

**“Letter From The President.....”****Namunuu Ihka Niha**

Committee members have been busy these past several weeks. Fund raisers for the upcoming Idaho trip has been going well, but we haven't reached our goal yet. Our Master-Apprentice project continues to be working well, also the dictionary work is ongoing. The community classes are well attended.

We've been visited by several, outside groups or individuals, the latest being the National Indian Telecommunication Institute of Santa Fe NM. All these people have concluded that the success of our programs are based on three factors.

1. Goal Setting,
2. Working cooperatively and collaboratively to attain those goals,
3. And probably the most important attribute is that we care about each other.

**“Sümü Oyetu Tanu Nananumunuu”**

Haa, taasü nü sümü ü naramuiku. Suka tü numu ukü tuibtsi ukü na ketokwetü süsü mü hini hanitui. Suku usü na kwühüai usü hanitui. Suku usü naibitü pü punipü. Usü kahni uraatsi suku tukani uraa wa?ikan kema tuna punin uraa wa?ikan. Süsü ma?waitü suku mü kaku usü taatu punin. Süsü yaa! Sümü sü kahnikupatu. Mü yu kwitü. Suka usü huya suku surü tuibtsi uka waata mata popin. Oka natsawin ubatü natsawinka. Surüu puetapü urüu kaku püku u pikan weki. Surüu sukü natsakai usü kwesü onai suku pü kaku pahin. Surüu kaku pia yaketu! Surü ü suku sü u pahi usü wüpai tuibtsi usü to?itsi nukin.

Subeetu, Ron Red Elk

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**COMANCHE LANGUAGE CLASSES**

*by Barbara Goodin*

Community Comanche language classes will continue through the end of May throughout Comanche Country. As of mid-April we had over

In a report to the Institute for the Preservation of the Original Languages of the Americas (I.P.O.L.A.), she wrote the following comments:

600 students sign the attendance sheets. We think that is wonderful! We are providing Comanches the opportunity to learn our language.

After May we will decide if classes will be suspended during the summer months and continued in the Fall when school starts again, or whether some of the sites want to continue through the summer. It has been our experience in the past that summer months bring many more activities for families, and attendance in the language classes goes down. We will also meet with the community teachers and find out their feelings on this subject.

Classes are held each Monday from 6:30 until 9:30 in the following communities:

**Cache:** Cache Housing Authority meeting room, with Edith Gordon teaching, assisted by Margaret Poahway;

**Apache:** Comanche Community Center, Rosalie Attocknie, teacher;

**Lawton Area:** Old conference room at the Comanche Complex north of Lawton. Sandra Karty, teacher;

**Walters:** Comanche Community Center, Bud Yackeschi, teacher.

**New Mexico Toyo Comanches:** Geneva Navarro is teaching classes in the Santa Fe area. You may call her at 505-471-3831 to get her class schedule.

If you have not attended any of the language classes, take the time to do so before the end of May. You will be glad you did!

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**FIELD LINGUIST REPORT**

Back in March we reported on several members of our group attending a Native Language Curriculum Development Conference held in Tulsa. One of those leading the workshop was Mary S.Linn, Ph.D. candidate in linguistics from the University of Kansas, who paid a visit to us last October.

“The Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee (CLCPC) is highly successful in all their language endeavors. Trying

to determine what makes a program successful is one of the goals of this project, but it is difficult to say just what it is that makes this program so successful. Here are my thoughts on this.

“First, it is surely the personalities of the committee members, especially the elders and the main group of active younger members. This is not something that can be forced or predicted. The CLCPC works well together. They play well together. They go on long field trips; they have potlucks; they play traditional games. In short, they care for each other outside of their common language goals. This friendship enables them to overcome family hostilities; dialect differences, and the insurmountable odds of reviving a language. Their personalities are strong, but their egos do not seem to be easily bruised by group decisions that go against their vote.

“Second, they have set the highest goals: to revive the language as a daily language. I think this reflects their optimism, their incredible energy, and strong beliefs in the connection of their language and culture. However, they set attainable intermediate goals. Yes, they get discouraged, but they can also look at successes. They have two printed lists (in the brochure and on the website) of their accomplishments. To some, this may seem like they are bragging. But I think it keeps them going. They are inspired, dedicated, and patient.

“Third, they have a good mix of traditional and modern. The younger people in the committee put the care and respect of the elders before anything else. They don’t overwork them, and they protect them from outside publicity, while giving them full credit, and they listen to them in all decision making. Yet they also have a web site and computers and are highly organized.

