

## **Indigenous New Words Creation Perspectives from Alaska and Hawai'i**

Larry Kimura, University of Hawai'i Hilo & Hawaiian Lexicon Committee  
*Isiik* April G.L. Counciller, University of Alaska Fairbanks & Alutiiq Museum

This paper describes the context, background and history of the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee and Alutiiq New Words Council. It discusses committee membership, word formation techniques and other relevant issues involved in developing new vocabulary for indigenous languages so that these languages can be used to discuss new things and concepts that were not known previously to speakers of these languages.

Threatened language groups facing terminological deficiencies are increasingly seeking to develop new words to modernize their lexicon. The Hawaiian Lexicon committee has created new words for two decades, following work first done in the 'Aha Pūnana Leo schools in 1983. The Alutiiq New Words Council in Kodiak Alaska began work in the Fall of 2007. While differing greatly in the age of their programs, there are some strong connections between the two committees, such as an implicit connection to their wider language revitalization movements. Both also share linguistic-self determination as a guiding force, as well as an awareness of global forces, against which these activities are a form of resistance.

The authors of this article, Counciller and Kimura, met when a small contingent of Alutiiq representatives from Alaska visited the Hawaiian programs in 2003 as the Kodiak Alutiiq community was just forming its language revitalization program. When the Kodiak New Words Council was created, Kimura was invited to participate in the early stages, sparking a collaboration between the two organizations.

### **The Hawaiian Lexicon Committee**

The reestablishment of the Hawaiian language as a medium of public school education after a 90 year ban resulting from the overthrow of the independent Hawaiian Nation in 1893 rekindled a commitment for Hawaiian language and culture revitalization with significant consequences for the betterment of native Hawaiian well being (Wilson & Kamanā, 2001). The creation of new Hawaiian words helps to keep pace with new items and concepts emerging from our modern global society.

The Hawaiian Lexicon Committee under the auspices of the Hale Kuamo'o Hawaiian Language Center of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo's Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language in consortium with the Hawaiian language immersion preschool program 'Aha Pūnana Leo, has produced new word lists since the incorporation of the non-profit 'Aha Pūnana Leo in 1983, and the acceptance of Hawaiian medium education into the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) in 1987. These new Hawaiian word lists have resulted in

## *Indigenous Language Revitalization*

publication of Hawaiian new words dictionary, *Māmaka Kaiāo* (Kōmike Hua‘ōlelo Hou, 2003), in 1996, 1998 and 2003 with over 6,500 entries.

The creation of new words began with plans to start Pūnana Leo Hawaiian language medium preschools in 1983. Potential teachers, among whom were native speakers of the language and ‘Aha Pūnana Leo founders, met to plan and prepare a Hawaiian preschool program. New words needed to be coined for such concepts as a gathering circle to start and end the day (*lina poepoe*), a snack (*mea‘ai māmā*) in the morning and afternoon, independent activities (*hana ‘ae‘oia*), to trace a figure (*ho‘omahaka*), or “playing house” (*pā‘ani ‘anakē*). These words grew out of necessity and were immediately put to use with the start of the first Pūnana Leo School Hawaiian medium preschool in 1984.

In 1987 a small team of Hawaiian curriculum developers came together at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo to create the first content material for the Fall DOE Hawaiian immersion combined kindergarten-first grade school program. Some of the content work entailed translations of math, science and social studies lessons. The small team of five regular members consisted of Hawaiian language educators, Kauānoe Kamanā, Pila Wilson, Larry Kimura and Leinani Raffipiy. The team was augmented at times with input from Hawaiian native speaking educators Elama Kanāhele and Sarah Nākoa, Hawaiian language teachers Hōkūlani Cleeland and Paul Koki Williams and from a Mohawk educator and language revitalization leader Dorothy Lazore. At the end of each day, members of the Hawaiian team would gather to review and approve new words that had been coined within the contexts of their curriculum work or to discuss and create words for circumstances in which Hawaiian was not then being used. Larry Kimura was designated Committee Chairperson of this new words committee, a position he still holds.

In 1988, a small portion of a Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) federal grant helped to continue the Hawaiian new words committee with seven native speaking elders representing five major islands of Hawai‘i. The *kūpuna* (elders) were Leilehua Lindsey, Edward Like and Joseph Maka‘ai representing the island of Hawai‘i, Helen Wahineokai representing Maui, Lani Kapuni representing Moloka‘i and Sarah Nākoa representing O‘ahu. Elama Kanāhele, then in her late thirties, represented Ni‘ihau and Kaua‘i. This native speaking elders committee was assisted by second language speakers, Pila Wilson and Haunani Drecshel, both Hawaiian language educators and linguists, Kalani Akana, Hawaiian educator, Larry Kimura, Hawaiian language educator and Committee Chairperson, and the recorder for the Committee was University of Hawai‘i fourth year Hawaiian language student Kana‘i Kapeliela. The Committee held six meetings on O‘ahu over a one-year period with two *kūpuna* who were flown in from their islands for the meetings. The new words committee members served without compensation and this has been the rule over the years up to the current Committee.

The Hawaiian *kūpuna* (elder) committee members represented the last of the native speaking generation estimated to be less than 2,000 at that time, with highly fluent speakers 70 years or older. The exception to this count was

the population of less than 250 living on the privately owned island of Ni‘ihau [This island was purchased fee simple in 1863 from the Kingdom of Hawai‘i by a private owner and remains the property of the purchaser’s descendents (Joesting, 1987)] in 1988 where Hawaiian was then spoken by all age groups. The selection of an all *kūpuna* member committee was to honor the last of the native Hawaiian speakers who gained first language fluency through their home and community environments. All had been raised in rural areas of Hawai‘i. Two had attained professional education certification, three had completed high school and two had gone to elementary school only. All of the *kūpuna* members, except for the representative from the Ni‘ihau-Kaua‘i community, were not then current active users of their language. As was then typical of their generation, they did not use the language with their own families or even with their peers. English had become their dominant language of communication in everyday affairs but they were still fluent in Hawaiian when they were engaged to use it.

