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NATIVE LANGUAGES OF NORTH AMERICA: THE EUROPEAN RESPONSE

William Cowan

When the Europeans began to come to stay in North America in the seventeenth century, they found a completely new horizon, not only in flora and fauna, climate and geography, but also in the people they encountered. Differences between Europeans and North Americans in physique, dress, customs, manners, and economy all stood out with great clarity. With similar clarity, the differences in language stood out. The languages the Europeans encountered were unlike any they had encountered before, not only in sound and structure but also in the social settings in which they were found.

In Europe there were but few languages, which were spoken by large numbers of people—hundreds of thousands, if not millions, in some cases, such as English and French; in North America, there were dozens of languages, spoken by very small speech communities in the hundreds of thousands. In Mexico and Peru, where the Aztec and Inca empires flourished, the language structure was imperial, with subject peoples continuing to speak their own languages even though many learned that of the rulers of the empire. Furthermore, the European languages, as well as the languages Europeans had encountered in the Middle East and in Asia, were written languages, with grammatical and literary traditions. The languages of North America were neither written nor did they have such traditions. They presented an uncharted sea of variation and diversity. So the newness and unexpectedness of the languages and those who spoke them had their impact on the Europeans.

Faced with these new languages, along with the new cultures and customs, the Europeans set about to record and describe the new linguistic horizon as best they could. The recording and description of languages, which here will be our major concern, was

admittedly a secondary linguistic task for the Europeans. Their first concern was to learn the languages they had come in contact with; the second was to write down what they had learned. This recording they did as best they could within the intellectual framework that was available to them and in the absence of native literary or grammatical traditions to use as a guide—much early description of North American languages sounds like a description of Latin or Greek, or even Hebrew—and with a great variety of success and failure. But record they did, and the result was a fairly large body of writings of various sorts—dictionaries, word lists, phrase books, translations (mostly of the holy scriptures), grammatical disquisitions, and the like.

The pattern of European response to North American languages can be organized in terms of a cycle that seems to repeat itself throughout the history of this response. The sequence includes, first, the response of explorers and travelers; second, that of missionaries; third, that of scholars. From the earliest times of Europeans in North America this triad of explorer, missionary, and scholar has reacted and interacted with the languages encountered, and the result of this interaction is a large, sophisticated body of data and techniques that has contributed greatly to the development of linguistics, and to the preservation, analysis, and even the spread of the languages concerned.

Three Traditions

There are three main traditions of the European investigation of the languages of North America. They have differences and varying emphases, but are broadly identical in outline. The three traditions are the Spanish, the English, and the French. Two other traditions, those of the Swedish and the Dutch, were formulated at the beginning of the colonial period but did not survive the abandonment of an imperial policy in North America by the countries themselves and have left behind only an odd word list, a few grammatical comments, and other comments included in writings on other subjects. These remnants are nonetheless valuable for being scanty and are of value in the total range of information preserved from the earliest days of contact. A final tradition—and it should be understood that these traditions are differentiated mainly on the basis of the

language and nationality of the writers, without substantial differences in methods and points of view, since all were within the bounds of general post-Renaissance European thought—but one which came much later on was that of the Danes, who concerned themselves, and still concern themselves, with Eskimo, and with especial interest in Greenland, where many Eskimos live. We will be concerned here with only two of these traditions—the English and the French.

