, and Edward Tahhahwah, Lawton; Gloria Cable and Billie Kreger, both of Cache; and Carney Saupitty Sr. and Richard Codopony Jr., both of Apache.

The Cable-Kreger team has participated in all three years of the project, and the Parton-Coker and Saupitty-Codopony teams are in their second years. All three teams have made excellent progress, with the three apprentices' demonstrating a good concept of the language immersion process.

The other three teams are participating for the first time. It will be interesting to see how their second evaluation compares to the first, and then how they do in their final evaluation at the end of the project period.

We will keep you informed on their progress.

SHOSHONI NEWSLETTER

We received the first issue of "Newen Deboope," the Shoshoni Newsletter, thanks to former Comanche Tribal Princess Dorie Jill Parker, who attends the University of Idaho in Pocatello.

The Department of Anthropology did an excellent job of putting together their first newsletter, and gave us some wonderful ideas to

improve ours. We hope to receive future editions.

TULSA LANGUAGE CONFERENCE

Several members of the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee recently attended a workshop in Tulsa on the OSU-Tulsa campus, sponsored by the Oklahoma Native Language Association (ONLA) and the Center for Tribal Studies, Northeastern State University, Tahlequah. Attending were Richard Codopony Jr., Apache; Dr. Reaves Nahwooks, Indianahoma; Ronald Red Elk, Anadarko; and Carney Saupitty Jr. and Sr., Apache.

The theme chosen for the first workshop of the year was "Developing Language Curriculum: Reviewing, Planning, and Preparing our Language Programs." Coordinators for the event were Greg Bigler, president of ONLA, and Carol Young, Center for Tribal Studies. The year's goals and programming began with a review of what participants have done with their language programs, finding strengths and areas which can be enhanced. It entailed [1] A review of what participants have done, past and present, in their language programs; [2] What language materials have been produced; [3] Whether or not teaching has been effective in that learners begin to speak and/or write their tribal languages; [4] Difficulties individual programs have faced; [5] What is needed to make individual programs more effective and more "fun"; and [6] Plan language tasks sequentially.

Upon completion of the first six tasks there was a continuation of two more specific tasks: 1) to re-affirm and/or modify the goals and objectives of individual language programs, and 2) to work on specific aspects of individual languages to prepare language units, lessons and materials.

Participants were asked to come prepared to discuss these issues and brought language materials that their language programs had developed.

The training workshop was led by Dr. Marcellino Berardo, Ms. Tracy Hirata-Edds, Ms. Mary Linn, and Dr. Akira Yamamota, all of Kansas University.

Ms. Linn paid an on-site visit to Lawton last

October when the Comanche Language group presented a three day workshop training for the beginning of Year Three of the Lannan Master-Apprentice Team Project.

COMANCHE CHR/EMS NEWS

CHR Director, Nina Youngman, says her office has received copies of the Strong Heart Studies' results, and can make them available to Comanche people. If you were/are a participant in that study and are interested in obtaining one or all of your reports, please call (580-492-3720 or 580-492-3725), or come by the CHR office at Comanche Tribal Headquarters.

Anita Yackeyonny, Acting Director of the Diabetes Program, is offering the following services for Comanches with diabetes: monthly Diabetes Support Group meetings at the Comanche Complex; weekly aerobics class at the Cahoma Community Center; monthly nutrition training sessions; monthly health screenings; provide home visits to elders; and provide new meters, lancets and test strips. Please call her at 580-492-3816 for more information.

YAHNEE CORNER

Easy for you to say!

Grandpa went to the dentist's office at the Indian Hospital with his wife, Sadie. He told the dentist, "Look, I want you to pull this bad tooth, but we don't have much time, so no medicine! - you know, that Nau-vo-cane, and no laughing gas. Just pull it, 'cause we gotta go." The dentist said, "Man, you got guts, but I'll do it that way if you want to. Which tooth is it?"

Grandpa turned to Sadie and said, "Sadie, go ahead and show him which tooth it is!"

Going up or down!

Old Sam was on his death bed and the preacher was with him. The preacher told him, "Sam, you need to denounce the devil before you die." But Sam just looked at him and didn't say anything. So the preacher said to him again, "Sam, you should denounce the devil before you die." Sam just looked at him and was quiet for a little while.

Then he finally spoke up, "Look, Preacher, until I know where I'm going, I don't want to make

nobody mad!"

The effects of tranquilizers

Sonny Boy's mother, Josie, took him to the Indian Hospital to be examined. After talking with Sonny Boy, the doctor turned to Josie and said, "Josie, you need some help, too, you know. You're too worried about Sonny Boy and you're anxious all the time. I'm going to give you some tranquilizers; you take them regularly then come back and see me again next week." So Josie followed the doctor's order and took the tranquilizers and then went back to the hospital. "So, Josie, how's Sonny Boy doing?" The doctor asked. "Who cares?" Josie responded.

*(*Editor's note: We include more Comanche stories for you, because even though the temperatures are in the 60s and 70s, officially we are still in winter, which was a time for storytelling among Comanches. Enjoy them.)*

COMANCHE STORIES

as told by Tommy Wahnee (deceased)

WESSEE

As the story goes, Wessee (who was an actual Nūmūnū tribal member) lived many, many years and had many experiences--some of which were hard to believe, but actually happened.