The assistant members to the *kūpuna* committee were all second language speaking language activists and were thus beginning to use Hawaiian on a daily basis at work and at home. They were encountering the challenges of not having Hawaiian words for a myriad of modern items and concepts. They were attempting to create words out of necessity without any consensus of approval from the approximate 2,000 less active speaking elder generation of native speakers.

Words such as “theory” or “evolution” from school content material were great challenges for the *kūpuna* committee. They could participate in informal discussion in Hawaiian about the meanings of such words and make attempts to explain these concepts through Hawaiian but they found it difficult to create actual words for these areas of science. The descriptive approach as the initial attempt on the part of native speakers for creating new Hawaiian words was a natural approach and conformed to some of the terms that developed during the late eighteenth century, for example:

*mea wehe kini*, Can opener. Lit., something to open a can.

*ipu hao*, Iron pot. Lit., iron gourd.

*waihona palapala kahiko*, Archive. Lit., place to deposit old documents.

However, the terms discussed in the committee were often much longer, e.g., ‘*i’o pipi i wili ‘ia* (Hamburger. Lit., cow meat that is ground up), *pahu aniani no ka i‘a* (Aquarium. Lit., glass box for fish), *pahu ho‘olele leo* (Radio. Lit., box that sends out a voice), and were not realistically considered for contemporary use in the same way that shorter words from traditional culture were, e.g., *lo‘i* (Irrigated taro field.), *mākolū* (Net mesh three fingers in depth.) and *kahuli* (Overtaken as a canoe).

Because the native speakers had difficulty creating new words, the direction for the *kūpuna* committee quickly switched from Hawaiian immersion curriculum content, to clarifying words recorded in the Hawaiian dictionary relating to the home, health conditions or cultural values. Sometimes there was no Hawaiian word for a common household item such as a clothes hanger. The active second

## *Indigenous Language Revitalization*

language users would have coined a word (*uea kau lole*. Literally wire upon which clothes is hung.). Then it would be presented to the *kūpuna*, and more often than not, receive their approval.

The committee member who represented the Hawaiian that already existed in the viable Ni‘ihau Hawaiian speaking community would participate more actively with things around the home that the non-active native language users would not have a word for. The existing Hawaiianized sound for bicycle, *paikikala* for example, was also pronounced *paisikala* and *pisikala* by Ni‘ihau Hawaiian speakers, and they could name parts of the bicycle such as the fender (*pale kaea/huila*. Literally tire protector.) or the spokes in the wheel (*kukuna kaea/huila*. Literally, tire rays). The other *kūpuna* members had no choice but to approve of these words since they had not used the Hawaiian language to communicate about a bicycle, a common mode of transportation on Ni‘ihau. The approval of new words or clarifications of existing words by the *kūpuna* committee was by consensus.

Consensus for the *kūpuna* committee, and also for the current committee, means that there is a good understanding of the goals and mission of the work at hand so that personality differences of individuals do not deter from the mission. Disagreements and different points of view are healthy and are the rule of a new words committee, but working through consensus results in a sound and efficient new words committee. Each indigenous community will know its own language situation and hopefully keep an open but focused mind in maintaining a forward motion for the needs of their languages.

In the meantime, the pressure for new Hawaiian words in curriculum content and pedagogy kept multiplying with the success of the Hawaiian medium education program in the State public school system. The native speaking *kūpuna* committee was discontinued as an active new words committee after one year, with the selection of new members for the committee from among second language Hawaiian educators especially connected to Hawaiian language medium education and with representation from the active Ni‘ihau native speaking community. Consultation however, with *kūpuna* native speakers occurred whenever applicable questions arose regarding their knowledge of language use. Within seven years, however, most of the original *kūpuna* committee had passed away but consultation of native speakers continues with native speakers who are available. The continuing new words committee became known as the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee from 1989 forward. Its membership has ranged in number from six to ten, all second language speakers except for a Ni‘ihau community member.

The Ni‘ihau membership on the Committee was eventually replaced with consultations with Ni‘ihau native speakers. The reason for this is somewhat similar to the situation of the non-active *kūpuna* native speakers who did not continue using their language in all contexts of modern living, but instead succumbed to using English for words they did not have.

It is the observation of this writer (Kimura), in a situation where a language needs to be revived, indigenous new words are more likely to emerge from a

more culturally and politically conscientious group of proactive second language indigenous speakers participating in a global society.

Since 1988, the very isolated and only viable native Hawaiian speaking population of 250 people on Ni‘ihau has decreased to less than 75 today (Ilei Beniamina, personal communication, 2008) owing to an economic diaspora caused by the unavailability of jobs on Ni‘ihau. Most have migrated to the neighboring island of Kaua‘i to seek a livelihood within the larger English-speaking world. Any new piece of information or item not introduced first in their primary Hawaiian language is easily and often said in the dominant English language, commonly with a Hawaiian pronunciation.

Consulting with operative native speakers of Hawaiian such as active Ni‘ihau speakers has been beneficial for some modern inventions that became a part of daily life on Ni‘ihau before the transition to English. Such words include the term for a spark plug (*‘ōpu‘u ahi*. An object shaped like the bud of a flower that has a fire-like spark.), light bulb (*‘ōpu‘u kukui*. A bud shaped object that can be illuminated.) and diesel fuel (*‘aila uliuli*. dark colored oil). Other more newly created Hawaiian words such as tire fender and bicycle tire spokes were already noted earlier. Also as mentioned, is the lack of current engagement on the part of Ni‘ihau native speakers with the recent inventions, such as the technology dealing with computers introduced through, and overshadowed by, the English language.

Many words have broad meanings in Hawaiian and a specified meaning is determined via context and often with the assistance of an adjective, which follows what it modifies. *Mī‘oi* for example is a general act of imposing oneself, but Ni‘ihau native speakers have contextualized a meaning for it as for example in faking a hit in volleyball (*mī‘oi wale*). The intensifier *wale* stresses the containment of the act (aggressive behavior) only within itself and no further. These observations in word coining on the part of active native Hawaiian speakers brings further understanding as to how broad meanings of words can be coined into more specific current words. It demonstrates how Hawaiian words are created.