Colonial Period

The English came into contact with the inhabitants of North America primarily up and down the eastern seaboard of what is now the United States. The French came into contact primarily in the St. Lawrence valley and the region of the Great Lakes. The English contacts were made exclusively with speakers of Algonquian languages; for the French, both Algonquian and Iroquoian languages were encountered. It was not until some time after the colonial period that the great linguistic diversity of the interior and western parts of North America came to the attention of those of these two European traditions. At the beginning of the colonial period, the missionary impetus was especially strong in both of these traditions. English Protestantism and French Catholicism, which rarely agreed on anything else, did agree on the necessity of converting the Indians to Christianity as quickly as possible. With a theological enthusiasm that could only have developed in the hothouse atmosphere of seventeenth-century Europe, with its Reformation and Counter Reformation, the Europeans set about the task of rescuing the Indians from the bottomless pit that faced the unconverted upon death. The primary linguistic expression of this drive is the production of European religious literature in North American languages. The missionary linguists turned out prayer book after prayer book, sermon after sermon, catechism after catechism, Bible translation after Bible translation, rolling on through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and well into the twentieth. The anthropological interest may outweigh the missionary one at the present time, but not by much; the missionary impulse is still quite strong.

It is instructive to discuss a few examples of the kind of work that resulted from this European perception of North American lan-

guages. The English contacts were earliest, most intense, and most fruitful in New England, even though some reports and discussions came out of contacts to the south and the north. The earliest really respectable linguistic result I know of in English is five pages containing some three hundred items, words or short phrases, at the end of William Wood's *New Englands Prospect* of 1634. The exact provenience of these words is not known, since Wood traveled widely in the English settlements of the time and his transcription leaves much to the imagination, but they are of a southeastern New England Algonquian type, similar in many respects to such better-known languages as Natick, Narragansett, or Pequot, which were spoken in what are now the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. All these forms are really dialects of one language, and the testimony of men like Wood and others indicate that a speaker of one form could easily get by with speakers of any other form. The situation where a number of different tribes—different political if not cultural entities—spoke what seemed to be the same language led to the general belief, still not completely eradicated today, that all the Indians of North America spoke one language, generally called "Indian." However, the most recent estimate of the number of languages currently spoken by the Indians of North America—that is, north of Mexico—is about 275, some 50 of which are spoken in Canada. Moreover, a reasonable estimate is that about 100 others have become extinct since the arrival of Europeans, so that, at an earlier stage, the linguistic diversity was even greater than it is now.

Wood's list is quite respectable, considering the time and the circumstances in which it was made. His book was, in effect, a travel brochure extolling the virtues of the New World and intended to convince prospective emigrants from England that life in New England was possible, even pleasurable. He mentioned the native inhabitants and added his list as a matter of interest. The list contains such homey and familiar items as *mawcus sinnus*, "a paire of shooes"; *pappouse*, "childe"; and *squaw*, "a woman"; and what he must have considered useful phrases, such as *kawkenog wamponpeage*, "let me see money," or *nenetaha*, "Ile fight with you."¹

Wood's contribution falls in the category of the responses of explorers and travelers.

Although it technically falls in this category also, the next worthwhile contribution from the European point of view begins to warm to the subject of missionary zeal and lays the foundation of what was to come. This contribution is the famous *Key into the Language of America*, by Roger Williams. A protean figure in early colonial history, Williams was a preacher, dissenter, a translator and mediator for the English in their wars with the Indians, and, above all, the founder of the colony of Rhode Island. In fact, he was on his way back to England in 1643 to obtain a royal charter for the colony when he wrote his book to keep himself occupied for the roughly three months that the passage took. He had spent a number of years in Massachusetts and Rhode Island learning the language, and he drew upon his own memory for the linguistic material. Wood's words are not assignable to any one language or dialect, but Williams's are definitely from a dialect called Narragansett. Recent linguistic studies have demonstrated the unity and integrity of the dialect, distinct from other dialects, and have also validated the accuracy of Williams's recording of it.

First Tangible English Study

Williams's work is a remarkable feat—the more so since he did it alone at sea—and is the first tangible English study of a North American language by one who had learned it well enough to use it effectively. A small book, of some two hundred pages, it is primarily a phrase book, designed to teach its English readers a large number of useful words and phrases, like "What is your name" and "I understand not," and an appreciation and understanding of the culture that went with it. There is little if any grammatical explanation in the book, and the chapters are arranged under such general headings as "Of their nakednesse and clothing," and "Of discourse and the news." Many chapters are full of Christian homilies and exhortations to the Indians in Narragansett to adopt Christianity. Some are cast in the form of sermons, others in the form of a dialogue, some read like a translation of the Bible. The following bit of dialogue is typical:

How many Gods bee there?
 Many, great many.
 Friend, not so.
 There is onely one God.
 You are mistaken.

