

Carrier book a way to preserve language

Tyler Clarke, The Cutbanks

Doing his part to keep the Carrier Language alive, local author William J. Poser has recently released a book through the CNC Press titled *The Carrier Language: A Brief Introduction*.

A self-proclaimed "Jew from Vermont," Poser first became interested in the Carrier language in the early 90's. He became inclined to write a book about the language when he noticed graffiti in Fort St. John written in Carrier. Interested in translating it, and noticing that there weren't too many books on the subject already, he made the decision to write one himself.

"I thought it wouldn't be that hard

to do so I sat down and wrote it myself," he said. Having researched American First Nations languages earlier on in his career when he was a member of the Linguistics Department at Stanford University from 1983 to 1994, Poser was already well-versed in the nuances of First Nations languages.

"I've been compiling information," he said. "A lot of it comes from dictionary databases."

Other information has been gathered by Poser through discussions and other means of research, with write-ups in his new book on the history of the language, residential school's effect on it, as well as a traditional First Nations story written in Carrier. The book, he added, is intended as an instructional tool to help teach the basics of the Carrier language.

"It's important," he said of retaining languages and of his new book. "It in itself it won't preserve the language. It really depends on whether or not people in the community use it."

Language, he added, helps in understanding certain aspects of different cultures. As a result of the residential school system, First Nations people were made to feel ashamed of their native language, something Poser sincerely hopes will change.

That said, Poser admits that it'll be tricky for people to become fluent in the language again.

"It's hard to become fluent because in most places it isn't spoken around," he said.

"I would like school teachers to know more about language, and maybe this is a way to do that," he said of his book.

Celebrated with a Doctorate in Linguistics, Poser is currently a Research Consultant to the Yinka Dene Language Institute based in Vanderhoof.

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William J. Poser with his book.

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