

Items Relevant to the Carrier Language in the Press

Transcribed and annotated by Bill Poser

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B.C. Pioneer Priest Dies in Manitoba

Ministered to Indians in Central Interior for Over Twenty-five Years

Prince George Citizen, April 28, 1938, p. 1

Rev. Father Adrian Gabriel Morice, who spent over 25 years as a missionary in the central interior of British Columbia, during which time he established a mission at Moricetown on the Morice river, between Hazelton and Smithers, passed away at St. Boniface, Man., last Thursday at the age of 79 years.

Father Morice was well known in Fort George and Fort St. James before the building of the railway, and travelled extensively through the Skeena and Omineca districts in the early days. He published a dictionary of the Dene or Carrier Indian languages, the Carrier Indians being the tribe located in the area of Fort George the Upper Skeena and Omineca districts. The Paris Geographical Society awarded him a medal for a map of B. C. he made in the early '80's.

He also was the author of "The History of the Interior of British Columbia" pronounced one of the most authentic chronicles of British Columbia's early days.¹ He was also author of a history of the Riel Rebellion.

Father Morice was born in Mayenne, France, on August 27, 1859, and came to Canada over 50 years ago. He ministered to the Eskimos in the Arctic Circle for a time before coming to British Columbia.²

Sincere regret will be felt throughout the central interior of British Columbia at the passing of this grand old gracious pioneer of the early west.

1 Actually, "The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia".

2 This is false. Father Morice came directly from France to British Columbia and never worked with Eskimos .

Indian Patriarch Buried at Ft. St. James

Prince George Citizen 1952-09-22, p. 11.

Fort St. James - James Alexander, one of the men who guided Father Morice, and who taught the famous missionary the Carrier language passed away at his home here late Saturday evening.

“Jimmie” Alexander, as he was known in most of the Interior, was born at Fort St. James in Sept. 1868. Son of the Hudson's Bay factor, he was educated at St. Joseph's Residential School at Williams Lake where he met the young French missionary who was to become one of the most famous men in the history of British Columbia, and a recognized authority all over the world on the customs and language of the Interior Indians.

“Jimmie” acted as guide to Father Morice on many of his travels and later was employed in the same capacity by government surveyors, among them Frank Swannell and by road engineers and locators all over the interior. Jimmie Alexander knew the pack and game trails, and the water routes of Northern and Central British Columbia as well as Rus Baker³ knows the skyways.

For several years prior to the bridging of the Stuart River he ran the government ferry and many are the tales swapped by the oldtimers of the stormy crossings late at night or during freeze-up in which Jimmie played the star role.

In later years Jimmie has lived in retirement with his family in sight of the old ferry landing.

The funeral was held Wednesday afternoon from the Church of Our Lady Of The Snows and interment took place in the Catholic cemetery.

Pallbearers were: Alec McKinnon, Felix Antoine, Alec Prince, L. R. Dickenson, Jack Roberts, Fred Smith and Frank Swannel who journeyed from Prince George to attend the funeral.

³ Russ Baker founded Central British Columbia Airways, later renamed Pacific Western Airlines, in Fort St. James in 1946. The company eventually became Canadian Airlines.

Morice Remains Legend

Prince George Citizen 1968-07-30, p. 38⁴

Father Adrian Morice,⁵ Roman Catholic priest at Fort St. James during the last years of the Nineteenth Century, remains a legendary figure among the Indians living on the Fort's reserve today.

Probably no other man did so much for the area as Father Morice during his 19 years ministry, guiding and educating throughout thousands of square miles of untamed bush country.

Adrien Gabriel Morice was born on Aug. 27, 1859 at St. Mars-sur-Colmont⁶, France and was ordained priest in the order of the Oblates of Mary the Immaculate in 1882.

In 1885 he was sent to Fort St. James after ministering for 2 1/2 years to the Chilcotin Indians.

One of his first acts was to try and establish a school for the Indians, but his efforts failed. Determined to bring some sort of knowledge to his charges Father Morice set up a small printing press in a log cabin behind the church.

Adapting a system of syllabic writing developed in 1840 for the Cree Indians by the Rev. James Evans, a Methodist missionary, Father Morice began producing small books and pamphlets in the local Carrier tongue.

The system was so simple that some of the Indians are said to have mastered it in two evenings of study.

Father Morice's greatest achievement was the complete translation of the Bible⁷ into the Carrier language, copies of which are still in existence on the Fort St. James reserve.

His religious jurisdiction covered 14 small villages as well as Fort St. James, and he travelled thousands of miles using canoes, dog teams and horses to pay them regular visits. One of the small villages he visited was Fort George, now the present city of Prince George.

Because of his mobility and the high regard he received from the Indians a Hudson's Bay officer once referred to Father Morice as "king of the country".

He left Fort St. James in 1905 and in 1911 with a widespread reputation as historian, cartographer, and religious researcher, was appointed lecturer in anthropology at the University of Saskatchewan.

In 1912 he was given the university's first BA and MA degrees, honors which were conferred on him without his having to sit the examinations.

Between 1891 and 1935 Father Morice published 11 books on history, religion and anthropology.

4 This article was reprinted without any indication that it had previously been published under the title "Catholic Priest Remains Legend" in the *Citizen* on 1969-07-29 on p. 29 and again under the title "Priest Printed Bibles" on 1970-07-28 on p.47.

5 For a biography see David Mulhall *Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice* (UBC Press, 1986), and for a bibliography of his work Gaston Carrière "Adrien-Gabriel Morice, o.m.i. (1859-1938) Essai de bibliographie" *Revue de l'université d'Ottawa* 42.325-341 (1972).

6 Saint-Mars-sur-Colmont is a *commune* in the Mayenne *département* in the *Pays de la Loire* region of north-western France. In 2008 it had a population of 445.

7 Father Morice never translated the Bible into Carrier. This is an erroneous reference to the Prayerbook, which contains Carrier translations of hymns and prayers, a catechism, and other such material. A complete translation of the New Testament did not appear until 1995. Except for a few brief portions, the Old Testament has never been translated into Carrier.

Preserve Language, Calder

Prince George Citizen, February 10, 1965, p. 6

Victoria (CP) - The provincial education department was asked Tuesday to sponsor a study into how best to preserve B.C.'s native Indian languages.

Frank Calder⁸ (NDP-Atlin), lone Indian member of the legislature, suggested the study be carried out by the University of Victoria's new linguistics department, university extension departments and the provincial museum.⁹

Mr. Calder said since the late 1930s B.C. Indians have "gone gradually from the use of their own native language,"

"It alarms me very much," he said.

Students from integrated schools rarely used their native language and in most urban Indian homes "you may find that English is used by a child as soon as he is able to talk."

He said it has been found that in extreme cases a language may disappear from use in less than 20 years.

"In this province we are becoming industrialized and the movement of Indians is toward integration," he said. "I am very much concerned as to the final result respecting use of Indian languages."

8 Frank Calder (1919-2006) , himself a speaker of Nisga'a, was the first status Indian elected to any provincial legislature in Canada. He served as an MLA from 1949 until 1979.

9 The provincial museum had at one time a linguistics department. It was abolished in 1985.

'Indian - and proud of it'

Conference theme

Prince George Citizen, February 2, 1971, p. 9

By Marj Gray

"I am what I am - an Indian. And proud of it."

That was the mood of a three-day conference at Prince George Jan. 28-30 bringing young Indian people from the reserves throughout Northern B.C. to Prince George College. The project, sponsored by the Doh Day-de-claa Indian Youth Group, was designed to instil a pride in their culture by the young people.

Close to 100 young delegates listened to speakers from all over Canada telling them to be proud of their background.

They emerged from the small, stuffy room at the college with their heads lifted a little higher.

They were urged to push ahead not wait for governments or white organizations to help them.

'Stop crying'

"Stop crying," Indian artist George Clutesi demanded.

"Don't depend on the government," Kamloops-Cariboo MP Len Marchand warned.

"Look at yourself as Indian people, don't be influenced by anyone else," local Indian leader Nick Prince told them.

"Our roots lie in our culture, we must keep those roots strong, Indian teacher from St. Joseph's School in Vanderhoof Mary Johns¹⁰ said.

The only failure of the conference as seen by the young delegates was the absence of more participation by the students themselves.

The three days, Jan. 28 through 30, were packed with more than 16 speakers and panels. Only a couple of the panel discussions involved students.

In an evaluation the final day, major complaints were the lack of small seminars and short question periods.

Many of the younger students were reluctant to question a speaker in the large group and had their problems unanswered.

Indian Time

"A small group would be beneficial to get people to open up," Doh Day-de-claa president Jackie Dick was told at the end of the conference.

Club secretary Winnie Marcelais was advised the agenda was too strict. Many preferred to run the conference on Indian time - doing everything as it came along with no reference to clocks.

The overall opinion seemed to favor the meeting, which brought delegates from as far as Kitimat, Fort St. James and Vancouver.

¹⁰ The late Mary John, Sr.

“We have to get together,” Mildred Gottfriedson, B.C. representative on the National Education Committee advised.

“They took away our country and tried to take away our pride. Let's show interest, ask questions, give our children a pride in education.”

'Only an Indian...'

A major concern of the young people was the introduction of Indian language and culture in schools, especially schools such as Prince George College, where a significant percentage of the students are Indian.

Mary Johns brought in a group of young school children who sang Indian songs in the Carrier language which she had taught them.

“Only an Indian can really teach Indian culture,” she said.