The secretary and treasurer are so efficient! They do not wish to have miscommunication, so the secretary communicates. They do not wish to lose

When we arrived at the Santa Fe Indian School Gymnasium on Saturday, the place was packed with people. I was so happy to see some of my relatives there. The walls were covered with the posters and the awards they had received. Wes Studi, who has appeared in many movies, including “Last of the Mohicans,” announced the winners for the contests. First place went to a young Navajo girl for her poster, and second place went to Jodie Crow, who is one of my

funding opportunities for mismanagement. They emphasize storytelling and oral culture, but they quickly adopted an alphabet and integrate written materials. They give materials out freely to kids, but charge a reasonable amount to adults in order to stay afloat. And they seek advice from outside resources, but they maintain their autonomy and their vision. (I think they have moderation in everything except energy!)

“Fourth, a more predictable element is that they have a slightly larger base of speakers than some other groups in Oklahoma (and elsewhere). I think that 800 is rather a high estimate of speakers, but even if it were 400, they have more speakers with energy to draw upon. At the same time, they do not have so many that they are complacent.”

*Editor’s Note:* The CLCPC was pleased to hear these comments made by a neutral party from the outside looking in. The one item we took exception to was the number of speakers, which was probably based on old data. We feel the number of actual fluent speakers is nearer 100, which may be a more realistic number. However, the number of Comanches who can understand everything being spoken, or who can speak a number of words or short phrases may be much higher.

We thank Ms. Linn for her candid overview of the Comanche Language Committee.

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## N.M. YOUTH LANGUAGE FAIR

*by Billie Kreger*

Traveling to the Second Annual Native American Youth Language Fair & Pow-Wow in Santa Fe (Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>) with a teenager and an eight year old--you can imagine the noise and loud music going on all at the same time. Well, let’s just say it kept me awake during the drive.

relatives. The Comanches also won second and third place in the language contest. Autumn Gomez, 13, and her bother Matthew, 9, along with Julian Wahnee, 8, gave a puppet show. The three children take Comanche language lessons in Santa Fe under the guidance of teacher, Geneva Navarro. They also sang the (Comanche) alphabet song and offered the Comanche rendition of “Old McDonald Had A Farm,” in addition to reciting some numbers. They did very well.

Congratulations to all those who continue to want to learn their native language. I'm hoping we can have this type of event in our area.

You should have seen the booths! The silver and turquoise jewelry, the beautiful pottery--they were quite inexpensive, considering the prices you see when you go to the galleries to see them.

There were quite a few Comanches there, to my surprise, and a lot of others that traveled there as we did.

I took our new tote bags with the Comanche language logo on them, and sold them all. They were a very popular item that night.

We left the pow-wow around 11:00--I was so exhausted. They say the high altitude contributes to shortness of breath and tiredness. We left the following morning to return home -- it's always good to be back home.

*Editor's Note:* The CLCPC received a news article from I.P.O.L.A. that appeared in *The Sunday Journal* after the event, and here are some of the highlights:

- the language fair grew from six contestants last year to 150 this year;
- out of 300-plus original Native American languages, only 175 still exist;
- Wes Studi said, "Language doesn't have to be serious. It can be fun to do."
- quote from Layli Himes, assistant to the Executive Director of I.P.O.L.A., "What an event!"

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## SHOSHONE NATION REUNION

The Shoshone Nation Reunion is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> at Fort Hall, Idaho. Members of the Comanche Tribe and Paiute Tribe have been invited, in addition to some other related tribes. According to a fax received by Dr. Reaves Nahwooks, liaison between the Shoshone and Comanche Tribes, the following activities are scheduled:

**Foods:** Traditional foods and preparation will be presented. Health is our first wealth and we must preserve it to our end. No more high blood pressure, diabetes, etc.

**Cultural Teachings:** The roles of men, women, children, and elders in our society will be

**Traditional Crafts:** Bring and show your crafts! Baskets, whistles, roaches, drums, fish weirs, spear poles, bow and arrows are among the crafts

presented and there will be discussion of the challenges to utilize these factors in our modern society.

**Gift Exchange:** The giving of gifts is encouraged.

**Traditional Games:** Traditional games are scheduled to be demonstrated and played. Shiny games, foot races, rock juggling, spear throwing, and spearing the hoop are planned. Others, such as Indian horse relay racing, tepee set up and contest and stick games are considered.

**Story Telling:** Storytelling is important to our culture. Our sharing of legends, the stories of historic separation, and family histories will provide togetherness. Stories have a strong tie to songs.