You are out of the way.
 They that know not this God.
 They goe to Hell, or the Deepe.
 They shall ever lament.
 Who told you so?
 God's Booke.²

The work verges on being a religious pamphlet. Nonetheless, in spite of the catch-as-catch-can transcription, difficult to interpret and full of misprints, the *Key* contains a large amount of material, and students of this corner of American Indian linguistics still find it a valuable source of data.

In the resources it offers, the next outstanding contribution to European work in American Indian languages stands head and shoulders above any other such English work of the seventeenth century. It is John Eliot's Indian Bible of 1663; a translation of the scriptures into a language that has come to be known as Natick, from the name of the town near Boston in which the Christian converts among the Indians lived and in which Eliot lived while he was doing the translation, but which Eliot referred to only as "the Indian language." In it we see the missionary effort in full flower. The language is only dialectically different from the Narragansett of Roger Williams. Eliot had lived as a missionary and preacher among the Indians of Massachusetts for many years and, obviously, knew the language well. He had begun working on the translation a dozen years before he finished it and had already published several smaller works, such as catechisms, in Natick. Since its publication, the text of the Indian Bible of 1633 has served as a source of information on the Natick language. But it is text only, no analysis. What grammatical, lexical, or phonological conclusions we come to about Natick is our own doing.

Algonquian Languages

A few years later, however, in 1666, Eliot published a short grammatical treatise on Natick which he entitled "The Indian Grammar Begun." To my knowledge, it is the first explicit grammatical statement in English on any North American language, and considering the time in which it was written, it is a fairly sophisticated piece of work. Eliot presents extensive paradigms of the quite complicated verb structures—a feature for which all Algonquian languages are known—as well as lesser information on word deriva-

tion, inflection, and phonology. He is aware of special features of Algonquian grammar, for example, the distinctions between animate and inanimate nouns, between inclusive and exclusive pronouns, and of the five modes of the verb. Short as the treatise is—sixty-six pages—it is, like the Indian Bible, a valuable document in the European perception of North American languages.

The last document from this era and place that is worthwhile mentioning is a vocabulary of the Natick language compiled by Josiah Cotton in Plymouth, Massachusetts, about 1710. Although Cotton himself was not a minister, he was the son and grandson of ministers and had trained for the ministry at Harvard. He was the first notable English recorder of North American languages who had been born in New England rather than in England. The “vocabulary” is more than that. It contains extensive grammatical paradigms arranged as vocabulary: “I love thee,” “I love him,” “I love you,” “he loves me,” etc. It also contains many illustrative sentences: “I am ready to go,” “Do thou carry me,” and the like. Although, like Williams’s *Key*, it is heavily interlarded with Christian homiletic material—sermons, catechisms, and so on—it is technically a work of scholarship, whose primary purpose was to record the language as it existed, and thus it falls into the third category of the recurring triad of European responses to North American languages. The vocabulary was not in fact published until 1829, more than one hundred years after it was compiled, so that in its day it had no public effect like those of the works of Wood or Williams or Eliot.

