

Alaska Native Language Center News

Two paperback books recently published by the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, should be useful to anyone interested in the traditional oral literature of Alaskan Athabaskans.

Eliza Jones of ANLC collected the traditional Koyukon riddles that her uncle, the late Chief Henry of Huslia, knew. They have been published as a set of cards with a riddle on one side and the answer on the other, with translations included. Koyukon riddles are told in a fascinating style very reminiscent of poetry: an object is described in metaphoric language and the listeners have to guess what the questioner is describing in his poetic way. The riddle set can be bought from ANLC for \$2.50.

"The War at Nay'nadeli" recounts the story of a small war between the Ahtna Athabaskans of the Tyone Lake-Denali area and the Nenana River Athabaskans. The storytellers are Henry Peters, age 65, and his mother Jennie Peters, age 84, who were both born at Valdez Creek near the abandoned gold town of Denali and now live at Cantwell. Jennie's grandfather was the chief of the Ahtna band in this war, which Jennie estimates took place about 1865. The story, in Ahtna with English translations, is full of picturesque detail and exciting moments, and is a unique contribution to Alaskan Native history. The book costs \$1.00, also from ANLC.

Readers who are interested in Alaskan Native literature and history may write to ANLC, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 for a descriptive price list of publications.