**Social Dancing:** Dancing has always been a strong character of our culture. Such dances as the Owl, Round, Two Step, Shake, Chicken, Rabbit, Buffalo, and War are planned. There are other dances, too, like the Ghost, 49, and Warm Dance to be considered. Time will be provided to groups that want to perform their specialty dances.

**Singing:** Songs show the wide spectrum of man and the natural elements. Songs are: War Dance, Bear Dance, Sundance, Victory Dance, and Flag songs. Then there are the courting songs, prayer song, warm dance, traveling, morning and honor song.

**Language Preservation:** A variety of presentations will be available to assist the preservation of languages: Dictionaries- Shoshone, Bannock, Paiute, Comanche; See and Say books, Indian stories with cassette tapes; and presentations of styles of verbal usage.

**The Power Of Prayer:** Prayer will be reinforced by the gathering of healers, veterans, and others to share the experience of healing, brotherhood, gift exchanges, pipe sharing and creating mentorship.

**Photographs:** Bring your photographs! Photographs will be displayed with theme and identification. Families will present family trees with photographic displays.

**Genealogy:** Family reunions are encouraged. This connects us together, tribe to tribe.

to be presented or demonstrated.

**Horse:** The horse, horse saddle - Jonah Mink.  
Demonstration - Medicine Horses.

**History:** Copies of Treaties.

The Comanche Language Committee has been holding fund raisers to help defray the expenses of active committee members who want to attend the Reunion. We plan to charter a bus, and a non-refundable seat deposit of \$50 must be made. This tells us you are serious about going on the trip. Those who have not contributed to the fund raising events will be responsible for their own lodging accommodations and food. However, the Language Committee will negotiate for reduced rates on a block of rooms, and others will be able to share in that fringe benefit. If you are interested in attending this possibly once-in-a-lifetime event, please contact Dr. Nahwooks at 580-246-3529 or Barbara Goodin at 580-353-3632.

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**FUND RAISERS HELD**

*by Deloris Karty*

**Kwitatsi (Bote) Sale, Apache OK**

The Comanche Language Committee held a kwitatsi (bote) sale at the Apache Reformed Church dining hall on April 1<sup>st</sup>. (This was no April Fool's joke!)

The fry bread cooks (as usual) were the true champions - Rosalie Attocknie and Barbara Coker. Rosalie and her family also had the awesome privilege of cleaning some of the ingredients for the sale. She reports that it was very hard and tiresome and that her family assisted greatly (she said she had to borrow someone's garden hose to help clean some of the longer pieces!)

The Comanche Language crew began arriving early the day of the sale to assist in setting up for this special meal. The Comanche Princess dance was going on nearby, so we had plenty of customers. I think the odor carried down toward them on the wind! Anyway, they started arriving before we had the first fry bread cooked!

The first sale of kwitatsi began at about 11:15 a.m. and the customers started pouring in! We sold fast and furious, trying to keep up with the demands for more. We were completely sold out by 11:45! Imagine that!

It was especially nice to see the young children dressed in their fine regalia, to participate during this Gourd Dance, as well as some of the Comanche elders. The elder's participation in this

The CLCPC gang was sitting around eating what was left--which wasn't much. Kenneth Goodin was asked to auction off the leftover cakes and cookies. He got started and was getting rid of everything so fast, we had to make him stop before he sold the stove and refrigerator!

The wonderful aroma of fry bread was still hanging in the air, and so was the awesome smell of "kwitatsi," even though there was not one bite or morsel around. As we loaded up to leave, Reverend Montanari wanted to know what he could spray in the dining hall to get rid of the awesome, lingering smell!!

The sale was such a success, we might try it again--that is, if the preacher will let us back in!

**Comanche Language Gourd Dance**

On Friday evening, April 14, the Comanche Language Committee sponsored a benefit dance at the Fort Sill Indian School Gym. The emcee was Nipper Tiddark, the head lady dancer was Jeannie Smith (granddaughter of Marie Parton), head man dancer was Harvey Big Man (son of Verna Ann Cable), with Ed Tahhahwah and group serving as drummers, who did a fantastic job! The chorus girls chimed in--we have great Comanche singers!

The purpose of the benefit dance was to help raise funds for committee members to travel to the Shoshone Nation Reunion at Fort Hall, Idaho.

