

ACTIVITIES REPORT - JANUARY 2013

COVERING THE PERIOD JULY-DECEMBER 2012



Highlights

During the summer of 2012, YNLC staff members were busy with a number of language documentation projects and professional activities that continued to the opening of school programs in late August.

Linguist Dr. André Bourcier continued editing and enhancing the Southern Tutchone Dictionary, a long-range project begun some years ago by Ms. Margaret Workman when she was a Southern Tutchone instructor at F.H. Collins and a staff member at YNLC. Originally from Aishihik Lake, Margaret has digitally recorded a huge amount of supplemental material to complement the written dictionary entries. Students will certainly appreciate and benefit from hearing the words and sentences spoken by Margaret. YNLC plans to make the dictionary available in separate sections before undertaking a full release, beginning with *Southern Tutchone Words for Land and Water*.

Mr. Chad Day, creator of several excellent *YouTube* videos devoted to the Tahltan language, visited YNLC for two days of Tahltan literacy at the end of July. Director John Ritter and Linguist André Bourcier collaborated with Day to review and transcribe materials he had recorded with speakers in Telegraph Creek and Iskut, B.C. One of his teachers, Mr. Pat Carlick, had been a member of YNLC's first class of Certificate



Nàday Gän ('dry lynx') is a well known Southern Tutchone landmark located between Haines Junction and Burwash. Its English name is Mount Decoeli.

graduates in 1986. It is gratifying to witness the renewed interest in the traditional language by younger Tahltan people, and it was a treat for YNLC to renew its Tahltan connection as well.

During July and August, YNLC Director John Ritter attended meetings with colleagues at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and also continued his documentation work with several speakers of Alaskan Athabaskan languages. He consulted with Dr. Jeff Leer on content and timing for a Tlingit literacy session in September 2012, and met with Mr. Allan Hayton to firm up travel plans for the Gwich'in (Tukudh) session in November.



André Bourcier, Chad Day and John Ritter at the Tahltan Literacy Session at the end of July

André Bourcier conducted follow-up work and communications stemming from his attendance at a June workshop in Ottawa entitled *Assessing, Monitoring, and Promoting Arctic Indigenous Languages*. The gathering was convened by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and included representatives from Nunavut, NWT, Yukon, Greenland, Alaska, and Russia.

YNLC works closely with the Yukon Geographic Place Names Board. In early September YNLC and YGPNB co-funded a photographic site survey by helicopter in the Peel and Eagle River watersheds.

School-based native language programs began again in August and September. The Centre resumed its autumn schedule of training and documentation activities that continued to the Christmas break.

Certificate / Diploma Training Session

A five-day session for students in the Certificate and Diploma programs was held at YNLC in September. Participants included trainees who are teaching Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Tlingit, Hän, Gwich'in, and Kaska. In addition to new classroom activities, the students reviewed oral drill techniques, short- and



Pauline Sidney showing examples of /g/ and /gh/ at the Tlingit Literacy Session



Melissa Hawkins and youngest student listening for Hän sounds at the Literacy Session

long-range lesson planning, topics in professionalism, and school procedures. The use of portfolios for tracking individual progress was emphasized. Elders Anne Ranigler, Gertie Tom, Margaret Workman, and Norman James were on hand to provide fluent language models, cultural information, and support.

The session included a review of the different roles and reporting requirements within the school, the Department of Education, YNLC, and Yukon College. Connections between FN programs and school-based programs were discussed.

Each trainee taught at least one demonstration lesson and received feedback from participants and the coordinators. We are very grateful to the elders and mentors who provided support and encouragement throughout.

Program Coordinators Linda Harvey and Jo-Anne Johnson work very closely with all the trainees in their individual teaching programs as well as at YNLC. They

made visits to schools and First Nation programs as summarized under Program Consultations further below.

Literacy and Documentation Sessions

Tlingit Literacy Session

Tlingit literacy was the focus of an intensive two-day session held in late September that included participants from Teslin, Carcross and Whitehorse.

