

The Society for the Native Languages of the Americas

To all those interested in the Native languages of the Americas:

This communication is the first of a planned series of newsletters of a newly formed Society for the Native Languages of the Americas (proposed name). In response to a Call circulated earlier this year, a charter for the Society was proposed, amended and adopted at the recent meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Washington, D.C. An ad hoc executive committee was also appointed and charged with the task of collecting a membership list, circulating a newsletter and drafting a proposal for a set of by-laws for the Society. This first communication reports on the meeting.

Also included are a membership form (see the last page of this communication), information about the procedure for drafting by-laws, and a call for papers for next year's meeting in Los Angeles.

In order for this information to reach all who might be interested one way or another in this new Society, we urge you to pass this newsletter along, or post it, or to write to any of the ad hoc committee members (addresses below), with names of people who should know about the Society. Comments, criticisms, and suggestions of any sort are also welcomed.

January 14, 1981

-- Kenneth W. Whistler  
ad hoc committee member

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Report from Wick R. Miller, Chairman of the committee of the whole at the Conference on American Indian Languages (CAIL), December 5, 1980, Washington, D.C.

A business meeting of the CAIL was held Friday evening, December 5th, to consider the formation of a formal organization for the group that has been meeting informally for almost 20 years in conjunction with the American Anthropological Association's annual meeting.

Various letters of support for the formation of an organization from 32 people who could not attend the AAA meeting were reported on, along with their suggestions and comments.

A draft charter was presented to the meeting. After much discussion it was overwhelmingly accepted, with an amendment that related to the name of the group. (We ran into problems in trying to get the name to mean what we intended it to mean, and to be unambiguous in covering Canada, the U.S.A., and Latin America, as well as referring to all the Native languages of the Western Hemisphere, including Eskimo and Aleut. The problem was referred to the ad hoc committee--see below--for resolution.)

While sentiment was overwhelmingly positive, it was not unanimous, and the minority opinion should be represented in this report. There was one negative vote on adoption of the charter. In addition, Kenneth Hale (who was not able to be at the meeting) asked that his name be removed from the list of those who signed the Call. A number of Native American linguists are planning a conference this spring, to be held at the University of Arizona, Tucson, at which time they plan to form an association as well. We received a letter from them, asking us to delay our organizational meeting until next year.



## Report from Wick R. Miller (cont.)

The opinion of the majority of those attending the business meeting was that: (1) The aims of the two groups should not be in conflict--in effect we are formalizing a relation of almost 20 years standing with the AAA, and (2) since the effort to organize formally began two years ago at the AAA meeting in Los Angeles, and since all the appropriate groundwork had been laid in getting ready for this year's meeting, we might lose the momentum if we waited. A number of people came to the meetings in Washington specifically to be at this business meeting and participate in the charter discussion. (3) There was a certain urgency in getting our relationship with AAA and with the International Journal of American Linguistics clarified. It was unanimously agreed, however, that we need to work closely, during the following year when our by-laws are being formulated and thereafter, with the Native American constituency within and outside of the anthropological-linguistic academic community.

Carl and Flo Voegelin were not able to be with us in Washington, and they were missed. It was reported to us that had Carl been there he would have opposed formation of a formal organization on the grounds that we don't need one. But, on the other hand, it was reported by Jane Hill and Victor Golla, who have had the greatest amount of contact with the AAA head office recently, that in fact it is likely that we may have problems in our relationship with the AAA if we maintain our present loose and informal structure.

The question of our annual meeting was discussed. There seemed to be a consensus that normally we should meet with the AAA, but that we should occasionally meet with the Linguistic Society of America, and that we should have the option to choose another format from time to time should circumstances warrant. It is hoped that the by-laws will reflect this sentiment.

An ad hoc committee was elected to draft a set of by-laws and to handle interim business of the new Society.

--Wick R. Miller

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The members of the ad hoc committee and their current addresses and phone numbers are:

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The ad hoc committee is interested in receiving any ideas people may have about the by-laws and what they should or should not contain. Please either write or call a member of the committee with your comments. For the basic nuts and bolts of what by-laws should in principle contain, the committee is referring to the by-laws of the LAS ("Constitution," in the December LSA Bulletin of each year) and of the AAA ("Constitution and By-Laws," most recently in the AAA Anthropology Newsletter for March 1980, pp. 9-10). The details of our organization will, of course, be different.

One particular point on which we would be glad to receive advice and guidance is on the matter of the name for the organization. Our tentative working name is "The Society for the Native Languages of the Americas". Arguments against using the traditional expression "American Indian Languages" were voiced at the organizational meeting: "American" was objected to as potentially interpretable as referring only to the United States of America, and "Indian" was similarly thought perhaps to exclude Eskimo and Aleut.

The draft by-laws for the organization will be circulated by late spring, 1981, to all members. Comments and suggestions would be welcome then as well as now. At the first formal meeting of the organization, at the 1981 AAA meetings in Los Angeles, the draft by-laws will be formally presented for adoption, with changes possible at that time.

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#### 1981 Call for Papers

Those who would like to present papers in the 1981 sessions of the organization, to be part of the annual meeting of the AAA in Los Angeles, should follow the instructions in the November, 1980, Anthropology Newsletter, pp. 9-12, but submit all the required forms (including registration form and check) to Eric Hamp (Dept. of Linguistics, Univ. of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637) by March 1, 1981, so that he can organize sessions and forward our program as a complete package to the AAA program committee by their deadline. To submit a paper you must be a member of the AAA (regular or student); you may join at the time of submitting your abstracts (see the Anthropology Newsletter).

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#### MEMBERSHIP IN SNLA

Anyone who would like to become a member of SNLA at this time should fill out and return a membership form (below). Members will be retained on the mailing list to receive future notices of the Society. Please send \$2.00 to: The Society for the Native Languages of the Americas, c/o Ken Whistler, National Anthro. Archives, NHB, Rm. 60A, Stop 152, Smithsonian Inst., Washington, DC 20560. Checks may be made payable to SNLA.