Carrier Linguistic Society of Ft. St. James
Historical Sketch

By
Shirley Walker

The Carrier Linguistic Society is a First Nation’s Organization envisioned and initiated by Raymond Prince of the Nak’azdli Community. Ray named the Society as the Carrier Linguistic Committee, and it was incorporated into the Societies Act of British Columbia in 1973. In later years the name was changed to the Carrier Linguistic Society.

Raymond Prince was born in 1923. His family fished, hunted, and trapped and used dog teams for transportation.

As a young man Ray joined the Canadian Army in 1940. After training in Scotland he participated in the Canadian invasion of Sicily in 1943. Ray’s father was Alec Prince who grew up in Ft. St. James. Ray’s grandfather was Joe Prince also known as “Dayi cho” meaning Honorable Chief. Joe Prince was a son of Simeon le Prince and Simeon was the son of the famous Chief Kwah. Ray’s mother was Rosalie Austin from “K’uzche” the Carrier name for the Grand Rapids Reserve. Ray had four brothers and two sisters.

After World War Two Ray worked as a heavy construction operator and married in Vancouver. While there he had two children. That marriage didn’t last. Ray spent some time in the Northwest Territories making roads and also worked on the Bennett Dam. After that he moved to Terrace to work on the power line in 1965. He then did construction work near Takla Lake north of Stuart Lake. Ray’s father died in 1967, so Ray moved back to Ft. St. James. Ray started up a guiding business at Nation Lakes. He married a second time to Nellie Prince. They had five children.

Ray’s cousin, Betsy Leon, told Ray about her neighbor Dick Walker who was involved in language work. They met at the post office and became lifelong friends.
In 1961 Chief Duncan Sam gave permission for Dick and Shirley Walker to live on the Nak’azdli Reserve. While living on the Reserve, the Walkers were helped by many to start learning the Carrier language. Some of the main language helpers were Amelia Prince, Sam Lazare, Lazare and Betsy Pius, Armand Tylee, Jonas and Achille Lawrence, and Justa Sam. During that time, Dick completed a Phonemic Analysis of Carrier, and did a preliminary Grammar Sketch. He then tested his research with those who were helping him. With their approval, he finalized a practical orthography in 1964.

In 1970 two visionary First Nation’s people became acquainted with Dick. Through Betsy Leon, Dick was introduced to Ray Prince. Ray was curious. He had heard about the language work Dick was involved in, so he met Dick in the Post Office in Fort St. James and talked about helping him. Dick invited Ray to his study adjacent to his home on Kwah Road. Dick shared his dream with Ray. Dick’s goal was to keep on learning the Carrier language, produce literacy books for the schools, and translate the New Testament. That was the beginning of an involvement in language work for Ray Prince.

The other visionary person was Catherine Bird. She had already had a desire to see the Carrier language taught in the local schools, and had taught as a volunteer at Maria Goretti. Catherine came to the Walker’s and shared her
dream with them. She was looking for ideas on how to teach the language. Work on the first Carrier primers was initiated with Catherine Bird and Ray and Nellie.

That same year Dick Walker invited Dave and Kay Wilkinson, who had worked with the Sekani people, to come to join the language team in Fort Saint James. Dave held B.A degrees in Science and Education and a Master of Education degree. Dick’s idea was to expedite progress by Dave heading up the Carrier Literacy Team, and Dick heading up the Carrier Translation Team. Dick held a B.A. degree in Music and a Master of Divinity Degree. Both had graduate studies in Linguistics.

Work on Translation began with Dick, Lizette Hall, Francesca Antoine, Agnes Isaac and Catherine Bird. They worked on the Carrier book of Mark.

Catherine Bird also taught the Carrier language as a volunteer at the new school, David Hoy Elementary.

At the Dedication of David Hoy Elementary School in 1971, Principal Frank Pankratz introduced Dick Walker to Dr. Fred Speckeen, the President of the College of New Caledonia in Prince George. Through that introduction, Dick shared how the College of New Caledonia could become involved with the Carrier language program.
Catherine’s daughter Caroline came to stay with the Walker’s that year, and Catherine went to the College of New Caledonia to attend the Upgrading program. Application was made to the Canada Council for a dictionary grant. Dick Walker and Dave Wilkinson met in Victoria with the B.C. Teacher’s Association and also with the B.C. Member of Parliament to gain information and to share the goals of the Carrier language program.