Linguistic Investigations

When we turn to the linguistic investigations of the French, we find that many of the best of them suffered the same fate as Cotton’s “vocabulary,” remaining in manuscript, perhaps because the Catholic French did not want the Protestant English to get their hands on the material. (It is interesting to note that as late as the 1840s, Thavenet, a French Jesuit missionary, could write: “Ce dictionnaire est pour les missions. On ne doit pas le livrer au public de peur que les protestants ne s’en servent pour répandre leurs erreurs.”³ Some are still there. Hanzeli lists forty-two known but unpublished French linguistic manuscripts existing in various ar-

chives, libraries, and monasteries, mostly in Quebec but also in places like Ottawa and Rhode Island. French efforts generally came earlier than those of the English. The earliest respectable published information on North American languages in this French tradition is a list of 228 items in Huron-Wyandot, an Iroquoian language that became extinct in the 1920s, according to one report (according to another, there were five Iroquoian speakers still alive in 1962). It was published as an appendix to the *Voyages* of Jacques Cartier in 1534 and 1535–38, nearly one hundred years before Wood’s *New Englands Prospects*. This particular list is so well constructed, with words intelligently grouped together in categories, such as parts of the body, numbers, foods, natural phenomena, that there is some doubt that it was drawn up by Cartier at all—at least not while standing on a wild shore talking to Indians in sign language. Cartier was a rough seafarer and explorer whose basic literacy has been called into question, let alone the linguistic and literary sophistication necessary to construct such a list. Rather, the list seems to have been taken down in France by someone other than Cartier from Indians captured by Cartier and taken back to France. According to Marius Barbeau, who made the most recent study of this list, a likely candidate for this other person is none other than François Rabelais, who stayed with Cartier in St. Malo after the explorer’s return from the New World and got from Cartier the knowledge and terminology of seafaring that mark the descriptions of the navigations of Pantagruel. Whoever recorded the items, they are recorded well and are as valuable a source for early Iroquoian languages as Wood’s list is for Algonquian.

The main French effort, like that of the English, really began in a substantive way in the seventeenth century. A few early efforts in 1610 and 1615 may have paved the way—they left no results, however, only reports of language learning and study by French missionaries—but when the Jesuits entered Canada in 1625, linguistics became a going concern. Jesuits in New France, like their counterparts in the Spanish empire to the south, were single-minded men of great intensity and daring. Their task—their *only* task—was to convert the Indians to Christianity, and they went about it with much

greater intensity than the English did. This single focus of French missionary efforts soon produced a spate of results, among them the first printed Huron-Wyandot text, a catechism of 1630, and a dictionary of Huron published in 1632. Later, as the French spread westward, they came into contact with Algonquian languages, which they began to subject to the same scrutiny. A typical work, carefully done but which remained in manuscript until 1970, is a comprehensive dictionary of Montagnais by Bonaventure Fabvre, written in 1695. However, the greatest contribution of the French to Algonquian linguistics in the seventeenth century came from the eastern section of French influence, where the Jesuit Sabastian Rasles compiled a voluminous dictionary of the Abnaki language. The dictionary, which is about two hundred pages long, is subtly done, with a good appreciation for the distinctions of Abnaki phonology. It was begun about 1690, and probably finished not long afterward, but exactly how long it took no one knows, since Rasles did not publish it in his lifetime (in fact, it was not published until 1833). The history of the manuscript is illuminating. In 1691 Rasles had established a missionary post at Norridgewock, in what is now the state of Maine but in those days was no man's land between the English and the French. The English raided and sacked the place in 1705, 1723, and 1724. On the first occasion, both Rasles and his records escaped. On the second, Rasles escaped, but he had to leave his papers behind, and they fell into the hands of the English doing the raiding. On the third occasion, Rasles was killed. After the second raid, his manuscript dictionary fell into the hands of a Col. Heath, who presented it to a certain Elisha Cooke. Eventually, Cooke presented it to the library of Harvard, where it is to this day. In 1833, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences published it, and it finally became available as a source for the study of Algonquian languages.

