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# NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMNEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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September 2004

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

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Editor: Barbara Goodin

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## “Letter From The President”

Haa Marawekæ

Namunuu, Nanamunuu, ise taasæ taa Namu  
Paraibo nuu.

Twelve years ago this summer a group of Comanches formed The Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee (CLCPC). Below is the Vision, Mission, and Goals Statement developed by this group.

The **VISION** of the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee is to revive the Comanche language into a “living language” once again and to take our language of heritage into the Twenty-First Century.

Our **MISSION** is to foster a cooperative relationship among federal, state, and tribal agencies, schools, parents and others for the preservation and promotion of the Comanche language and culture, to change the direction of the Comanche language -- from near extinction -- and to take our language of heritage into the future.

### Our **GOALS**:

- To provide the opportunity for Comanche people of all ages to learn to speak, write and understand the Comanche language.
- To develop a broad array of innovative teaching techniques, products and services which will support and promote community Comanche language acquisition.

- To document, record and preserve the Comanche language and culture using modern technology.
- To develop and publish an official Comanche language dictionary.
- To seek funding and partnerships which will finance and support our goals.
- To identify degrees of proficiency for Comanche language teachers.
- To develop curriculum for use in public schools.

The majority of this group were elder Comanche speakers. It has been an established practice of the CLCPC to consult and follow the advice of these elders in matters concerning language, history and cultural traditions.

The elders wanted to establish a good relationship with the Comanche Business Committee (CBC). The first action the CLCPC took was to ask the CBC to recognize the group and support our efforts in matters dealing with the Comanche language. When the CBC unanimously recognized the group and adopted the spelling system, an additional request was made for a Language Preservation Office within the tribe, and a budget for that office. The office was established, but the CBC declined to provide funds to make the office operational.

Some of the same individuals that were members of the CBC then are on the current CBC.

My questions to you, the CBC, are these: What is the current status of the CLCPC as you see it? What commitments have we failed to accomplish? Can you, as the

governing body of the Comanche Nation, continue to support CLCPC efforts for our language?

One of the reasons for those questions is that one criticism continues to surface. That being the CLCPC has not produced one speaker! Now let's look at that issue.

As far as I know, there has not been a second language learner in the whole Comanche Nation. There are three individuals that participated in the Lannan Foundation Master/Apprentice Project that are very close to being speakers. The number one problem of second language learning is that it takes so much time and effort. We have not been able to resolve the issue of scheduling necessary time in with the daily lives of a second language learner.

Now, if there are other complaints, criticisms, or issues of the CLCPC operations, please bring them to the Committee's attention.

The other reason for those questions is that I attended the luncheon for the Comanche speakers. I had mixed feelings about the message the meeting was conveying. The Comanche Nation Elders Council is a great idea. As I was leaving the meeting, I thought, "the model for that proposed organization had to be the CLCPC."

Here is where the mixed feelings come in. You see, Chairman Coffey's support of the CLCPC has been rather dubious from past experiences of his last term in office. So what's up with that?

The CLCPC's commitment to keep our language in the daily lives of all Comanches is a total commitment. Our advocacy for the language will continue for as long as the Comanche people support our efforts.

We are on the brink of extinction as **NUMUNUU!** When the last speaker leaves us, we will no longer be **NUMUNUU.**

There is a glimmer of hope – our babies – the newborn!

When our speakers of today learned (Taa **NUMU Tekwapu**), they were babies. They grew up hearing the sounds of the language.

We can produce the Comanche sounds for those developing brains to be wired for the Comanche language, like our elder speakers were when they were growing and developing. They (the babies today) can be the first Comanches since you, our last speakers of today, to say "Comanche is my first language." The language will have found usage in the home again.

The parents will have to be involved in this process, and in a very short time our language will replace that foreign language (English), with our families once again.

On another note, the CLCPC is planning to update and make corrections to the work-in-progress Comanche Dictionary. We had hoped to start this process in September of this year, but it looks like it will be in October. We will select a date during our monthly meeting in September.

I would like to take this time to extend an apology for the errors that were found in the first Dictionary, and also thank the people for bringing them to our attention. This work is solely the work of Comanches for Comanches. If you would like to be a part of this worthy endeavor, please come and help. We will publish the dates, time and place later, and it will be posted on our internet site, also. See top of this newsletter for internet address.

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### **CONCERN FOR OUR LANGUAGE**

(\*Editor's Note: We received the following letter which is very relevant to the subject Mr. Red Elk spoke of just above. We hope you will read and listen to what this young Comanche man has to say.)