In 1972 the Canada Council approved the grant proposal and Dave Wilkinson along with Francesca Antoine, Catherine Bird, Agnes Isaac, Nellie Prince, and Sally Sam started to work on the Central Carrier Bilingual Dictionary. The College of New Caledonia provided the computer department for the technical side of the work. That year Ray Prince and Catherine Bird also attended a Translation Workshop in Medicine Hat, Alberta.
In 1972 the Carrier Primers, *Nah’apodi Baghuni Books 1 & 2* were published. The *Central Carrier Alphabet* was published. The Short Stories Booklet entitled, *Nah’apodi Whut’enne Nawhuhulnuk* authored by Catherine Bird and Sam Lazare was published.

All this time Ray Prince was developing a dream of his own. He envisioned a First Nation’s organization that would involve all the Reserves of the Carrier Nation joining together to preserve and promote the Carrier language and culture. As Ray, Catherine, Dick and Dave worked together their dreams became a shared dream and the Carrier Linguistic Committee was born.

The Carrier Linguistic Committee became a registered society in 1973. This First Nation’s directed organization, with the assistance of trained linguists, was conceived to function as a service organization for the Carrier nation. The Committee’s letter of introduction is as follows:

**Carrier Linguistic Committee**

*Ft. St. James, B.C.*

*May 1, 1973*

We wish to take this opportunity to announce to you the formation of the Carrier Linguistic Committee, otherwise known as the CLC. This community of Fort Saint James has a high interest in the development of a Carrier Literacy Program.

The aims of the CLC are:

- to promote literacy programs among the people of the Carrier Nation
- to produce literacy materials such as primers, readers, workbooks, teacher’s guides, supplements, visual aids, maps songs, dictionaries, histories, legends, culture,
- to train teachers and develop an ongoing program of teacher training which could in time involve other language groups in B.C.
- to create professional positions through teacher training and creative workshops
e. to motivate Carrier young people towards higher education and profession
f. to preserve the Athabaskan culture evidenced among the Carrier people
g. to enrich the existing school systems by exposure to the study of the Carrier language and culture.
h. to publish whenever funds are available, as much literature as possible, in the Carrier language
i. to provide information to the general public concerning the programs in progress
j. to function as a regulating body in the area of seeking funds, and exercise authority over the distribution of any funds received by the CLC
k. to set quality standards for the literacy materials and teacher qualifications

We are very happy to have as our Executive the following people:

Board of Directors

Lazare Pius, Chief of the Nak’azdli Reserve
Francesca Antoine, Councilor for the Nak’azdli Reserve
Ray Prince, President of the Dakelh Trappers Association and member of BCANSI
Bob Antoine, Former Chief of the Nak’azdli Reserve
Peter Prince, Former Councilor of the Nak’azdli Reserve
Betsy Leon, Former Councilor and Health Worker, Nak’azdli Reserve
Dick Walker, MA, Linguist with Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)

Officers

Catherine Bird, President, Teacher, Dut’ai Enterprises, BCANSI
Dave Wilkinson, Vice President, MA in Education, Linguist with SIL
Shirley Walker, BA, SIL member

When Lizette Hall moved to Victoria, B.C. in 1974, Ray Prince, Francesca Antoine, and Agnes Isaac continued to be involved in translation work. When Lizette Hall moved back to Quesnel, she and Norman Prince completed the final checking of the *Central Carrier New Testament*. Later on, Lizette also did the preliminary translation of the book of *Genesis*.

The *Central Carrier Bilingual Dictionary* and the *Central Carrier Country Map* book were published in 1974.

When the Fort Saint James Historic Park opened in 1974, a memorial plaque was placed at the entrance. Dick Walker and Francesca Antoine translated the words of the plaque into Carrier, to make it a trilingual message in English, French, and Carrier.

1975 the Carrier Linguistic Committee copyrighted the Nak’azdli Illustrated Alphabet.
In 1975 the Carrier Translation Committee completed *Mark’Uk’unusguq-i*. Lazare and Betsy Pius checked the book of Acts with Dick Walker.

In that same year Dave Wilkinson and Mildred Martin saw the publication of the two *Workbooks* they had created with the help of the two artists involved being Leroy Frye and Wilma Reid.

