

ACTIVITIES REPORT — JUNE 2008

COVERING THE PERIOD JANUARY – JUNE 2008

During the 2007-08 academic year the YNLC hosted a variety of sessions for Yukon language groups and developed a wide range of materials for teachers and learners. YNLC staff provided on-going training for language Instructors in both the Certificate and Diploma programs at Yukon College. This report covers our activities for the period January to June, 2008.



Highlights

The Yukon College graduation ceremony in June featured the presentation of Long-Service Mentorship Awards to seven individuals in recognition of the academic, linguistic, and personal support they have provided to instructor trainees. Lorraine Allen, Josephine Acklack, Dr. Cynthea Ainsworth, Margaret Bob, Mabel Henry, Bertha Moose, and Grace Wheeler each received a certificate and a plaque, presented by Gwich'in elder Ruth Welsh. The work of these long-serving instructors has been vital to the growth and continuity of native language programs in the schools.



Long-Service Mentorship Award recipients: Lorraine Allen, Bertha Moose, Grace Wheeler, Margaret Bob, Amanda Workman (Certificate graduate 2008), Mabel Henry, Josephine Acklack and Dr. Cynthea Ainsworth.

Also at the June 7 ceremony, Southern Tutchone instructor trainee Amanda Workman was awarded the Yukon College Certificate for completion of the three-year Native Language Instructor program.

Earlier in the year the Rotary Club of Whitehorse presented YNLC founding director John Ritter with a Paul Harris Fellowship, recognizing his long service to Yukon aboriginal languages.

Among the literacy sessions hosted by YNLC this spring were two with the White River First Nation, one for each of the languages spoken in the community. Participants in the Northern Tutchone session prepared and recorded a story in the *Camping* series (which is now on line at ynlc.ca). Community members in Beaver Creek are actively working to promote the use of both the Upper Tanana and Northern Tutchone languages.

At the Kaska in-service this spring, native language instructor Josephine Acklack wrote and recorded a new story, *Living On Rabbits*, based on her experiences growing up in the bush as a child.

Another highlight this spring was the production of a CD of traditional Gwich'in hymns, known as Tukudh Chilig, which were recorded at the December 2007 literacy session. The Tukudh liturgical tradition still plays an important role in Gwich'in worship, family life, and community events today. Another Tukudh session is planned for this fall.



Certificate Program graduate Amanda Workman and family on graduation day.



White River First Nation Northern Tutchone language team: Stan Peters, Angela Demit, Roland Peters, Selina Peters, Jessie Barrett, Agnes Winzer.



Elder Lucy Wren at a YNLC recording session in 2004

Institutional cooperation has taken several forms. The Centre has been working closely with the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska to plan and host cross-border language training and research. Locally, YNLC is providing information to CYFN to assist with their native language planning at the federal and local levels, and has offered to assist CYFN with its in-house aboriginal language classes. YNLC staff have met with Yukon College officials regularly to strengthen working relationships, and in May made a presentation to the President's Advisory Committee on First Nations Initiatives. And YNLC has assisted the Department of Education's First Nations Partnerships unit with requests for meetings and presentations.

YNLC's activities for the first half of 2008 are summarized in the table at the end of this report.

Honouring Lucy Wren

Revered elder Lucy Wren passed away on May 22 after a lifetime of service to her community as a highly respected mentor in language and traditional ways, as a wonderful craftswoman, and as a storyteller. Besides speaking English and Southern Tutchone, she was fluent in both Tagish and Tlingit and recorded many stories and language lessons.



On stage at the 2008 Yukon College Graduation: Amanda Workman, Certificate Graduate (with children), YC President Terry Weninger, YC Chancellor Sam Johnston, YNLC Elder Ruth Welsh, YC Academic Vice-President Karen Barnes

Teacher Training

Certificate Training Session

Seven Yukon and Alaskan languages were spoken by the 15 participants who attended the five day March Certificate Training Session. YNLC staff presented material on language structure, listening exercises, and teaching techniques. Participants discussed assigned readings, role-played realistic situations, and led demonstration lessons.

Special guests included Dr. Cynthea Ainsworth, who participated in the instruction and evaluations, Barbara Hobbs from First Nations Partnerships and Programs, Dept. of Education, and students from the Porter Creek Secondary Southern Tutchone class.



Nancy Sterriah preparing teaching materials at the Certificate training session

Mayo Community Native Language Teacher Training

In April YNLC provided a special training session for community native language teachers in Mayo at the request of the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. YNLC staff and 12 participants reviewed the Northern Tutchone alphabet, practised listening exercises, and discussed teaching methods and the requirements of the Certificate training program. Elders who attended included Helen Buyck and Christine Hager. Special visitors included Alice Buyck and Catherine Germaine, two pioneer native language teachers at Mayo's J.V. Clark School.