To Mr. Red Elk and Language Committee,

**Maruaweku.** My name is Greg (Poahway) Steen, grandson of the late Margaret Poahway. I am currently in the Marines deployed to Iraq. I spend most of my time reading and re-reading the Comanche Dictionary, attempting to learn what I can on my own. I write to give my

thoughts on the direction of the Comanche language.

My grandmother taught me most of what I know today, but after looking at all the words and phrases, I realize that I didn't take full advantage of her knowledge. I can still hear her help me pronounce the words when I say them aloud. She created a powerful platform for me, now that I think about it.

What I want to address, first, are the questions brought up in the December 2003, issue. I read them over and over and felt overwhelmed with concern for our language. The programs we have are awesome and I wish I could be a part of it. That is why I need some time to express my views and opinions to you and the Language Committee.

Your first question refers to the continuation of our language. My opinion is that, without a shadow of a doubt, we need to keep the programs going. We cannot quit or slow down right now. First, it gives our Comanche people a sense of purpose. If we allow ourselves to be absorbed completely in the taiboo ways, then why did we ever speak Comanche? Why are we who we are? Our purpose would be defeated. Second, it allows us to pass on our traditions, knowledge, and history in our own way. Third, our way is our identity-- ~~Namenuu~~: The People. If we lose our language, we lose our uniqueness... we lose ourselves.

The next question asked was about whether having every Comanche speaking our language was realistic. I'm afraid that it is not, in my opinion...not yet! Our language is very unstable now. Lack of interest and motivation for some inhibits them from dedicating to master our language. Let's stabilize it first. If we were to focus on those with a strong desire and determination to fluently speak Comanche, we could train the trainers. The trainers would provide high influence in the daily living to teach others. Challenge our Comanche people to become a Comanche language expert and teach others.

Personally, my goal is to pass it on to others. I will start with my daughter, Courtney, age 5, and my newborn son, Joseph Isawwra. My theory is that the English language is nothing but a crutch to use and then set aside. We should use it with minimal reference. The reason is because English and Comanche are not alike. The difference is in the idea transmitted from one person to another. English relies on phonics to get a message across, while Comanche uses ideas. An example is:

English: A dog runs around and plays. Words and phonics.

Comanche: Sarii (dog) nohi?nuraakai (runs around and plays). Whole idea transmitted.

English uses units of words to build a picture and Comanche has a word that sets the idea with a subject together. The goal for someone who wants to master our language should be to start thinking like a Comanche first. Then they can start building on their vocabulary and the mechanics of composition. Start thinking in terms of ideas and phrases, not words and phonics. My grandmother thought in ideas. It was hard for me to get her to break down some words for my understanding. I wanted the literal translation. Now, it is clear to me why she said, "Patsikwasi means possum. Just possum." I wanted the "bare tail" explanation. Another one was "Pabi?ku?ya." She took that one with her (to the grave). Comanche was once the first language of our people, now it seems to be a second. Let's reclaim it for our first again.

Urako  
Greg Poahway Steen

(Uh pita nuh kahku, sibe?nikiyutuh usuni Nuhmuh tekwaruh nuh. Uh kamakutuh nuh.)

\*\*\*I want to say, "For my grandma, from now on, I will always speak Comanche." You know the rest.

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### **CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE**

In our June 2004 issue of the ~~Nam~~ Tekwapuha Nomneekatu Newsletter, we published The Happy Birthday Song and Old McDonald's Song. It has been brought to our attention that the translator of The Happy Birthday Song was Gloria Cable, and the translator of Old McDonald's Song was Sam DeVenney. We regret the omission of credit.

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### **NEW EXHIBIT SET FOR DISPLAY AT VISITOR'S CENTER DURING COMANCHE NATION FAIR submitted by Juanita Pahdopony, curator**

"Our Mothers, Ourselves," is an exhibit that recognizes the contribution of the women in our lives – the grandmothers, mothers, sisters and daughters who ensure that the transmission of our culture continues. Because it is the women who gave birth to us, cared for us, and taught us the language, rules and values of life, and the same women who will take us into the future. The women of our lives provided a gentle perspective, but firm discipline. They shared a depth of insight, to develop our appreciation of the physical and the spiritual – the very soul of beauty and culture. And it is the same beauty and culture that can be found in the art, cradles, clothing, toys, tools and lullabies.

If you have information or memorabilia you would like included in this exhibit, contact Juanita Pahdopony at 580-353-1329 or [Pahdopony@aol.com](mailto:Pahdopony@aol.com).