Knowing our language’s history, grammar, pronunciation, spelling, social and political relevance as well as its formal and informal nuances, evolvment and current state of affairs is vital in the work of revitalization and the creation of new words. Serious second language learners, who have acquired their language well, generally have a great advantage of knowing how the language works through second language acquisition. This is generally not in the experience of native speakers. However, indigenous language medium education for both the native speaker and non-native speaker can provide a stronger knowledge of the workings and history of the aboriginal language as compared to learning it through a non-indigenous medium of education.

Correct dictionary spelling of Hawaiian words plays a crucial role in the maintenance of accurate Hawaiian pronunciation especially since the Hawaiian orthography is based on a phonetic alphabet and because the increasing numbers of second Hawaiian language learners depend heavily on the Hawaiian dictionary.

## *Indigenous Language Revitalization*

Mispronunciation contributes to the deterioration of a correct language standard and can change the meaning of a word. Consultation with native oral speech is therefore another important objective of the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee, especially since inaccurate spelling changes have been noted over several printings of the most used Hawaiian dictionary.

### **An example of new word creation**

In order to provide an idea of how some Hawaiian words are created, the following is an example of a typical process the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee followed to create a new word for the word ‘evolution.’ First, the context of the word is determined for both its semantic and structural meaning. In Hawaiian, action takes precedence and therefore, though the noun form of the word (evolution) was the initial introduction of the word, the Committee is cognizant of creating a verb form, which can also be used as a noun. In looking at the meanings of the word ‘evolve,’ the Committee recognizes a variety of contextual meanings other than the biological meaning of ‘evolve’ such as the evolving of languages and airplanes. Sometimes it is the consideration of the other meaning that precedes in the coining of the original word request. In this particular example for ‘evolve’ the other meanings did not precede the process of dealing first with the biological meaning and so taking up the other meanings subsequent to the biological meaning of ‘evolution’ was efficiently performed with minor revisions after the new word for Darwin’s evolution was approved.

Typically, after the Committee has clarification on the word it submits its analysis. For biological evolution, two major thoughts are expressed for consideration, one that it requires a good length of time and second that it involves genetics. *Ewe*, meaning family lineage, is almost immediately considered along with *li‘uli‘u* for a long length of time. The Committee is familiar with traditional words that appear as the result of a combination of two or more words as an approach to produce another word. Take for example, *ulu*, to grow and *kau*, to place something. So the unexplained, miraculous acquiring of knowledge as a growth (of inspiration) that settles (placed) upon someone is a concept expressed in the word *ulukau*. Now the Committee wrestles with combining *ewe* and *li‘uli‘u* to produce the word for biological evolution. The verb *li‘uli‘u*, to pass a length of time, would be modified with *ewe* (lineage) to describe the nature of this passing of a length of time. A committee member raises the suggestion that we select *liliiu* from the related Polynesian Tongan language family in place of the Hawaiian *li‘uli‘u*, and *liliiuwe* is out for its first evaluative test, and the Committee gives its nod for the first approval. The adapting of the Tongan word is not only because Hawaiian is in the same Polynesian language family, but also because it adds a twist to the Hawaiian to make the word more unique yet still palatable in Hawaiian. After this first approval, the Committee will have a chance to give its second and final approval at the next meeting, generally within a span of two months. This time affords a fresh look at the newly coined word at the subsequent meeting.

With the creation of biological evolution fresh in the minds of the members, the Committee goes back to other meanings reviewed earlier in the clarification process for ‘evolve’ and considers the evolution of language and airplanes and replaces the modifier *ewe* (lineage) with *loli* (change), to render *liliuloli* (progressive change that occurs over time) for the evolution of the Volkswagen car, for example.

The Committee then recognizes Hawai‘i’s unique geographic isolation and resulting ecosystem as comparable to Darwin’s discoveries in the Galápagos Islands off South America. The Committee considers the biological term ‘adaptive radiation’—a biological evolution pertaining to the diversification of an ancestral group of organisms into a variety of related forms specialized to fit different environments or ways of life, each often further diversifying into more specialized types (Merriam & Webster, 2008). Hawai‘i has many examples of adaptive radiation and the adjective *ewe* in *liliuwe* is replaced with *welo*, a more specific Hawaiian word meaning a hereditary trait, to create the word *liliuwelo* for adaptive radiation.

As a result of creating a word for biological evolution the Committee has also created words for evolve as in technological evolution, and for evolve as in adaptive radiation. The Committee utilized in part, several approaches for the creation of these new words. First the consideration of combing Hawaiian words (two) into one, and while shortening at least one of the words, the extension of the meaning of a word(s), and the use of a word from another Polynesian language. Please refer to Guidelines 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the Guidelines for Creating New Hawaiian Words in the Appendix of this paper.

After these words are approved for a second time at a subsequent meeting, then the words are ready to be dispersed to the public for use. Currently the new words of the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee are in the publication *Māmaka Kaiāo* that is also online at [www.ulukau.org](http://www.ulukau.org). *Māmaka Kaiāo* is searchable as an individual dictionary or in a combination of other existing Hawaiian dictionaries such as the most used dictionary, *Hawaiian Dictionary*, by Pūku‘i and Elbert.

The primary users of the new words book *Māmaka Kaiāo* are second language users who cannot find a word in the *Hawaiian Dictionary*. The number of Hawaiian speakers who know the language from a fair to high level of fluency is estimated to be around 10,000. From this estimated total, the number of active speakers of the language on a daily basis is approximately 3,000. Included in this figure of active speakers are the current student statistics (Hale Kuamo‘o and Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language, 2008) for Hawaiian immersion (“immersion” from total to partial) and Hawaiian medium (“medium” meaning the sole language throughout the total school environment):

DOE Kaiapuni Hawai‘i Hawaiian Language Immersion Program	
1,811 students	126 Hawaiian immersion teachers
‘Aha Pūnana Leo Hawaiian Medium Schools	
211 students	64 Hawaiian medium teachers

## ***Indigenous Language Revitalization***

This totals to 2,212 active student speakers of Hawaiian currently enrolled and 190 active speaking Hawaiian language teachers presently hired in Hawaiian language immersion and medium education. There are also active Hawaiian language users as administrators, tutors, substitute teachers, curriculum developers and parents attached to both the Hawaiian medium preschools and K-12 program. It is interesting to note that aside from the present Hawaiian language medium education statistics, the DOE schools have an enrollment of 3,800 students taking Hawaiian language as a subject. Also, at the College level, there are over 2,000 students enrolled in Hawaiian language courses with some at the graduate levels (Hale Kuamo'o and Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language, 2008.).

