

ACTIVITIES REPORT — JANUARY 2012
COVERING THE PERIOD JULY–DECEMBER 2011



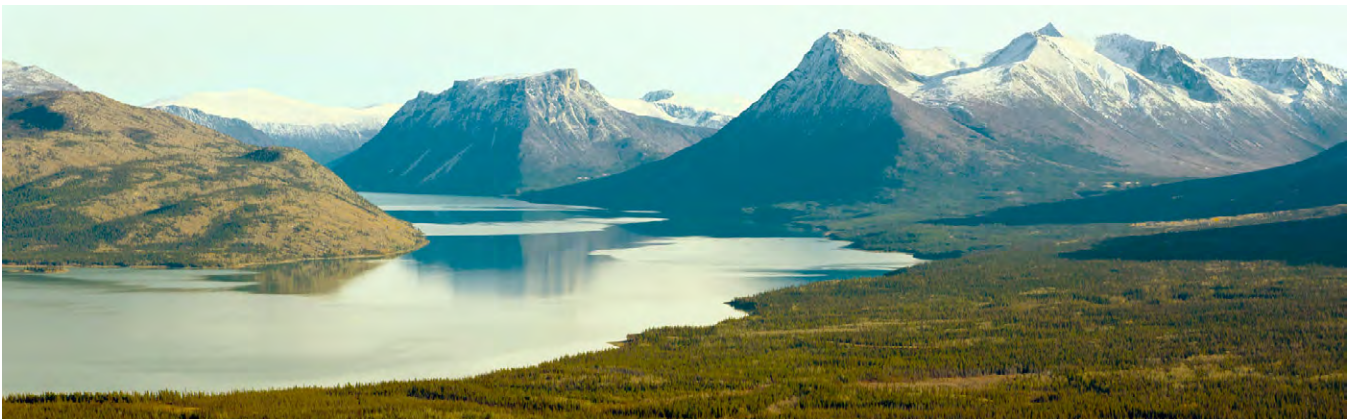
Highlights

Summer 2011 began at YNLC following Yukon College graduation in June. 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.

In late June, we were delighted to welcome several distinguished visitors including - at long last - Dr. Michael Krauss, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and his wife Dr. Molly Lee, a Curator Emerita at the UA Museum of the North. Krauss founded and directed the Alaska Native Language Center for many years. He is a distinguished scholar of Alaskan aboriginal languages, still active in retirement. Krauss and YNLC Director John Ritter met four decades ago at MIT when Ritter was a graduate student and Krauss a visiting professor. Later, when Ritter began his Gwich'in language studies in the Northwest Territories, Krauss provided great support and encouragement. Their personal and professional relationship has continued to the present time.

Visiting YNLC at the same time was Dr. Jeffrey Leer, who was in the process of retiring from UAF after three decades as Professor of Linguistics and Alaska Native Languages. Dr. Leer gave a talk for the staff and visitors on Koyukon (Athabaskan) Generic Verbs. Although he is now officially retired, Dr. Leer will continue to assist YNLC in its Tlingit language documentation and teaching activities.

Northern Tutchone Specialist Anne Ranigler and Linguist Doug Hitch attended the CYFN General Assembly in Whitehorse July 5 -7 where they maintained a large display of YNLC publications and teaching materials. YNLC also hosted a display and participated in the Yukon Teachers' Association Conference in September.



Looking south across the big bend in Kusawa Lake. Ark Mountain is the flat topped feature at centre-left in the background. Ark Mountain is known as Äthè Kal (Dhā̄l) in the Southern Tutchone language.

Dr. André Bourcier gave a technical paper on issues involved in standardizing dialects of Athabaskan language at the Methods in Dialectology XIV Conference in London, Ontario in August.

Linda Harvey led a popular session on traditional medicine at the Yukon Teachers' Orientation Culture Camp on Aug 23rd.

Sheila Maissan and Doug Hitch continued work on the interactive online listening exercises for hand-held devices like iPhones.

YNLC works closely with the Yukon Geographic Place Names Board. When the national Board met in Yukon in August, Doug Hitch gave two presentations on YNLC's research on the journeys of Edward Glave in 1890 and 1891. In October YNLC and YGPNB co-funded a helicopter survey of traditional travel routes along the Asek and Tatshenshini Rivers.

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.

With the resumption of the schools programs in August and September, the Centre also began its autumn schedule of training and documentation activities that continued to the Christmas break.



