
NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMNEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

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Editor: Barbara Goodin

(*Editor's Note: We received the following letter taking us to task for what we printed in the June-July-August Language Newsletter. The writer asked that we print her letter – and we have – along with our response.)

Dear “President” and Editor,

I would like to know why Geneva Navarro's name is included in the letter on the first page of the (June 2005) language newsletter? If you aren't going to include the proposal that was mentioned, how are we, your readers supposed to know what you are talking about? It sounded to me like it had an angry or accusational tone to it (your mentioning of her name) and I would like to know why. This is a newsletter for the entire community interested in language preservation isn't it? Or is it your own forum to show your dissatisfaction with individual tribal members?

I understand that there is an elder's council that has organized. I also understand that there are those in the community that resent this council because they are outspoken and won't go along like a bunch of cattle and buy into whatever they are told.

Many of the fluent speakers in the tribe are our elders. People seem to believe that once you get old that your brain deteriorates into nothing. I want you to realize that the people on this council are professional people, dignified, brave, and honest. They are being treated like they are renegades and actually, maybe they are. After all, it has been the renegades that have stood up for people and brought about changes that need be. There are other elders who haven't

joined the council out of fear, but come to the council to ask them to speak for them and to ask for help. We as Comanche people should be able to speak about whatever we need to without fear of reprisal.

I would like to request that more respect be given the elders, the elders council and to the fluent speakers of our tribe. Many of them have taken precious time to help our people retain our language, yet they are so disrespected by the very people they are trying to help.

You know, not every one can be an elder. Our elders hold knowledge and wisdom and are trying to pass it on to us. By the way, just being old does not qualify you as being an elder. Some of you are just old people. I think that the younger people can see that and will treat you as such. Or they will see your value and treat you as well as you deserve to be. So what are you, an elder or just an old man? The disrespect that you are given by others will let you know. Please print this in your newsletter.

Thank you, **Terry (Navarro) Gomez**, Comanche Tribal Member, Professor/Center for Arts and Cultural Studies; Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM.

“Response From Our President”

Haa, Maruaweka Numunuu,

Nu nahnia tsa **Ron Red Elk** kena tsukupu. Nu tsa tuibitsi. (Joke, hope you enjoy the humor.)

What I would like to attempt to do is answer some questions and concerns in the above letter dated August 17, 2005, written by Terry (Navarro) Gomez.

Geneva's name was in the article because she was the person that made the resolution at the annual General Council in April. The resolution was not included in the article because of its vagueness and ambiguity. Here it is: "The Comanche Nation General Council directs the Comanche Business Committee to centralize and consolidate all Comanche Language Projects funded by the Comanche Nation." The Comanche Nation College was named by Geneva at the General Council as the entity to do the centralization and consolidation. By the way, this part never made it into the written part of the resolution.

This Comanche Language Newsletter is provided by the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee (CLCPC) to inform people of language issues and activities. I'm required to have an article in each issue as President of the organization. I try to be positive in the subject matter that I'm addressing, but when you can see nothing positive in that subject matter, it is very difficult to have a positive attitude. You can probably tell by my previous article (June 2005) that my opinion of the centralization/consolidation resolution is of little or no benefit to language use, which is what I deem as the most important issue in our quest to save "Taa Nəm̄ Tekwap̄."

As I stated at the General Council, I have the utmost respect for Geneva Navarro and Rita Coosewoon as fluent Comanche speakers, and still consider them to be friends and colleagues in our work with the Comanche language. On the other hand, I won't go along like a bunch of cattle and buy into whatever is told to me. I have a mind and opinion and will speak my mind without fear. By the way, I consider myself part of that Elder's Council. I know most of the elders that are active on that council, and you're right, they are very capable and concerned Comanche people. I'm supportive of some of the issues they have taken on, but like the centralization/consolidation resolution,

which I can foresee little or no benefit materializing, I have to be outspoken and say NO.

I use Taa Nəm̄ Tekwap̄ in my presentation in these articles to highlight the spelling system. Not all Nəm̄n̄ can speak Comanche. On the other hand, all Comanches can learn to read Taa Nəm̄ Tekwap̄. I feel it to be imperative that s̄m̄ oyet̄ Nəm̄n̄ use our language. It is only through the use of our language that it will remain just that: Taa Nəm̄ Tekwap̄. Please don't wait too long!