1975 was the year of the first Teacher Training Program sponsored by the Nak’azdli Band, the Carrier Linguistic Committee and the College of New Caledonia. Chief Peter Prince acquired funds for the workshop. Dave Wilkinson was chosen to be the Coordinator of the Workshop. The Workshop was held in the basement of the Canadian Legion Building in Fort Saint James. Kay Wilkinson took over the composition and lay-out work from Leroy and Shirley Frye.

Southern Carrier people from the workshop adapted the *Primers* to their dialect.

Another milestone that year was that the District School Board incorporated the Carrier Language Program into their budget. Also in this year funds for curriculum development were provided by the Secretary of State.

In 1976 and 1978 the *Central Carrier Primers and Workbooks* were revised and published. During this time the *Primers, Workbooks, and Illustrated Alphabet* were being adapted and published in the dialects of Stoney Creek, Fort Fraser, and Nazko. Copyright permission was granted by the Carrier Linguistic Committee.

The second six week Teacher Training Workshop under the auspices of the College of New Caledonia was held in the Fire Hall in Fort Saint James. It was during this Workshop that Dr. Geoff O’Grady of the University of Victoria came as a guest lecturer.
1976 saw *Whel’a’ne Babe ‘Ut’en K’oh* published by the Carrier Translation Team. In addition, Kay Wilkinson did the typing of the *Story of Joseph.* In the latter part of 1976 the School Board approved the Carrier Literacy Program for Fraser Lake teachers. This year saw eight schools with the Carrier language being taught.

In 1977 the *Teacher’s Manual and Lesson Plans* was published to assist the Carrier teacher in this first language Primer series. Within this year the *Carrier Teacher’s Manual for Oral Instruction*, a manual for a second language approach, was published. The two readers, *Ts’oodunne Hik’uyadhduk-i Books 1 & 2* were also published. The readers were developed by a Carrier committee of five. Along with the readers, Ileen Heer wrote *Carrier songs* to accompany the Teacher’s Manual. They were recorded at the College of New Caledonia. Kay Wilkinson, with her background and knowledge in music, transcribed the melodies for print.

1977 saw the book *Paul Rome Whut’enne ‘Udechoo But’s’o K’eyanguz-i* published by the Carrier Translation Committee. This year Bernadette Rosetti worked on her *genealogy book* about Chief Kwah and his descendents in consultation with Shirley Walker.
In 1978 Ray Prince became President of the Carrier Linguistic Committee. April of this year saw the Nazko materials available for use.

In May, the third Carrier Teacher Training Workshop was held in the United Church in Fort Saint James. It was extended to eight weeks. By this time the Carrier Language Program had expanded to include ten schools in the district.

A two day conference was held in Prince George on Carrier Language Projects. It was attended by Dr. Saul Arbess, Director of Indian Education, Ministry of Education, Dr. Fred Speckeen, President of the College of New Caledonia, School Superintendents, and Carrier Chiefs.

In this same year a Strategy Conference was held which included Athabaskan educators and First Nations teachers from North West Territories and the Yukon.

In 1979 the Carrier Translation Team saw John 'Uk'uneyuyguz-i printed. Ray Prince recorded both John 'Uk'uneyuyguz-i and Paul Rome Whut'enne Buts'o K'eyanguz-i on audio tapes.

In 1980 the Nazko Primers were revised and the fourth Carrier Teacher Training Workshop was held in the Wilkinson Office Building in Fort Saint James.
The Training Workshops expanded the number of graduates to sixty-two.

The *Stoney Creek Primer and Workbook* were completed.

In 1982 The *Fort Fraser Primers* were completed and available to teachers.

1983 Bernadette’s book, *Kw’eh Ts’u Haidene* was published. She also published the legend she entitled, *The Lame Girl* in 1985.

The book, *Nek’uyalhduk-i*, a conversational approach to learning Carrier, was written by Shirley Walker and Francesca Antoine and was published for classroom use.


In 1986 the Carrier Linguistic Committee participated in a literacy conference at the Shelly Reserve and assisted them in their program of developing their own Primers in the Shelly dialect.

During 1986 the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council held an Education Conference which the Carrier Linguistic Committee attended that year, and another one in 1988. Ed John founded the Yinka Dene Institute. In October 1989 Catherine Bird and Dick Walker instructed at the YDLI Teacher Training.