The Hawaiian Lexicon Committee values these statistics because they represent an estimated count of the active users and learners of the Hawaiian language. They have the ultimate say on whether a new word is used or not and they bring a renewed hope for the life of the language.

### **The Alutiiq New Words Council**

The Kodiak New Words Council (NWC) is part of the wider Alutiiq Language revitalization effort on Kodiak Island. Like the language movement itself, the NWC is relatively new, and does not have the historical depth of the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee. However, the experiences of this new program, which is documenting the committee formation and word development process in action, will be useful for other Indigenous groups contemplating terminological development for their languages. Since the NWC cannot be understood out of context, a historical background is provided first.

The Alutiiq (traditionally known as Sugpiaq) homeland of coastal Southern Alaska stretches from the middle of the Alaska Peninsula, across Kodiak Island and the southern Kenai Peninsula to Prince William Sound. Some of our people still use "Aleut" as a self-designator, a term used during the Russian era for most Native groups of Southern Alaska, whether they were Unangan, Sugpiaq or Yup'ik. The term "Alutiiq" was first noted during the Russian era as a way of saying *Aleuty* (Russian for "Aleuts") in our Native language (Leer, 2001). It came into use again in the 1970s and 1980s, while others preferred the traditional "Sugpiaq." Most people on Kodiak now call themselves Alutiiq, while our people in other areas use Aleut, Alutiiq, or Sugpiaq. Our language is usually referred to as Alutiiq, Sugt'stun (lit., "like a person"), or Alutiitstun (lit. "like an Alutiiq"). Alutiiq is part of the "Esk-Aleut" language family, most closely related to Yup'ik (Krauss, 1982).

There are two major dialects in the Alutiiq region. Koniag Alutiiq is spoken on the Alaska Peninsula and the Kodiak Archipelago. Chugach Alutiiq is spoken on the Kenai Peninsula eastward to Prince William Sound. Within these dialects there are sub-dialectical differences. On Kodiak, speakers identify a Northern or Afognak dialect, traditionally spoken in the villages of Karluk, Larsen Bay, Afognak/Port Lions, Ouzinkie, and Kodiak. The Southern dialect is traditionally spoken in Akhiok/Kaguyak and Old Harbor. There are even differences within



the sub-dialects, and Elders can often figure out a speaker's specific village of origin based on their vocabulary or way of talking.

Alutiiq is traditionally an oral language, without an alphabetical form. Russian priests and Alutiiq students developed the first written form of Alutiiq in the early years of the nineteenth century. These scholars used the Cyrillic alphabet to represent Alutiiq sounds. Remaining texts from this period include the Lord's Prayer (1816), a catechism (1847), a primer (1848), and a Gospel of St. Matthew (1848). As Dr. Lydia Black laments in "Forgotten Literacy," although this form of written Alutiiq was used throughout the Alutiiq homeland, it quickly faded after Americanization (Black, 2001). The alphabet in use today was introduced in the 1970s and uses Roman characters.

The greatest number of "borrowed" words in Alutiiq are from Russian. These "Alutiicized" words exist in the hundreds (locals joke that to Alutiicize you just add a q on the end of a non-Native word). Household and everyday items that did not exist traditionally, such as fork—*wiirkaa*q (vilka in Russian) cat—*kuskaa*q (koshka in Russian) and lamp—*laampaa*q (laampa in Russian) were all added during this period. Words containing an f or a Russian *р* (which is pronounced differently than the uvular Alutiiq *r*) can easily be identified as having Russian origins, as these letters' sounds are introduced. While new sounds are often introduced in this way, sometimes the borrowing language will use the "most similar native sound" (Hock & Joseph, 2004, p. 209).

It was during the first 100 years of American rule that the Alutiiq language struggled the most. Although some villagers learned English on top of Alutiiq and Russian, negative pressure by mission and secular schools taught parents that the Native language would stigmatize their children. Fluent children learned that speaking Alutiiq could result in a ruler to the hand, a soapy rag in the mouth or other traumatizing punishments. Many children of trilingual parents grew up monolingual, speaking only English in an effort to survive in American society. Today people ask their parents and grandparents why they didn't pass down the gift of our heritage language. The bitter answer is that parents' love was manipulated by "English only" proponents, who claimed that Native language fluency was a detriment to success.

It is interesting to note that there are relatively few "Alutiicized" English words in our language. Because the language was in such rapid decline, no "natural" methods of terminological development occurred. In fact, many words faded from the lexicon with the death of every fluent speaker. Fluent speakers report that they would typically substitute an English word without Alutiicization (N. Alokli, personal communication, 2008). Instead of developing words for new technologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, speakers code-switched into English to insert needed words: "*Radio kwarsgu*" "Turn on the Radio." Or, a speaker might create a word by describing it in the language. An alien from outer space might be described as a *suuru*aq—a "fake or unreal person." These words, while easily understood by other speakers by the context and description, were not typically adopted by other speakers due to the infrequency of Alutiiq language use. Individual speakers, isolated from each other in separate remote villages,

## *Indigenous Language Revitalization*

did not have opportunities to share their neologisms through conversation, and new words remained with the individuals who created them.

It is unknown exactly how many Native speakers of Alutiiq are still living throughout the region. The *Native Peoples and Languages* map, produced in 1982, identified 900 speakers (Krauss, 1982). In 1994, that number had dropped by half (Krauss, 1994). A local 2003 survey on Kodiak Island identified only 45 semi or fully fluent speakers, and a few Elders on that list have already passed away. This survey, conducted by Shauna Hegna at the Alutiiq Museum, found that .03% of Alutiiq people on the Archipelago could speak our Native language, and that the average age of speakers was 72 years (Hegna, 2004).