Ron Red Elk

(*Editor's Note: My work with the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee gives me an opportunity to correspond with many different individuals. In this age of computers, most correspondence is done through e-mails. It is not uncommon to hear from someone who is wanting to give their horse a Comanche name...or someone who has a new baby and wants a Comanche name...or someone has a ranch in Texas and wants a Comanche word to name it...or someone has a sweetheart and wants to know how to say and spell "I Love You" in Comanche, and occasionally as seen above, someone taking us to task. But many, many other people contact us to share their thoughts or language related news with us. I would like to take this time to share some of these items with you.

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

"Ma r̄awe?k̄. Hello, Barbara, n̄ haits̄j̄ tsaat̄, my good friend!

Just wanted to share some good thoughts with you about taa Nəm̄ tekwap̄ from Toledo, Ohio, or this area still known to some as Miami/Maumee Indian country.

In a new online college course that I taught this summer about Indigenous topics, we discussed Indigenous language

donation. Also, Ron Red Elk has visited the Comanche meteorite there in Austin, but can't recall the name of the museum.)

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(*From one of our readers who has been ordering language learning material)

"I think I am making good progress with the language. I must have inherited the accent. I am having some problems with the whispered vowels. Either too strong or left out all together. I probably need a lesson from a speaker to get it right. If by next summer I feel like I am confident enough in my ability, I may contact you to see if you know of anyone who would be willing to give a short lesson in person to me.

I live in the hills of central Texas outside Austin, and as I was practicing outside the other night, the thought occurred to me that it has been a very long time since the trees have heard that sound.

Kerry Kennington."

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(*From tribal member **Jim Warson** in Hawaii)

"I'd like to make the N~~um~~ aware of two items:

- 1) Dartmouth University was founded to provide, among other things, "educational opportunity for the Indians." There is significant financial aid available if a qualified student can be found.
- 2) The pending Akaka bill, if passed, will provide a separate state for Hawaiians without boundaries, unlike the reservation system. Under the doctrine of equal justice, tribes could acquire land outside the reservation boundaries which could then be placed in their jurisdiction. This could be huge for the tribes, since the taxes would then be paid to them, not the other taxing authorities.

Pass this on, it's fuel for thought.

Aloha, Jim Warson."

(*Editor's Note: To learn more about the Akaka bill, type in "Senate Bill 147" on your search engine to read the entire bill, or "Akaka bill" to hear from all sides.)

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From someone interested in helping us put our Comanche words on the world wide web, check out this web site.

<http://comanche.geijer.nu/>

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Doug Whalen, DhW, president of The Endangered Language Fund (ELF) out of New Haven CT, shared this letter with us. We feel like it is relevant to our own efforts.

"Mr. Barkhausen, Thank you for your heartfelt note. You have put your finger on many of the sources of language loss today – fragmentation, skipping a generation, the lack of time in the modern world. Your web site is quite interesting – I especially like the animation in the syllabary – but, as you know, it will not revive the Cherokee language by itself. Still, I think it is a very nice part of the drive that many tribes have to make it clear that the languages are not incompatible with technology, so I think it deserves further work.

The Stabilizing Indigenous Language Conferences

(<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/SIL9brochure.html>) are both useful and uplifting. But again, this kind of thing has to fit into a busy schedule.

There are two aspects of the work that I do at the Endangered Language Fund that keep me going. The first is that I think that our grants, small as they are, are making a difference. The second is that it allows me to feel that I have done what I could, rather than sitting around watching it happen (which is what I was doing ten years ago). Even if I do not "save" a single language, I will have done what I could. I know that many of the materials we collect will be of value for generations.

So, this is not a list of recommended actions – I think that, just as with each language's situation, your own situation will call for unique solutions. But I am adding my note of encouragement. And, if there are things that you think ELF can do, let me know. We are still mostly focusing on our

grants, but hope to expand our operations in the coming year. Sincerely, Doug Whalen, DhW, President ELF.”



John E. McLaughlin, Ph.D. wrote to request the Comanche word for wolf for research he was doing. When I responded back with “Isa,” he sent the following:

“Here are the words for ‘wolf’ in the seven languages of the Numic family (Great Basin), a part of the larger Uto-Aztecan stock.