At the invitation of the Yinka Dene Language Institute, CLC workers began four bilingual classroom dictionaries from the initial idea of Ileen Heer. She, as a classroom teacher, realized how helpful it would be for students to have a classroom dictionary that related to the Primers. All the vocabulary of the Primers was not found in the Bilingual Dictionary already published in the Central Carrier Dialect.

The Classroom Dictionary for the Central Carrier of Fort Saint James was published in 1991 with a joint copyright with the Carrier Linguistic Committee and the Yinka Dene Institute in Vanderhoof. People who worked on this project were: Irene Antoine, Catherine Bird, Ileen Heer, Mildred Martin, and Florence Sam.

The other YDLI and CLC Classroom Dictionaries published in the ‘90’s were in the Stoney Creek, Babine, and Sekani dialects. Dick Walker acted as Coordinator and Linguist for each of the four classroom dictionaries.

The people who authored the Stoney Creek dictionary were: Mary John, Gracie John, and Mary John Jr.

The authors who worked on the Babine dictionary were: Dorothy Patrick, and Susie Tress. Elder Consultants were: Gordon Joseph, Antoine Tom, John and Veronica Dennis, and Casimel Williams. Linguistic Consultant was Hank Hildebrandt.

The authors of the Sekani classroom dictionary were: Theresa Alexis, Sam Chingee, and Florence Prince. The elder consultants were: Harry Chingee, Sam Chingee, and Max Tylee.
Early into the 1990’s the YDLI gained permission from the Carrier Linguistic Committee to use the original text of the CLC/YDLI Children’s Dictionary project for adaptation for Video which became the Nak’azdli/Tl’azt’en Children’s Dictionary. The adaptation team was made up of Catherine Bird, Mildred Martin, Rose Pierre, Lynda Prince, Francesca Antoine, Ray Prince and Nellie Prince. Art work was by Victor Morris and Russell Haskell. The Bar Code Production was done by ThirdWave Communications Inc.

Ray Prince and Dick Walker traveled to Quesnel to meet with Laura Boyd, Doreen Patrick and others to be of consultant help. In 1993 the Ndazdeh Huwhut’en Hubughunek Nazko Dictionary was printed.

The year of 1995 saw many books for classroom use completed and printed. They included: Chuntuz Tizya: Traveling and Making Camp by Flo Sam and Mildred Martin. The other books they co-authored were: Dab’et: Fall, Danghun: Summer, Khit: Winter, ’Oluth: Spring, Huwa ‘oohdli whe Nuwhuthyeh: Play It Safe, Ulba Bulh ’Ut’en: Working With Father, and ’Uloo Bulh ’Ut’en: Working with Mother. Neghuni was also printed, which was the illustrated alphabet in book form.
In 1995 the Carrier Translation Team held a celebration day for the printed 
*Yah'usda Ooghunt*: in the Central Carrier Dialect. Chief of the Carrier Sekani 
Tribal Council emceed the celebration. 
Several people at various times worked to make this become a reality. 

The prominent ones who served on the Translation Team were: Betsy 
Antoine, Francesca Antoine, Catherine Bird, Betsy Dennis, Francis Dennis, Charlie 
Dominic, Lizette Hall, Agnes Isaac, Lazare and Betsy Pius, Norman Prince, Ray and 
Nellie Prince, Bernadette Rosetti, and Dick Walker.

Grants were received from the First Peoples Heritage, Language and Culture 
Council. These funds were used to further develop a curriculum for the local high 
school in Ft. St. James, so that the Carrier language could be recognized as a second 
language choice for the students. One of the teachers in the high school was Ileen 
Heer and later Gloria Duncan. Both teachers were also very active in curriculum 
development.

In 1997 Vivian Cahoose, Theresa Holte, and Doreen Sill began work as a 
Translation Team with Dick Walker. They adapted the Central Carrier New 
Testament to the Anahim Lake dialect. They worked together in Williams Lake, as 
well as at Anahim Lake.

The Southern Carrier *Yah'usda Bughunek* New Testament was completed 
and in print in 2002.
The celebration days of completion were held in Quesnel and also at Tweedsmuir Park.

