

**YNLC ACTIVITIES REPORT**  
COVERING THE PERIOD JANUARY – JUNE 2010



### 2010 Graduation

The Yukon College graduation ceremony was held on Saturday, June 5th, 2010. This year again the event took place in the Yukon Arts Centre, which was packed with family and friends who came from near and far to celebrate with the graduates. YNLC warmly congratulates our graduates Ruth Johnny (Certificate Course, Upper Tanana language) and Ruth Welsh (Diploma Course, Gwich'in language). We also congratulate Mary Jane Allison (Southern Tutchone language), who was awarded the Associate of Applied Science degree in Native Language Education from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. These teachers have worked with great dedication in their classrooms, in their communities, and at YNLC and UAF to achieve their personal and educational goals. We are very proud of their accomplishments!



Grand Chief Ruth Massie of CYFN presented the Certificate and Diploma to the YNLC graduates, and was joined on stage by YNLC Coordinator Linda Harvey who had just completed a term on the Yukon College Board of Governors. Distinguished Alaskan educator Dr. Cynthea Ainsworth traveled from the Tok region to attend the ceremony and present the UAF degree to Mary Jane Allison. Dr. Ainsworth has worked closely with YNLC students since the early 1990s and has provided academic and practical support when they attend UAF summer classes.

*2010 Graduates:*  
*Ruth Johnny (Certificate)*  
*Mary Jane Allison (AAS Degree)*  
*Ruth Welsh (Diploma)*

## Other Noteworthy Events

A spring highlight was a visit to Haines, Alaska, by YNLC linguist Doug Hitch and Dr. Jeff Leer from the Alaska Native Language Center to work with Chilkat community members and elders on the Tlingit place names found in old maps and other historical sources. The scheduled trip was extended by two days when early March weather closed the Haines Highway, reminding our researchers of the rigours faced by the early travelers who made the trek on foot and snowshoes.

Doug Hitch also attended a historic meeting in Moscow in April, where he met representatives of the Ket people. The Ket language may share a common ancient ancestor with Yukon native languages. That meeting led to an exciting new project to produce a YNLC story book in the Ket language.

A Southern Tutchone in-service and literacy session this spring included an in-depth examination of a traditional story on the importance of sharing told by CAFN Elder Margaret Workman. The story generated much discussion about traditional ways and older vocabulary.

YNLC staff and the entire native language community were deeply saddened by the loss of three elders this spring: Edith Josie (Gwich'in), Gerald Brown (Southern Tutchone), and Mamie Smith (Tlingit). All three were strong advocates for the preservation of their native languages and traditional teachings, and will be deeply missed. We extend our condolences to their families and communities.



*S. Tutchone Elder  
Margaret Workman*

## Retiring Native Language Instructors

YNLC wishes to express its deep appreciation for the work and dedication of three native language instructors who retired this year: Margaret Bob and Bessie Cooley who taught Tlingit at Teslin School, and Martha Smith who taught Southern Tutchone at St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction.



*Retiring Tlingit Instructor  
Margaret Bob*

Margaret, Bessie, and Martha are all graduates of both the Certificate and Diploma programs at Yukon College. Bessie also received her AAS and BA degrees from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and worked with Dr. Jeff Leer of the Alaska Native Language Center to compile a Tlingit dictionary. All three have contributed extensively to the work of preserving Yukon native languages, including recording story books, recounting traditional stories, and working on place names.



*S. Tutchone teachers Doris Allen,  
Agnes MacDonald and Martha Smith*





*Lillian Underwood and Allan Hayton*

## Teacher Training

In March, 15 participants representing six Yukon and Alaskan languages attended the five-day training session for students enrolled in the Certificate and Diploma programs. YNLC staff presented material on language structure, teaching techniques, and professionalism. Participants led demonstration lessons, shared teaching

ideas, and role-played classroom situations. Two new Certificate trainees were Lillian Underwood, from Kluane Lake School, and Allan Hayton originally from Arctic Village, Alaska, who teaches Gwich'in at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Founding elder Gertie Tom and retired Southern Tutchone language specialist Margaret Workman participated in the session, along with native language instructor Mabel Henry and her husband Percy Henry, both fluent speakers of Hän. Guests included YTA leaders Katherine Mackwood and Cully Robinson.