(\*Editor's Note: Juanita is looking for both traditional and contemporary cradles, swings, toys, clothing, and women's tools; photographs of Comanche women and children at work and play. Comanche lullabies will be played during the exhibit; Comanche language group photos will be displayed and a children's video highlighting work with the young will be shown; photographs of Comanche Housing Child Care Day Center will be displayed showing the

nurturing and traditional care of Comanche children.

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### **13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL COMANCHE NATION FAIR**

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> are the dates for this year's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Comanche Nation Fair.

For more information contact the Comanche Nation at 580-492-4988 or toll free at 1-877-492-4988.

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### **RESEARCHING INDIAN HERITAGE**

We've recently learned of a web site that can help if you are researching your Indian heritage. It is:

<http://thorpe.ou.edu/OILS/index.html>.

It is based out of the University of Oklahoma in Norman and includes information such as enrollment procedures, tribal membership requirements and more.

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### **FESTIVAL TO HONOR NATIVE LANGUAGE WRITERS**

**by Gordon Bronitsky, PhD**

I am working with the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center of Albuquerque, New Mexico, to create "Native Nations, Native Voices" – a festival to honor contemporary Native language writers.

To honor these authors, Native language writers have been invited to participate in a week long festival. Writers will read from their works in their own languages. National language translations will be made available to the audience at the option of each writer.

A special effort has been made to include and honor high school and college authors in Native languages, for they are the future of languages. Selected writers represent as broad a range of languages and styles as possible. The festival is scheduled for July, 2005.

(There are) over 500 Native Nations, each with its own language and culture.

These are the Nations that were encountered by the first Europeans to enter North America. Yet now, Native languages are under threat everywhere, due to Euro-American educational policies, disease, and the virtual omnipresence of English language television. Some languages are extinct – from Guale to Esalen, from Eyak to Timucuan. Others are only spoken by a handful of elderly individuals. Yet throughout Native America and beyond, a small but growing body of writers are giving new voice to Native languages, using their own languages to write about and confront the world they live in, the world of the Twenty First Century.

I would be happy to provide more information or answer any questions you might have.

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### COMANCHE BANDS

The Comanche Language Committee was invited to give a short workshop on Comanche Bands to those attending the Comanche HomeComing Pow-Wow in Walters this past July. There seems to be a renewed interest in Comanche Bands, with people trying to learn from which band, or bands, they are descended. We manned a booth and fielded questions, and hopefully helped some people. I would like to offer a paper prepared by Delores Sumner for the workshop. All spelling is hers.

“My name is Delores Titchywy Sumner, my Indian name “Too ‘See.” My grandparents are Atchesuah Titchywy and Tauyer Poemoceah Titchywy. My two sets of great grandparents are Old Man Titchywy & Permansu and Poemoceah & Chemah. My great great grandparents are WisSisChi

and ToKoYon. My great great great grandparents are Quenay and TahMoKo.

“Being a good librarian, I have prepared a bibliography on where you can find information on the history of the Comanche Bands. One great book is in the Lawton Public Library Research Room entitled Comanche Tribal Census Records, 1879-1899. (Editor’s Note: you can also see this online at:

<http://php.indiana.edu/~tkavanag/comlist.htm>.

“The book lists the Band leaders and the year or years they served. For example: WisSisChe was the leader of the Band that ToKoYan, Poemoceah and Titchywy belonged to during the years 1879/1880/1883/1885. However, according to the Kiowa/Comanche 1885 Census, Old Man Titchywy, my grandfather Atchesuah’s father, is listed as family head with the Waysee Band. In order to find your Band, you need to know your ancestor. The name of the Band sometimes will be listed on census and probate records. The Census of 1870 combined the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache. Not a very resourceful book, as many Comanches did not sign up for various reasons. The Census of 1874 listed almost half of the Comanches at Fort Sill. In the Census of 1876, Asahabit and Toshaway Bands are listed. The other Census are: 1880, 1883, 1885 and 1889. Census information can be found at the Comanche Tribal Complex, Anadarko BIA Agency and the Lawton Public Library Research Room.

“There is a lot of good history to read. In 1900 AD, the Buffalo Eaters, CoChoTeichas, traveled south to present SE Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas from the Shoshone Country and were given the name “The Snakes Who Returned” because they drove out the Apaches, who had previously driven out the Shoshone Indians. The Pi Utahs (PaiOoE Tahs, meaning bow and arrow) also branched off from the Shoshones, settling in the state of Utah, giving the state the name OoE Tahs. At one time the Comanches and Shoshones were one large tribe. The

Shoshones in Idaho call themselves The People, Num. They call Comanches Yamparika or Padoucas. In 1719 the Comanches are mentioned in history books as Padoucas.