After that Vivian began drafting the book, *Soo 'Udechos Whe'whudit'en*, the book of Genesis in the Anahim Lake dialect. Then she asked Dick Walker and Doreen Sill to check through it with her. This book was printed in 2006 using the Carrier Linguistic Society alphabet.
In 1999 the Anahim Lake Nagwunt’oo Bughunek Elementary Dictionary was drafted by Janie Jack, Theresa Holte and Bella Leon. They asked Dick Walker to read through the draft.

In Ft. St. James funds were provided for Catherine Bird Coldwell to complete the *Nah’azdli Carrier Hymn and Prayer Book*. Catherine put a tremendous amount of work into this project and the Carrier Linguistic Society recognizes her diligence. The book was published in the orthography of the CLS in December of 2005.

The planning committee members of the CLS at this point in time were: Yvonne Piereroy, Gloria Duncan, Deborah Page, Catherine Coldwell, Mildred Martin, Florence Sam, and Rita Henkes. They were working towards the Carrier Language and Culture being recognized and taught at University level. Also pictured are members of the CLS and Carrier teachers.

September of 2006 became the year that the Carrier Linguistic Society and the University of Northern British Columbia joined forces to initiate a new program of teacher training.

The inaugural luncheon was held in the Kwah Memorial Hall in Fort Saint James. Students and Staff enjoyed the excitement of a day making history for potential Carrier teachers of the future.
The UNBC Staff present at the luncheon were:

President: Don Cozzetto,
Director of Regional Operations, and
College/University Relations: Dennis Mack
Chair South-Central Regional Campus: Blanca Schorcht,
Regional Services Coordinator, South-Central Regional Campus: Darlene Wooldridge,
Dean, College of Arts, Socials, and Health Sciences: Jim Randall, Director, First Nations Centre: Paul Michel, Chair First Nations Study Program: Antonia Mills, Coordinator: Carrier Language Program/Executive Assistant to the Vice-President (Academic) and Provost, Yvonne Pierreroy.

Chief Leonard Thomas gave the welcoming speech. President Don Cozzetto also gave a speech and acknowledged the efforts of Catherine Bird Coldwell who offered a prayer.

The Carrier students of this new teacher training program gave promise for the future. Other teachers trained in connection with the Carrier Linguistic Society, in cooperation with the College of New Caledonia, and the Yinka Dene Language Institute have over the years sustained the Carrier language by teaching in several dialect communities. These include: Tache, Portage, Takla Landing, Nadleh, Shelly, Stoney Creek, Nazko, Anahim Lake, and Ft. St. James. Some of the teachers were: Laura Boyd, Catherine Bird Coldwell, Mabel Daley, Nellie Dionne, Gloria Duncan, Ileen Heer, Janie Jack, Irene Joseph, Pauline Joseph, Sally Joseph, Barb Lessard, Mildred Martin, Nellie Prince, and Florence Sam.

Mildred Martin taught the Carrier Language and Culture at Maria Goretti in Ft. St. James for nine years and then taught at Tache for four years. She has been very active in curriculum development over the years.

Florence Sam took Mildred’s position at Maria Goretti which became Nak’al Bun Elementary in 1995 and in addition to teaching, has also been active in
curriculum development. Florence holds both a College of New Caledonia Certificate, and since 1995 a continuing certificate with Independent Schooling.

Nellie Dionne was employed as a Teacher Assistant at David Hoy Elementary and completed three years training with Adult Education, before taking the position of Teacher of the Carrier Language and Culture. She has been teaching for more than twenty years. Nellie was awarded the B.C. Premiers Award For Teaching Excellence March 3, 2008.

Sally Joseph taught the Carrier Language and Culture classes at Portage beginning in the 1980’s and continued teaching to 2003. She enjoyed teaching the children in outdoor activities involving snowshoes, drum making, setting fish traps, and taking nature walks.

Since 1993 the Carrier language classes have been taught at the University of Northern British Columbia. Levels 1 & 2 were offered each Fall and Winter Semester. Catherine Bird Coldwell and Yvonne Pierreroy developed the curriculum for the two levels of study. Florence Sam and Yvonne Pierreroy developed the curriculum for Levels 3 & 4. These were reviewed by Catherine Bird Coldwell and Mildred Martin. Over the years instructors teaching the University courses included: Linguist Margaret Anderson teaching with Ileen Heer, Linguist Bill Poser teaching with Yvonne Pierreroy, Catherine Bird Coldwell co-teaching with Yvonne Pierreroy, and Nellie Prince co-teaching with Yvonne Pierreroy and then teaching on her own.