Derek Wilson and Rene Nanahee¹¹ described Indian programs being practised in Carson Graham School in Vancouver.

They didn't know how much we knew,” Rene told the group. “The teachers figured we needed a rehearsal salmon barbecue before Indian Day (at Carson Graham).”

Rena Point, from the B.C. Homemaker's Association, asked why Indians were not competing with Japan and Hong Kong in the production of tourist items.

“I would like to see elders teaching the younger Indians, I want to meet people who want to revive artifacts,” she said.

In probably the most moving speech of the three day gathering, Eddy Dennis told the students of the importance of education.

“I will give myself as an example so no student messes up his life like I did,” he said.

He related how he became involved with drinking upon entering Prince George College in grade nine in 1964.

After three expulsions, he left school with only a grade 10 education.

“I fouled up my chances to become a social worker (which I wanted to be)”, he said. “I hope you students do not do the same.”

'Faith in you people'

Nick Prince followed Dennis, promising, “I have faith in you people, think for yourselves.”

The only Red power visible throughout the conference was a “better Red than dead” poster. Also on the wall were information posters telling “97 per cent of Indian students will not reach grade 12,” or “40 per cent of Indian families earn less than \$1,000 a year.”

Indian culture displays were placed in the hallway outside the conference room. “XA?-AW-THEN (FOUR)” an Indian culture play, was shown Jan. 27-30 in the College auditorium.

Indian Affairs social worker Lynn Foster described the conference as “the most important gathering this district ever had”.

“You kids must have some pride in yourselves or you would not be here,” she added.

11 This is an error for *Nahanee*.

Miss Foster told the delegates they came from a proud, generous and competent people and need to know that.

The older speakers urged the young people to act on issues concerning Indians today. Len Marchand complimented them for speaking about the problems rather than trying to ignore them.

Mildred Gottfriedson encouraged the young people, "Help yourselves, help your people, we need you." That was what the conference was about.

New Indian Writing Tried at Fort St. James

Prince George Citizen 1971-11-03, p.9

[illustration omitted - first part of Carrier alphabet chart with caption "Sample of New Carrier Language System"]

Moira MacLennan

Fort St. James may become an educational centre for Carrier Indians who want to read and write their own language.

Dick Walker, a translator with the Wycliffe Bible Society who went to live on the Fort St. James reserve in 1961, has established a written form of the language and developed literacy materials for adults and children.

What he is looking for now is funds to allow them to be published and taught.

45 symbols

On a recent visit to Prince George he and assistant Dave Wilkinson showed The Citizen an illustrated alphabet, two primers of 50 pages each, a bilingual reader in English and Carrier and a teaching manual.

The alphabet has 45 symbols, compared to the 26 in the English language.

Even with 45 characters, sounds such as P and R are missing.

Carrier is "one of the most difficult languages in the world," said Walker.

More complex than the Chinese languages, he thought.

For the English word "it" there are 300 forms, each with a different shade of meaning.

Walker speaks the language fluently, pointed out Wilkinson, who has been at Fort St. James for less than two years.

"Partially," objected Walker. In talk about hunting, he could hold his own, but in a conversation about something like women's handicrafts he would be struggling.

The reduction of Carrier to a written form has been done before, by 19th century Oblate missionary Father Morice, said Walker, but the result was difficult to use.

It had been more suited to a situation where the Indians' second language would be French.

Literacy in the Carrier language is a vital bridge to full fluency in English, said the translators.

The written forms of the mother tongue provide the "hooks" and "footholds" for grappling with the alien language.

In addition, being able to read and write one's native language add confidence and self esteem.

This is the approach taken by UNESCO in its literacy programs.

Walker noted the dissatisfaction expressed at the recent B.C. and Yukon Indian Education Association held in Prince George.

Teachers Needed

The 80 delegates agreed Indian children have a high drop-out rate in white schools because of their different language and background. They called for more government aid to help solve the problem.

Walker and Wilkinson feel their literacy program could be part of the answer.

But first their program must have teachers.

Walker plans to approach the B.C. Native Teachers Association for money to publish the primers and to pay members of the Carrier people while they are trained in their use.

He hopes they will then go back to their reserves to teach others.

If the Indians respond to the program, Fort St. James will be a centre from which literacy spreads outward, he said.

Once underway, it could be operated by the Carriers for their own people.

The missionaries' visit to Prince George was connected with their project to compile a Carrier-English, English-Carrier dictionary.

With the help of Tom Troughton, dean of continuing education and community services at the College of New Caledonia, they were filling in application forms for a Canada Council grant.

Bible translation

If approved, the funds will assist the work of getting the information from Carrier speakers, writing it in the alphabet Walker has developed and using the college computer to compile the dictionary entries.

Ultimately, the two linguists will begin work on a translation of the Bible¹².

The Wycliffe Bible Society believes that “no language in the world should be denied having at least the New Testament.”

Meanwhile, other works to be prepared include a lesson workbook¹³, a bilingual plant book¹⁴ and a map with Carrier place names¹⁵.

12 Published in 1995 by the Carrier Bible Translation Committee as *Yak'usda Ooghuni: 'Andidi Khuni Neba Lhaidinla-i*.

13 Published in 1985 by the Carrier Linguistic Committee as *Nek'uyalhduk-i*.

14 Published in 1973 by the Carrier Linguistic Committee as *Hanuyeh Ghun 'Utni-i*.

15 Published in 1974 by the Carrier Linguistic Committee as *Central Carrier Country*.

Friendship Centre Language Classes

Prince George Citizen 1972-11-01, p. 17

Moira MacLennan

Carrier Indians who want to learn their native language may be able to do so this winter at the Prince George Indian Friendship Centre.

Bob Sebastian, the centre's new director, hopes to arrange classes as part of the season's program. English could be banned one night a week, he said.

A large proportion of the 200 people who attend the Friendship Centre regularly are students.

Many of these young people, said Sebastian, do not know the Carrier language at all.

As a result they are losing contact with their culture.

Sebastian himself will join the language classes.

A Carrier from Hazelton, he understands the language but has difficulty speaking it.

His problem was that he learned English first. When he tried to speak Carrier as a boy, he spoke it with an accent that made other people laugh at him.

Sebastian sees the Carrier lessons as a reflection of a movement common to Indian peoples, "a movement to defend themselves within Canadian civilization, with the help of the news media, with the help of such people as Chief Dan George, with the help of Indian organizations..."

"We're going to have to move, or lose our culture, our identity."

Asked to describe the essence of that culture, he said, "I believe the Indian is one of the human races closest to nature."

In the teachings of the old people, every tree, every stone was given its due place in the environment.

"When the kill was made, every part of the animal was used." Waste was discouraged.

He said the aim must be integration with, rather than assimilation into, the white Canadian culture.

Prince George College, where the student population is 50 per cent Indian, is doing a good job on integration, he said.

"At other schools the Indian student may find that being one of a small minority imposes pressures that are difficult to handle.

"Most of the time it's too difficult." The student drops out of school before graduating.

There is a great need for Indian teachers in the public school system, he said, to help the Indian student establish himself.

In the meantime, institutions like the Friendship Centre have a role to play if they can counterbalance the isolation, he feels.

Activities organized by the Friendship Centre include basketball and leather work. It is also preparing to send delegates to two Indian conferences, those of the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.

Chairman interested in Carrier courses

Prince George Citizen 1973-02-23, p.3

School board chairman Joan MacLatchy said Thursday she would welcome suggestions on how to introduce Carrier, the native Indian language of the central interior, to Prince George schools.

Although there are no plans to add Carrier to the district curriculum, she said the board would give serious attention to briefs prepared by Indian groups outlining how it might be taught.

Bob Sebastian, director of Indian Friendship House in Prince George, said Thursday that Indian dialects must be taught in B.C. schools if Indian culture is to survive.

Mrs. MacLatchy said recent statements by Education Minister Eileen Dailly make her optimistic that courses in Indian Language and culture could be tried here.

“They're willing to move in new directions,” she said. “So are we.”

'Cultural rebirth' seen

Prince George Citizen, 1973-02-23, p. 3

It's "just a matter of time" until native Indian languages are introduced to B.C. schools, Bob Sebastian, director of the Indian Friendship Centre in Prince George, said Thursday.

"I think this is a step just about every trustee in B.C. will have to take sooner or later," he said, reacting to a statement by Williams Lake School trustee Anne Stevenson recently. Mrs. Stevenson supported the teaching of Indian dialects as a second language in some schools.

Sebastian said a "cultural rebirth" is taking shape for Indian people in B.C., stimulated by a new government awareness of Indian problems and changing public opinion.

At present B.C. schools tend to emphasize the cultural traditions of the English language, causing Indian children to suffer a loss of respect for their native languages, he said.

"It's time for everyone to stand up and be counted. Teaching of Indian languages in schools is long overdue."

Mrs. Stevenson said Shuswap, the language native to Indians near Williams Lake, is in danger of becoming extinct unless the B.C. government agrees to support teaching it in schools.

Sebastian agreed Indian languages are being lost, especially among young people. He said a recent study showing 70 per cent of B.C. Indians less than 21 years of age to be ignorant of their native tongues proved the need to introduce the language in schools.

Because the dialects are unimportant to society at large, they are considered of no value by the Indian youth. School recognition of the languages would help to change this attitude, Sebastian said.