Because of the extreme rate at which our language is declining, various organizations are working together on Kodiak Island to document and revitalize our language. The *Qik'rtarmiut Alutiit* (Alutiiq People of the Island) Regional Language Advisory Committee (known as the “Qik Committee”) was formed in 2003, with representatives from area tribal councils, non-profits, and educational organizations. In partnership with these local organizations, the Alutiiq Museum received funding from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) in 2004 for a 3-year Master-Apprentice language revitalization project that also included outreach education and curriculum development. This has been complemented by a handful of other small grant projects focused on materials development.

It was during the ANA project implementation that people began discussing the need for new words. For the first time ever in significant numbers, Elders<sup>1</sup> were visiting local classrooms, guiding semi-fluent Apprentices with Alutiiq language lessons. Children asked for the Alutiiq words of items in the classroom, and many times Elders would have no answer, or have to make up a word on the spot. As language-learning materials were developed, elders and program staff grew uncomfortable putting these hastily created words on paper, without having agreement from other Alutiiq speakers. The Qik Committee discussed how new words creation would be an appropriate objective of the next major language program project at the Alutiiq Museum.

In 2007 the Museum received a three-year Documenting Endangered Languages grant from the National Science Foundation. This project includes field research conducted by semi-fluent former Apprentices, a web portal to share audio and video clips and transcriptions and the New Words Council. The intended coverage area of this project includes all of the Alutiiq communities on Kodiak Island, although recent communications with other areas may increase possibilities for region-wide collaboration.

Former Apprentices from the ANA project (who still identify themselves as Apprentices after the end of the formal project) are an important part of the effort, as they comprise a group of intermediate-fluency second language speakers who did not exist only a few years ago. Seven former Apprentices continue their involvement in the new project in an effort to maintain and enhance their language skills in combination with other ongoing and planned projects.

The New Words Council (NWC) is only significant as a part of the wider Alutiiq language movement. It is agreed by community stakeholders that no one

project will be the key to turning back the tide of language loss, but that numerous coordinated activities will have the greatest effect. Creating new words for the Alutiiq language will not be useful unless there are people to speak it. It is hoped that current efforts will make the language more useful to the current community of fluent and semi-fluent speakers by extending the arenas where the language can be spoken. As youth and children are taught to speak Alutiiq in the coming years, there will be words for things that are important to them and part of their daily lives.

The initial training for NWC members was in September of 2007. Participants from Kodiak's outlying villages flew in for the two-day training, and Larry Kimura, original member of the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee was invited as a guest-trainer. Members of the Kodiak program had met Mr. Kimura in a visit to the Hawaiian programs in 2003. While the purpose of that visit was to see the immersion schools, the existence of the Hawaiian Lexicon committee was recalled when the Kodiak NWC was being planned. Mr. Kimura presented on the history of the Hawaiian committee and instructed on possible techniques of new word creation.

The council is made up only of fluent Alutiiq speakers. This was a conscious decision because there are no second language speakers yet who know the language fluently enough to authoritatively develop new terms without assistance. Like the Hawaiian committee which eventually became comprised of second-language speakers, we know that this may become an eventuality for our group, but it would not be considered a legitimate action at this point. Semi-fluent speakers act as associate members on the Alutiiq NWC. Their role is to set up meetings, keep discussion moving, and learn from the Council members. If the day comes where they are asked to join the council, the experience of "sitting in" will provide a background on the unspoken rules used to develop words and gain consensus in Alutiiq word creation.

Associate members do play an important role in the selection of new terms. They provide suggestions on the agenda for the fluent members, so that they are not presented with nothing to work with. While the suggested words are rarely approved exactly as they were presented, they provide a basis for discussion. Those who suggest words learn from the discussion more appropriate ways of creating words, and are able to suggest more appropriate choices the next time. This aspect of semi-fluent participation in the council was suggested by Larry Kimura, who reminded participants that many needed "new words" are outside of the Elders frame of reference. Asking them to develop new words for a computer's hard drive or software without providing any groundwork could be stressful and counterproductive.

Meetings are organized by project staff at the Alutiiq Museum. They are held approximately once per month for four hours, and Elders receive a modest stipend for their participation. Members gather in a conference room that is set up for audio conferencing, and has a white board for writing up word options (the writing is done by Apprentices, as few Elders are comfortably literate). The audio conference option for members residing outside of Kodiak is rarely used,

## *Indigenous Language Revitalization*

and the museum has decided to fly interested Elders in to Kodiak for future meetings. It is possible that technological aspects of the teleconference system, along with the length of meetings has made this option undesirable. Face-to-face interactions are preferred by Elders when interacting in and about the language. Subtle aspects of consensus building—like one person’s conspicuous silence or a look towards a more fluent speaker—can be missed over the phone.

The process for the council has a number of steps. Needed words are proposed by anyone interested, and potential options are put forth by second-language speakers or Elders they have consulted with. Elders receive an agenda with the list of needed words, proposed choices, and their literal translations about week before each meeting so that they can have time to consider options. At the meeting, the word will be deliberated until consensus is reached. If consensus is not reached, the minority will either acquiesce to the majority, or the discussion will continue. In only one case so far have the Elders decided to vote, and in that case the vote was nearly 50/50, so the members decided to keep both words.

The agenda is divided into three sections: Upcoming Words, In Discussion, and Approved Words. When the council approves a word for the first time, it is certified during the following meeting. If the council would like to discuss other options for that word rather than re-approve it, it is returned to discussion. If the word is certified, it is added to the master new words list. This list will be posted to the museum’s web site, and published in print form at the end of the project.

A discussion by the group at the initial training was the types of words that were needed. The developed list would help guide the NWC in what categories to focus on. This list included communications, electronics and other technologies, as well as the classroom setting and other needed words for everyday situations. In practice, the council has also discussed words that already exist. One such word, *usuq’aq*, a verb meaning “to get worn out” (usually used with clothing, but also used with people) was brought to the NWC by an Elder who remembered it, but wanted to have the other Elders confirm that it was a word they also remember.