Pow-Wow activities began at 7:00 p.m. with everyone participating and having a great time. We had hot dogs, frito-chili pies, cakes, candies and cold drinks, as well as coffee. There were several raffles going on and plenty of 50-50 pots circulating during the evening. There was also a special program of "throwing people in jail" for a price, and then having them buy their way out, which turned out to be a lot of fun. (Editor's Note: Easy for you to say, Deloris, nobody threw you in jail!) No one was exempt from being thrown in jail! I don't know who spent more time in jail, Ron Red Elk, Penny Cable or Susan Nahwooksy's son, Clyde! They were having so much fun, I don't think they wanted to be bailed out! We had to reprimand Ron over the loud speakers - he was eating in jail, when he should have had only bread and water!

event was especially special in that they do not always dress up in their tribal regalia, except on very special occasions. They were beautiful! It is evident they are teaching our younger children

about the proper ways to act during this time. The children did very well. We are very proud of them.

Winners of the big raffle prizes were: 1<sup>st</sup> Place, Gourd Dance bandolier, Drew McDaniels of the Museum of the Great Plains (who promises he is going to learn to gourd dance!); 2<sup>nd</sup> Place, black velvet gourd dance sash with beaded ends, Baldwin "Buster" Parker of Cache; 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Prizes were shawls that were won by Nita Mithlo and Brenda Nibbs of Lawton.

We want to thank Ray Niedo and Ed Tahhahwah for making and donating the bandolier, Marie Parton for making and donating the sash, and Sallie Tonips and Punkin Wright for donating the shawls. Many others donated both raffle items and food for the concession, and most important, their time, to make this a success. Ura.

### **Rattlesnake Festival Taco Sale**

On Saturday morning, after having spent the previous evening gourd dancing until midnight at Fort Sill Indian School Gym, the Comanche Language group gathered bright and early at the home of Barbara Coker in Apache to prepare and sell "Rattle Snake Tacos."

Everyone was tired and sleepy, but otherwise game for this new day, which began cold and miserable. The wind was trying its best to blow the awning away, but it had been set up well by Richard Codopony Jr. and Ron Red Elk.

When the food began to arrive, several tables were already set up to handle the crowd. However, Barbara Coker and Rosalie Attocknie were smart to stay indoors and cook the fry bread.

They no sooner got a few made, when someone was ready to make a purchase of Indian tacos (which we renamed "Rattle Snake Tacos"). Even though the temperature warmed up, the wind made it seem colder. And there was always that looming threat of rain. The customers came and sat out in the weather and enjoyed the sumptuous fry bread treat! Margaret Poahway, Edith Gordon and Marie Parton were smart. They stayed inside to encourage the cooks, where it was nice and warm. About mid way through the event, Ken Goodin and Billie Kreger took over the fry bread cooking duties, and stayed in there until the end! a few that had the same enthusiasm and promise that the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee does. I was truly

I'm happy to report there were no tacos left over from our sale. We ran out of ingredients before we ran out of customers. Thanks to our great cooks - Barbara Coker, Rosalie Attocknie, Ken Goodin and Billie Kreger. And a special ura to Barbara Coker for being a gracious hostess, as always.

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### **AN E-MAIL LETTER**

*from Dr. Fred Muscavitch  
Onieda Nation*

"Let me begin by thanking you for the newsletter that you send out. It is a pleasure to read it. I am uplifted by the wonderful things that you are doing to preserve and strengthen your language.

"In the process of writing my dissertation on the Oneida language, I had the opportunity to visit several reservations from New York to Washington to Arizona to Oklahoma, to speak with elders about their experiences with native language programs. I had over 100 interviews with elders, linguists, tribal political leaders, and tribal spiritual leaders.

"During this process I had the great fortune to hear about the efforts going on with the Comanche language. I made a trip to Oklahoma to meet with and interview speakers at the Wyandotte school, the Miami Nation, the Seneca/Cayuga Nation (sister tribes of the Oneidas in the Iroquois Confederacy), and the Comanches in Lawton. I also stopped along the way to visit several other settlements. This trip was very thought provoking.

"At Lawton, I sat in with the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee during a session of the elders reporting on the Master-Apprentice progress and then having a discussion on preparing several traditional recipes using buffalo. During the break I was able to speak with some elders, and (also) with Barbara and Ken Goodin, and Ronald Red Elk. I then interviewed an elder before driving back to the Dallas airport.

I must tell you that of all the programs that I have visited over the past five years, I only found

impressed by the variety of activities that exist, by the active participation of the elders, by the way in which the elders were recognized for their

knowledge and experiences as well as the friendly, cooperative atmosphere that filled the building.