He said Carrier, the language of central interior Indians, is in no immediate danger of extinction but has suffered a gradual erosion over the years. Only about 40 per cent of Indians in the area between Prince George and Hazelton are still able to use the language.

Outside of reserves it is practically unknown, he said.

Its traditions and purity are maintained by older members of Indian bands.

Carrier is spoken in four dialects and despite the fact it is not a written language, it has been kept uncorrupted by the old people, who act as unofficial teachers.

Sebastian stressed that preservation of Carrier is vital to preservation of the culture of those who use it.

"The words and phrasing are completely different from those of English. Learning the language causes you to learn human values, such as respect for mother nature," Sebastian said.

He added that school trustees may be missing a good thing in not making use of hundreds of village band elders - all capable teachers of the Carrier language.

Most would be delighted to receive an invitation to teach in a Prince George school, he said.

OFY Project - Youths collect Indian legends

Prince George Citizen, 1973-08-23, p. 3
Bill Graham

Fort Fraser - With help from an Opportunities For Youth grant, a group of eight young Indians here are making a small but concerted effort to stem the disappearance of the prehistoric lore of the Carrier Indians.

Their work on a project, titled Nautley¹⁶ Cultural Research, officially ends Friday and a report is being prepared.

For more than a month the young people have been making visits to the reserves of six registered Indian bands within a 50-mile radius of Fort Fraser, patiently trying to extract stories and legends from the memories of old people.

Project leader Ted George explained the old people are living repositories of the Carrier culture, which has no written records other than research done by white archivists.

The collection of legends and stories is being done with a sense of urgency, George said, because every time an old person dies his story is lost forever.

The Carrier culture and traditions are at a crossroads, he said. The age-old process of transmitting cultural values orally from generation to generation has been cut short by a sudden disaffection on the part of Indian youth who increasingly are forsaking the Carrier language and copying the ways of white society.

Subtle sense of humor

But the values of the old way of life still flicker in the minds of old people, capsulized in enigmatic stories which the research team is collecting and translating into English.

The stories are fables, many containing advice on proper conduct, says George.

“Everybody learns something from them about how life is, and how it ought to be.”

Some are funny, laden with the subtle Indian sense of humor which few white people understand.

George said a surprising number are risqué, by the standards of white society.

“The Indians never had any hang-ups about sex. These stories would be told to the whole family, children included,” he said. Some of the most explicit of the stories would not be told to children until they reached their middle teens, however.

Many deal with familiar animals, such as bears, porcupine, and mice, and frequently the animals are given to talk.

A typical story uncovered by the young people is called Stas¹⁷ and the Fish and goes like this:

“One day Stas was walking along the lakeshore when he saw a large trout jump. Wanting the fish for dinner he began to plan a way to get it.

Sings song for trout

“He thought, ‘Maybe if I sing and antagonize the fish it will jump onto the shore and I will grab it before it gets back into the water.’”

“He began to sing. This was his song: ‘Big fish do you think you can run into me again?’”

“He sang this song for a while and all of a sudden the fish jumped out of the water and hit Stas in

¹⁶ This is the name of the village at the East end of Fraser Lake, now spelled *Nadleh*.

¹⁷ Written 'Usdas' in the Carrier Linguistic Committee system.

the head.

“Stas fell down and was knocked unconscious. While he was unconscious the trout managed to make it back to the water.

“Regaining consciousness, Stas found he had missed the fish so he tried again, with the same results. The fish would make it back into the water before Stas awoke. So he dug a hole on the shore and sat down in it, and began to sing his song again.

“The trout jumped out of the water and hit Stas in the head again. This time when Stas awoke the trout was trying to jump out of the hole.

“This is how Stas managed to get his trout for dinner.”

George said translation of the stories into English has proved a vexing and time consuming problem. All but three of the project members both speak and understand the Carrier language, but agreement on suitable English translation is often hard to reach.

“Sometimes everyone ends up getting mad at each other,” he said.

Translation takes time

Adding to difficulties are the differences of pronunciation and word usage which exist between various Carrier bands, and the fact that some Carrier words have no English equivalents.

The work of translation takes up four times as much time as the actual recording of stories.

The young people have run into opposition when trying to explain their intentions to old people and once were banned from entering reserves of the Lake Babine band, 150 miles west of Prince George.

The suspicion is gradually disappearing, George said.

The hostile attitude is sometimes the result of an Indian frame of thinking which sees stories as precious family possessions.

Some ask to be paid for telling their memories, he said.

Memories are slow to be moved in some cases.

George said, 'Some of them are in their eighties. They can only tell about two stories and they have to quit for the day.

“Some days we can't get any.”

CNC Board Support

[untitled]

Prince George Citizen, March 25, 1974, p. 3

The college voted to support missionaries Dick Walker and Dave Wilkinson who are compiling a 7,000-word dictionary of the Carrier Indian language.

The two have worked on the project for 12 years and information is being processed by the college computer.

Councillor Findlay Dingwall said the pair “have been working on peanuts” over the years and have been unable to obtain money from the provincial first Citizens Fund because they lack written support from schools and the college.

The venture marks the first full-scale effort to put the complicated Carrier tongue into written form, council was told.

Letter to the Editor - Ken Luggi

Prince George Citizen, April 9, 1974, p. 4.

Dear Sir:

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Citizen for its fine work in making public the plight of the Indian people in this area. One reporter in particular, Bill Graham, should be recommended for the interest he has shown in the progress of our people.

But there are other professional people who also deserve to be seen in the eyes of the public. We have such people as Mr. Dick Walker and Mr. Dave Wilkinson, both linguists, who have done tremendous work with the Nak'azdli Whutine (In English, the Necoslie people) in the development of the Carrier Linguistic Committee¹⁸. The CLC is endeavoring to revive and to keep the Carrier Language, which was, at one time, in danger of being lost to our people. The Carrier language is now a written language which will not be so easily lost.

The College of New Caledonia also deserves some mention. Much of the computer work, which saves so much work, was supplied by the people at the College in the compilation of the Carrier Dictionary.

I am also impressed with what Mr. Doug Hudson¹⁹ from the College of New Caledonia is doing. With his technical know-how, we will eventually learn something of our past. Without our history and our language, we will lose the incentive to be proud of the fact that we are Carrier Indians.

These dedicated professional people deserve some recognition!

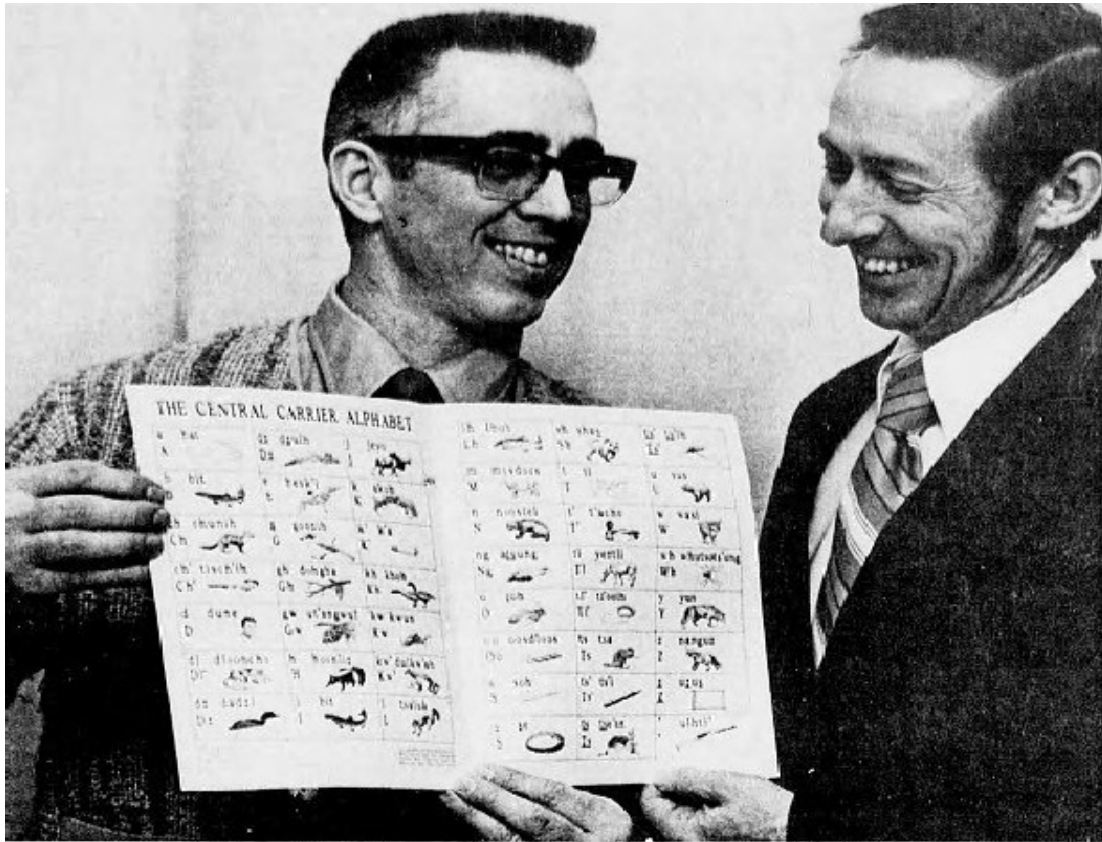
Ken Luggi
Chief, Stellaquo Band
Fraser Lake, B.C.

¹⁸ Currently known as the Carrier Linguistic Society.