- Panamint (Death Valley, CA): pia’isa, literally ‘big coyote’; toopi; isampapi, literally ‘coyote’s older brother.’
- Shoshoni (central Nevada, western Utah, southern Idaho, western Wyoming): pis’isa, ‘big coyote’; wonko’itsa, ‘pine canine.’
- Comanche (western Texas and Oklahoma): piatseena’, ‘big coyote’; tuhtseena’, ‘black coyote.’
- Kawaiisu (Tehachapi Mountains, CA): tyvizi; nywyga’awagady, ‘people eater.’
- Colorado River Numic (Chemehuevi dialect: Parker CA; Southern Paiute dialects: southern Nevada, northern Arizona, southern Utah; Ute dialects: eastern Utah, western Colorado): tyvaci (tuh-vah-tsee, Chemehuevi); syna’api (Southern Paiute); kwinnoota (Southern Paiute); typattsi (Southern Paiute); sinaavi (Ute).
- Mono (Yosemite Park and Owens Valley, CA): to’ape.
- Northern Paiute (northeastern CA, northern NV, eastern OR): esa.

These are the forms that have been recorded by linguists and native speakers who have included them in various published and unpublished dictionaries of these languages. Remember that no dictionary of any of these languages is a complete record and there are forms (such as Comanche pia’isa, ‘big coyote’) which were recorded during the nineteenth century that are no longer used in

the modern languages. These closely related languages exhibit several features in common that should be noted as well. ‘Coyote’ and ‘wolf’ are both considered to be virtually identical creatures by most of them, and the word isa, although usually referring to coyote can also be used for wolf if there is no separation between the two species required in that context. Mythologically, Wolf is the wiser, older brother of Coyote, so there is some distinction always drawn in that context. Also some languages make a distinction between isa, Coyote in a mythological sense (note the Panamint name isampapi “Coyote’s older brother”), and itsa, Canis in a biological sense and referring equally to wolf or coyote (wolf being distinguished from coyote by a compound with wonko ‘pine’ [referring to mountain country], pia ‘big’, or tu- ‘black’).

As far as spelling goes, many of the bands speaking the same language have a different spelling system even though the words are pronounced the same. For example, in Nevada most of the Shoshoni bands spell it pia’isa, but in Fort Hall, Idaho, they spell it bia’isha. The spelling differences are even more pronounced in Colorado River Numic. I’ve used a sort of “generic” system for each language, although, as you can see, between languages the same pronunciation can be spelled different ways. Numic spelling is a linguist’s nightmare.”

John E. McLaughlin, Ph.D.

SHOSHONE NATIONS REUNION

The 2005 Shoshone Nations Reunion took place August 10th and 11th this year. It was followed by the Shoshone Festival which lasted until Sunday the 14th.

Our group held fund raisers for the last few months to help pay for our rooms and meals during the trip, and when the tribe provided money for the bus so that any and all Comanches could go, we were set.

The bus left the Comanche Complex parking lot just after 6 a.m. for the grueling 24 hour straight through trip.

Here are some thoughts from some of the people who went:

COMANCHE ELDER CHOSEN AS GRAND MARSHALL

(*Editor's Note: Vernon Cable from Cache, was chosen as Grand Marshall over the Parade held at Fort Hall, Idaho. Here, in the words of his daughter, **Charlene Tahdooahnippah**, is how that came to be.)

"During one of the meetings that was held under the Big Tent during the Shoshone Reunion, Mr. Gary Watson told the Comanche congregation that he wanted someone from The Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation group to be the Grand Marshal for the parade for the Shoshonean Festival that started Thursday evening, Aug 11th. This person would start the parade Thursday morning and again Saturday morning. We all looked around at each other and then, my dad (Vernon Cable from Cache), jumped up and said "I'll be the Grand Marshal".

We all clapped, but I can only think that it was appropriate for him to be the Grand Marshal because he is an elder of the Comanche Tribe and also a WW II veteran. He was so proud to be the Grand Marshal! You should have seen him smile from ear to ear.