Participants at the Hän Literacy Session: Erica Scheffen (THFN) with Kalilah Olson, a student at Robert Service School in Dawson City



Southern Tutchone instructor-trainee Luke Johnson with students at Kluane Lake School in Destruction Bay, Yukon

Certificate / Diploma Training Sessions

The five-day September session included trainees who are teaching Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Tlingit, Hän, Upper Tanana, and Kaska. In addition to new classroom activities, the students reviewed short- and long-range lesson planning, topics in professionalism, and school procedures. Elders Anne Ranigler, Gertie Tom, Margaret Workman, and Norman James were on hand to

provide fluent language, cultural information, and support.

The October session focused on the needs of recently hired language instructor trainees: Noli Eastmure (Whitehorse Elementary School - Southern Tutchone), Luke Johnson (Kluane Lake School, Destruction Bay - Southern Tutchone), Marion Schafer (Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, Old Crow - Gwich'in), and Nicole Smith (Jack Hulland Elementary School & Hidden Valley School - Southern Tutchone).



Participants at November's Tlingit Literacy Session: Louise Parker, Bessie Cooley, Sean Smith, and Emma Sam

The session included a review of the different roles and reporting requirements within the school, the Department of Education, YNLC, and Yukon College.

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 during October and November, as summarized under Program Consultations further below.



Teetlt'it Gwich'in sisters Mary Decker and Joanne Snowshoe at the Tukudh Session

Literacy and Documentation Sessions

Upper Tanana Literacy Session

In early November, Ruth Johnny worked with YNLC linguists John Ritter and André Bourcier to review and edit her draft book of Upper Tanana listening exercises. Ruth teaches at the Nelnah Bessie John School in Beaver Creek and has been actively involved in Upper Tanana documentation for several years. Her completed book will be a welcome addition to the list of teaching and



Founding Elder Gertie Tom

learning materials for the language. During her visit Ruth also worked with linguist Doug Hitch to practice the use of YNLC fonts to create written documents in the Upper Tanana language.

Tlingit Literacy Session

The Tlingit session was held in mid-November and welcomed participants from Teslin, Carcross and Whitehorse.

Our thirty-year colleague in Tlingit language work, Dr. Jeffrey Leer, made a long journey to YNLC to teach the session. Now officially retired, he joined us again to present a two-day session aimed at the needs of beginning teachers and students of Tlingit. He concentrated on presenting the basic sounds of the Interior Tlingit language and providing ample time for written and oral practice by the participants.

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

Gwich'in Literacy Session

Gwich'in speakers and learners gathered at YNLC November 22-24 for their annual session devoted to the traditional liturgical language. Participants came from Ft. McPherson, NWT; Fairbanks, Alaska; and Old Crow and Whitehorse, Yukon.

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

Participants transcribed Chilig 65 into Modern Gwich'in and created an English translation, confirming that the text is based on well-known passages from the Gospel of John:14. The hymn is frequently sung in Gwich'in communities from Alaska to the Mackenzie Delta. Participants agreed that the close study of the original Tukudh text was useful and illuminating.

Allan Hayton, a Neets'it Gwich'in speaker originally from Arctic Village, Alaska, made an important contribution to the session by presenting his YouTube postings of Tukudh Chilig. The internet videos combine visuals of community and church leaders with



Peter Loovers (GSCI) and Allan Hayton (UAF) editing a video recording for YouTube of participants singing during the Tukudh session

recordings of the individual hymns. They illustrate an important contemporary tool for promoting and revitalizing traditional languages. Allan is currently completing his M.A. degree at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Hän Literacy Session

The Hän Literacy Session was held over four days starting at the end of November, 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.

Once again, Percy Henry served as the 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. One highlight of the session was the presentation and review of a Hän translation of the familiar hymn *Amazing Grace*, which had been undertaken by Angie Joseph-Rear working with Percy Henry and Edward Roberts in Dawson.

The Hän alphabet and some of its "sound families" were studied. Participants listed example words and used them to compose listening exercises. Basic commands, verbs and kinship terms were also studied. Participants sang, and YNLC's André Bourcier recorded, several Christmas carols and songs. The sound files will be edited and burned to CD and sent to the participants.

The final day of the Session was devoted to the preparation of new Hän teaching



Hän language team: Elders Percy and Mabel Henry with their daughter Mary Henry, Hän Language Instructor at Robert Service School.



Kaska Instructor Nancy Sterriah leads a language game in Ross River School

materials. Linguists John Ritter and André Bourcier worked with Mary Henry to review and edit her draft Hän listening exercises, a project she is undertaking as part of the requirements for the Diploma program. Once again, Percy Henry's participation was absolutely necessary to guarantee the accuracy of the Hän language in the listening exercises. Mähsi' Cho, Percy!