Our faithful colleague in Tlingit language work, Dr. Jeffry Leer, made a long journey from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to teach the YNLC session. Many of the topics focused on Tlingit names for specific species of fish and their habitats, and related vocabulary for fishing techniques such as hooking and netting fish. Listening exercises were created to distinguish velar /k/ and /g/ and uvular /kh/ and /gh/ sounds, as these are very important contrasts in the Tlingit language. How to form questions was also reviewed in the study of sentence structure.



YNLC's Linda Harvey and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Language Coordinator Angie Joseph-Rear singing at the Gwich'in Literacy Session in November



Tanacross visitors Dollie Jonathan and Irene Solomon Arnold with YNLC Linguists Doug Hitch, André Bourcier and John Ritter

Several fluent speakers generously contributed their expertise to the session: Emma Sam, Margaret Bob, Sam Johnston, Bessie Cooley, Pauline Sidney, and Norman James.

Tanacross Recording Session

In November, Ms. Dollie Jonathan and Ms. Irene Solomon Arnold traveled by highway from Tok, Alaska, to spend several days at YNLC documenting the Tanacross language. Tanacross shares many important features with the neighboring Hän language of Eagle and Dawson City, and with the Upper Tanana language of Northway, Tetlin, and Tok. Ms. Arnold is a graduate of both the YNLC Certificate and Diploma programs and has been involved in Athabaskan language teaching since the early 1990s.

Her return to YNLC was a follow-up to her visit in 2010 when she re-recorded a substantial portion of the *Tanacross Language Lessons* booklet that YNLC produced several years ago. During this recent visit she completed the digital recording of the lessons and also provided a number of sentences illustrating the strikingly beautiful Tanacross tonal system.

With this new material YNLC will prepare the revised lessons for a new booklet as well as posting to the Web and creating a CD with text, sound, and images.

Hän Literacy Session

The Hän Literacy Session was held at YNLC on November 21-23, with more than twenty participants and visitors. A large contingent from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation was on hand for the session, including Heritage Director Jackie Olson and Language Coordinator Angie Joseph-Rear, along with Elders and students.

THFN Elder Percy Henry once again served as the indispensable fluent Hän speaker for the group. He patiently repeated words and phrases, and spoke about the cultural context of many of the examples he provided. His contribution was enormous throughout the three-day session.

Participants reviewed Hän sounds and composed example sentences for listening exercises for /ts/ and /ts'/. Various translations were undertaken or edited, including Hän phrases on outdoor signs, school posters, and specific vocabulary from the



December moon over Yukon College



Percy Henry at YNLC during the Hän Literacy Session, November 2012

They studied, sang, and recorded many of the traditional hymns (known as Chilig or Ch'ilik), first translated into Gwich'in (Tukudh) by Archdeacon McDonald and his Gwich'in teachers and collaborators in the 1860s.

Participants transcribed Chilig 99 into Modern Gwich'in and read the Tukudh Bible text on which the hymn is based. With the help of YNLC's Sheila Maissan, who searched various internet databases, the English original was located and found to date to 1872. The hymn is frequently sung in Gwich'in communities from Alaska to the Mackenzie Delta.

Participants also compared samples of Archdeacon McDonald's translations from 1874, 1898, and 1920. They undertook a retranscription of Psalm 23 into Modern Gwich'in.

booklet *Lëjit Nätäzrè* ('Lëjit Goes Hunting'). Participants sang several Christmas carols in Hän. Patricia Robertson visited the session and interviewed individuals who have been active in Hän language revitalization in Dawson City. The article she prepared appeared in the Yukon News before Christmas.

Gwich'in Literacy Session

Gwich'in speakers and students from Yukon, Alaska, and NWT gathered at YNLC November 27-29 for their annual session devoted to studying the traditional liturgical language known as Tukudh or Takudh. Participants represented the communities of Ft. McPherson and Aklavik, NWT; Fairbanks and Arctic Village, Alaska; and Old Crow and Whitehorse, Yukon.