Participants at the special Mayo session for community language teachers

Literacy and In-Service Sessions

Tlingit Literacy Session

Fifteen persons, including respected elders Sam Johnston and Ida Calmegane attended this session in February with guest instructor Dr. Jeff Leer from the Alaska Native Language Center. Participants studied the Tlingit alphabet, practised listening exercises, reviewed teaching and learning resources, and developed teaching materials.

Northern Tutchone Literacy Sessions (White River First Nation)

A literacy session with nine participants was held in January with a follow-up session in April. Participants practised listening exercises and prepared and recorded a version of the *Camping* story book with the assistance of YNLC staff, and which may now be seen and heard on ynlc.ca.



Josephine Acklack and the opening screen from *Living on Rabbits* on the ynlc.ca web site.

Kaska In-Service

In February a session was held for the two Kaska language teachers from Ross River School, Josephine Acklack and newly hired Nancy Sterriah. They reviewed and proofed a story by Josephine, *Living On Rabbits* (now on ynlc.ca), practised listening exercises, and worked on teaching materials and lesson plans.

Southern Tutchone Literacy Session

A Southern Tutchone literacy session with sixteen participants from Klukshu, Haines Junction, Burwash and Whitehorse was held in April. Mary Jane Johnson, who works for Kluane National Park and Reserve, also attended, as well as elder Marge Jackson from Haines Junction and retired YNLC Southern Tutchone specialist Margaret Workman.

The wide-ranging session included weather terms, words used in gopher trapping, signage for Kluane Park, and songs. Colleen Joe-Titus reported on the progress of the Champagne and Aishihik Place Names Project.



Southern Tutchone Elders
Irene Smith and Marge Jackson

Northern Tutchone Literacy Session (Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation)

YNLC organized this session in May at the request of the First Nation. Participants included new trainee Jocelyn Skookum, who is working with elders Evelyn Skookum and Agnes Charlie. Participants studied vocabulary and word order, edited the Lord's Prayer



Ahtna In-service participants Honalee Sanford, Dr. Cynthea Ainsworth, Jessica Denny and Elder Lena Charley

in their dialect, discussed First Nation personal names, and transcribed a song.

Ahtna In-Service

Elder and fluent Ahtna speaker Lena Charley recorded household and classroom expressions at the Ahtna in-service in June. Jessica Denny, Honalee Sanford, and Dr. Cynthea Ainsworth were also in attendance. Topics for the session included classroom management and testing, vocabulary, and general conversation.

School and Community Visits

Linda Harvey and Jo-Anne Johnson are the training coordinators who keep in regular touch with native language trainees

and mentors and visit the schools and communities periodically. A table of their visits is attached as *Program Consultations 2008*.

Presentations and Meetings

Yukon College

YNLC made a presentation to the President's Advisory Committee on First Nation Initiatives on May 16 as part of an ongoing dialogue about the relationship between the Centre and the College. The YNLC has also met with Dr. Karen Barnes, the new Vice President for Education and Training, to discuss the content and structure of the Certificate and Diploma programs for native language instructors.

Booklet for Substitute Teachers

On May 14 Jo-Anne Johnson and Linda Harvey met with Terry Markley, co-ordinator of intermediate programs at the Department of Education. YNLC has been asked to contribute material about their programs, website, and materials to an information booklet being prepared for substitute teachers.

Presentation to SFU Linguistics 130

On June 17, YNLC Linguists Doug Hitch and André Bourcier made a presentation on Canadian Aboriginal Syllabics to the students in the Simon Fraser University Linguistics 130 course coordinated by the Department of Education's First Nations Partnership unit. They surveyed the origin and spread of this unique form of writing which is used for First Nations languages in Canada from Baffin Island to BC.

A complete table of *YNLC Presentations 2008* is attached.



YnLC Linguist André Bourcier with Tlingit Elder Sam Johnston



Paddy Jim recording Southern Tutchone place names with YnLC Linguist Doug Hitch and YG Toponymist Garry Njootli

Recordings of Elders

At the request of Sam Johnson, Tlingit elder and Yukon College Chancellor, YnLC held a special translation and recording session in January. Chancellor Johnston was working on a Tlingit translation of an English version of a traditional Tlingit story for a television program. Staff assisted with breaking down the difficult or idiomatic English into more understandable phrases and recorded Sam's versions of those which were then presented to him on CD.

YnLC recorded Paddy Jim (Southern Tutchone) pronouncing a number of Kusuwa area place names in a special session on behalf of the Yukon Geographic Place Names Board. The resulting CD was provided to the Champagne/Aishihik First Nation which had submitted the names for consideration by YGPNB.

New on ynlc.ca

As mentioned above, *Living On Rabbits*, an original Kaska story composed by Josephine Acklack about growing up on the land has been posted. There is also a new White River Northern Tutchone version of *Camping*, recorded by the team of Agnes Winzer, Jessie Barrett, Stan Peters and Angela Demit.