Wessee was along on a hunt with several other warriors, near the Grand Canyon (Pia tuk honno), when night was beginning to fall. They were trying to find a trail to the bottom of the canyon and sent Wessee ahead of them. He kept trying one trail and then another, and before long he found himself alone. He called to his friends, but apparently they did not hear him as he received no response when he called to let them know he had

Wessee traveled along, camping when he felt he needed to rest and then starting early in the morning to make the best possible time. However, he had a hard time and sometimes didn't have food for several days, but he kept going. He wore out his moccasins fast and even his horses were growing weary. He had to kill one after the other for food to survive, and then he was on foot, but he kept going.

It is estimated it took him about five or six

found a good path.

As Wessee tried to see in the darkening valley, he thought he could hear dogs barking in the distance, so he made his way toward the sound. He knew they were domesticated dogs because of the way they were barking. As he drew near, he could make out the shape of a lodge and could hear voices. He was also surprised that he could understand the people talking--they were speaking Comanche. So he called out to them that he was coming to them - that he was a Nūmū nūū. They were so surprised to receive a visitor, especially another Nūmūnūū.

A young couple explained that they had come down from up North, near the Big Mountains, and were staying for just a short while. They were on their way to the big water (the coast). They invited him to travel along with them, since he didn't know where his traveling companions had gone and by now they probably thought he was dead. So he agreed to go along. They traveled leisurely and after a few days, they reached the big water. There they found friendly people-atabits_i (other tribes) and settled down to make a home and to learn of their ways. An elderly woman grew fond of Wessee and adopted him. He became her son and she provided cooked food and made moccasins and clothing for him.

They went along like this for some time and then Wessee wanted to go back to his people, on the open Plains. His adopted mother wasn't happy about him leaving, but agreed if that was what he wanted, she would help prepare for his journey. She made him about twelve pair of moccasins and gave him three horses and provisions which would last him until he found his people.

months to make the trip, but he made it back to his Nūmūnū on the Plains.

That's the way they told the story.

Another NAUTSA PUNEE Story

There was a war party that headed down into Mexico. They were gone for awhile and didn't come back.

A young man (brother-in-law to one of the war party) went in search of the group. He

traveled far and came to Mexico. When he came to the Rio Grande, he found that it was full. The water was high and rushing. He waited, not knowing whether to try to cross here, or go further upstream to find a way.

While he was thinking about how to cross, he heard a voice in a grove of trees across the way. It said, "Hurry, cross here, the enemy is right behind you. You need to hurry before they catch you." The voice said red bandanas (meaning Apaches) were chasing him. So he jumped in and swam as hard as he could and got across the raging waters. He felt good that he made it across safely and then decided he would find the person who had called to him. He went to the grove of trees and there he saw his brother-in-law sitting in an upright position, leaning on the trunk of a tree. He was so glad to see him and wanted to know how long he had been there and that his family was looking for him to come back to camp. The brother-in-law said he was alright, but that he would not be going back. The young man encouraged him and that if he needed help, he would help him travel home. The brother-in-law said no, he was alright, everything was alright, but he would not be going back with him.

The young man looked again at the raging waters and could see that the Apaches had come to the edge of the Rio Grande, but finding it full, were leaving.

When the young man turned back to his brother-in-law, he found a decaying body propped against the tree trunk. He had returned to help the young man escape the same fate that had fallen on him and his war party. They had been dead for several days.

That's the way they told the story.

MOOPITS STORY

There was a man and woman who had a little girl who loved to run and play. One day, she told them she had fallen in love and that she was going to get married. They were happy for her and wanted to meet their future son-in-law. She brought this big man to meet her people and they were married. He had told her before they married, to never look at him while he was sleeping. So she didn't look at him while he slept.

One day, however, she decided she wanted to know what he looked like when he was sleeping, so she went quietly to their teepee and peeked in. There, to her surprise, lay a great big Moopits. She had married a Moopits! She ran to tell her people the terrible news. She had married a Moopits! They all ran away.

That's the way they told the story.

TUCUMCARI

The story goes that while a group of Nūmūnū hunters were in the area of Tucumcari, NM, one of the hunters developed tuberculosis. (He probably had it awhile, but it only got worse when they reached the area.)

The hunters had to leave without him, because he was getting weak and could not travel very well. A Being (Spirit) came to him and said he would make him well, if he believed he could be healed. The young man said that he believed the Spirit could make him well. After a few days of following specific instructions and taking the tea prepared by the Spirit, the young man did indeed get better. After a while longer, he was well. Thus, the name given to the area was Tuto mak kie (got well).

Another version of the same story is that the group of Nūmūnū hunters were in the area and could see far in the distance and were shown large herds of buffalo. So they were able to get the food they needed for their people. Thus, the name give to the area was Tu com katah (hunter's point).

That's the way they told the story.

THE KEEPER OF THE PLAINS

A 44 foot steel sculpture stands at the confluence of the Big and Little Arkansas Rivers in Wichita Kansas as a tribute to the Plains Indians. A gift of internationally renowned Kiowa-Comanche artist Blackbear Bosin (1921-1980), it was dedicated in May of 1974.