Gwich'in Elder Marion Nukon, seated, with YNLC Linguist André Bourcier, Randall Kendi and Ruth Carroll



Eagle Hän Elder Ruth Ridley in Fairbanks, with daughter and grandsons. Ruth has been a mainstay of Hän work in Alaska for many decades.

Allan Hayton, a Neets'it Gwich'in speaker originally from Arctic Village, Alaska, and now a graduate student at UAF, presented an overview and update on his *YouTube* postings of Tukudh Chilig. These videos combine visuals of community and church leaders with recordings of the individual hymns. They illustrate an important contemporary tool for promoting and revitalizing traditional languages.

Linguist André Bourcier digitally recorded all the prayers offered and hymns sung during the session. As in previous gatherings at YNLC, these recordings will be made available to the participants on CDs.

Remembering Ruth Welsh

YNLC hosted a memorial gathering for distinguished elder Ruth Welsh at the conclusion of the Gwich'in literacy session in November. Many friends and family members came to share memories and pay their respects. YNLC staff gave a powerpoint presentation highlighting Ruth's many contributions to the work of Centre over the years.

Remembering Ruth Welsh is now available on the YNLC web site at ynlc.ca under elders.

YNLC and the SGS Language Revitalization Program

The Yukon Native Language Centre is administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations to serve all Yukon FN languages. CYFN also administers the Self-Government Secretariat, which in turn oversees the Language Revitalization Program (LRP). The LRP carries out work designed to increase FN language fluency within specific FNs, with primary focus on language-nests as well as the master-apprentice program. In recent months, Mr. Sean Smith, Manager of the LRP, has made visits to YNLC training sessions to share information with individuals who are teaching FN languages both in schools and FN-operated programs.



YNLC Founding Elders Gertie Tom and Margaret Workman with Sean Smith of CYFN's SGS Language Revitalization Program

YNLC has provided materials and resources for use in the LRP. We look forward to continued collaboration between YNLC and LRP.

Whitehorse Correctional Centre

YNLC has collaborated with Whitehorse Correctional Centre (WCC) to provide First Nations language resources, including limited web access to YNLC's on-line language lessons and other materials. Most recently the Yukon College Campus at WCC contacted YNLC for support in offering a Southern Tutchone language class. YNLC provided the names of potential instructors and confirmed the availability of teaching materials for such a class.

Hand-held Listening Exercise Game

All of the ingredients for a complete handheld version of Anne Ranigler's Northern Tutchone Listening Exercise have now been gathered. One complete game has been assembled and is available for viewing on ynlc.ca. The game has been shown in training sessions at the Centre with enthusiastic reception. The youngest person in the room was given an iPod Touch showing the game and, without instructions, that person succeeded in figuring it out. This literacy tool has complete audio. Every Northern Tutchone sentence and word can be heard. To try out the game on your mobile device, or regular web browser, go to ynlc.ca and click on the secret button on the white ptarmigan at the top of the logo.



William Firth (Ft. McPherson, NWT) and Deacon Marion Schafer (Old Crow, YT) collaborate during the Gwich'in Session

YNLC Government of Yukon Long Service Awards

On November 16, 2012, two members of the YNLC staff, Jo-Anne Johnson and Sheila Maissan, received Long Service Awards at a luncheon hosted by the Government of Yukon. Jo-Anne's thirty years of employment have included classroom teaching of Kaska Language at Johnson Elementary as well as her current long tenure at YNLC as Rural Programs Coordinator. Sheila joined us in 2002 and has served as our indispensable Publications Officer throughout, word-processing materials in all Yukon languages and deftly editing our books, CDs, and web materials to make them attractive and user-friendly. Congratulations to both ladies!