*Ruth Johnny, Jenny Sanford, Agnes Winzer, Chief David Johnny at the WRFN Literacy Session*

## Literacy and In-service Sessions

### White River First Nation Literacy Session



In February, YNLC staff organized and led a literacy session with 18 participants from the White River First Nation in Beaver Creek. Two languages are spoken there: Upper Tanana and Northern Tutchone. Participants worked on a *Hiking* story book in each language.

### Tlingit Literacy Session

In March Dr. Jeff Leer led a Tlingit literacy session for 12 participants. They practised listening exercises and studied motion verbs, tenses, ordinal numbers, and commands, noting the differences between the Teslin, Carcross and Coastal dialects.

*Retiring Tlingit Instructor Bessie Cooley with YNLC's Anne Ranigler*

### Northern Tutchone Literacy Session

In April, YNLC staff organized and led a Northern Tutchone literacy session with 10 attendees representing both school and FN programs. Participants translated *O Canada* into Northern Tutchone from English and Southern Tutchone versions prepared earlier by YNLC's Linda Harvey. The group practiced singing it until all were comfortable with the words and melody. YNLC linguist André Bourcier recorded the anthem and created a CD which will be used in the language programs in Tantalus School, Carmacks. Participants also practised listening exercises and children's rhymes. Bella Bresse, a substitute language teacher at Tantalus School attended for the first time.



*N. Tutchone Elders May Roberts and Gertie Tom*

### Southern Tutchone In-service Training and Literacy Session

Two Southern Tutchone workshops were held over four days in April. YNLC staff organized and led the two sessions, one for native language instructors and one for all community members. New participants included Sean Smith, now teaching at Elijah Smith Elementary, and Lillian Underwood, the new instructor at Kluane Lake School. Lena Smith-Tutin, an official with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, also attended the session.



*Sean Smith at the Southern Tutchone Session*

A highlight of the workshop was a review of a story told by Margaret Workman that she learned when growing up at Aishihik Village. The story was related to her by Bessie Stevens, sister of Chief Albert Isaac. It deals with traditional practices and beliefs, provides teachings about group responsibility and sharing, and led to a discussion about traditional ways. Specific vocabulary from the story was also studied. Margaret recorded two versions in April 2009, and

she returned last summer to prepare preliminary transcriptions and translations. These were subsequently edited by John Ritter, André Bourcier, Mary Jane Allison and Linda Harvey.

The Southern Tutchone sessions were made particularly memorable because of the participation of CAFN Councilor Gerald Brown, who passed away suddenly a few weeks later. Gerald was a strong advocate for his language and a promoter of traditional ways.



*Kaska Elders John and Josephine Acklack with YNLC staff Jo-Anne Johnson and Linda Harvey*

### **Kaska Literacy Session**

YNLC staff organized and led a Kaska literacy session in May with six participants. The group wrote an original story, *The Caribou and the Wolf*, and practised using it in a demonstration lesson. The group also practised the singing of *O Canada* in Kaska, based on a version prepared several years ago by Josephine Acklack, long-serving instructor in the Ross River School.

### **Yukon College Athabaskan Language Course**

In December, 2009, Yukon College officials contacted YNLC Director John Ritter to request help in finding an instructor for ATHA 102, the second term of the Southern Tutchone Athabaskan language class which began in the autumn. After some discussion, YNLC's Linda Harvey and Whitehorse high-school Instructor Mary Jane Allison agreed to take on this additional assignment for Yukon College. YNLC's role included working with the instructors to design a course outline reflecting a communicative language approach, preparing the listening exercises and other materials, reviewing the pace of classroom instruction, and developing measures of teaching outcomes. YNLC's John Ritter and Sheila Maissan worked extensively with Linda and Mary Jane from January to April. A comprehensive teaching binder has been put together containing the materials YNLC prepared for the course.



