

HAIDA

At the time of their first contact with Europeans, people speaking the Haida (HIGH-da) language owned and utilized that part of the northern North-west Coast consisting of the Queen Charlotte Islands/and the southern half of Prince of Wales Island in Alaska.

Well remembered traditions of both the Haida and Tlingit confirm that the Alaskan Haida, who are known collectively as Kaigani, are invaders from the north-western parts of Graham Island who moved north across Dixon Entrance a few decades before the arrival of European traders and established several villages in former Tantakwan Tlingit territory, some of which they retained their Tlingit place-names.

Linguistically a single language, Haida was formerly spoken in a number of minor dialects. In recent times these have been reduced to two: the Skidegate dialect of the southern Queen Charlottes and the Masset dialect of the northern Charlottes and Alaska. In earlier times the Kunghit-Haida of the southernmost

islands are said to have spoken a noticeably different dialect. *the Nonstents dialect (see Kees, 1968, for bibliography on Haida language). The most recent linguist to study Haida, R. Levene, says there are now 3 distinct dialects: Skidegate, Masset, and Alaskan (Levene, 1975)*

Haida is considered to be a language of the Nadene Stock, related distantly to Tlingit and even more distantly to Eyak and the Athapaskan family. Its distribution within the Nadene Stock would seem to indicate that it has a time depth of several millenia on the northern coast. *(Levene, 1975)*

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