

ACTIVITIES REPORT — JUNE 2004
COVERING THE PERIOD JANUARY — JUNE 2004



The Yukon Native Language Centre continues to respond to requests for its expertise and experience in the areas of teacher training and language revitalization. Two Certificate training sessions were held this spring to accommodate requests for training from an increasing number of community language instructors.

A new language training initiative at Kwanlin Dun First Nation has also received support and training assistance from YNLC staff (see below for more details). On-line language lessons on the Centre's website have expanded with the addition of a third Yukon native language, Northern Tutchone.

A significant highlight during this period was the January announcement of the funding of six new teacher trainee positions by the Department of Education. Minister of Education John Edzerza and Grand Chief Ed Schulz jointly made the announcement, which will help ensure the passing on of language and training to the next generation of language teachers. These are the first new trainee positions to be funded in five years. YNLC has been involved in the selection of the trainees, with staff members Margaret Workman and Jo-Anne Johnson on the hiring committee.

This spring also saw the graduation of four students from the YNLC Certificate Program and three from the Diploma Program. One of the Diploma graduates, Linda Harvey, will also receive her Associate of Applied Science Degree in Native Lan-



Participants in the April 2004 Southern Tutchone Literacy Session



At the May 2004 Northern Tutchone Literacy Session, Gertie Tom, left, and Margaret Workman, present flowers to Agnes Winzer, right in recognition of her many years of service.

participated actively in its development. In 2000 she published *Kwädāy Kwändūr: Traditional Southern Tutchone Stories* which she compiled, and translated, from seven elders. She also developed a dictionary of Southern Tutchone and compiled a database of Southern Tutchone personal names. In 1998 Margaret received an Innovations in Teaching Award from the Yukon Department of Education. In 2001 she was awarded an Associate of Applied Science Degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

We extend our warmest wishes to Margaret for a happy and productive retirement in her beloved Aishihik.

Mary Jane Kunnizzi joined YNLC in 1994 as a part-time Gwich'in translator and cataloguer. She has worked assiduously with the YNLC archive tape collection, preparing valuable indexes and making copies of tapes for safe storage in the Yukon Archives. Her Gwich'in work has included the compilation of a two-volume set of listening exercises for the Teetl'it Gwich'in (Peel River) dialect, and an extensive set of translations and tran-

guage Education from the University of Alaska Fairbanks later this summer.

This June marks the closing of a chapter in the life of the Language Centre with the retirement of longtime staff members Margaret Workman and Mary Jane Kunnizzi.

Since 1983 Margaret has contributed immeasurably to the work of YNLC and to the task of language revitalization. A fluent speaker of Southern Tutchone, she was founding instructor of the F.H. Collins Athabaskan language program, and mentor to many other language teachers. Margaret provided the original impetus for the Dákeyi CD ROM project and



Mary Jane Kunnizzi displaying beadwork with her daughter Arlene Njootli.

scriptions of Gwich'in tapes compiled in the 1970's by Centre director John Ritter. In 2000, Mary Jane completed the YNLC Certificate Course at Yukon College. In the last few years she has worked closely with YNLC linguist André Bourcier.

To Mary Jane we also extend our thanks and our warm wishes for a happy retirement.

In Memoriam

YNLC staff and native language instructors around the Yukon were saddened to learn of the passing of former language teacher Ann Mercier on April 22. Ann Mercier was born at Frances Lake, Yukon, and grew up in the Watson Lake area. Her traditional Kaska name was Tsíkhó. A fluent speaker of Kaska, Ann received her Certificate in 1989 and her Diploma in 1993. In 1997 she was among the first group of graduates from the Associate of Applied Science degree program in Native Language Education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. For many years she taught Kaska at Johnson Elementary in Watson Lake and was also the first native language teacher at the Watson Lake Secondary School. On behalf of her former colleagues and the Centre, we would like to extend our sincerest condolences to her family.

Native Language Teacher Training

A five-day Certificate training session was held from March 15 to 19 for 13 participants representing five Yukon and Alaskan languages: Gwich'in, Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Kaska, and Lower Tanana. This session was offered for teachers already in the classroom. Participants practised the "gesture approach" to language



With YNLC elder Gertie Tom (centre), Cheryl Silas (standing) of Northway, Alaska, and her mother, Darlene Northway, a fluent speaker of Upper Tanana, work through a listening exercise in their language at the second spring 2004 Certificate training session.

teaching, which incorporates hand signals and other physical movement into student learning. Randall Kendi, a graduate of the Certificate program, assisted with instruction by sharing teaching ideas and helping evaluate demonstration lessons. Gwich'in elder Ruth Welsh made a presentation on the medicinal use of plants. Chief Mike Smith of Kwanlin Dun First Nation and

MLA Lorraine Peters also attended the sessions as guests.