*An ATHA 102 student working with Instructor Mary Jane Allison*

### **Tlingit Place Names Meeting, Haines, Alaska**

YNLC staff linguist Doug Hitch and Dr. Jeff Leer from the Alaska Native Language Center traveled to Haines, AK, in March for two days of meetings and workshops about Tlingit place names, in cooperation with Chilkat elders and community members.

In the past few years YNLC staff have been studying several nineteenth-century documents about the southwest Yukon and the Chilkat area, including the Kohklux maps, the reports of Arthur and Aurel Krause, maps by Frederick Schwatka, and the travelogues of Edward J. Glave. These materials contain many Tlingit place names and other names and words which remain unidentified or not well understood.

In autumn 2009, YNLC's John Ritter contacted Tlingit language instructor Marsha Hotch of Klukwan to invite her to YNLC to discuss her long-standing work in the revitalization of Tlingit in the Haines and Klukwan area, for which she had recently been honored with





*Leaders of the Chilkat meeting in Haines*

an Alaska Governor's Award. Their phone discussions paved the way for the March trip by Hitch and Leer. While there, they were privileged to work with Marsha as well as Chilkat Tlingit elders Joe Hotch and Smittie Katzeek, who both spoke from their experience about the importance of the Tlingit language. Doug Hitch made digital recordings of Joe and Smittie. Among the many useful names established are:

**Khàtx'wàltú** , translation 'big boulders', the name of the former village south of Klukwan; and **Yàndayânk'**, the name of the famous Chilkat man who guided both Schwatka and the Frank Leslie expedition into the Yukon.

The meetings were an opportunity for Dr. Leer to return to his early connections with the Tlingit language and people. He had worked with elders in Klukwan forty years earlier and had been adopted into a Klukwan family. Dr. Leer made a well-received presentation about his life and work with Tlingit.

The YNLC looks forward to further cooperation with Marsha Hotch and her Tlingit colleagues in Klukwan and Haines.

### **Ket Language Project, Krasnoyarsk Region, Russia**

YNLC staff are working on the translation of a Fish Camp story book into the Ket language of Russia. This would mark the first time that Yukon native language teaching materials have been rendered into a native language outside North America.

This project began when the Arctic Athabaskan Council contacted John Ritter to invite YNLC to participate in the Arctic Leaders Summit in Moscow in April. Cindy Dickson of the Council pointed out that she and others were especially interested in meeting representatives of the Ket people of Siberia at the meeting. She had heard of the possible linguistic and historical connection between the Ket and the Athabaskan people of North America. She requested that a YNLC linguist accompany the Yukon delegation to Moscow. Our Doug Hitch was eager and willing to participate and made plans to take equipment and materials to make sound recordings of the Ket speaker(s) if that should prove possible.

Once in Moscow, he met Ket speaker and linguist Zoya Maksunova who was enthusiastic about the project and provided a written translation of the story book into Ket, and recorded a spoken version with Doug.

*Doug Hitch with Ket linguist Zoya Maksunova  
(photo by Alexandra Bocharnikova)*



YNLC has approached Dr. Edward Vajda, a linguist at Western Washington University who is the North American expert on the Ket language, to provide accurate transcriptions and translations of the Ket story book sound files.

Once the story book is completed, YNLC intends to make it available online for anyone to use.

## **KDFN Northern Tutchone Classes**

When requested, the Yukon Native Language Centre provides assistance wherever possible to First Nation language and cultural programs operating in the communities. YNLC's support includes training and help with materials and resources. In some cases, YNLC staff members also serve on their own time as instructors or cultural resource personnel in these programs. This spring YNLC Northern Tutchone Specialist Anne Ranigler taught language classes with her sister Elder Ellen Shorty in a program sponsored by Kwanlin Dun First Nation in Whitehorse. Youngsters and elders attended to learn, to encourage each other and to practise their language and culture. Activities included an ice-fishing expedition to Marsh Lake using Annie Smith's cabin as a base. Regular classes included cultural activities such as traditional cooking and beading. A radio interview of Anne talking with CBC correspondent Nancy Thomson was aired as classes started in January.

