

Loanwords between Iroquoian and Algonquian languages

Early French records indicate that Huron/Wendat (Iroquoian) traders were highly organized and had Algonquian commercial partners who they visited each summer at Lake Superior and Sault Ste Marie. These included the Potawatomi, the Miami and the Illinois as well as the Hocank (a Siouan language), the Meskwaki and the Kickapoo, as well as the Petun and Neutral (Campeau 1994:35). This advantageous commercial position held by the Huron/Wendat traders seems to be reflected in Huron/Wendat intermarriage and monolingualism. For example, Gabriel Sagard noted that the Algonquin and Nipissing who lived north of the Huron/Wendat around Lake Nipissing wintered and intermarried with the Wendat, but not vice versa. This situation created unidirectional bilingualism a situation well-portrayed by Trigger (1969:37; see esp. Sagard 1998[1632]:104-105) who states that “The Huron did not bother to learn the languages of their neighbors, while their own language was a lingua franca among the Assistaronon, Winnebago, Ottawa, Algonkins, and other Algonkian-speaking tribes with whom the Huron traded.” The historical information seems to suggest that the Huron/Wendat language — or likely a pidginized form of it — was used by Algonquin and Odawa groups and by peripheral tribes as well. At first sight there do not seem to be many Iroquoian loanwords into Algonquian language (or vice versa) besides those found by Cuoq (1886). In this presentation I will document ten new loanwords: Algonquian ‘moose’, ‘liver’, ‘rattle’, and ‘legend’ were borrowed in Huron/Wendat or Mohawk, while Iroquoian ‘bean’, ‘eel’, ‘skeleton’, and the particle for tag questions were borrowed into Algonquin and Odawa and diffused into neighboring Cree dialects.

References

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