English Tradition

After the seventeenth century the established pattern continued: contact and response by explorers, missionaries, and scholars. The first occurrence of the English tradition in a specifically Canadian context came in 1791 with the appearance of a book entitled *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter*

and Trader, by an English trader and traveler named John Long. He had come to Canada in 1768 and had traveled widely among the Indians of the St. Lawrence valley and the Great Lakes and knew several languages quite well. He fought on the British side in the American Revolutionary War and afterward continued his adventures and travels in British North America. In 1791 he published an account of these travels and adventures and included a number of vocabularies and comparisons of languages, such as Ojibwa, which he calls Chippeway, Algonkin, Iroquois, and even Eskimo. The list, like the book, is rather superficial, but it does give some information on the state of the languages at the time of his writing.

If Long's work is the explorer's within the Candian context, the missionary contribution of greatest importance in the same context is undoubtedly the invention of the Cree syllabary by James Evans in 1840. In fact, Evans's invention of this syllabary ranks as one of the most remarkable European reactions of any sort to North American languages. Evans was an Englishman who had come to Canada in 1820 and become a minister and missionary to whatever Indians the mission board assigned him to. He resided in several places in Quebec and Ontario and probably acquired a good knowledge of Ojibwa in addition to Cree. By 1840 he was an experienced and able missionary, and he was chosen by the church to head the major missionary effort they were beginning in the northern territories. He established his missionary headquarters at Norway House, in what is now Manitoba, and established submissions in many places across the northern frontier. He decided that the Crees, if they were ever to learn to read the scriptures, should have them in a form of writing that was easily learned, unambiguous, and distinctively Indian. So he invented a novel syllabic alphabet, out of whole cloth, so to speak, with no known model or precursor. It was an ingenious invention—a system of nine basic quasigeometric symbols, each representing a consonant. Each symbol may occur in one of four positions, or *attitudes*: right side up, upside down, on the right side, and on the left side. The attitude indicates which one of four vowels is to follow the consonant in question. For example, a V right side up represents the consonant *p* followed

by the vowel *a*. The same symbol upside down, Λ , represents the consonant *p* followed by the vowel *e*. On its right side, \succ , it is *p* followed by *o*, and on its left side, \prec , it is *p* followed by another vowel which cannot be easily represented in English, but is similar to the *a* in the English word "far." Unfortunately, this is not quite enough for Cree and the syllabary has to be fleshed out by a number of diacritics (dots, small circles, apostrophes), to indicate such elements as preaspirated and labialized stops, the vowel *i*, consonants not followed by any vowel, and other details. Nevertheless, it seems to work fairly well for Cree—and, indeed, for other languages, since it has eventually become the writing system of Eskimo, Slavi, Ojibwa in part, and some languages of Canada. Evans established a press to print the religious literature he and others wrote in this syllabary, and, at first, he had to make his own type from lead gleaned in old tea chests, but, later, he had professional fonts made by the missionary society.

Cree Syllabary

In the Cree syllabary we find the first tangible evidence of a European's deliberate and conscious doing something for North Americans in the matter of language. Of course, the motive behind it was to enable the Crees to be better Christians, but the effect was that something had been created especially for the Indians and was available for any use, since it was obvious that anything could be written in Cree using the syllabary, not just religious works. The syllabary remains controversial in the matter of Indian languages. Most anthropologists of the European tradition have no use for such a syllabary and would prefer to see Cree and other languages written in a standardized Latin alphabet—in fact, a number of recent proposals have been made to this effect, by Ellis for Cree, Todd for Ojibwa, and Gagné for Eskimo—but it has not been determined whether this will be acceptable to the speech community involved. Many speakers of these languages have grown up with the syllabic writing, and may well have the same attitude toward it that, say, Israelis have toward the Hebrew alphabet. The Hebrew language could just as easily be written in a standardized Latin alphabet—in fact, it would be much more efficient, as well as incorporating Hebrew into the international Latin sys-

tem—but it does not seem a likely development, given the emotional attachment that Israelis have toward their writing system. Neither does it seem likely that the Crees will give up their writing system any more readily, just because a European tells them to.

