

# Tlingit Indian Singer



Richard Dick.

## TALENTED INDIAN COMPOSER

## SINGS SONGS IN OWN LANGUAGE

By HOWARD ROCK  
Times Editor

"When I sing, I put my life into it," said Richard Dick, a Tlingit Indian living in Skagway.

Richard Dick is an exceptionally fine guitarist who accompanies this instrument with his deep, resonant baritone voice singing songs many of which are ones he composed himself.

"One day, I heard the 'Voice of the Andes' in which the Aztec Indians were singing their religious songs," Dick said. "I noticed a certain beat like the Tom-Tom beat that helped me to arrive at the style and beat of my songs."

A month ago, he was invited to Juneau to sing at the Juneau-Douglas High School to help raise funds for the

(Continued on Page 5)

# Tlingit Indian Singer . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Tlingit-Haida Central Council.

"I sang songs in Tlingit language. My people heard me and I could see tears in their eyes. They understood what I was singing about," he said. "You see, they don't always have the opportunity to hear their language used in songs."

Dick said that Tlingit dances are done with chants and drums without words but costumes tell the stories.

"A dancer may do the dance of the bear with the appropriate costume as well as dances of the wolf, raven, killer whale or any animal we have in the Southeastern," he said.

Richard Dick is something of a comedian also. He sings "Don't Be Cruel" in Tlingit language a la Elvis Presley simulating the well known movements of the famous singer. This performance usually brings down the house.

The Tlingit singer is a member of the Skagway troupe, "Days of 98," that performs for tourists during the tourist season in the famous historic town.

"Not taking it away from the group, but I sometimes steal the show at our performances," he said.

"Arising from his excellent performances, Dick is constantly being encouraged by numerous tourists telling him that he "was wasting his time" and that he should go "big time" like in a city of Las Vegas.

After the tourist season is over in Skagway, the singer is planning to come to Fairbanks with the idea of preparing a program for the Alaska 67 Centennial.

"I want to join the Musician's Union there and try to become a professional also. I feel that my chances would be better there because you have a union, television and radio stations," he said.

Richard Dick is a huge Tlingit Indian six foot four inches tall. He works in summer tying up tour ships from May to the middle of October.

"I do pretty well considering the time I work," he said.

He has been married and has two children, Gilbert, 16, and Inga Betty, 17, who live with him.

He was born in Angoon in 1925. He moved to Skagway in 1944. He was with the Army Engineers during World War II.

Richard Dick sings his songs in English and Tlingit. Asked why he sang in Tlingit, he answered in his deep, resonant voice:

"I did it to convince my people that it could be done. My people have been throwing away something that is very rich in our culture."