To me it was an Honor for him, especially since he went alone to the Shoshonean Reunion without his companion of 56 years, my mom (Gloria Werny Cable). He truly missed her and we could tell that he was trying to make the best of it being by himself, and no doubt he did this for her, too!

Come Thursday morning, he went where the parade floats were gathering and they told him they didn't have a car for him to ride in that day, but they would have one for him on Saturday morning. So, with that information, he went on to the Horse Races and he must have forgotten about the car.

Come Saturday morning, my husband Pat and I went down to the lobby of the

motel and my dad was sitting there all dressed up and I said to him, "You're suppose to be riding in the parade this morning, right?" And, he said "They don't have a car for me to ride in," and I said, "They're supposed to have one for you today and you need to get going 'cause it's already 9:30 and they are gathering right now for the parade." He jumped up from his seat and said, "Let's go".

So, we piled in our van to get Dad to the parade so he could be the grand marshal. We got there and they were ready for him. They said they would put his name on the car and he kept looking and saying, "How are they gonna do that?" So we took him to the front of the parade, where they had a car ready for him to sit up on or ride in. He chose to ride inside.

They made posters for him with his name on it and also had a "Grand Marshal" sign. You should have seen him, he was so proud and us girls were proud, too! He couldn't believe that they put this all together in just a couple of minutes.

We had to take his picture and let everyone know here in Comanche Country that he was the **Grand Marshal for the Shoshonean Festival for 2005**. All of his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, brothers and sisters are very proud of our father, brother, uncle, grandpa, **Vernon Cable** and also our mother, **Gloria Cable** for being such an inspiration in all of our lives in everything that they do and say! God has richly blessed them! Țra!

(Editor's Note: Charlene, God has richly blessed all of you, too.)

LESLIE WHITEFEATHER:

"I am so happy to have visited Shoshone Country with my grandmother, Marie Parton, for the Shoshonean Reunion, "Honoring Our Native Heritage." The reservation was beautiful and our cousins were so kind. One of the most wonderful things I discovered was how similar our language is. I met a friend and we were

constantly comparing words, they were almost exactly the same!

During the Reunion, the Shoshone people were also celebrating their annual festival. This was great. My grandmother and I got to see the horse relay races, as well as the chief's race. These were no ordinary jockey races we are used to seeing on television. The riders were unbelievably athletic.

When they rode it was as if they were floating on the back of the horse. One thing I noticed was the light clothing. Some riders wore shorts and others wore sweatpants. This made them lighter and more agile. In one particular relay race, a rider jumped from one horse, took two leaping steps, and jumped over the back of another horse and took off! He, of course, won the race. In the Chief's races the riders wore war bonnets! It was all so beautiful and exciting.

It was such a pleasure to attend the Reunion and Festival. There were so many Comanche people there, from Little Ponies, Princesses, Language members, Elder's Council members and other tribal members that I was proud to be a part of it. We had a great time seeing the beautiful country and experiencing the hospitality of our cousins."

2005 COMANCHE NATION FAIR

Visit the Comanche Nation's official web site at: www.comanchenation.com to learn more about the upcoming Fair. Click on "Entertainment" then scroll down to "Comanche Nation Fair." You may also call toll free 1-877-492-4988 for further information.

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. Primer explains the Comanche alphabet and sound of each letter. \$15 includes s&h and your choice of audio cassette or CD.

Comanche Song Book. Collection of 116 songs written in Comanche with an English translation, plus set of 3 CDs of songs. \$30 plus \$5 s&h.

Comanche Flash Cards Set. Three sets of 48 flash cards each with simple Comanche words. \$15 includes s&h and your choice of audio cassette or CD.

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; Adult sizes small through XL \$12; Adult sizes 2X and 3X \$15. Specify color and size when ordering & add \$4 per shirt s&h.

Authentic Handmade Comanche Dolls. Beautiful 20" soft bodied dolls, dressed in traditional clothing. Both girl and boy dolls available. \$40 each plus \$5 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 \$4 s&h.

Ball Caps. Royal blue with red bill and Language Logo on front. \$10 plus \$4 s&h.

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

**Please include your e-mail address when ordering in case we need to contact you. Contact us (e-mail address at top of newsletter) if ordering multiple items, as we can usually ship cheaper than quoted here.*