Another six versions of the *Moose Hunt*, which had earlier appeared in pre web site computer versions, were reformatted for the web site. These are by Rachel Tom Tom (N. Tutchone), Lorraine Allen (S. Tutchone), Irene Arnold (Tanacross), Lena Johnson (Southern Tutchone), and the late Lucy Wren (both Tagish and Tlingit versions). There should now be no links on ynlc.ca which point to the old yukoncollege.yk.ca site.

Another set of language lessons has been added to the Centre's website—the Mentasta dialect of Ahtna recorded by elder Katie John. These language lessons are a joint project with the Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium and the original sound files were recorded by Dr. Cynthea Ainsworth.



Elder Gertie Tom at the Certificate session

The website now has a page called "Honouring Memory, Honouring Language." Click on Culture, then Elders, at ynlc.ca. The page describes the significance of the contributions made by persons who have passed on, and the importance of respecting the wishes of the family in regard to this legacy.

New Materials

Topics in Tlingit Verb System and Orthographies

This booklet includes material from the Tlingit Literacy Session held in September 2006, plus a good deal of extra material on the history of written Tlingit and the complex grammar of the language, added by guest instructor Dr Jeff Leer of the Alaska Native Language Center.

Story Book Reprints

Continuing demand for YNLC's print story books required a reprint of Kathy Birckel's *Moose Hunt* and *At Home*. A number of others will be reprinted in the summer.



Cover of the Chilig CDs

Tukudh Chilig CDs

Participants at the November Gwich'in Literacy Session recorded a number of Tukudh Chilig (traditional hymns). The Chilig were originally written by Archdeacon Robert McDonald and Gwich'in translators in the 1860s, and still play an important role in worship, family life, and community events. YNLC has produced these songs, plus prayers by several of the elders, as a set of two music CDs which can be played on any CD player or computer.

Publications Catalogue

The updated 2008-2009 YNLC Publications Catalogue, listing all YNLC's publications, is now available free of charge. The most up-to-date version, as well as a printable order form, can also be found on the website at ynlc.ca.

New Promos

The Centre has begun using HTML email to promote web and print publications. Announcements were circulated for *Living on Rabbits* (see above), for the six most recent literacy session booklets, and for the Yukon language article in up here magazine which features YNLC staff and programs (reposted, with permission, on ynlc.ca).

Planning for Fall 2008

The Yukon Native Language Centre and individual teachers are busy planning for the fall session. There will be a Tlingit Literacy Session from September 8-10. The fall Certificate Training session is scheduled for September 15-19. Other language sessions are being planned. Please contact YNLC for further 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 ynlc.ca, or contact us by:

- local telephone at (867) 668-8820
- toll-free at 1-877-414-9652
- fax at (867) 668-8825
- email at info@ynlc.ca
- mail at Yukon Native Language Centre,
Yukon College, Box 2799,
Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 5K4.



YNLC staff: (back row:) André Bourcier, Linda Harvey, Jo-Anne Johnson, Doug Hitch, John Ritter,
(front row:) Anne Ranigler, Josephine Holloway, Gertie Tom, Sheila Maissan

YNLC Training Sessions 2008

Ahtna Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	June 2-4
Northern Tutchone Literacy Session	Community Literacy	May 21-22
N. Tutchone – NND FN (Mayo)	Intro. Teacher Training	April 22-23
Southern Tutchone Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	April 16-18
N. Tutchone Literacy - White River FN	Community Literacy	April 3-4
Certificate Course	Teacher Training	March 3-7
Kaska In-Service	Classroom Literacy	February 26-28
Tlingit Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	February 19-21
N. Tutchone Literacy - White River FN	Community Literacy	January 10-11

Program Consultations 2008

Ross River School Visit	Kaska Program	April 14-17
F.H.Collins Secondary School Visit	Gwich'in Program	April 9
Watson Lake Secondary School Visit	Kaska Program	February 14-15
Johnson Elementary School Visit	Kaska Program	February 13
Teslin School Visit	Tlingit Program	February 11-12
Nelna Bessie John School Visit	Upper Tanana Program	January 22-25
Porter Creek Secondary School Visit	S. Tutchone Program	January 22

YNLC Presentations 2008

Simon Fraser U Linguistics 130—Dept of Ed FN Partnerships	Canadian Aboriginal Syllabics	June 17
Yukon College President's Advisory Committee on First Nations Initiatives	YNLC Presentation	May 16
Aboriginal Language Conference, Winnipeg	YNLC Presentation	May 7-9
FN Education Advisory Committee	YNLC Presentation	May 1-2
Aboriginal Language Initiative, Quebec City	CYFN/YNLC Presentation	February 11-14
Department of Education	Education Reform Project	January 24
Yukon Native Teacher Education Program	Clan System/Family Tree	January 9



TOGETHER TODAY... FOR OUR CHILDREN TOMORROW

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