There are many potential techniques for new word creation, which vary in their applicability to different languages and needs. Nativization, a form of borrowing, has already been discussed, and while it has a history with the Alutiiq language through Russian, it was deemed to be generally undesirable by the committee unless the borrowing was from a related dialect or language. Perhaps the opposite choice would be coinage, in which the word is developed completely in the language. A type of coinage is the extension of a new meaning to an old or obsolete word, or the adding of additional definitions to an existing word (Hock & Joseph, 1996). Two words can be put together to form a compound word, just as prefixes or suffixes can be added to a root word (Kōmike Hua’ōlelo Hou, 2003). Coinages can also involve reductions, acronyms, or abbreviations such as with phone for telephone, and TV for television (Hock & Joseph, 1996).

A technique where the meaning of each word or morpheme is borrowed is a calque, a loan translation. An example of this type of word creation would

be translating English *sky* and *scraper* into another language to make a word for skyscraper. An often-used Indigenous method is to describe the item in the language, based on its function, sound, or appearance (Kōmike Hua‘ōlelo Hou, 2003). The limitation to this technique is that these “words” can be several words, or one very long word. The most often used technique in the Alutiiq is to add one or more suffix to an already recognized root word. Most often, however, it is a combination of more than one technique.

In the initial training workshop for the NWC, members developed a list of potential word creation techniques and a hierarchy of sources from which words could be borrowed. Starting with the closest language neighbor, the first choice for “borrowing” was Chugach Alutiiq, followed by Cup’ik, Yup’ik, Inupiaq or Siberian Yup’ik, and other Indigenous languages. Following the Hawaiian example, the council suggested borrowing from the indigenous languages in the lands local to the animals or objects being named. Other techniques identified included the use of suffixes, describing the sound made by an object or animal, research of historically used terms, reduplication (doubling of word sounds for emphasis), and creative or *humorous* constructions.

The word for the largest city in Alaska, Anchorage is a calque. The NWC used a recognized root and a common suffix to form the Alutiiq name *Kicarwik*. An “anchorage” in English is a place to anchor a boat, so the Alutiiq word for the city literally means “place to anchor.” *Kicar-* is the verb root for “to anchor.” The suffix *-wik* means “place to [verb].”

The word for moose, *tunturpak*, could be considered a nativization of another Alutiiq dialect’s term—*tuntuwaq* (J. Leer, personal communication, 2007). A *tuntuq* is a deer, and the *-wak* suffix of the borrowed word in the Alaska Peninsula dialect of Alutiiq is a nearly-obsolete suffix meaning “big [noun].” The Kodiak Elders did not recognize the *-wak* suffix, so they decided to use a more recognized suffix (*-pak*) with the same meaning, forming the word *tunturpak*. One issue that the Elders faced in the same meeting is that when words are created in this way, there may be more than one potential English meaning. When the NWC looked next for a word for elk, “big deer” was already taken, so instead they chose *cirunertuliq*, which means “one with the big horns/antlers.” There could also be other animals with big horns, but when the council has ratified a word for an item, it is considered “taken.” If a longhorn cow ever appears on the new words agenda, the council will avoid using a word already assigned elsewhere.

Some word choices also show a bit of humor or social awareness of the Elders on the council. The word for credit card, *akilngum kaartu* means “the debtor’s card.” The word chosen for a moving walkway (like in an airport), *kwingcarait’sqaq*, translates to “the thing where you don’t need to walk.” The humor felt by the elders in creating this word does not translate, but many laughed about such a modern and laziness-inducing contraption. In contrast, the word for television, which some second language learners privately hoped would contain a social critique, was simply *ulutegwik* (*uluteg-* “to look” + *-wik* “place to [verb]”) or “place to look.”

## ***Indigenous Language Revitalization***

The differences between villages and sub-dialects are not major from a linguistic standpoint, but are of utmost importance to Alutiiq people, as speakers' identities are tied to village and family connections. For this reason, all language revitalization efforts and materials development in Alutiiq take variation into account. Thus far, it has not been a contentious issue for the NWC. The Elders have discussed the differences in dialect, but have not made these differences an issue. They leave variations up to the speaker, and are comfortable in having more than one word for an item, or more than one meaning for a single word.

In the initial training, members were asked what expectations they have for the New Words Council. In addition to simply creating new words for the language, the participants showed an awareness of the council's role as more than its basic stated function. They listed community education, spelling standardization, and an increase in the status of the language and of the fluent speakers. They also felt that the NWC might be an opportunity for collaboration and intergenerational cooperation. These responses show that the NWC on Kodiak is expected to fulfill more than its simple functional role. As the project progresses, it will be seen if the NWC fulfills these additional roles ascribed to it by community members and participants.

While it is too early to know, those involved as members and observers of the NWC hope that it will be a useful project to create needed new words in the Alutiiq language. It is likely that the social importance of the council will be great, for the Alutiiq language revitalization movement is small and new, and the NWC is a highly visible. The primary goal of the Alutiiq language movement is to create new speakers, but this effort, and the documentation of it, will be an important component over the course of the project. Upon conclusion of grant funding in 2010, the Kodiak NWC will need to decide if the effort was a successful, but short-term endeavor, or if the NWC will become an institution like the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee.

The NWC on Kodiak is part of the wider Alutiiq Language revitalization movement. The language movement is part of a wider-still cultural resurgence that has been occurring on Kodiak since the late 1980s (Crowell, 2004; Crowell, Steffian & Pullar, 2001). The Alutiiq people of Kodiak Island are exerting greater self-determination over their cultural resources, community life, research projects, arts, and language. As our language was intentionally taken from us, we must now intentionally act to bring it back. New words creation is one strategy in a concerted effort to bring back Alutiiq into a living context.

### **Note**

<sup>1</sup>In this section the term Elder implies also fluent speaker, but it should be noted that there are many Elders in Kodiak who do not speak the language.