A second Certificate training session was held from March 29 to April 2 for 17 community language instructors from the Yukon, Alaska, and NWT. Eight languages were represented: Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Gwich'in, Hän, Upper Tanana, Ahtna, Kaska, and Tlingit. The participants included Amanda Geddes-Workman, one of six trainees hired this year, and elders Irene Smith and Betty Sjodin. Elder Lena Charley from Alaska also participated, along with her daughter and granddaughter. Brian Aubichon, director of the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program, attended as a guest. The Hän dancers from Dawson City performed for the group.

Attendance at the training sessions is part of the course requirements for the three-year Certificate program accredited by Yukon College. Participants must also complete three years of classroom experience in order to receive their certificate. Graduates of the Certificate program may go on to take a two-year Diploma program, during which they continue to improve their linguistic and teaching skills, develop original teaching materials, and document oral history and traditional narratives.

Literacy Training Sessions

Three literacy training sessions were held this spring. From April 14 to 16 a Southern Tutchone literacy session was held, with 20 participants including elders Marge Jackson, Irene Smith, Louie Smith, and Trudy McLeod. The group reviewed names for prehistoric animals, the names of present-day fish and animals, and wrote a story for a second version of the Fish Camp booklet. The group also studied word order in Southern Tutchone and practised listening exercises for those sounds in Southern Tutchone not found in English.

A Northern Tutchone literacy session was held on May 12 to 14 with 27 participants. Alyce Joe and Shirley Joe, K-12 native language teachers at Eliza van Bibber School in Pelly Crossing, brought in a listening exercise to be checked. They also



Gwich'in Elder Betty (Martin) Sjodin with Ft. McPherson visitors Eleanor Firth, William Firth, and Betty Firth.

brought the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke that they had translated into Northern Tutchone. Grace Wheeler, who teaches at Tantalus School in Carmacks, brought the Northern Tutchone names for the different departments in Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation offices to be checked. These signs will be put up in the First Nation office building. Norm Easton brought in a traditional style copper knife made by Brian Walker. Evelyn Skookum from Carmacks sang a seagull song. Flowers and a card were presented to Agnes Winzer on the occasion of her retirement from her teaching position in Beaver Creek.

André Bourcier and John Ritter traveled to Dawson City to take part in a Hän literacy session held June 1 to 3 and organized by Angie Joseph-Rear and Mary Henry of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. More than 20 participants and guests at the session included an important delegation of Hän speakers and youth from Eagle, Alaska. Topics included listening exercises, translations, dialect comparisons, and a careful review of the late Louise Paul's Hän translation of the Lord's Prayer which she taped in 1978 for John Ritter.



Jessica Denny and Lena Charley practicing Ahtna postpositions at the second spring 2004 Certificate training session.

School Visits

On January 27 Urban Programs Co-ordinator Margaret Workman visited the Headstart program for children aged three and four at the Kwanlin Dun First Nation. She observed the two language teachers there, Janet Burns and Georgina Stone. Georgina is graduating this June from the Certificate program. On February 10 Margaret visited Hidden Valley Elementary and observed language teacher Linda Harvey, who teaches grades one to seven. She assisted students working on a button blanket, a project that has involved the whole school.

Margaret has also carried out ongoing observation this spring at Selkirk Street Elementary, where teacher Dorothy Bellerose is completing her first year in the school's new language program. Margaret assisted students who are building a model Indian village in the classroom and helped find names for buildings in the village.

Rural Programs Coordinator Jo-Anne Johnson visited Carmacks from February

10 to 12. She observed Mary Skookum, who teaches language lessons in the First Nation office as part of a team with Agnes Washpan and Evelyn Skookum, and also teaches in the First Nation daycare program. Mary is in the second year of the Certificate program.

From February 24 to 26 Jo-Anne visited Haines Junction, where she observed lessons for First Nation office staff led by Lena Smith-Tutin and Vera Williams. Both Lena and Vera are graduating from the Certificate program this June, as well as Doris Allen who teaches in the First Nation daycare program. Jo-Anne also visited the St. Elias Community School where Martha Smith and Vivian Smith teach in the language program. Special guest artist Ron Chambers was working with the students on traditional craft projects.

Jo-Anne visited the Northern Tutchone communities of Mayo, Pelly Crossing, and Carmacks from May 25 to 28. She observed Alyce Joe and Shirley Joe at Eliza van Bibber School in Pelly Crossing, Grace Wheeler and Amy Billy at Tantalus School in Carmacks, and Dorothy Charette and Hilda Clarke at J.V. Clark School in Mayo.