The third notable event of the nineteenth century in the cycle of explorer, missionary, scholar, though not specifically in the Canadian context, was the appearance in 1891 of J. W. Powell's *Indian Linguistic Families North of Mexico*. Published by the Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., it was the work of many experts in Indian linguistics and it classified all the known languages of North America into fifty-five language families, with much supporting detail in the form of tribal names and locations. This classification showed in great clarity the diversity of languages and language families in North America, and it showed with equal clarity which languages were related to which other languages and, by implication, which groups of Indians had descended from a common culture and common language. Establishment of this shared genetic inheritance was a powerful tool in tracing the historical diversification and spread of languages in North America. This classification has stood up remarkably well since the time it was first proposed. In few, if any, cases have the languages been found to be wrongly assigned to one or another language family. The only major modification of the system is that the fifty-five families have been grouped into succeeding larger conglomerates by the discovery of more elements that point to a common linguistic inheritance. For example, in the Powell classification, no connection is established between, say, Cree, of the Algonquian family, and Kwakiutl, a Wakashan language. That connection has since been established, however, and they are seen to be related, although so distantly that it takes great care to single out the elements they have preserved in common.

Anthropological and Linguistic Point of View

The publication of this classification marks the beginning of the interest in North American languages from an anthropological and linguistic point of view that dominates the European tradition at the present, superseded-

ing the exploratory and missionary interests. The quickening interest in these languages underlay the careers of two scholars whose influence has been paramount in linguistics and anthropology since the time of Powell's publication: Franz Boas and Edward Sapir. With intertwined careers—Boas was Sapir's major professor—and a lifelong friendship, they made major contributions toward establishing the anthropological and linguistic interest in North American languages. Boas was a German physicist who came to Canada to study the color of Arctic sea ice around Baffin Island and became so entranced by the Eskimo culture there that he made a major change of career, eventually becoming a professor of anthropology at Columbia University. He did most of his field work and linguistic investigation among the Indians of British Columbia and, in 1911, edited the *Handbook of American Indian Languages*. Sapir, like Boas, of German birth—his parents emigrated to the United States when Sapir was five—took a Ph.D. from Columbia under Boas in 1909. In 1910 he came to Ottawa as chief of the bureau of ethnology in the Museum of Man—technically part of the Geological Survey of the Canadian Department of Mines. The fifteen years Sapir spent in Ottawa were among the most productive of his career. He wrote article after article on the languages of North America and made field trip after field trip to British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and Quebec. While in Canada he succeeded in getting a famous linguist, Leonard Bloomfield, to do field work among the Sweet Grass Cree of Saskatchewan. The familiarity that Sapir gained with the languages of North America is what enabled him to make what is thought by some to be his major contribution to American Indian linguistics, his reduction of the fifty-five language families of Powell's classification to six major superfamilies, or phyla. This he did in his famous article on the languages of North and Central America in the 1929 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Although Sapir never published the necessary data to prove the validity of his classification, subsequent work by a whole generation of linguists has shown that his scheme was essentially correct.

Sapir's classification is a many-chambered thing, showing various levels of relationships among the languages considered. As developed later by his student George Trager, five

levels of classification can be established: (1) the level of *phylum*, (2) the level of *stock*, (3) the level of *family*, (4) the level of *subfamily*, and (5) the level of *language*. For example, if we consider Cree within this scheme of classification, we find it in the phylum Algonquian-Wakashan, in the stock Algonquian-Ritwan, in the family Algonquian, in the subfamily Central Algonquian, and in the language Cree. Of Sapir's six superfamilies, or phyla, five are represented in Canada, and it might be of interest to see what they are. The first is Eskimo-Aleut, with Eskimo as a representative language; the second is Algonquian-Wakashan, with Cree as its most important language; the third is Nadene, with Sarcee, a language of Alberta, as one of its best-known representatives; the fourth is Penutian, represented by Tsimshian; and the fifth is Hokan-Siouan, represented by Mohawk.