¹⁹ Douglas R. Hudson is an anthropologist who in 1983 completed a doctoral dissertation entitled *Traplins and Timber: Social and Economic Change among the Carrier Indians of British Columbia* based on research carried out with Tl'azt'en Nation.

Indian dictionary ready

Prince George Citizen December 16, 1974, p. 15



Dave Wilkinson and Dick Walker study one of the first copies of their 400-page bilingual dictionary.

by Bill Graham

Fort St. James - What do you say about an Indian language so complicated that it has 300 different ways to say the word "it"?

"It blows your mind," says missionary scholar Dick Walker, who spent 12 years translating the Central Carrier language spoken here, and has just published a 400 page bilingual dictionary.

Walker, fellow linguist David Wilkinson and a committee of five Indian women put themselves "through the wringer" to publish the dictionary which they see as a potential breakthrough in the advancement of Indians everywhere.

With 3,500 entries and a 50 page concordance, the dictionary is the first adequate translation of the complicated oral language to written form.

Used with school primers which have also been translated, it will offer Indian children here an even break in public schools for the first time.

Walker said early settlers and missionaries thought the Carrier language was inferior to English, but it is actually much more complicated - as difficult to learn as Chinese.

The verb structures are very complex, and Carrier is a tonal language, meaning that words which

would be spelled similarly would have vastly different meanings, depending on the tone of voice.

Carrier contains sounds unknown in English, Walker said. Many differentiations are so fine that only another Indian can detect them.

For example, the words Ts'ih [mosquito], oots'i [his stomach], ootsi [his head] and oodzi [his heart] sound identical to the English-listening ear.

Three years of research were spent choosing a 45-letter phonemic alphabet to adequately describe the range of sounds.

In structure, Carrier is so complicated it has more than 300 ways to say "it".

No 'he' or 'she'

Most verbs are equal to a complete sentence in English and may include the subject, object, indirect object pronouns, tense, proposition and adverb.

Carrier has no gender. It has no equivalents for the English pronouns "he" and "she" for example.

This explains why some elderly Indians, who barely speak English, will freely interchange the pronouns "he", "she", and "it" regardless of whom or what they were talking about.

In spite of complexities, the translators based their dictionary on the eight parts of speech in English grammar, to make relationships between the languages more clear.

Carrier is only one member of the Athapaskan language family - Indian languages spoken in Alaska, the Yukon, Northwest Territories, parts of Alberta and in north central B.C., as far south as Williams Lake.

In the southwestern United States the Navajo and Apache Indians also speak Athapaskan languages, a fact which fascinates anthropologists.

There are about 40 aboriginal languages in B.C., most of them now extinct, and Carrier is as different from these as it is from English.

The Central Carrier spoken near Fort St. James and featured in the dictionary is one of three Carrier dialects. Except for pictographic drawings found near Stuart Lake, it was never a written language until translated into syllabics by pioneer ethnographer Father A. G. Morice more than 70 years ago.

Morice published a Carrier catechism and reader in syllabics, but the rudimentary translation method was never equal to the complexities of Carrier.

Walker, Wilkinson and their Indian co-authors see the dictionary as a key tool to improve the literacy of Indian children.

Walker said public schools have "locked up the minds" of Indians by not adapting to their language and culture.

Could learn faster

They could learn English four times faster by first learning the structure of their native tongue, he said. This fact is confirmed in international studies.

Early missionaries and administrators discouraged the use of native speech, thinking the Indians would adjust quickly to the English language.

Even today, some adult Indians feel guilty speaking their own language. Many others have lost the gift.

As modern missionaries, Walker and Wilkinson are undoing wrongs of the past. “Achieving fluency in one's mother tongue is a fundamental step in achieving self-respect,” Walker said.

Wilkinson explained it a different way.

“When English kids start school, their parents think of it as Mile One, but in reality it is Mile Six, because these children have the advantage of an informal education in English language.

“The Indian's first six years of experience are totally ignored by the schools. Grade 1 can be so terrifying, the kids only learn they do not want to learn,” Wilkinson said.

An entire class of Nazko band Carriers failed Grade 1 last year, he added. “These children are not stupid But what chances are they getting?”

Four Carrier readers are already in use in St. Maria Goretti²⁰ catholic school in Fort St. James. Kindergarten children here learned to read and write Carrier after only 36 hours of classroom instruction. By spring next year, Grades 5 to 7 children at the school will be “fluent” readers of Carrier, Walker said.

The next and most important step will come if the Vanderhoof²¹ school district, which encompasses Fort St. James, wins education department approval to introduce the program in all public schools.

To accomplish this at least 250 Carrier books would have to be prepared, and a special school set up to train Indian teachers.

White teachers, would not be considered because self-sufficiency is an important aspect of the Fort St. James project.

Money only problem

“We are at a unique point in history when Indians can step into a professional level and perform a function no one else can do as well,” said Wilkinson.

The school board has already approved the program and only a lack of money prevents its introduction. The education department decision is anxiously awaited.

Walker and Wilkinson are members of a unique international body of Christian missionary scholars called the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Both men say they are nondenominational and identify themselves simply as Christians.

Walker began working with Carrier at Fort St. James in 1961, his object to prepare Carrier reading material for children. He chose the job because of the obvious failure of the public school system to serve Indian children.

Studies from other countries suggested they could learn English four times faster by learning their own language first, he said.

The dictionary project sprang from Walker's linguistic research and was begun when Wilkinson came in Fort St. James in 1971, after eight years of similar work with Sekani Indians at Fort Ware and McLeod Lake.

Five Carrier women carried much of the work and along with Walker and Wilkinson are listed as co-authors. Walker said the women are the real authors, “we just functioned as scribes and technical back-up”.

The one and one-half years of work were a terrific labor, said Wilkinson, who headed up the

²⁰ Taken over by the Nak'azdli band and renamed Nak'albun Elementary School.

²¹ School District 56, subsequently merged with School District 55 (Burns Lake) to form School District 91.

research. "After six hours of work we felt like we'd been pulled through a wringer."

"The work takes 100 per cent attention and constant checking for spelling and levels of meaning."

The women - Francesca Antoine, Catherine Bird, Agnes Isaac, Nellie Prince and Sally Sam - each became an expert at various aspects of translation.

Walker said the work was leavened by his constant fascination with the Carrier way of thought as revealed in language.

'Beautiful mystery'

"The Carrier mind and way of conceptualizing is a beautiful mystery," he said.

It is a language which nurtures subtleties and many sentences convey their meaning by implication. "This is why a Carrier joke is sometimes not very funny if you translate it to English," Walker said.

Both men believe the dictionary with its concordance and accompanying grammar sketch is a key which will open the language to wide translation into a written form.

Their translators were helped by a total of \$24,000 in Canada Council grants, and technical assistance from the College of New Caledonia.

The college computer was loaned to formulate alphabetical order and Wilkinson said "we can't thank them enough. The idea of the dictionary was born through encouragement of the college."

Walker is also busy on a translation of the New Testament.

"There is definitely a spiritual side to our work," he said.

"The goal is to provide these people for the first time the word of God in their native tongue."

He has just translated the gospel of Mark and hopes to have this published by spring.

The challenge of Bible translation is great, Walker said.

"How does one refer to fig trees, camels and palm leaves - things which have never entered the Carrier experience?"

The roundabout solution: fig tree - "a fruit tree whose fruit is called fig."

The translation of concepts such as "justification," involved even more painstaking labors. "The translation of the Bible encompasses the entire mental sphere of a people's language," Walker said.

The men see their dictionary as a valuable scholastic resource, but stress that it was written "for the people, not for linguists".

Because words are defined in sentences contributed by the Carrier women, the dictionary yields insights into the Carrier way of thought.

Appendices describe the Carrier grammar, kinship system, calendar and counting systems.

Carrier seasons are characteristically named for phenomena of nature. February, for example, is "Chuzsul 'ooza" meaning "the time of the small snowflakes" while November is named "Banghan nuts'ukih" or half the time we travel by boat".

Walker has great respect for the complexity of Carrier, much of which he has not mastered despite his 12 years of translation labors. The dictionary contains 3,500 definitions but could easily encompass about 50,000, he said.

"I will probably be learning this language all my life," he said, not appearing too worried about

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the prospect.

Council Presentation

[untitled]

Prince George Citizen, 1974-12-16, p. 3

Missionary scholars Dick Walker and Dave Wilkinson presented council an honorary copy of their recently published 400-page Carrier bilingual dictionary. The dictionary contains 12 years of research into the complicated Indian language spoken near Fort St. James, and was published with the help of \$24,000 in Canada council grants during the past two years.

About \$5,000 copies have been printed and sell for \$10 each, Wilkinson said. He thanked the college for its strong support of the project.

Without the college, the dictionary might not have been published, Wilkinson said.

The College computer was tested to its limits to alphabetize the 3,500 entries. Carrier uses a 45-letter phonemic alphabet, and all but one symbol on the computer was used in the task.

Letter to the Editor - Father J. Hettrick

Prince George Citizen 1975-02-04, p. 4

Dear Sir:

I was interested and pleased to read the article in The Citizen (Monday, December 16th, 1974) on the Carrier Language Dictionary. I was working amongst the Carriers from 1936 to 1948; and they called me MAHWOLNEK-YAS²²: the little priest.

Have known the old Indian Chiefs and some very old Indians who spoke very little English - but I enjoyed trying to converse with them. Yes, I know some Carriers who still read and understand the syllabic language. Mention one Indian village where the Carrier language is spoken, that I have not visited...