Spring Graduation

Seven graduates from YNLC's native language instructor training programs were honoured at the Yukon College graduation ceremony on June 7, 2003. Graduates of the three-year Native Language Instructor Certificate Course are Doris Allen (Southern Tutchone), Lena Smith-Tutin (Southern Tutchone), and Vera Williams (Southern Tutchone), all of Haines Junction, and Georgina Stone (Southern Tutchone) of Whitehorse. Graduates of the Native Language Instructor Diploma Course, which requires two additional years of training and teaching, are Dorothy Bellerose (Southern Tutchone) and Linda Harvey (Southern Tutchone), both of Whitehorse, and William Firth (Gwich'in)

of Fort McPherson, NWT. In August Linda Harvey will also receive her Associate of Applied Science degree in Native Language Education from the University of Alaska Fairbanks.



Spring 2004 graduates: Dorothy Bellerose (Diploma), Lena Smith-Tutin (Certificate), Vera Williams (Certificate), William Firth (Diploma), Doris Allen (Certificate), and Linda Harvey (Diploma).

The Centre staff is very proud of these instructors, who have worked extremely hard to complete their training at Yukon College and in their home communities. We join family and friends in congratulating them on their achievements.

Athabaskan Language Conference in Japan

From February 13 to 23, native language teacher Linda Harvey participated in a conference on Athabaskan language revitalization in Tokyo, Japan. Linda attended on behalf of Southern Tutchone language specialist Margaret Workman, who was honoured with the special invitation from the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in recognition of the significance of her contribution to language preservation, but was unable to attend for health reasons. During the conference Linda made a presentation about her own role in language revitalization as a native language teacher, the training programs of the Yukon Native Language Centre, and the role that language plays in the preservation of traditional First Nations culture.



Linda Harvey demonstrating teaching methods at a recent certificate training session.

Presentations

On March 24, and again on May 5, YNLC staff set up a display of teaching materials at the Council of Yukon First Nations leadership meetings in Whitehorse. At the second meeting, Margaret and Centre director John Ritter made a presentation on YNLC activities during the year. During the meeting of the Arctic Athabaskan Council held in Whitehorse on March 22, Margaret and John made a presentation on international language initiatives organized by YNLC. On April 8 YNLC staff made two presentations at the 31st annual Alaskan Anthropological Association Conference held at the Westmark Hotel in Whitehorse from April 7-10. Jo-Anne Johnson, Linda Harvey, and Margaret Workman made a joint presentation on the subject of “Language Revitalization in Yukon, Canada.” Staff linguist and computer specialist Doug Hitch made a presentation on “Web and Font Technologies at the Yukon Native Language Centre.”

Margaret and Jo-Anne were invited to present information at a teacher training workshop held at the Chilkat Indian Village in Klukwan, Alaska, from April 21 to 23. They showed the 30 participants teaching materials and games developed by YNLC, and Margaret taught a Southern Tutchone demonstration language lesson. A number of the participants expressed interest in attending a future Certificate training session.

Staff Retirement

On April 30 the Yukon Teachers Association held a Yukon-wide retirement party. Invitees included YNLC staff member Margaret Workman and native language teachers Agnes Winzer of Beaver Creek School and Kathy Birckel of Elijah Smith Elementary in Whitehorse.

Elder Bessie John Honoured

On May 21 the school in Beaver Creek was renamed Nelnah Bessie John School in honour of the late elder. Bessie was a fluent speaker of Upper Tanana, a graduate of the Certificate program and the first native language teacher at the school. It is fitting that the community has chosen to honour her memory in this way. Director of Learning David Sloan attended the ceremony and presented a framed picture of Bessie on behalf of YNLC and the Department of Education.

Yukon Teachers Association Liaison

During the past six months Linda Harvey and Jo-Anne Johnson have served on the Aboriginal Issues in Education Committee of the Yukon Teachers Association. Jo-Anne has also served on the Professional Development Committee and is a member of the committee responsible for organizing the YTA conference in spring 2005. Native language teachers throughout the Yukon are encouraged to submit suggestions to Jo-Anne for workshops or panels at the conference.

Visitors from B.C. Aboriginal Organization

In February YNLC received a visit by two representatives from First Voices, an aboriginal organization in B.C. committed to promoting native languages in the province. They were accompanied by Cheryl McLean of Aboriginal Language Services (Yukon) and Tina Jules from the Yukon Department of Education. The visitors and YNLC staff shared information about programs, activities and resources.