The full program included the requirements for three separate credentials. Students could opt for:

1. The Certificate in Carrier Language comprising 30 credits
2. The Diploma in Carrier Language comprising 30 additional credits
3. The Education Diploma comprising 23 additional credits.

Students who completed the Certificate Program and the 2 year Diploma program in 2008 at Kwah Hall, the UNBC Regional Campus were: Susan Barfoot, Caroline Bird, Edna Cameron, Mabel Daley, Ruby Dominic, Dale Joseph, Pauline Joseph, Jo Anne Leon, Carla Martin, Vera Mattess, Deborah Page, Francois Prince, Sara Sam, Shana Schwentner, and Myrna Thomas. JoAnne Leon and Sara Sam graduated in Prince George with the Education Diploma in 2010.

Instructors for the FNST UNBC courses included, Catherine Bird Coldwell, Gloria Duncan, and Dick Walker. Guest Elders included Betsy Mayo and Mildred Martin and many others for the Cultural on site immersion courses.
Dick Teaching Linguistics
Darlene Wooldridge Regional Services Coordinator UNBC South Central

Betsy Mayo
Outdoor Fishing Immersion Class

Catherine, Dick & Dick Benoit
Outdoor Hunting Immersion Class

Dick Benoit
Outdoor Hunting Immersion Class

Mildred Martin
Outdoor Tanning Immersion Class
Sara Sam and Jo Anne Leon continued on for further schooling at UNBC in Prince George beginning Sept. 2010.

Mabel Daley adapted the Carrier Linguistic Society Primers and alphabet chart to her dialect and returned to teaching at the Tatl’ah School Fall of 2010.

Ruby Dominic worked for the Tache Nation Elders Society under the mandate of Language and Culture revitalization. She worked with William Poser on the Tl’azt’en Dictionary. She then began doing infrastructure for Yekooche as well as teaching dancing and making regalia.
Carla Martin assumed a team teaching position with Florence Sam at the Nak’albun School in Ft. St. James.

Pauline Carla Jo Anne Francis Ruby

Pauline Joseph taught at Tache.

Francis Prince assumed a teaching position at the Portage School.

Deborah Page worked with First Voices developing Carrier Language Lessons online while filling the position of office manager for the Carrier Linguistic Society and was also a board member of the Society. She then took the position of Saik’uz Education Coordinator. The Carrier Linguistic Society gave permission for her to use the templates she designed and formatted for the Ft. St. James dialect in order to adapt the language lessons to the Saik’uz dialect. While in Ft. St. James she worked with Dennis Cumberland recording First Voices Lessons.

Coordinators for the DSTC Program were: Yvonne Pierreroy, Shirley Walker, and Sharon Bird. Sharon began the Professional Development Program after the DSTC Program concluded.

In 2008 while the DSTC Program was being implemented, the Carrier Linguistic Society began a Revision of the Carrier Dictionary with First People’s Heritage, Language & Culture Council. In addition, Deborah Page initiated the First Voices Language Lessons under Peter Brand.
In 2009 the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council posted the following on their website:

The Nak’azdli Band and the Carrier Linguistic Society (CLS) are the official language authorities for the Nak’azdli Community. Dakelh experts Catherine Coldwell and Mildred Martin and Linguist Richard Walker have been working to edit and update the Central Carrier Bilingual Dictionary, first published in 1974.

In April of 2010 the Carrier Linguistic Society representatives attended the School District 91 Carrier Language Curriculum and Resources Discussion meeting in the Fraser Lake Adult Learning Center.

In January of 2011 Sara Sam offered Carrier Welcome greetings to be displayed on the walls at UNBC. The Carrier Linguistic Society anticipates more Carrier students to be trained at the University.

It is encouraging to see the dreams of the Elders and that of Dick Walker being fulfilled in the younger generations desiring to keep their language and culture alive.

Board of Directors & Officers:

Chief Fred Sam

Catharine Coldwell

Flo Sam & Gloria Duncan

Mark Prince, Rita Henkes, & Sara Sam