### **References**

Black, L. (2001). Forgotten literacy. In A.L. Crowell, A.F. Steffian & G.L. Pullar (eds.), *Looking both ways: Heritage and identity of the Alutiiq people* (pp. 60-61). Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press.

- Crowell, A.L. (2004). Terms of engagement: The collaborative representation of Alutiiq identity. *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 28(1), 9-35.
- Crowell, A., A. Steffian & G. Pullar. (2001). *Looking both ways: Heritage and identity of the Alutiiq people*. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press.
- Hale Kuamo'o, Hawaiian Language Center, University of Hawai'i at Hilo.
- Hegna (2004). *Yugnet Ang'alluki—To keep the words*. Kodiak, AK: Alutiq Heritage Foundation.
- Hock, H., & B. Joseph. (1996). *Language history, language change, and language relationship: An introduction to historical and comparative linguistics*. New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter.
- Joesting, E. (1987 [1984]). *Kaua'i: The separate kingdom*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language, University of Hawai'i at Hilo.
- Kōmike Hua'ōlelo Hou. (2003). *Māmaka kaiāo*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Krauss, M. (1982) Native peoples and languages of Alaska (map). Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska.
- Krauss, M. (1994). Many tongues, ancient tales. In W.W. Fitzhugh & A. Crowell (eds.), *Crossroads of continents* (pp. 144-150). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Leer, J. (1978). *A conversational dictionary of Kodiak Alutiiq*. Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Native Language Center
- Leer, J. (1990). Classroom grammar of Kodiak Alutiiq, Kodiak Island Dialect. Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Native Language Center.
- Leer, J. (2001). The Alutiiq language. In A.L. Crowell, A.F. Steffian & G.L. Pullar (eds.), *Looking both ways: Heritage and identity of the Alutiiq people*. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press.
- Merriam & Webster, (2008). *Online dictionary and thesaurus*. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- Pūku'i, M., & S. Elbert. (1986 [1957]). *Hawaiian dictionary* (Revised & enlarged ed.). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Pullar, G. (1994). The Qikertarmiut and the scientist: Fifty years of clashing world views. In T. Bray & T. Killion (eds.), *Reckoning with the dead: The Larsen Bay repatriation and the Smithsonian Institution* (pp. 15-25). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Wilson, W.H., & K. Kamanā. (2001). Mai Loko Mai O Ka 'I'ini: Proceeding from a dream. In L. Hinton & K. Hale (eds.), *The green book of language revitalization in practice* (pp. 147-178). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

## Appendix

This appendix is taken from the 2003 publication of *Māmaka Kaiao* and was used as a handout for the 2008 SILS breakout panel on *Indigenous New Words Creation: Perspectives from Alaska and Hawai‘i*.

### **The words**

Living languages throughout the world are in a state of constant change and growth, and so it is with the Hawaiian language. Therefore, in order to provide assistance to all Hawaiian-language speakers in this new era, *Māmaka Kaiao* is once again being printed to serve as a companion to the *Hawaiian Dictionary* by Pūku‘i and Elbert.

For Hawaiian-language students, one dictionary is no longer sufficient because these two volumes serve different purposes. The *Hawaiian Dictionary* provides invaluable information about Hawaiian vocabulary from the earliest days of recording the language up to the 1980s, but it is the task of *Māmaka Kaiao* to make available to the general public the new vocabulary that is being created by the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee.

Members of the Lexicon Committee generally meet from four to six times each year to discuss new vocabulary for the Hawaiian language. Most of the words that are brought up for discussion are words which are not found in the *Hawaiian Dictionary* but are needed when writing or translating a lesson, a story or article, a book, or any other document in the Hawaiian language.

Because today’s educational curricula involve many new concepts which lack equivalent Hawaiian terms in the *Hawaiian Dictionary*, development of the Hawaiian-immersion curriculum has resulted in the emergence of many new terms related to new fields of knowledge. The creators or translators of educational materials are generally the ones who bring the new words they have created before the Committee for discussion, approval, and dissemination.

If a particular vocabulary list concerns a subject which requires the knowledge of an expert in the field, such experts are invited to the meeting. If sufficient information is available in dictionaries or other resource materials, or is within the scope of knowledge of members of the Committee, then these resources are utilized so that the concept or meaning of the terms will be clearly understood before decisions are made concerning what Hawaiian word or term is most suitable.

Listed next are guidelines which are commonly used by the Committee to create the new words which are included in *Māmaka Kaiao*. Although the creation of new words is not limited to these guidelines, they do describe how most of the new words have been created.



**Present guidelines for creating new Hawaiian words**

1. Make minor changes to a word which already appears in the dictionary. The most common changes are to either insert or delete a *kahakō* (macron to make a long vowel), or to join or separate parts of a word or term. A *kahakō* has been added to words like *hāpaina* (carrier) and *kāka'ikahi* (few), while terms like *a pau* (all) and *me he* (as if) have been written as two words instead of one.
2. Record a word which is used by native speakers but is not found in the dictionary, or one which appears in the dictionary but is used by native speakers with a meaning which is different from that listed in the dictionary. Words like *ho'ohūpō* (feign ignorance), *kāka'ahi* (deal, as cards), and *'ālo'ahia* (stress) have been used by native speakers but are not found in the dictionary, while the words *huka* (zipper), *maka'aha* (screen), and *nemonemo* (bald, as a tire) appear in the dictionary but without the particular meanings used by native speakers being included.
3. Use reduplication of an existing word in order to alter or extend the meaning. This is a common practice in Hawaiian vocabulary development and has been done to create words like *ūlialia* (coincidence) from *ulia*, *hohoki* (neutral) from *hoki*, and *monamona* (dessert) from first shortening *momona* and then expanding it through reduplication.
4. Add either a prefix or a suffix to an existing word. This, too, is a common way of forming new words in Hawaiian, and traditional affixes have been used by the Committee as well as new ones created to fill specific needs. In order to create a word which means “concentrated,” the traditional suffix *-hia* was added to the word *pa'apū*, and then, in order to arrive at the meaning “to concentrate, make less dilute,” the traditional prefix *ho'o-* was added to form the word *ho'opa'apūhia*. The traditional suffix *-na* has also been used to change verbs to nouns, such as adding it to *pāku'i* (append) to form the word *pāku'ina* (affix, in grammar), and to *koi* (require) to form the word *koina* (requirement). The word *kālai* (intellectual policy) has been transformed into a prefix meaning “-ology, the scientific study of.” With this meaning, it has been used to form new words such as *kālaiaopaku* (physical science) and *kālaianiau* (climatology).
5. Explain the meaning of a word or term by using Hawaiian words. This guideline has been used rather extensively because when the “new” term is encountered by a speaker of Hawaiian, its meaning should be rather easily grasped even if the reader or listener is not familiar with the English word or term. The following are some terms which have been created using this guideline: *ala mōlehu* (crepuscular), *uila māhu pele* (geothermal electricity), *kuhihewa o ka maka* (optical illusion), and *'ōlelo kuhi lima 'Amelika* (American Sign Language).
6. Combine Hawaiian words to create a new word. This guideline is somewhat similar to the previous one with the main difference being that the meaning will probably not be immediately apparent to a speaker of Hawaiian because it may not be obvious even when recognizing the separate parts of the word.