Benefits

What have been the benefits to those of European descent and tradition of studying the languages of North America? For the explorer, trader, or trapper, it has meant the extension of his market, his travels, his findings, by enabling him to talk with the people he has encountered. For the missionary, it has meant, for better or worse, a broadening of the scope of Christianity to include those whose souls he was desirous of saving. For the scholar, it has provided a rich source for studying the history of North America, both as it existed before the arrival of the Europeans and after. For the anthropologist and linguist, especially, the languages of North America have been a testing ground for theories of language and language structure, theories of historical change in languages, and theories of cultural diffusion and spread. These languages have provided a data base that has greatly enhanced the development of theory, far beyond that possible in a purely European frame of reference, because languages with literary traditions spoken by large numbers of people in a technological society would fail to show some features that are inherent in languages without literary or grammatical tradition, spoken by smaller numbers of people without a technological culture. In many ways, it has broadened the universe of discourse. These languages have also been a training ground for some of the most able linguists of the modern tradition,

whether theoreticians or not, and have provided them with laboratories in which to learn their tasks. Some of the most important linguists of the twentieth century have been intimately connected with these languages: Sapir, Bloomfield, Pike, Hockett, Whorf, Trager, and even Harris, the grandfather of the transformational school that is the current chief provider of theory in linguistics.

What benefits have the Indians who speak these languages received from those of European tradition who have interacted with them in the matter of language? This record is much less impressive, although one possible benefit is the preservation, as in Eliot's translation of the Bible, of a language that would otherwise have gone out of existence without a trace—under European impact, of course—had he not recorded it. Other things preserved are tribal ritual, songs, incantations, and other elements of the oral tradition that was the North American norm before the arrival of the Europeans with their writing systems. It is not unheard of for Indians to search the records of linguists and anthropologists in order to revive some part of tribal culture that has fallen into disuse. Also of benefit has been the introduction of writing systems for these languages, whether in the form of standard Latin transliteration system or a completely new scheme like the Cree syllabary. Had the speakers of North American languages had a system of writing prior to the arrival of the Europeans, how much more of their culture might have survived than did? They would have been able to write their culture down themselves without relying on the sometimes antic and unsure perceptions of the Europeans. In the future, how much more will be saved of what remains of Indian culture, now that writing systems are available for those languages that do not have them? Another benefit is the pedagogical approach to language learning developed within the European tradition by modern linguists. This approach has been applied to a number of Indian languages, such as Cree, and is being applied to others—even where the chances of preservation seem rather hopeless, as in the case of Sarcee, which has only fifty effective speakers, mostly of middle or old age. Not only can textbooks be used by those of European descent who want to learn Cree, for instance, but they can also be used by those of Cree descent who, for

some reason, either do not know Cree or do not know it well and want either to improve their language or to learn it.

Future of Native Languages

What about the future of native languages of Canada? Some, like Eskimo or Cree or Ojibwa, with large numbers of speakers, forty to fifty thousand each, and a growing awareness that the preservation of the language has value, will undoubtedly survive for an indefinite period of time, despite the increasing numbers of speakers of European languages. (Indeed, the number of speakers of these languages might also increase, as Cree has, from about eighteen thousand speakers in 1911 to the fifty thousand or so it has today.) Others, however, like Sarcee, with fifty speakers, or Semiahmoo, a Salish language of British Columbia with only two effective speakers, inevitably will disappear. They will pass from current concern to linguistic archives, as so many others have done. Let us hope that that ending will be reserved fewer and fewer North American languages as time passes by.

NOTES

1. William Wood, *New England's Prospect*, London, 1634. Facsimile reproduction, Amsterdam, 1971, p. 97.
2. Roger Williams, *Key into the Language of America*, London, 1643. I quote from the 6th edition, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1973, pp. 195, 198.
3. Abbé Thavenet, *Ébauche d'un dictionnaire algonquin-français*, unpublished ms. Quoted from Pilling, *Bibliography of the Algonquian Languages*, p. 483.

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