Kwanlin Dun Native Language Initiative

Staff members Margaret Workman and Jo-Anne Johnson were approached by Kwanlin Dun in January to assist in the planning for a new native language program there, offering classes in Southern Tutchone, Northern Tutchone, and Tlingit. They attended a planning



Kwanlin Dun chief Mike Smith, left, and Southern Tutchone elder Louis Smith, right, with students April Schultz and Myranda Simpson at the April language banquet.

meeting with 15 elders and language co-ordinator Dianne Smith and offered teaching suggestions and materials. Linda Harvey and her mother, fluent speaker Irene Smith, are co-teaching the Southern Tutchone classes, which are offered one evening a week. Classes began in January under a 10-week pilot project. On April 5 a feast was held at the Potlatch House to recognize and support the language teachers and students and to celebrate the successful completion of the pilot project. YNLC director John Ritter, Margaret Workman, Jo-Anne Johnson, and Linda Harvey were guests at the feast. YNLC took photos of the occasion and assembled a poster as a record of the event.

Hollywood Calling!

YNLC staff are participating in the making of an animated film by Yukon filmmaker Carol Geddes. Margaret Workman translated the script, written by Geddes and entitled *The Two Winters*, into Southern Tutchone, and is providing the voice of one of the characters. Linda Harvey is also voicing a character and sings two traditional Southern Tutchone songs included in the film.

Website Developments

The Northern Tutchone language lessons in the Big Salmon dialect by YNLC founding elder Gertie Tom have now been posted on the web. This is the third set of on-line language lessons. As with the Gwich'in and Southern Tutchone versions of these lessons, the sound quality is excellent, with all of the beautiful and subtle phonetic details of the language clearly audible. Special technology allows the sound to play almost instantly when the web visitor clicks on a sentence in native language. The recording of the Hän version of the web-based lessons by elder Percy Henry was begun in March and continued in June.

Development work continues on web versions of the Centre's computer story books. Work also continues in the effort to have our special font appear correctly in web browsers.

New Materials

In February distinguished elder and retired native language teacher Lucy Wren came to record the first half of the Tagish language lessons for the web, assisted by John Ritter and Margaret Workman.

A number of the story books have been reprinted, including 14 titles in the Fish Camp series, 8 in the At Home series, and 10 in the Moose Hunt series. Copies for classroom use in the appropriate dialect will be sent to the various school programs.

The second edition of the Curriculum Guide, with substantial improvements and additions, is proving very popular and is being reprinted.

New flashcard sets for the classroom are also being produced. These will include approximately 200 images in both large-size and small-size cards for use in classroom teaching and games. More game boards for classroom use are also being produced.

A booklet of the Southern Tutchone literacy session held April 14 to 16 is now available. The booklet includes lists of examples of consonant sounds in Southern Tutchone, examples and teaching material on verb forms, and the first half of a new

Fish Camp story book with Chris Caldwell illustrations.

Demand for the two-volume Gwich'in Listening Exercise book has been unexpectedly heavy, and the work is now being reprinted. An English index has been added to the Tagish Place Names book by Angela Sidney.

All these materials can be ordered from YNLC (see contact information below).

Planning for Fall 2004

The Yukon Native Language Centre and individual teachers are busy planning for the fall session, with a number of literacy and teacher training workshops in the works. The following training sessions have been scheduled:

Sept. 13-17 Certificate Training Session I

Sept. 27-Oct. 1 Certificate Training Session II

Further literacy and training workshops will be announced as information becomes available.

How To Reach Us

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 at (867) 668-8820, toll-free 1-877-414-9652
- by fax at (867) 668-8825
- by email at ynlc@yukoncollege.yk.ca
- website www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/ynlc



The Hon. John Edzerza, left, and CYFN Grand Chief Ed Schulz at the January 2004 press conference announcing the creation of the new teacher trainee positions.

2004 Training Sessions and Presentations



Session	Focus	Dates	Days	Participants
Yukon Native Teacher Education Program	Clan System/Family Tree	January 12	1	5
Athabaskan Conference (Tokyo, Japan)	Language Revitalization	February 16-20	5	30
Certificate Course	Teacher Training	March 15-19	5	23
Arctic Athabaskan Council	International Initiatives at YNLC	March 22	1	20
Certificate Course	Teacher Training	March 29 - April 2	5	27
Southern Tutchone Literacy	Classroom and FN Literacy	April 14-16	3	26
Chilkat Indian Village Language Workshop	YNLC Presentation	April 21-23	3	30
CYFN Leadership	YNLC Update and Display of Materials	May 5-6 (and March 24)	3	35
Alaska Anthropological Association	YNLC Presentation	May 8	1	25
Northern Tutchone Literacy	Classroom and FN Literacy	May 12-14	3	27
Hän Literacy Session	Classroom and FN Literacy	June 1-3	3	18
NWT Aboriginal Consultants	YNLC Presentation	June 7	1	15
Hän Recording Session	Hän Language Lessons	June 7-8	2	5
Ahtna Athabaskan Session	Ahtna Language Lessons	June 16-18	3	10
14 Sessions			39	296