Publications

All the YNLC language session reports from 2012 are now printed or in process. Many native language teachers make good use of large and small picture flashcards for instruction and for language games. To support them, YNLC evaluated its existing



Jo-Anne Johnson and Sheila Maissan, YNLC staffers displaying their awards for long service.

pictures, and reprinted sets of 254 laminated flashcards. These have been distributed free of charge to each school native language program. YNLC also supplies various other teaching aids and assists school and First Nation language teachers to prepare their own materials.

A number of publications have been reprinted: *Haa Shagóon* (Our Family History) by the late Mrs. Angela Sidney, compiled by Julie Cruikshank; the *Dákeyi Teaching Guide*, a companion to the Southern Tutchone place names section posted on our website at ynlc.ca; *Gwich'in Language Lessons* book and CD by the late Ruth Welsh; the Tukudh study hymnal which is much enjoyed at Gwich'in sessions; and several language session reports.

We are working to digitize the audio tapes of Kaska Language Lessons by Josephine Acklack and Grady Sterriah. YNLC is gradually transforming all its audio publications from tape into CD or web-based formats, a time-consuming and painstaking process.

Two articles on YNLC were published in the Yukon News this fall: one highlighting Connie Jules's work in Teslin, learning, teaching and documenting her Tlingit language; and one focusing on Hän language efforts by the THFN in Dawson City. Both articles are available on the YNLC website.

The Publications Catalogue will be updated and reprinted shortly to reflect our new materials. A good deal of material in all Yukon languages is already available on our website ynlc.ca.

Planning for Spring 2013

The Yukon Native Language Centre and individual teachers are busy planning for the spring 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, ynlc.ca, or contact us by:

- local telephone at (867) 668-8820
- toll-free 1-877-414-9652
- fax at (867) 668-8825
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Eagle River, northern Yukon, is known in Gwich'in as Ezhìn Njik and Ch'izhìn Njik, both meaning 'Eagle River'. The Richardson Mountains in the background are known as Teetl'it Ddhàa' in Gwich'in, lit. 'Peel River mountains'.

YNLC Training & Documentation Sessions

Certificate / Diploma Course	Teacher Training	Sept 20–24
Tahltan Literacy Session (Chad Day)	Documentation	Aug 1-3
S. Tutchone Place Names Research with Elder Marge Jackson	Documentation	Sep 4-5
First Nations Programs & Partnerships	YNLC Participation	Sep 11, 25
Certificate / Diploma Training Course	Teacher Training	Sep 17-21
Tlingit Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	Sep 27-28
Yukon College YNTEP	YNLC Presentation	Oct 31
Tanacross Recording Session	Documentation	Nov 13-15
Hän Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	Nov 21-23
Gwich'in (Tukudh) Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	Nov 27-29



December view from YNLC, with Dhäl Ndü 'long mountain' and The May 'grey rock (mountain)' in the distance. The May is locally called Grey Mountain.

Program Consultations

Nelna Bessie John School Visit	U. Tanana Program	Oct 6
Ross River School	Kaska	Oct 10-11
Tantalus School, Carmacks	N. Tutchone	Oct 10
Kluane Lake School, Destruction Bay	S. Tutchone	Oct 16-17
Robert Service School, Dawson City	Hän	Oct 17
J.V. Clark School, Mayo	N. Tutchone	Oct 18
CAFN Haines Junction Community Program	S. Tutchone	Oct 18
St Elias Community School, Haines Junction	S. Tutchone	Oct 18
Teslin School	Tlingit	Oct 23
Whitehorse Elementary School	S. Tutchone	Oct 30
Eliza van Bibber School, Pelly Crossing	N. Tutchone	Nov 14
Gùch Tlà Community School, Carcross	Tlingit	Nov 14
Little Salmon Carmacks FN Language Program	N. Tutchone	Nov 15
Tantalus School, Carmacks	N. Tutchone	Nov 15
Porter Creek Secondary School, Whitehorse	S. Tutchone	Dec 6



TOGETHER TODAY... FOR OUR CHILDREN TOMORROW

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