“In comparison, in some other communities across the country, I saw the elders treated as resources to be interviewed and videotaped. I’ve seen elders kept out of the decision making and occasionally I’ve seen an outside consultant treated as if he or she was the only one who could save the language.

“If you have an opportunity to read my dissertation, you will see that the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee program is listed as one of the best and it is one of the few programs that I think has a good chance at reaching its goals. I thank you all for allowing me the opportunity to see a community that works together toward the same goal.

“Sincerely, Dr. Fred Muscavitch.”

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## COMANCHE LANGUAGE CD-ROM

*by Deloris Karty*

Karen Buller and James Kreger (son of vice-president, Billie Kreger) of the National Indian Telecommunications Institute (N.I.T.I.) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, were in Lawton on April 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> to begin recording the Comanche language as it is spoken in conversation by fluent speakers, to be “burned” onto a CD-ROM.

The first day, Wednesday, several members of the CLCPC gathered at the Museum of the Great Plains in Lawton to proceed with the project, but the weather was uncooperative, with fog and drizzling rain. Museum staff was gracious enough to allow us to stay there and start the recording, even though we had planned to go outdoors in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

The project began, using a CD-ROM program. Speakers presented names of birds, trees, body parts, numbers and colors.

N.I.T.I. is paying for the initial production, with proceeds from a modest grant awarded by the Fund for Four Directions--the one foundation in the United States that funds only Native American language preservation projects. The goal of this grant is to produce an interactive CD, to turn over to the Language Committee, that can be copied and sold as the group continues its mission of language preservation. The CD can

be loaded into a computer, and with a click of a kahu you can see and hear actual words and conversation. At the same time, subtitles in English and Comanche will appear on the screen, together with the picture of the speaker.

During the second day, with weather conditions improved, the group traveled to Medicine Park for a mountainous background setting for the pictures. The weather began cold and blistery, but warmed up as the day progressed.

Again, gracious hosts from the Medicine Park Music Hall and Restaurant came to our rescue. Hot coffee was provided our speakers, and a warm dining hall was opened for our use. Thank you to David Lott, owner, and his staff, who opened their facility to us.

The speakers were seated outside on a balcony overlooking Medicine Creek, with Mountain Scott in the background. Flowing waters and noisy geese were in the background, too.

As the clouds began to drift away and the air began to warm, we traveled to Ann’s Country Place near McClung’s Store, where we had a wonderful lunch. We then proceeded to the Visitor’s Center in the wildlife refuge for additional recording sessions. It is estimated that during the two day recording session approximately 128 individual vocabulary words were recorded, along with numerous sentences.

Committee members who attended the two day event were: Ray Nieto, Lucille McClung, Theresa Saupitty, Gloria and Vernon Cable, Margaret Poahway, Edith Gordon, Dr. Reaves Nahwooks, Marie Haumpy, Kenneth and Barbara Goodin, Jo Vickers, Billie Kreger, Geneva Radney (mother of Karen Buller and niece of Edith Gordon), Deloris W. Karty and Ed Tahhahwah.

During the last day’s recording session, Ray sang the “Dove Song,” which is a peyote song about the dove traveling out and returning with a twig in its beak. It is a beautiful song.

The Language Committee is very fortunate to have had this opportunity to record the speakers as they spoke the Comanche language. It is hopeful, we’ll be able to record additional words and speakers, as this is a wonderful tool in learning the Comanche language. It is estimated there are very few persons younger than 55 or 60 who can fluently speaker the Comanche language.

Therefore it is urgent that we continue to collect as many words and pictures as possible before the elders of the tribe pass on.

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### **“INDIAN THOUGHT” LECTURE**

Dr. Reaves Nahwooks gave a lecture on Friday, April 7, at the Museum of the Great Plains on “Perspectives in Indian Thought.” It was co-sponsored by the Museum and Cameron University, with funding provided by the McCasland Foundation, Lawton Arts and Humanities and Oklahoma Arts Council.

His lecture was concise and thought-provoking, and was attended by both Native Americans and non-Indians alike. He gave several examples of the difference in the thought process of Native Americans and non-Indians, and shared many experiences with the audience.

During the question and answer session, one young non-Indian woman asked Dr. Nahwooks how Indian people could even speak to white people as the result of the many injustices and prejudice they have suffered at the hands of non-Indians. In his usual thoughtful, dignified manner, he gave a most fitting answer. I was proud to be a Comanche!

Hopefully, the “powers that be” in this community will see fit to promote more sharing-of-cultures events.