“Being a genealogist, I have traced my ancestors as far back as records can be found. I am still searching for WisSisChe’s roots. He was a Spanish captive. The assumption that he was of Spanish origin was from the type of clothing he wore. He was 4 or 5 years old when he was captured and wore a lace blouse and bloomers, clothing of an aristocrat. One of (the) main hindrance to tracing genealogy is the Comanche taboo of not saying a dead person’s name. ‘Kay Why Noh.’ This may be the reason I can not locate the name of WisSisChe’s father, who was captured around 1824.

“Then came the land allotments, a result of the Jerome Act, in 1901 and 1905, which now identifies Bands through real estate. The Yapai or **Yamparika** (Root or Yap Eaters) settled in Medicine Park, Meers, Elgin, Fletcher, Cyril and Apache. They were the most northern band. Then south of this band, but still north of Lawton, were the **Nokoni** (Those Who Turn Back), also (Those Who Move Often) also (Wanderers), later changed to Dertsahnaw-yehkuh (bad campers), because of the death of a headman called Nawkohnee, father of Quanah Parker. Many historians were confused when Band names changed, as they were not familiar with this custom. Then in western Comanche County were the **Kwahada** or Quahada (Antelope). They settled in Cache, Snyder and Indianola. This band in 1875 was the last to surrender. Then my grandfather’s band, the **Penateka** (Honey Eaters) are the southernmost band. They settled in the vicinity of Walters, Oklahoma. The Penateka were known sometimes as “Timber People” and “Wasps” and several other names. The Penatekas were living close to Fort Sill in 1868 and considered one of the more peaceful bands. My grandmother’s band was the Wian or

WeAhNuh, meaning “wearing out.” The Band was located near Cache, as her grandfather, WisSisChe, was head of a band.

“Tracing the Bands, you will find the spelling is not always the same. The spelling of WisSisChe was also Waysee. The authors usually spelled the words according to sound or phonics. By 1883, nearly all the Comanches lived north of the Red River.

“It should be noted that smaller bands united with larger bands and sometimes Comanches broke off from primary bands and formed smaller ones. One great thing to know is that Comanche Bands never fought with each other. The Bands were organized in family groups and had no boundaries between the several band territories. Comanches were free and welcome to settle or move through their regions.”

#### Comanche Bibliography

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Trenholm, Virginia Cole & Maurine Carley, The Shoshonis: Sentinels of the Rockies.  
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Compiled by Delores Titchywy Sumner  
July 2004

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#### CHILDREN’S HEALTH FAIR

A Children’s Health Fair was held in August at the Comanche Complex in the new conference room. The Comanche

Language Committee was pleased to have been invited to participate.

We handed out Comanche coloring books (taken from our Comanche Picture Dictionary) and crayons to the children that were brought in by their parents. Several tribal programs participated, and the children were monitored for height, weight, hearing, immunization records, etc. The most popular area was the snack booth, provided by the Comanche Food Distribution Program. It featured "Comanche Gold" on crackers.

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### NEW SERVICE BEING OFFERED

The Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee would like to offer a new service on the internet. On our web site at [www.comanchelanguage.com](http://www.comanchelanguage.com) we have a section titled "Upcoming Events," where we announce our upcoming activities. We would now like to offer this service to other Comanche groups who would like to promote their activities.

If you have an upcoming pow-wow, family reunion, sporting event or any other activity of interest, you may fax it to us at: 580-353-6322 or e-mail your information to: [clpc@comanchelanguage.org](mailto:clpc@comanchelanguage.org) and we will place it on our web site where it will stay until after the event has occurred.

Please keep in mind that we cannot list the entire head staff of a pow-wow, but if you will send us the basic information and a contact number for people to reach you for more information (phone number or e-mail address) we will post it on our web site. We reserve the right to edit as space permits, but we will try to include all the information needed to promote your event.

We have the capabilities to receive both Word and Word Perfect documents sent by e-mail, but please notify us prior to sending an attachment. Otherwise we delete unsolicited attachments due to the possibility of viruses and bugs. We will confirm receipt of your announcement, but allow us a few days for your announcement

to appear on our web site. Unless we are inundated with requests, we think this can be a very efficient way of letting Comanche people know what's happening in Comanche Country, and hopefully make your event more successful.

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### 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 incl. 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. \$12 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.** Three sets of 48 flash cards each with simple Comanche words. \$12 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.** Royal blue with red bill and 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 "Nám̄ 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:

[clpc@comanchelanguage.org](mailto:clpc@comanchelanguage.org).

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