

# *Alaska Native Language Center News*

The Alaska Native Language Center, in cooperation with the Society for the Preservation of Haida Language and Literature, has published a major new dictionary of the Alaskan Haida language.

The dictionary contains about 2,700 Haida entries, with example sentences for all the verbs, and an English index. Erma Lawrence of Ketchikan compiled the dictionary entries with the assistance of Vesta Johnson, Robert and Nora Cogo, and Christine Edenso. Jeff Leer of ANLC edited the dictionary and wrote a 150-page introduction explaining the sounds and grammar of Haida for students of the language. The Haida Society sometimes conducts classes in learning Haida for interested persons in Southeastern Alaska and will be using the dictionary in the curriculum.

Alaskan Haida is spoken by about 200 people, most of whom live in the Hydaburg-Ketchikan area. Haida is also spoken on the Queen Charlotte Islands right over the Canadian border. The people of Masset, B.C. speak a dialect very like the Alaskan one, but the people of Skidegate, B.C. speak a very different dialect of the same language. The Haida language is not known to be related to any other language in the world.

The Haida people began to develop a written literature around the beginning of the twentieth century, but Haida speaking and writing were severely suppressed in the schools by the U.S. Government, starting in 1912. After sixty years of complete suppression, during which most of the children of several generations grew up losing their language, efforts were re-initiated in 1972, when a new writing system for the language was developed with the support of ANLC. Since then the Haida Society has been very active in producing literary and instructional books and establishing an important archive of tape recordings in Haida. Erma Lawrence and Charles Natkong, of Hydaburg, have been the most active writers in the language. Lawrence has taught Haida to students ranging in age from preschool to college level. She has also translated many parts of the Bible into Haida. Vesta Johnson, also of Ketchikan, administers many of the functions of the Society, including organizing the workshop at which the dictionary was edited. Johnson also serves as archivist for the tape collection.

The Haida Dictionary is priced at \$10.00 and may be purchased from the Society for the Preservation of Haida Language and Literature, c/o Mrs. Vesta Johnson, 3715 Baranof, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901.