

## Native Language

### Part Three - Reaching and Teaching Potawatomi Youth

by Winda Collins

When I began writing this series on language, there were to be two parts. It was only after having the privilege of sitting in on a meeting recently that a third part seemed appropriate.

Part One, *A Brief Look into the Past* (November 15, 2007 issue), was a glimpse into the history of North America and the resulting negative impact European immigration had on indigenous culture and language. The facts included in that article were meant to emphasize the importance and urgency of saving that which could very well be lost if swift action is not taken.

In Part Two, *The Past, Present and Future Collide* (December 1, 2007 issue), I discussed how modern technology is paving the way in preserving the Potawatomi language by way of a handheld computer unit, the Phraselator LC. This particular project is geared toward the entire language, one capable of not only teaching those who wish to learn, but also to save it for future generations.

An invitation to attend a committee meeting recently at the FCP Library, Museum and Cultural Center was one I could not refuse. This meeting was held to put final changes into place and to approve the completion of a language project geared toward children. The people involved in the project are Jim Thunder, FC Potawatomi elder and teacher; Virginia Jacobson, FC Potawatomi elder; Mike Alloway, FC Potawatomi member and FC Potawatomi Library, Museum and Cultural Center Director; Kim Wensaut, FC Potawatomi member and FC Potawatomi Librarian; Kevin Jacobson, FC Potawatomi member; Tom Skenadore, Grey Fox Productions; and Michael Bridgeforth, Tribal Boy Design.

Titled, *Gte Ga Nēs - Little Garden*, this was an endeavor "two Christmas's" in the making. First created on paper in book form, it was then converted to an interactive CD ROM, a compact disk which stores information that can be displayed on a computer. To give you a glimpse into the need to reach the youth, I give you the preface to the project:

"Each and every tribe was given their language by the CREATOR. Each and every tribe was given their ceremonies to use in paying respect to our CREATOR. The elders always told us that our ceremonies are dependent on our Language. And, all of our ceremonies have to be done in our Language. Our Language makes us who we are.

"What will happen to this respect when our Language is no longer used in our ceremonies? Will the CREATOR listen when a language without respect is used in our ceremonies? I mention these things as something to think about for our younger people. It is my hope that our young people will learn our Language and our old ways.

"I would like to thank the Tribal

Council for funding this project. My role was to provide the proper wording, pronunciation to the students, provide scripts with each segment, word lists and guiding the students in pronunciation and inflection. It was a lot of work and also a lot of fun to do. So enjoy your program and start speaking your Language. It is your birthright."

-Ayaw nin se Bemwetek - Alias Jim Thunder

All language spoken by the characters is in Potawatomi, using the voices of committee members. There are five characters involved: a teacher, four students and a dog. The CD ROM is divided into four main sections:

#### 1 Ode pi gego ke wshetomen - At this time, let's make something

This segment teaches basic interactive language with others, covering greetings, classroom supplies, furniture and clothing.

#### 2 Ode pi ke wisnemen - At this time, let's eat

Segment two deals with meals, eating utensils, food and personal hygiene.

#### 3 Ode pi ke zagthesemen - It is time for us to go outside

This segment has to do with playing outdoors and nature.

#### 4 Gge dnekmegzemen - Let's play

Part four is a memory game involving animals and numbers.

Also included is an index which includes the Potawatomi alphabet, vowels, consonants, sentence structure, pronouns, and suffixes that designate a word as either singular or plural.

The cartoon characters and graphics are colorful and fun. The sounds will at times make you giggle. My words do not do the project the justice it deserves. And although the project is ideal for teaching children, it would work extremely well for beginners of any age.

If you would like to learn more about this project, contact the FCP Library, Museum and Cultural Center.

Many thanks to the committee for allowing me to listen, learn and gain a better understanding of the importance of their language and of their desire to reach and teach Potawatomi youth. I was impressed by the passion and dedication of the people involved.

On a final note, I must add that before the meeting began, each person there introduced themselves and gave a little bit of their personal background. After hearing several stories that included when and where they had first begun language classes, I realized this story has many chapters because each person has their own story to tell. And while some chapters may remain unwritten, it is my hope to once again revisit the past on a more personal and local level.



submitted by Billy Daniels Jr., FCP Language and Culture Director

Wna go ngi mbe bya  
I got here yesterday

Wna go gi mbe byē  
You got here yesterday

Wna go gi mbe byē wak  
He/she got here yesterday

Wna go gi mbe byēk  
They got here yesterday

Je sheg ngi mbe bya  
I just got here

Je sheg gi mbe bya  
You just got here

Je sheg gi mbe byē wak  
He/she just got here

Je sheg gi mbe byēk  
They just got here

Iw she ga ga ē wi ne ma ji yan  
I'll be leaving real soon

Iw she ga ga ē wi ne ma ji yen  
You'll be leaving real soon

Iw she ga ga ē wi ne ma jit  
He/she will be leaving real soon

Iw She ga ga ē wi ne ma ji wat  
They will be leaving real soon

Shē ba ngi mbe bya  
I got here this morning

Shē ba gi mbe byā  
You got here this morning

Shē ba gi mbe byē wak  
He/she got here this morning

Shē ba gi mbe byēk  
They got here this morning

## Vegetables Donated to the FCP Elderly

by Krystal Statezny



Brian Franz, FCP Language and Culture apprentice, and Billy Daniels Jr., FCP Language and Culture Director (standing) present produce from their garden to Arnol Wensaut, FCP elder (sitting - left) and Max Kezick, FCP elder (sitting - right).

Elders at the FCP Elderly Building and community elders through the Meals on Wheels program will be feasting this winter on many delicious vegetables and red potatoes, thanks to the FCP Language and Culture Department's

donation of canned items on December 3, 2007. The produce was harvested from the Language and Culture's gte gan (garden) this fall. The vegetables were grown without the use of pesticides or fertilizer.

Overall, they contributed 300 pounds of red potatoes, 55 pints of canned tomatoes, 14 quarts of pickled green tomatoes and 12 pints of canned green beans. All the canning of the vegetables was done in her personal time by Bernardine Wilson at her home. "Gche Migwech to Bernardine. We appreciate the time she donated to canning these for the elders," said Brian Franz, FCP Language and Culture apprentice.