The part of the article I would like to comment on is and I quote: "the dictionary is the first adequate translation of the complicated oral language to written form..."

"Walker said early settlers and missionaries thought the Carrier Language was inferior to English..." (end quote)

I find this hard to digest, for what about the two Volumes on the Carrier Language: "A Grammar and Dictionary Combined" by Rev. Adrien Gabriel Morice, O. M. I. a Missionary and Scientist. These books were published in 1932. The first volume has 660 pages and the second volume has 691 pages.

There are also some good stories in it as told by Chief Louis Billy Prince from Fort. St. James: stories about "Na'Kraztli" the native name of the spot where stands Fort St. James on Stuart Lake; "The little Dwarfs"; "The Owl" and "Extracts from the Catechism about Christ and His Church."

Chief Louis Billy Prince said that Father Morice had a real ear for the Carrier Language.

I quote again: "The challenge of Bible translation is great, Walker said. 'How does one refer to fig trees, camels, and palm leaves - things which have never entered the Carrier experience?'" (end quote).

No doubt, it will not be easy to translate the Bible, to translate the real meaning of the Word of God. Fig Tree: Mai-sulkre-tcen (Literal translation: Fruit-tastes well tree) Ref. Morice No 152 and 68²³. Camel: Yezihli-tco-uyen tezerh (Lit. trans. Big horse its spine is crooked) Ref. Morice No. 166. Palm Leaf: Nella-ket-tan (Resemblance to the concave part of the land leaf.) Ref. Morice No. 117 and 25.²⁴

An Indian word is often a whole sentence, or should I say the word is descriptive?

The Indian accepted many words derived from French, as Louis Billy Prince told me through the early French Hudson Bay traders and French missionaries. For instance "Lugliz" in the new dictionary means Church (Lugliz comes from eglise the French word for Church) However, Thenadetli-Pa-Yerh means House of prayer in Carrier i.e. Church.

Read the titles of Father A. G. Morice, O.M.I. you will find them on the first page of Vol. 1 of the Carrier Language - A Grammar and Dictionary combined. These titles are printed in the shape of a keystone and taking up the space of eleven lines and some titles are omitted.²⁵

In 1937, at the request of Bishop J. L. Coudert, O.M.I., Father Morice wrote the last book in

22 This is an error for what is spelled *nawhulnuk-yaz* in the Carrier Linguistic Committee writing system, *nahwolnek-yaz* in Father Morice's roman system.

23 These numbers refer to sections of Father Morice's book.

24 Father Hettrick omits a number of necessary diacritics. The correct spellings are: *mai sulkré tcen*, *yezihhli-tco-uyen tezerh*, and *nella-~~ket~~-tan*. In the Carrier Linguistic Committee writing system now in general use, these terms would be written: *mai soo lhki*, *yezihhicho ooyun duzokh*, and *nelak'utt'an*. Since Father Morice's time, *yezihhli* has become *yeztli* and *duzokh* has become *duzoh*.

25 The "titles" referred to are the various honorary degrees awarded to Father Morice, his memberships in professional societies, and so forth.

modern types²⁶ “The Carrier Prayer Book” with a literal translation. The contents are the same as that in the Carrier Prayer Book in syllabic type. However, the modern type makes the words much longer, and it is harder to read - I would say, that the expense involved in printing a book in Carrier Language with syllabic type today would be too great.

To close I must say, with others, that Father A. G. Morice, O.M.I., M.A. was a genius and an outstanding scholar whose writings have a permanent value.

Father J. Hettrich, O.M.I., Box 15, McBride, B.C.

26 By “modern types” Father Hettrick refers to the use in the 3d edition of the Prayerbook, published in 1938, of the roman-based sub-phonemic transcription of Carrier used by Father Morice in his scholarly writing. In the first two editions Father Morice had used the “Déné syllabics”, as he did in all publications intended for the use of Carrier people.

Carrier to be taught

Prince George Citizen, May 9, 1975, p. 3
Citizen Staff Reporter

Fort St. James - A class of Indian men and women graduated as teachers of the Carrier language at a ceremony here today.

They completed a six-week course and some will teach the ancient Indian language in public and private schools this fall here, in Vanderhoof, and in Fort Fraser.

The course was sponsored by the Necoslie Indian band and the Carrier Linguistic Committee which produced a Carrier dictionary last year.

Five area Indian chiefs and the superintendent of Nechako School District spoke at the ceremony in St. James cafe.

Written Words Developed - Carriers adopt new alphabet

Prince George Citizen, May 13, 1975, p. 7.

by Bill Graham

Citizen Staff Reporter

Fort St. James

Bernadette McQuary, the "walking encyclopedia" of Nautley Indian reserve, looks forward to the day when Indian children no longer want to play "cowboys".

That's why she trained to teach the Carrier language with 18 other Indian men and women in a six-week course which ended here Friday.

"It's a sad thing to see children play 'cowboys and Indians' with all the little Indian boys wanting to be cowboys," said Mrs. McQuary.

"I hope to see the day when there will be more Indians than cowboys playing those games."

She thinks the six week course and the subsequent teaching of Carrier in public schools here will revive pride in the Indian language and culture.

The course was sponsored by the Necoslie Indian band of Fort St. James and the Carrier Indian Language Linguistic Committee which last year published a dictionary of the complicated tonal language.

It was a complete success observers say.

"There are some brilliant people here," said David Wilkinson of the linguistic committee, a major force behind the appearance of the dictionary.

Wilkinson, a missionary, said the course was a historic first and "the most thrilling thing I have ever seen".

"These people are like eagles released from their cages and soaring above the clouds," he said. "It was an opportunity for their full mental capability to be released."

Most of the students speak Carrier fluently, but the complicated language was never practised in a written form.

Wilkinson, colleagues Dick Walker, and Indian members of the linguistic committee made this possible by translating Carrier using simple phonemic signs and creating a dictionary of meanings.

A pioneer translation by Father A. G. Morice was too complicated for general understanding.

In September, graduates of the course will teach Carrier to both white and Indian children in elementary schools here, in Vanderhoof and Fort Fraser.

The training course was taught by Catherine Bird and Sally Sam, Indian women who helped produce the dictionary.

Mrs. Bird said the work is vital to survival of the Indian customs and identity.

"I just know it is part of my job to pass it on," she said. Many Indian customs are disappearing under the flood of white culture and values borne through television and public schooling, she said.

A course in Carrier, whether for teacher trainees or school pupils, will fortify the whole Indian culture, Mrs. Bird said.

An ancient Carrier value, for example, was to always look for the best in other people.

"The biggest downfall today is that people too readily criticize others," she said.

One saying is that if you are going to say something that would hurt a person, it is better not to say

it at all, Mrs. Bird explained.

Mrs. McQuary was raised in the traditional Indian way and continues to practice the old customs - thus her familiar nickname the "walking encyclopedia".

She was picked by her band to teach Carrier in Fort Fraser this fall, and she agrees with Mrs. Bird that the course is vital to the Carrier culture.

In addition, it will help white people to understand and respect Indian ways.

There are big differences between whites' and Indians' way of thinking, she said. One is their sense of humor.

An Indian will never laugh about animals, she said. "It doesn't sit well." And Indians don't understand slapstick, or any humor which belittles another person.

"Most Indian jokes are on ourselves."

"I hope this movement will bring back pride in Indian ways," she said of the course. "People have to know their language to get back the old ways of behaving.

"There is a typical saying among old people that the children are becoming as thoughtless as white people," she said.

The six week teacher training course involved learning the 45 letter phonemic alphabet used in the dictionary, translating spoken Carrier to writing, and reading Carrier stories from primers prepared by the linguistic committee.

Teaching concepts and actual student teaching experience were also included.

The Nechako School District²⁷, which includes Vanderhoof, Fort Fraser, and Fort St. James has already agreed to launch a Carrier program in elementary schools and will hire three or four of the graduates this fall. Others will be hired by Catholic schools.

Board chairman Finlay Dingwall said trustees are interested in creating a mutual respect between white and Indian cultures.

"They feel if we are truly to be a public school system there should be a niche for the Indians," Dingwall said.

"In fact, white people can learn a lot from the Carrier language and we expect many of the pupils to be whites.

"One interesting feature of Carrier is that it has no curse words.

"It won't hurt us at all to learn about the life style of Indians, especially since we have one of the larger Indian populations in B.C.

"It has been needed for a long time."

²⁷ This is the former School District 56, merged in 1996 with School District 55 to form the current School District 91 "Nechako Lakes".

Central Interior students opt for Carrier

Prince George Citizen 1977-09-01, p. 29
Holly Botham

Some 500 to 600 elementary students in the Central Interior will opt this fall to learn the native Indian Carrier tongue instead of French.

The youngsters, most of them native, will be taught Carrier as a second language in eight federal, public and private schools.

Slated to conduct the classes as an elective are: Portage Village²⁸; Tachie Village; David Hoy (public) in Fort St. James; St. Maria Goretti (private); St. Joseph's (private) in Vanderhoof; Nazko Kluskus, west of Quesnel; Anahim Lake near Quesnel²⁹; and Fraser Lake (public).

Two of the schools, Fraser Lake and David Hoy, have previously used Carrier as a first language of instruction for several years.

However, teachers there were required to design their own lesson plans and had few, if any, instructional supplements.

