

# Preface

*Schmick's Mahican Dictionary*, a modern reworking of the manuscript of Johann Jacob Schmick, is in the "Moravian" dialect of Mahican and is divided into an English-Mahican-German section and a Mahican-English section. It includes a Mahican historical phonology and a background and explanatory description.

It was in the American Philosophical Society Library in Philadelphia that I first saw Schmick's bound, two-volume manuscript of the Mahican language, or as he called it *Vocabularium Mahicandicum* (or on its title page *Miscellanea linguae nationis Indicae Mahikan dictae, curā susceptā ā Joh. Jac. Schmick*). This language was once used in the western part of my native Connecticut, western Massachusetts, western Vermont, and eastern New York State. It seemed strange to me that such an important work lay unseen, unused, perhaps unknown, and certainly unpublished. Later I came to understand that indeed it was known to a few Algonquianists, including Frank T. Siebert, Jr., who had handcopied it long ago.

Thus in that library I soon knew what I should do: work on it and publish it. The two-volume manuscript was not on microfilm, another surprise considering again its importance. Since I was not a truly qualified worker in Algonquian linguistics and did not expect the library to respond to my request for microfilming, I asked Bernice Miller Pigeon, the principal "gatherer" for the Stockbridge-Munsee Historical Library Museum, of Bowler, Wisconsin, to request the microfilming of Schmick's manuscript because Mahican was an ancestral language of the Stockbridge-Munsees, and she had it done.

The years passed as I worked up each stage from the illegible hidden script to the splendid, clear printed words—an endeavor of great tedium and some frustration, but during that time I also received comfort and support from scholars and Indians in distant cities in the United States and Canada. Through their enduring lectures, advice, suggestions, and elucidations I came to feel the life that still pulsed in that dead language—new patterns still to be seen or surmised. William Cowan, of Ottawa, was the first to state that I had an obvious interest in Algonquian languages; Gordon Day, also of Ottawa, helped me find Wampanoag materials and from there feel comfortable in the friendships formed at annual Algonquian conferences meeting in city after city; Ives Goddard, of the Smithsonian Institution, who first wanted someone to work up a Mahican dictionary early on helped me feel as though I could be of use in his backyard linguistic turf; fatherly Frank Siebert, of Old Town, Maine, kept me from going off the deep end with uncertainties or too much romanticism or inspired me with a little more independence.

But it was David Pentland, of Winnipeg, an Algonquianist who thoroughly plowed through my work, wrenching out etymological improprieties, and writing up a precise treatise on Mahican historical phonology for this book—a task he agreeably and willingly assumed 4 years before its completion.

Up to the camera-ready acetate-sheet stage I personally completed all steps. The compositing was done on my obsolescent IBM "Selectric" Composer at great expense, including machine breakdowns, fixed by Howard Tate. Thus major typesetting costs for the publisher were avoided, and I could work as I wished, generally once a year for a couple of meticulously spent months, stage by stage.

This dictionary has prevented the loss of another iceberg peak of Algonquian culture from rapidly melting away and is for the scholarly reuse or even resurrection of *our own* ancient and obscure languages. *Schmick's Mahican Dictionary* is useful for Indians of the East Coast who want to know their ancestral languages better, for of course Algonquianists, whether as linguists or ethnohistorians, for Germanists, and for general readers who want some background on Schmick's era in Pennsylvania. The explanatory background can also be used as a study of linguistic influences.

Carl David Masthay  
St. Louis, Missouri, 1986

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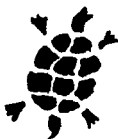
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Toonpaooh

[túnpau]

*Turtle*



Muchquauh

[móhkwaʰ]

*Bear*



Mechchaooh

[méəxčáu]

*Wolf*

(Mahican clans)