Southern Tutchone In-service
YNLC held the final organized literacy session of the year on

December 13, 2011, when an enthusiastic group convened to review the translation and transcription of a story written by Lena Smith-Tutin, a fluent Southern Tutchone speaker from Haines Junction. Lena is enrolled in the YNLC Diploma Course and wrote the story about life and activities in a traditional autumn hunting camp in the Aishihik Lake area. Lena's equally-fluent sister, Margaret Workman, was on hand to guide and assist the work of the group. Also attending were Southern Tutchone Instructor Mary Jane Allison, and YNLC's Linda Harvey, André Bourcier, and John Ritter. The full text was reviewed and will be recorded by Lena and Margaret early in the new year. The story with sound and graphics will be posted on the www.ynlc.ca website.



UAF Emeritus Professors Dr. Jeffry Leer and Dr. Michael Krauss with YNLC Director John Ritter

YNLC Presentations

Yukon Teachers' Orientation Culture Camp

Harvey led a popular session on traditional medicine at the Yukon Teachers' Orientation Culture Camp at Helen's Fish Camp, in traditional Ta'an Kwachan territory, on Aug 23rd. New and experienced teachers were very interested in the harvesting and preparation techniques that Linda demonstrated, skills she learned from her late mother, Southern Tutchone Elder Irene Smith.

Glave's Travels to the Alseck

Edward Glave's travels in Yukon in 1890 and 1891 were written up in his newspaper articles of the day. Essential reading for anyone seriously interested in Yukon history,



YNLC Founding Elder Margaret Workman recording with Lena Smith-Tutin at the Southern Tutchone Literacy Session

the articles have long been available only from archival sources. Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank and YNLC's Doug Hitch and John Ritter have been working extensively on a volume of his published and unpublished accounts. Glave recorded many First Nations place names and observations of the culture and practices of the people he encountered. We hope to print the book in spring 2012.

When the Geographic Place Names Board of Canada met in Yukon in August, Doug Hitch gave presentations on the YNLC work in both Whitehorse and Dawson City. YNLC works extensively with the Yukon Geographic Place Names board, whose work is very well respected in Canada.

Aboriginal Language Revitalization

In November, YNLC hosted a session with students taking an intensive one-week course in the Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization under Professor Brock Pitawanakwat from the University of Victoria, BC.



Deacon Marion Schafer and Mary Jane Moses, Old Crow participants at the Tukudh session

Many of the students had previously participated in various language training sessions at YNLC.

Whitehorse Correctional Centre

Over the years, YNLC has been approached by inmates and staff at WCC seeking resources for the study of Yukon First Nation languages. At various times YNLC has provided booklets, tapes, CDs, and assistance in locating language instructors.

Through a partnership with Yukon College's Community Campus at WCC, we have worked with the College technical staff to advance the availability of materials directly at WCC. YNLC's André Bourcier followed up from a request by a young inmate and met with the WCC Campus Instructor to determine how the YNLC web resources (language lessons, story booklets, etc.) could be accessed by the students. Between May and September, André and Doug Hitch at YNLC conferred with college officials and technical staff. Ultimately, the WCC lab computers were provided with limited access



Sharing food and stories at the Tukudh session



Doug Hitch, Anne Ranigler and Sheila Maissan with Anne's Listening Exercises in both electronic and print form

to Internet. In September André met with the Campus Instructor to review the various kinds of interactive learning resources, such as language lessons with pictures, text, and sound, available on the www.ynlc.ca website.

Those resources will enable the inmates who use them to connect - or re-connect - with their languages and cultures. It is also likely that the users will know (and possibly be related to) the fluent speakers who recorded the materials at YNLC.



A screen shot of the interactive game

Hand-held Listening Exercise Game

Doug Hitch and Sheila Maissan are continuing to work with programmer Dave Rodgers and artist Susan McCallum to produce an attractive game that will incorporate the listening skills needed to learn Yukon native languages. The first prototype will use Northern Tutchone sound files recorded by YNLC's Anne Ranigler.

Publications

An updated Publications Catalogue has been printed and can be ordered free by calling the Centre. It is also available on our website www.ynlc.ca.

Margaret Workman's compilation and translation of traditional Southern Tutchone stories, *Kwädäy Kwändūr*, was reprinted due to steady demand.

Work continues on transferring language lessons from audio tape to audio CD to accompany the book of printed text. Lena Johnson's Southern Tutchone and Catherine Germaine's Northern Tutchone lessons are now available as better quality page-by-page sound files on CD, and Lena's print book has been corrected and completely reformatted.