Efforts to bring the Carrier language to more northern Interior schools on an elective basis -- thus making it available to non-natives -- culminates four years of intensive work by the 30 member Carrier Linguistic Committee.

Comprised of status and non-status Indian members as well as linguistic teachers, the committee has tackled its project from two fronts:

- Providing a series of six-week teacher training courses under joint sponsorship with the College of New Caledonia with the result that some 35 graduates are now certified Carrier language specialists;
- Developing for print 100 copies of a teacher's oral instruction manual providing two years' worth of daily lesson plans in four different dialects. The manual is supplemented by a long-playing recording of 21 native Carrier songs, each one designed to accompany individual lesson plans.

The production of the recording is described by committee member, linguist Dave Wilkinson, as a historic first.

"It is the first time the Carrier music has ever been written and recorded by their own people for educational purposes," says Wilkinson, an American, who worked previously with Indian groups in McLeod Lake and Fort Ware.

Creation of the words and music was undertaken by Eileen Austin³⁰, a member of the Stuart-Trembleur³¹ band near Fort St. James.

As she sang the melody, Wilkinson's wife Kathleen wrote the music and arranged it. Actual taping was done in a marathon all-night session at the College of New Caledonia using sophisticated audio equipment, two vocalists and guitarists, and volunteer assistance of the college's Stu Barry and principal Dr. Fred Speckeen.

28 Known as Yekooche in Carrier.

29 Anahim Lake is not close to Quesnel. It is actually 316km (198 miles) west of Williams Lake.

30 Also known as Ileen Heer.

31 This is the band now called Tl'azt'en Nation, from which the village of Yekooche (Portage) separated in 1994.

One of the first efforts, when the committee organized in the early 1970s with financial help from senior governments and residents, was development of a 400-page Carrier-English dictionary.

Some 20,000 entries were originally planned for the hard-cover reference book; these were screened and placed in alphabetical order using computers at CNC.

“It would have taken years to do without the computers,” says Wilkinson.

The linguists claims there are some 5,000 Carriers in B.C. representing one of the most tightly-organized and flourishing native Indian language groups in the province.

One thousand Carriers live in the vicinity of Fort St. James, while another 800 make up the Stuart-Trembleur band³², and 400 are attached to the Stoney Creek band³³ near Vanderhoof.

Carrier is part of the Athabascan language family, remnants of which are found in bands living as far north as Alaska and as far south as the southern U.S. -- the Navahos and Apaches.

Wilkinson's involvement with the Carriers is far-reaching. Asked where he was a Carrier himself, the linguist replied, “No, but I wish I were one. Perhaps I'd speak the language better.”

32 Now known as *Tl'azt'en Nation*.

33 Also known as *Saik'uz First Nation*.

Making Their Language Sing

Kym Gouchie gets grandmother's help to save an endangered tongue through song

The Globe and Mail , 2008-10-14

Cathryn Atkinson

A native singer-songwriter hopes a grant from the Canada Council will help three generations of her family make beautiful music together, and at the same time save their critically endangered indigenous language.

Kym Gouchie receive \$8,000 from the council to write and record songs in the Lheidli dialect, a branch of the Carrier language group of northern British Columbia.

Only three elders of the Lheidli T'enneh people still speak the language fluently, including Ms. Gouchie's 87-year-old grandmother, Mary Gouchie.

Kym Gouchie, 43, who is also of Cree and Shuswap ancestry, became reacquainted with her Carrier heritage a decade ago, years after marrying away from her Prince George-based community.

"I want my own granddaughter to learn the language. It's about immersion... This project is bringing me home," said Ms. Gouchie, who now lives in Penticton. "I wanted to document and gather information about my Lheidli lineage through my grandmother, who is my only living grandmother, and it all fell into place."

She said her grandmother and 67-year-old aunt, Jeannette Kozak, would provide what she didn't have in terms of linguistic accuracy, as well as regional stories and traditions that could be translated into song. She called them her co-lyricists.

A performer with the drumming and a capella group Iskwew, Ms. Gouchie already sings and writes in Cree and other native languages. The songs that come from the year-long project will eventually appear on a Lheidli-only album.

"Lheidli is very phonetic. There are glottal [stops] that emphasize letters in a word, and you can pretty much read it the way it is written if you've mastered that alphabet, whereas Cree is much harder to read," she said. Ms. Gouchie said she hopes her aunt and grandmother will help her "create songs as true to Lheidli as possible."

"I come from a long line of musicians. My late father is a musician and I think his passing encouraged me to dig deeper into our roots and that took me to his mother. He's no longer here to tell me the stories, and had lost much of what he knew about the language when he was put in a residential school," she said.

"I've had to do my own detective work for this project and I like to think of myself as a cycle breaker, to change things in my lifetime."

Mary Gouchie, now a great-great-grandmother, said she is "so proud" of her granddaughter's initiative and has been helping her with the intricacies of Lheidli.

"It is so important to me that our language is carried down to future generations. I've heard some of Kym's songs in our dialect and I'm so pleased she is catching on so well," her grandmother said.

Ms. Kozak said the now-discredited residential-school system, which discouraged native children

from speaking their languages for many decades, is to blame for the possible loss of Lheidli.

“I spoke only Lheidli until I was six years old and then I was sent away. I was one of the unfortunate people who had to go to residential school, and we lost it all through that. We couldn't speak it there.”

In recent years, Ms. Kozak studied Lheidli and now teaches it to school-age children on a part-time basis. She said she felt the language would adapt well to modern usage if she had a greater chance to teach it, and lamented that funding was sporadic.

“If they would only give me a chance to go in there and teach more, I really want that, but every time the money runs out our class stops,” she said.

She is very excited to be a part of the project and hopes to be able to sing when the songs are recorded.

“We'll write as many as we can. I feel now that maybe it will be appreciated.” she said. “I don't want the language to be lost.”

In October, 2007, the National Geographic Society named B.C. a world hot spot in terms of the risk of language extinction, with many aboriginal dialects classified as endangered or moribund, meaning that most fluent speakers were over 60.

Tracey Herbert, Executive Director of the First People's Heritage, Language, and Culture Council, said 40 languages and more than 70 dialects were once indigenous to British Columbia. Eight are now extinct, and all of the remaining 32 are in trouble, she said.

The high number of languages came from B.C.'s geography, Ms. Herbert added, with dialects evolving in remote communities.

Living Language

Caledonia Courier 2011-02-16

Ruth Lloyd

Florence Sam and Carla Howell are keeping their community's language alive at Nak'albun Elementary School.

Sam has been teaching the Carrier language at Nak'albun school for 28 years. Her mother Mildred Martin taught at the school for nine years before she left and Sam was asked to step in to fill the position.

In those days, there was no curriculum and no resources, so Sam had to develop her own curriculum over the years, and created her own resources, making flashcards from scratch.

Sam had helped her mother with classes, but didn't have any teacher training, however she had been brought up in the Carrier language, as both of her parents spoke the language at home.

All these years later, the teacher still manages to say, "I love it," about the job she started as a volunteer.

In her early years as a teacher, Sam said she had trouble letting go of the kids at the end of the year, getting so attached she would cry when they moved on.

But over the years she has come to feel like her work is achieving the goals she hoped for, and parents are realizing the importance of keeping the language and culture alive.

People are especially more interested in the culture with the increase in drumming and singing going on.

Sam feels like it allows her students to appreciate where they come from and where they live.

"If you were living in Vancouver, would you be able to go out trapping?" asks Sam.

After so many years of passing on her culture and language, Sam is beginning to look back at her time and appreciate what has been accomplished.

There are now more resources for teachers and students, even a new online tool for First Nations language studies called firstvoices.com.

The website allows students to play computer games and learn traditional songs in their own dialect.

Sam developed a complete curriculum for learning the Carrier language and culture through the elementary years.

Sam also began Heritage Days at the school, which has become an entire week of cultural events in which elders demonstrate skills for students, from setting nets to campfire cooking to cleaning a moose hide.

This year, Dakelh Days or Heritage Days will be from February 21 to 25 and schools from Vanderhoof and Prince George will be coming to watch and learn as well.

Sam draws upon local talent for the event, and everyone pitches in.

"I have a big family and they're all good at something," explains Sam.

Now she is hoping to pass the torch on to her niece, Carla Howell, who was also raised by Sam's parents and so was raised in the language and then went on to UNBC to do a three year program to teach Carrier.

While it is her first class ever, the team teaching approach is working well to initiate her into the role.

“It's an awesome job, I love it,” says Howell.

The program at Nak'albun starts the kids out in nursery school and goes right on to grade 7.

The program involves lots of hands-on teaching with lessons centred around living within the culture.

“I think I enjoy working here because it's a more open cultural thing,” says Howell. “I think we learn from each other everyday.”

Cheslatta Carrier Publish Dictionary

Prince George Citizen, November 23, 2011 online
Gordon Hoekstra

The Cheslatta Carrier Nation celebrated on Tuesday the culmination of an 11-year process with the release of the first edition of the Cheslatta dictionary: Nyan Whut'en Hubughunek.

The celebration - which included chiefs, professors, librarians, principals, elected representatives and officials from across the Northern Interior - was held in Grassy Plains, south of Burns Lake, and approximately 200 kilometres west of Prince George.

Lheidli T'enneh elder earns masters degree. A Lheidli T'enneh elder with an deep knowledge of her aboriginal language has earned a masters degree in education.

