



**Making Dictionaries: Preserving Indigenous Languages of the Americas.** William Frawley, Kenneth C. Hill, and Pamela Munro, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. 450 pp. ISBN 0520229967

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This volume provides fascinating perspectives on the processes and practices of dictionary making by several contemporary lexicographers, all of whom have struggled or are yet struggling to develop these important tools for indigenous languages in North America and Meso-America. Given that most of the 23 contributors are well-known for their work in theoretical and/or historical linguistics, but also are actively involved in language preservation and restoration efforts, their accounts of the complexities, time, and issues involved in developing dictionaries become even more important and significant. As noted in the introduction by Fawley, Hill, and Munro, when one considers that a good dictionary “is a thousand pages of ideas and history, a guide to the mind and world of a people” (p. 22), developed by a person (rarely persons) who is “simultaneously a phonetician, morphologist, syntactician, and semanticist but also a sociologist, anthropologist, biologist, diplomat, therapist, mediator, and salesman” (p. 21), then the work and results deserve much more consideration than they are often accorded. Indeed, lexicographers are far from the “unfortunate drudges” that history suggests, but rather heroes to be celebrated and lauded for their ultimate achievements. Readers of this volume will come away with that impression as well as a genuine feeling for the real work and problems involved.

Fawley, Hill, and Munro begin their excellent introduction and summary of the chapters by noting some common “war stories” shared by lexicographers. These include: where and how to begin, finding and continuing funding, inevitable project expansion (“mission creep”), unachievable goals, an inevitable backburner status, and a “so what” or even mean spirited final assessment. But beyond these, they also list and discuss ten more serious issues raised by such work while pointing out how the authors address them in various ways. These ten include: choosing and defining main and subsidiary entries, the use (and abuse) of linguistic theory in dictionary construction, consideration of literacy and orthography issues, choice and use (and abuse) of graphics, definitions of the community of users and their role in decision making, holistic vs. specialized dictionaries, use (and abuse) of etymology and other aspects of history, the role of technology in development and ultimate production, issues as to inclusion or exclusion and variation in usages, and the role of consistency and rules in development (known largely by their violation!). The 16 chapters are then collected into four sections, each



with a slightly different perspective or focus on one or more of these issues. These include: I. Form and Meaning in the Dictionary with chapters by K. Hale and D. Salamanca on Misumalpan languages, W. Pulte and D. Feeling on Cherokee, J. Grimes on Huichol, P. Munro on verbs in various languages, and R. Rhodes on Eastern Ojibwa-Chippewa-Ottawa; II. Role of the Dictionary in Indigenous Communities with chapters by K. Rice and L. Saxon on Canadian Athabaskan languages, L. Hinton and W. Weigel on California languages, and P. Kroskrity on Western Mono; III. Technology and Dictionary Design with chapters by U. Canger on 16th- and 17th-century Nahuatl, J. Amith on Nahuatl, and D. Rood and J. Koonz on Comparative Siouan; and IV. Specific Projects and Personal Accounts with chapters by H. Aoki on Nez Perce, K. Hill on Hopi, C. Callaghan on Miwok languages, W. Bright on the Native American Place names in the U.S. Project, and M. Clayton and J. Campbell on 16th-century lexicographer Alfonso de Molina. There is a single bibliography and the volume is indexed.

Although there are too many good chapters in the volume to note here, those interested in anthropology and education should probably pay particular attention to the chapters in sections II and III, as they deal more specifically with issues involved in teaching literacy and in the role of dictionaries in language retention and revitalization. The chapters by Rice and Saxon, Hinton and Weigel, and Kroskrity are particularly oriented and insightful as to matters involving proper assessments of community language ideologies in proposed projects, educational levels of potential users of the materials, including their familiarity with existing orthographies such as English, the social positions of persons involved in the project(s), their expectations as well as those of the community in general, political and sensitivity issues, and ultimately ways to assess the usefulness of those materials in educational efforts, be they preservation and reference or more active utilization. The chapters in section III by Aoki, Hill, and Callaghan also provide further discussion of several of these topics while focusing on the authors' specific experiences of what can go right and wrong in developing dictionaries in specific communities. The chapter by Hill, Hinton, and Weigel, and in some ways Kroskrity, are particularly useful in thinking about ethical issues in working with contemporary communities, and about dictionaries as partnerships with communities--even though there are never any guarantees that everyone will be pleased with the process or the results.

Overall, this collection provides, as noted, interesting insights into the processes and issues involved in making dictionaries, those tools that are so extremely useful to many kinds of users but often taken for granted--unless your language does not have one, or better, several.

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