

## *YUKON NATIVE LANGUAGE CENTRE* ACTIVITIES REPORT: January 2001

New Years Greetings from the Yukon Native Language Centre! This past fall was a very active one for the Centre, highlighted by two special events: the retirement party for longtime native language instructor and YNLC collaborator Lucy Wren in Carcross, and a Holy Communion service held entirely in the Gwich'in language at Christ Church Cathedral in Whitehorse. The Centre continued its program of native language teacher training and literacy sessions, with increased attendance from teachers of adult native language classes, daycare teachers, and substitute teachers. YNLC staff participated in a major adult education conference held at Yukon College. The Centre also continued the development of new teaching materials, including a book of traditional Southern Tutchone stories transcribed from tapes by six Southern Tutchone elders.



### **Native Language Teacher Training**

YNLC offered two Certificate training sessions this fall. The first, held September 18 to 22, was attended by thirteen participants representing three Athabaskan languages, and included teachers of adult native language classes. The second, held October 2 to 6, also had thirteen participants, including visitors from Alaska and BC as well as Yukon, representing seven languages. This second session included daycare teachers and substitute teachers. The focus in these sessions was on teaching methodology, language structure, and professionalism. The subject matter covered included food vocabulary and conversation. The Certificate course requires three years of training and teaching experience to complete. It is accredited by Yukon College, and graduates of the program receive Yukon College certificates.

### **Retirement Party for Lucy Wren**

On October 3 YNLC staff members Margaret Workman and Jo-Anne Johnson attended Lucy Wren's retirement party at the Carcross School, held to honour Lucy's many years of teaching and promoting Tlingit language and culture. Margaret gave a short speech in Southern Tutchone to the many assembled staff, students, and guests, thanking Lucy for her work in teaching her language and for her help in recording story books and developing other materials with YNLC.

### **School Program Visits**

Jo-Anne Johnson, Rural Programs Coordinator, continued her program visits to the communities, observing in classrooms and checking materials. She visited Eliza Van Bibber School in Pelly Crossing, October 23 to 25, where she met with teachers Shirley Joe and Lizzie Hall. As a follow-up, YNLC will hold a literacy session for these two teachers to develop listening exercises and classroom materials. Urban Programs

Coordinator and Southern Tutchone Language Specialist Margaret Workman visited schools in Whitehorse in October and November, including Porter Creek Secondary, FH Collins Secondary, Takhini Elementary, and Hidden Valley Elementary, where a new language program for Grades 1 to 7 began this fall under instructor Linda Harvey. During her Hidden Valley visit, Margaret also gave a presentation in the school library on the role of YNLC, and read two stories to the students using the Southern Tutchone story books.

### Literacy Sessions

A Tlingit literacy session was held November 8 to 10, with guest instructor Dr. Jeff Leer from the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Seven participants developed listening exercises and teaching materials for classroom use, and checked words for the Tlingit dictionary. From November 21 to 24, a Gwich'in literacy and liturgy workshop was held with thirteen participants from the NWT and Yukon. Participants used listening exercises and reading practice in both modern Gwich'in and the older written form called Tukudh to prepare for a traditional Holy Communion service held at Christ Church Cathedral, conducted entirely in Gwich'in. Celebrants at the service were Rev. Dr. Ellen Bruce of Old Crow and



Ms. Ruth Welsh (Tagish), Rev. Dr. Ellen Bruce (Old Crow), and Ms. Anna Lee Furlong (Aklavik) in Christ Church Cathedral, Whitehorse. Rev. Dr. Bruce presided at a special Gwich'in service in the Cathedral on Nov. 26, 2000.

Rev. Hannah Alexie of Ft. McPherson. Both the workshop and the service were dedicated to the memory of Deacon Effie Linklater, who died at her home in Old Crow the Friday before the service.

### **Conferences**

From October 30 to November 3, native language instructors Bertha Moose, Lorraine Allen, and Barbara Morris attended a conference in Edmonton entitled “Languages, Passport for the Millennium: An International Symposium.” Barbara was a participant in a presentation on Kaska language teaching. Linda Harvey attended the 1st National Aboriginal Women in Leadership Conference from November 19 to 21 in Vancouver. YNLC staff participated in sessions at the “Coming Together” conference on adult education held at Yukon College from November 7 to 9. Staff also set up a display and sold publications.

### **Visiting Linguist**

André Bourcier, a PhD candidate at the University of Laval in Quebec City, worked at YNLC during the fall months. André’s principal work has been researching, completing, and proofreading the Gwich’in listening exercises book that was developed by Mary Jane Kunnizzi, Gwich’in Language Specialist at YNLC, with assistance also from Mary Decker and Laura Firth, two Teet’it Gwich’in elders living in Whitehorse. André took part in the Gwich’in language and liturgy session mentioned above, and has been transcribing and translating Gwich’in stories recorded by John Ritter with William Nersyoo in 1979 in Ft. McPherson, NWT.

### **New Materials**

This fall saw the publication of a book of traditional Southern Tutchone stories entitled *Kwädq̄y Kwändūr*. The 128-page book represents the culmination of hundreds of hours of painstaking work by Margaret Workman in transcribing stories from tapes by elders Marge Jackson, Mary Jacquot, Jessie Joe, Jimmy Joe, Copper Lily Johnson, and Jessie Jonathan. The book sells for \$30. Margaret has also continued her work on the Southern Tutchone dictionary, compiling lists of nouns and organizing the nouns into categories. She also recorded sound files using the words in sentences. Work has continued this fall on a variety of native language multimedia projects. More than 20 new Talking Books will be completed soon, complementing the 70 or so currently available in the four series The Moose Hunt, Drying Fish, At Home, and Camping. Work continues on the printed Story Booklet versions of the Talking Books. A print run of more than 25 Story Booklets is planned for the spring.

### **Web Site Update**

A new section has recently been added to the YNLC web site, [www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/ynlc](http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/ynlc). Under “About YNLC” there are links to “YNLC in the Media” and “YNLC Activity Reports”. There you will find eleven reports from the local media since December 1998, and our semiannual activities reports for the last two years.

## **Planning for Spring 2001**

Several literacy sessions are being planned for the New Year. In February there will be a mini-training session for native language instructors who are teaching adults. A Certificate training session is planned for March 26-30, 2001, and a Diploma training session is scheduled for April. If you would like more information on the Centre's programs or publications, please write us at Yukon Native Language Centre, Yukon College, Box 2799, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 5K4. We can also be reached by telephone (867) 668-8820, fax (867) 668-8825, and e-mail at [ynlc@yukoncollege.yk.ca](mailto:ynlc@yukoncollege.yk.ca).