Mark Nielsen
Prince George Citizen
Oct 25, 2015

<https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/local-news/lheidli-tenneh-elder-earns-masters-degree-3720294>

A Lheidli T'enneh elder with an deep knowledge of her aboriginal language has earned a masters degree in education.

For Janet (Jeannette) Kozak, 75, the news that her two years of effort has paid off delivered a sense of both accomplishment and relief.

"I feel pretty proud of my self," Kozak said Monday.

"That was a lot of work."

The achievement comes on top of earning a teachers certificate in 2012 which gives her the credential to teach the Lheidli dialect of the Dakelh (Carrier) language in public schools.

Kozak earned the masters through Simon Fraser University, who sent an instructor up to Prince George for a weekend each month to work with Kozak and a group of others also studying towards the same degree.

"In between, we had a whole lot of work to do," Kozak said.

Along with the course work, where she learned about the array of teaching methods, Kozak put together a portfolio about her language and culture for her thesis.

Kozak spoke Lheidli until she was six years old when she was sent away to the Lejac residential school near Fraser Lake where pupils were strictly forbidden from speaking their native languages.

"That's all we spoke at home - my grandmother couldn't speak English," Kozak said.

"When we came home from Lejac, she said for us to speak in our language. And I said 'we can't

because the government will squish our heads if we spoke,' and we believed that, when you're a little kid you believe that."

Her interest was revived about 20 years ago when a program was launched to revive the language.

She and some others were given an opportunity to earn accreditation to teach the language but, because funding came and went, it took 15 years before Kozak finally had a certificate.

Kozak also credits her mother, Mary Gouchie, 94, as a major source of knowledge.

She is one of just three others, besides Kozak, who can speak the dialect.

"We have a dying language and somebody has to save it," Kozak said.

Armed with "boxes and boxes" of laminated picture cards with the Lheidli word for each object underneath, Kozak said she continues to teach at the Lheidli T'enneh learning centre on the Shelley reserve.

"I just love it when finally the children catch on and they're speaking to one another in the class, even though they just say 'hello,' 'how are you,'" Kozak said.

"They pick that up within two weeks and within 12 weeks they're conversing with one another in different sentences that I'm putting on the board."

Culturally Modified Tree returns to roots in Nadleh Whut'en

University of Northern British Columbia

October 12, 2016

<https://www.unbc.ca/newsroom/unbc-stories/culturally-modified-tree-returns-roots-nadleh-whuten>

A culturally significant message tree has called UNBC home for the last 16 years, but on Oct. 22 it's returning to its roots in the Nadleh Whut'en community.

The tree, that's been on loan to UNBC from the Nadleh Whut'en Nation since 2000 and displayed in the atrium of McCaffray Hall, will be featured in the new Administration and Health Centre complex in the community near Fraser Lake.

"This tree is a stunning exhibit that has served to educate and enlighten staff, faculty, and local and international students and visitors about this incredible aspect of Nadleh Whut'en culture," said Erica Hernandez-Read, Access & Digital Initiatives Archivist at UNBC's Northern BC Archives.

The Carrier "message tree" was originally located at a junction on the Cheslatta Trail where a winter sleigh trail branched off on the south side of Klez Lake, 6 km south of Fraser Lake.

The message is written in pencil on a cambium-stripping scar that dates to the 1870s.

Three Elders who could read the Carrier syllabic language inscribed into this tree – Nick Prince of Nak'azdli, Peter George of Nadleh, Edward Ketlo of Saik'uz and Bill Poser, a linguist, deciphered the writing which (with slight variations) reads: "There is a body, Pierre, Hello, I am saying this, Antoine". It is not clear whether the message was referring to a human body or perhaps to the body of an animal that had been shot.

The tree had been killed by mountain pine beetles in 1993 and was discovered by a First Nations

forestry crew member mapping the beetle-killed area. The tree was examined by local community members and the Ministry of Forests and recorded as an archaeological site in 1995 by Arne Carlson of Traces Archaeological Research and Consulting. During the restoration of the Cheslatta Trail in 1999 by the Nadleh Whut'en and Cheslatta Nations, it was discovered that the tree had blown down and the trail crew transported this section of tree to Nadleh where it was temporarily stored.

The Nadleh Whut'en Nation generously placed the tree in the care of UNBC until such time as they built their infrastructure for its display. The UNBC Arts Council, including UNBC faculty members Drs. Maryna Romanets, Antonia Mills (now a Professor Emerita) and Rob Budde who are all pictured above, was involved in the original loan and installation of the tree.

One of the last fluent Dakelh speakers dies, taking 'a whole dictionary with her': Lheidli T'enneh elder Mary Gouchie died last week, leaving a challenge to the preservation of her language

Audrey McKinnon

CBC News January 29, 2019. [Images omitted]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/lheidli-t-enneh-elder-mary-gouchie-dies-dakelh-1.4997303>

The death of one of the last fluent speakers of a northern B.C. First Nation dialect will leave a hole in efforts to preserve the language, but her legacy continues in Prince George schools.

Lheidli T'enneh elder Mary Gouchie died Friday in Prince George at the age of 97. She was one of the last people who spoke the Lheidli dialect of Dakelh as a first language.

"She was a keeper of the language and she would do everything that she could to help preserve that language," said her granddaughter Kym Gouchie, a musician who worked with her grandmother to translate her lyrics into Dakelh. "I'll never be a fluent speaker," she said. "But what I can do is take words and phrases and include them in my songs."

Dakelh, also known as Carrier, is the language traditionally spoken by First Nations people living in northern central B.C. It has many dialects, including the Lheidli dialect spoken in the Prince George area. Kym Gouchie says her grandmother's death is a huge cultural loss. "She sadly is taking a whole dictionary with her because our language has been lost through contact and through smallpox epidemic," she said. "The language and the culture goes with that." College program teaches Dakelh Darlene McIntosh a fellow Lheidli T'enneh elder and cultural advisor at the College of New Caledonia's Aboriginal Resource Centre, says a new Dakelh language program just started this semester at CNC. She says it's not well attended, but believes that will change. "With anything that starts, it's got hiccups, but I think eventually it'll take hold," she said.

McIntosh has her sights on elementary and high schools in Prince George, where remaining language-keepers are spending time introducing kids to Dakelh language and culture. She says she hopes the children's interest in the language will grow as they do, so that by the time they reach college and university, language programs like the one that just started will get more registrants. "With our culture, language is the base of who we are, and so we really need to preserve it the best way we can," McIntosh said.

'She really did teach me a lot' McIntosh will give Gouchie's eulogy at her memorial this Saturday

at Sacred Heart Catholic Church at 2 p.m. Like many others, McIntosh remembers Gouchie for the profound impression she could leave on a room. "She was just this tiny little woman that just radiated every time she came into any group situation," McIntosh said. "I would consider her a mentor to myself because she really did teach me a lot."

Flags at Prince George city hall have been flying at half-mast in Gouchie's honour.

Remembering Mary Gouchie, Lheidli T'enneh's eldest elder

Hannah Petersen

Prince George Citizens

February 1, 2019

<https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/local-news/remembering-mary-gouchie-lheidli-tennehs-eldest-elder-1223018>

It's impossible to describe Mary Gouchie's incredible life in a few simple words, but those who knew Mary are quick to describe her smile, her sweetness, and her ability to connect with everyone she met.

She was Lheidli T'enneh's eldest elder and one of the last fluent speakers of Lheidli T'enneh dialect of the Carrier Language.

Mary was known for her tireless work to preserve, protect, document, and promote the use of the Dakelh. "It's the language that kept her culture alive because there is so much of the land and so much of the people in the language," says her granddaughter, musician Kym Gouchie.

Mary passed away after a short battle with cancer at the age of 97 on Jan. 24. She was the matriarch of a large family having 33 great-grandchildren and several great-great-grandchildren. "My grandmother was, to me, a pinnacle of strength and resilience," says Gouchie. "She had a really hard life. She lived in pretty severe poverty. Her mother was blind."

Mary was born Feb.15, 1921 and when she was very young she lived on the north side of the Shelley reserve. "It was during the time of the great depression so my grandmother learned how to set snares, she learned how to shoot a gun, to pick berries, to cook and sew. She was the eyes of her mother," says Gouchie.

Later in life, after she got married, she lived in the Island Cache and continued to work very hard. She worked in camp jobs, cooking, and most notably she was one of the head housekeepers at the Inn of the North. "She was one of the first people to retire from that position. She would tell stories about how she would have to walk to work every day through all kinds of weather," says Gouchie. "All along she has always maintained her language and her connection to our community stories through her mother."

Gouchie says she has always included her grandmother's knowledge into her career as an artist and a musician. "I have many archived audio and video clippings of her telling stories and her translating phrases and words for me that I have incorporated into my music and that I will continue to diligently," says Gouchie.

"I would work on song ideas with her. I would sing to her and tell her this is what I have created, and she would just smile and was so proud." "Her contribution to language revitalization is

immeasurable”

Gouchie says as the years went on it became harder to have a conversation with people in the Lheidli T’enneh dialect. “There are so few people who even speak it or understand it,” says Gouchie. “She was losing some of her words because of not being able to have conversations with people.”

Mary was deeply committed to language revitalization, and her contributions make up the foundation of two language courses at the College of New Caledonia (CNC). She began going to CNC when the college started running Aboriginal Studies classes and would share her life story with the students and encourage them to learn the language.