Demand for YNLC's Trappers board game continues, so game cards and a great deal more money has been (legally) printed.

In Memoriam

In late December, Ruth Welsh, esteemed Gwich'in Elder and YNLC's close friend of many years, passed away in Whitehorse. Originally from Ft. McPherson, Northwest Territories, Ruth moved south and trained as a nurse before moving to the Yukon and settling at Tagish, where she made many friends including the remarkable Angela Sidney, another YNLC Founding Elder.

Ruth became closely involved with YNLC's Gwich'in work in the 1990s and assisted us year after year, most recently serving as consulting Elder during a session on Gwich'in place-names last February. Ruth completed both the YNLC Certificate and Diploma Courses for Native Language instructors, the latter in 2010. She participated in many Yukon College graduation ceremonies as YNLC Elder, and she contributed regularly to the annual Gwich'in (Tukudh) literacy sessions both at YNLC and at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She became an expert on Gwich'in plants and their names and traditional medicinal uses. She shared her extensive linguistic and cultural knowledge willingly and happily. We are profoundly grateful for all she did for YNLC over the years.

Another long-time friend of YNLC, Mr. Les Jager, passed away in November. An independent contractor who operated Aries Construction for many years, Les was a remarkably talented craftsman who could size up an available space and determine how a needed item (storage container, book shelf, computer station, map holder, etc.) could be created to fit within it naturally. His handiwork is found throughout the YNLC — from the impressive entryway to the individual offices. He used light-colored woods



View across Klukshu Lake (Łughā Mān in Southern Tutchone) in October 2011. The name Klukshu is based on the lake's Tlingit designation: Ł'ukshú, 'end of the coho salmon (run)'.

consistently to enhance the brightness of each space. Much of the Centre's pleasant physical ambiance reflects Les Jager's careful craftsmanship over more than twenty years. His legacy lives on at YNLC.

Planning for Spring 2012

The Yukon Native Language Centre and individual teachers are busy planning for the spring session. 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
- email at info@ynlc.ca
- mail at

Yukon Native Language Centre, Yukon College, Box 2799, Whitehorse, YT Y1A 5K4

YNLC Training & Documentation Sessions

Certificate / Diploma Course	Teacher Training	Sept 12–16
Certificate / Diploma Course	Teacher Training	Oct 25-28
Upper Tanana Session	Classroom Literacy	Nov 7-9
Tlingit Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	Nov 15-16
Gwich'in Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	Nov 22-24
Hän Literacy Session	Classroom Literacy	Nov 30-Dec 2
Southern Tutchone In-service	Classroom Literacy	Dec 13

Ruth Johnny teaches Upper Tanana in Nelnah Bessie John School, Beaver Creek



Program Consultations

Teslin School	Tlingit Program	Sep 30
Nelnah Bessie John School, Beaver Cr	U. Tanana Program	Oct 4
Kluane Lake School, Destruction Bay	S. Tutchone Program	Oct 5
St Elias Comm. School, Haines Jnct	S. Tutchone Program	Oct 6
Ross River School	Kaska Program	Oct 18-19
St Elias Comm. School, Haines Jnct	S. Tutchone Program	Nov 7, 8
Tantalus School, Carmacks	N. Tutchone Program	Nov 17
Little Salmon Carmacks FN Daycare	N. Tutchone Program	Nov 18
Jack Hulland Elementary, Whitehorse	S. Tutchone Program	Nov 25
Hidden Valley Elementary, Whitehorse	S. Tutchone Program	Nov 25

YNLC Presentations

CYFN General Assembly	YNLC Participation	July 5-7
Yukon Teachers' Orientation Camp	YNLC Presentation and Participation	Aug 23
National Geographic Place Names Board, Whitehorse	YNLC Presentation	Aug 28
National Geographic Place Names Board, Dawson City	YNLC Presentation	Aug 31
Methods in Dialectology Conference, University of W. Ontario, London, Ont	YNLC Presentation	Aug 2-6
Yukon Teachers' Association Conference	YNLC Participation	Sept 22-23
Yukon College YNTEP Athabaskan 102	YNLC Presentation	Oct 24
Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization	YNLC Presentation	Nov 7
Kwanlin Dun First Nation	YNLC Participation	Dec 12



Josephine Holloway, YNLC's Administrative Assistant



TOGETHER TODAY... FOR OUR CHILDREN TOMORROW
COUNCIL OF YUKON FIRST NATIONS

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