## Indigenous Language Revitalization

Examples of words formed using this guideline are *hamulau* (herbivore), *ka'a'ike* (communication), *kōpia* (carbohydrate), and *poelele* (satellite).

7. Combine Hawaiian words while shortening at least one of the words. Although this guideline has been used for a number of math and science terms, it is also used for new words in a variety of other areas. Some words that have been created in this way include: *analahi* (regular, as in shape) which was formed by adding *ana* to a shortened *ma'alahi*; *ikehu* (energy) which was formed by combining *ika* and *ehu*; *lāhulu* (species) which comes from a shortened *lāhui* plus *hulu*; and *mo'olako* (inventory) which comes from *mo'olelo* and *lako*.
8. Extend the meaning of a word, which is already found in the dictionary, or give an existing word a new meaning. Words whose meanings have been extended to create new terms include *eaea* (aerated), *haumia* (pollution), *kaulua* (double, in math), and *lakolako* (computer accessories), while new meanings have been given to the words *oho* (capillary), *muku* (tight end, in football), and *palaholo* (gel).
9. Use a word or part of a word from another Polynesian language with its meaning intact or slightly changed. The word *pounamu* (jade) is a Māori word, which has been borrowed without changing its spelling or meaning. The Rarotongan word *ma'aka*, meaning “big,” is used in the term *hua ma'aka* (capital letter), while the Tahitian word *na'ina'i*, meaning “small,” is used in the term *hua na'ina'i* (lower-case letter). Sometimes words from other Polynesian languages are borrowed with changes in spelling to better fit Hawaiian orthography, such as *kōkaha* (condensation) from the Māori word *tōtā*, and *ha'uki* (sport) from the Tahitian word *ha'uti*. Hawaiian words are also sometimes combined with other Polynesian words, such as *hakuika* (mollusk) from the Hawaiian word *haku* (*pōhaku*) and *kuita*, a Proto Eastern Oceanic word meaning “squid.” The word *makahi'o* (explore) was created by combining the Hawaiian word *maka* (eye) with the Tahitian word *hi'o* (look).
10. Hawaiianize the orthography of a word or term from a non-Polynesian language. Many English words have been Hawaiianized since earliest contact with the English language, and the Committee continues this practice with words such as *naelona* (nylon), *'akika tanika* (tannic acid), and *'okikene* (oxygen). Lexical borrowing is not limited to English, however. Hawaiianization also extends to words from a variety of other languages such as *kaimine* from the Japanese word *saimin*, *kokei'a* (prairie dog) from the Ute word *tocey'a*, *lalinoka* (hieroglyph) from the Assyrian word *rahleenos*, and *'ōmā* (Maine lobster) from the French word *homard*.

Not all of the words and terms included in *Māmaka Kaiāo* have been created by the Committee, however. There are also words which are already established Hawaiian vocabulary, and therefore may also be found in the *Hawaiian Dictionary*.

There are several reasons for having included these words. Perhaps the primary reason is that when the Committee looks at a vocabulary list developed for a particular subject, although most of the terms may require the creation of new Hawaiian vocabulary, some words already exist and may be included merely as an aid to anyone using *Māmaka Kaiāo* to find vocabulary related to this particular subject. Another reason for including vocabulary that can be found in another dictionary is that there may be more than one word with the same or a similar meaning, and the Committee feels that a certain word would be most appropriate for use in a particular context.

Although not a common occurrence, there are also a few words which have been created by the Committee in spite of the fact that Hawaiian words with the same meaning already exist in the dictionary. In most cases, the Committee felt that the dictionary words are not in general use today and other words could be created by the Committee which would more accurately reflect contemporary concepts being described, thus providing Hawaiian-language speakers with additional vocabulary choices.

For each entry in the first section of the vocabulary, words are classified as *hamani* (transitive verb), *hehele* (intransitive verb), *'a'ano* (stative verb), *kikino* (common noun), or *i'oa* (proper noun), and following the definition of the word in English, the derivation or origin of the word is indicated. This etymology not only gives the reader a better understanding of where the word came from or how it was created, but it may also help to give a better understanding of its meaning.

Innumerable hours have been spent discussing all of the words which appear in *Māmaka Kaiāo*. No single word has been approved without first being discussed, often extensively, and in order to ensure that the word or term is the best one that the Committee is able to create, each word or term must be approved and reapproved at two different Committee meetings.

Members of the Committee realize, however, that every approved word cannot be a perfect choice, and as time passes the desire to revisit previously approved words frequently arises in order to try to find an even better choice. But because of the seemingly endless number of words and terms still waiting for Hawaiian equivalents to be created, changes are usually approved only when new information shows that a previously approved word or term may be inaccurate.

So the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee continues to meet several times each year in its attempt to provide new Hawaiian words and terms which will truly help to carry (*māmaka*) the Hawaiian language into a new dawn (*kaiāo*) in the twenty-first century.