“Her contribution to language revitalization is immeasurable and it will be her legacy,” says Marlene Erickson, CNC’s director of Aboriginal Education. “She has left a significant amount of work for the community to pick up and continue to work on.” Mary worked with Lheidli elder Josie Paul and linguist Dr. William Poser to create a Lheidli T’enneh dictionary.

“When you look at this dictionary there is a lot of long hours of just saying the words and pronouncing them for the linguist, Dr. Bill Poser, and translating and making sure they are spelled correctly.”

Mary also translated local signs and several community buildings, including creating place name signage for UNBC.

Erickson says that it was amazing that even though Mary was well into her 90s she would make the effort to come to the college to be with the students. “When Bill Poser went to visit her at the hospice she said, ‘Bill did we get all the words down?’ And I cried when he told me that because it shows what a selfless person she was,” says Erickson.

Darlene McIntosh, Lheidli T’enneh elder and cultural advisor at CNC’s aboriginal resource center would pick Mary up for their monthly potluck where she would do the lunch prayer in the Lheidli T’enneh carrier dialect.

“She held herself in such high esteem. You just automatically took a liking to her, you automatically respected her,” says McIntosh. “How many people did this woman touch? Not only the Lheidli T’enneh community but the Prince George community as a whole.” McIntosh says Mary leaves big shoes to fill.

“It’s going to be a huge loss within the Lheidli T’enneh community, within the city of Prince George and especially for the college and especially for me.”

Lheidli T'enneh elder translates In Flanders Fields into local Indigenous dialect for Remembrance Day: Edie Frederick from Prince George, B.C., honours First Nations veterans with her recitation of the iconic poem

Bridgette Watson

CBC News

Nov 11, 2020

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/edie-frederick-flanders-fields-1.5797103>

British Columbians who have heard In Flanders Fields recited every Remembrance Day can now

hear it read in a B.C. Indigenous language thanks to the work of Lheidli T'enneh elder Edie Frederick.

The Prince George teacher, along with her mother Josie Paul, have translated the iconic 1915 poem by John McCrae into the local Lheidli dialect of the Dakelh language and, to mark Nov. 11, Frederick has released a video of herself reciting it.

Although Dakelh speakers are few — there are fewer than 1,300 according to the 2016 census — it is the ancestral tongue of several First Nations in and around the central Interior of the province.

"It's more powerful when we say it in our language," Frederick told CBC's Daybreak North Tuesday.

Frederick said the translation from English is not verbatim, and sometimes she had to find other ways of saying something McCrae had, but that she feels the poem carries more power and emotion because of it.

By reciting those powerful words, Frederick says, she is honouring the many Indigenous veterans who entered into service for Canada.

According to the federal government, at least 4,000 First Nations soldiers fought in the First World War and 3,000 in the Second World War.

Nov. 8 marked National Indigenous Veterans Day, a day to recognize First Nations, Métis and Inuit contributions to military service.

"All the native veterans deserve to be remembered for doing what they did," said Frederick. "I just thought that we should honour them. We shouldn't forget about them."

For Frederick, the subject is personal.

Her own father, Alexander J. Paul Sr., served in the Second World War and, while he never shared stories from that time with any of his own children, she said he did later open up to his grandson about his time at war.

"To me that's an honour ... that he passed these stories on to my son," she said. For Frederick, Nov. 11 is a chance to "remember that we are all Canadians" and to feel optimistic about the future.

"We see little bits of reconciliation happening here and there and I just have hope for my great-grandchildren and my grandchildren, and I want to do my part and hold up that torch like it says in Flanders Field."

Saik'uz First Nation seeks to preserve their language with UNBC online course

Rebecca Dyok, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
Prince George Citizen, online
Feb 12, 2021 2:15 PM

<https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/local-news/saikuz-first-nation-seeks-to-preserve-their-language-with-unbc-online-course-3424597>

Language revitalization is a priority for many First Nations across the province to prevent their language from being lost, forever. Saik'uz First Nation near Vanderhoof has teamed up with UNBC to offer learning of the Saik'uz dialect of Dakelh through an introductory online class to the Carrier language.

“Our language is very much endangered,” said Saik'uz cultural coordinator Deborah Page. With many recordings and interviews completed years ago in their traditional language by speakers who have since passed, translators have been difficult to come by. “They’re getting older, and we’re losing them at a very fast rate,” Page said of their language keepers. “Some of the ones that were doing the translations never really learned how to write the language, so we wanted to do a course that would teach the literacy and linguistics of the language.” Because COVID-19 has made it challenging to meet in-person, dashing the vision of a locally developed course, Page reached out to northern scholar linguist William (Bill) J. Poser. Once Poser agreed to teach it, Page said she spoke with their education department that would later contact UNBC about making it a credited course.

Since beginning his role last summer as UNBC’s chair of First Nation Studies, Dr. Daniel Sims has been interested in working more with communities. “Language revitalization is key,” Sims, a Tsay Keh Dene First Nation member, said. “But then also providing back to the community.” UNBC offers numerous First Nations language courses and provides students the opportunity to obtain a certificate, diploma, and or bachelor’s degree. While Sims had some concerns on how many students would enroll in the course, interest has been high and the 20-student minimum was surpassed. “We’re trying to figure out how big the class can be, and the interest has resulted in us as a university looking at how we can offer a similar version of the course or work with other communities to provide their own language courses,” he said. “We already do that with a number of communities, but seeing how we can work with them even more.”

Page never fully learned how to speak her language and estimates there are just 20 or fewer fluent speakers within their community. She was brought up by her grandmother, who went to residential school where she, like others, was punished for speaking their Indigenous language. “When she was in her 80s, she switched right back to Dakelh and hardly spoke English anymore so I had to learn it,” Page said. The course, which will provide students with three credits, is scheduled to run from Feb. 26 to May 21, 2021.

Community mourns loss of Elder Edie Frederick: She was instrumental in preserving, sharing and teaching her people's language

Prince George Citizen

Sept 17, 2024

<https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/local-news/community-mourns-loss-of-elder-edie-frederick-9535921>

There has been an outpouring of messages of grief after a Lheidli T’enneh elder died in a collision on the weekend.

Edie Frederick was the passenger in a taxi that collided with a pickup truck on Massey Drive Sunday afternoon.

It happened soon after the death of her mother, Elder Josie Paul.

Lheidli T'enneh First Nation closed its offices Monday.

"We understand the importance of coming together as a community during times of loss," reads a statement at www.lheidli.ca. "We encourage all those who knew this individual to offer their condolences and support to the grieving family during this difficult time."

Lheidli T'enneh First Nation will hold a Community Grief Support Night on Wednesday, Sept. 18 from 5-8 p.m. at the House of Ancestors. Council meetings scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 19 and Friday, Sept. 20 were cancelled.

Friends took to social media as the news spread.

"Our community has lost two elders within less than a week," wrote musician Kym Gouchie on Facebook. "A mother and daughter who were our dear friends. They were language keepers and knowledge holders. They were matriarchs in our nation and the backbones of their families."

Frederick's passion was for preserving and sharing her people's language.

"I had the pleasure of working with Edie for several years during my tenure at Lheidli T'enneh First Nation," posted Jason Morgan of Carrier Sekai Family Services.

"Her passion for language revitalization was remarkable. I greatly admired Edie's dedication to her community's language and her expertise as a fluent speaker. Her impact on education will be profoundly missed."

Frederick and her husband Robert were the University of Northern British Columbia's first elders in residence.

"I get to teach about Lheidli and the history and the language and the land. I get to teach everything about Lheidli; and that's not written in books," she told *The Citizen* in 2015. "There's nothing on Lheidli that's in textbooks so I get to teach this groundbreaking lesson and it's a great honour for me to do that."

Library announces Jeanne Clarke Local History Service Award recipients: Bill Poser, Ray Olson and Linda Campbell will be honoured at a ceremony Feb. 22.

Prince George Citizen
Feb. 6, 2026

<https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/local-news/library-announces-jeanne-clarke-local-history-service-award-recipients-11849055>

The Prince George Public Library Board has announced the recipients of the 2026 Jeanne Clarke Local History Service Award, to be presented at an event later this month.

This year's Service Award will honour Bill Poser, as well as Ray Olson and Linda Campbell, in

recognition of their long-standing contributions to preserving and sharing local history.

Poser is being recognized for more than three decades of work documenting, preserving and revitalizing the Dakelh language and history. His efforts have made a significant and lasting impact on Indigenous language research and cultural preservation in the Prince George region and beyond.

Olson and Campbell — she's affectionately known as the “Train Lady” — are receiving the award for their work promoting the history of small towns and communities east of Prince George along the historic East Line. Through interpretive train visits, they have shared stories of pioneer life from 1914, when the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway served as the main mode of transportation, through the mid-1960s, when road access and modern infrastructure connected the region to the rest of the province.

The awards ceremony will also feature a musical performance by local Indigenous author and musician Mike Gouchie, a nominee in the Publication Award category, who will perform an acoustic version of his song *Shattered Glass*.

The 41st annual Jeanne Clarke Local History Awards ceremony will take place Feb. 22 from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Prince George Conference and Civic Centre. In addition to the Service Awards, the winner of the 2026 Jeanne Clarke Publication Award will be announced.

The event is free to attend, with light refreshments provided. Seating is limited, and attendees are asked to RSVP by calling 250-563-9251 ext. 128, emailing communications@pgpl.ca, or registering online at www.pgpl.ca/node/8098.

A full list of nominees and more information about the awards is available at www.pgpl.ca/jeanne-clarke-local-history-awards.