## **Materials in Progress**

Work continues on the manuscript of E.J. Glave's writings edited by anthropologist Dr. Julie Cruikshank. Staff linguist Doug Hitch is preparing interpretations of Glave's hand-drawn maps using modern base maps.

Edward James Glave was an English-born explorer and journalist whose reports and notebooks about his travels in southwest Yukon in 1890-1891 contain many references to native place names, personal names, and cultural practices. Dr. Cruikshank's manuscript includes Glave's newspaper articles and material from his unpublished field journals (now kept at the University of Alaska Fairbanks).

## **Publications Catalogue**

The YNLC Publications Catalogue, listing all YNLC's publications, is available free of charge at our website: [www.ynlc.ca](http://www.ynlc.ca). You can download a pdf version.

## **Upcoming Events**

Staff members Anne Ranigler and Doug Hitch will attend the CYFN General Assembly to be held in July at Brooks Brook.

The Yukon Native Language Centre and individual teachers are busy planning for the fall sessions. Please contact YNLC for updates on scheduling.

## How To Reach Us

If you would like more information on the Centre's programs, or would like to order our publications, please consult our website at [www.ynlc.ca](http://www.ynlc.ca), or contact us by:

- local telephone at (867) 668-8820
- toll-free 1-877-414-9652
- fax at (867) 668-8825
- email at [info@ynlc.ca](mailto:info@ynlc.ca)
- mail at YNLC, Yukon College, Box 2799, Whitehorse, YT Y1A 5K4.

## YNLC Training Sessions

Kaska Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	May 6–7
S. Tutchone Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	Apr 29–30
S. Tutchone Trainee In-Service	Classroom Literacy	Apr 27–28
N. Tutchone Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	Apr 22–23
Certificate / Diploma Course	Teacher Training	Mar 22–26
Tlingit Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	Mar 1–3
Upper Tanana / N. Tutchone Literacy Session for White River F.N.	Community Literacy	Feb 15–18
Athapaskan 102 (Yukon College Course)	Continuing Education	Jan 5 – Apr 13



TOGETHER TODAY... FOR OUR CHILDREN TOMORROW

**COUNCIL OF YUKON FIRST NATIONS**

2166 - 2nd AVENUE WHITEHORSE, YUKON  
Y1A 4P1

TEL: (867) 393-9200  
FAX: (867) 668-6577



## YNLC Presentations

Yukon College Graduation Ceremony	YNLC Participation	June 5
Arctic Leaders Summit, Ket Delegation Meeting, Moscow, Russia	YNLC Participation	Apr 14–17
Klukwan Tlingit Consultation, Haines, AK	YNLC Participation	Mar 4–5

## Program Consultations

Elijah Smith Elementary School	S. Tutchone Program	May 31
Takhini Elementary School	S. Tutchone Program	May 26
Ross River School	Kaska Program	May 25–27
St Elias Comm. School, Haines Junction	S. Tutchone Program	May 18
Tantalus School, Carmacks	N. Tutchone Program	May 13
Johnson Elem. School, Watson Lake	Kaska Program	Apr 19–21
CAFN Community Daycare Program, Haines Junction	S. Tutchone Program	April 16–17
Kluane Lake School, Destruction Bay	S. Tutchone Program	April 14–15
St Elias Comm. School, Haines Junction	S. Tutchone Program	Jan 28
Nelnah Bessie John School, Beaver Creek	U. Tanana Program	Jan 25–27



*2010 Graduates Ruth Welsh, Mary Jane Allison and Ruth Johnny*

**Yukon College Graduation  
June 5, 2010**



*YNLC's Linda Harvey and Dr. Cynthea Ainsworth*



*2010 grads with Grand Chief Ruth Massie and WRFN Chief David Johnny*



*Elders Darlene Northway and Martha Sam*



*Ruth Welsh celebrates with her family*