

A P A S S A M A Q U O D D Y - M A L I S E E T D I C T I O N A R Y

Peskotomuhkati Wolastoqewi Latuwewakon

by David A. Francis and Robert M. Leavitt

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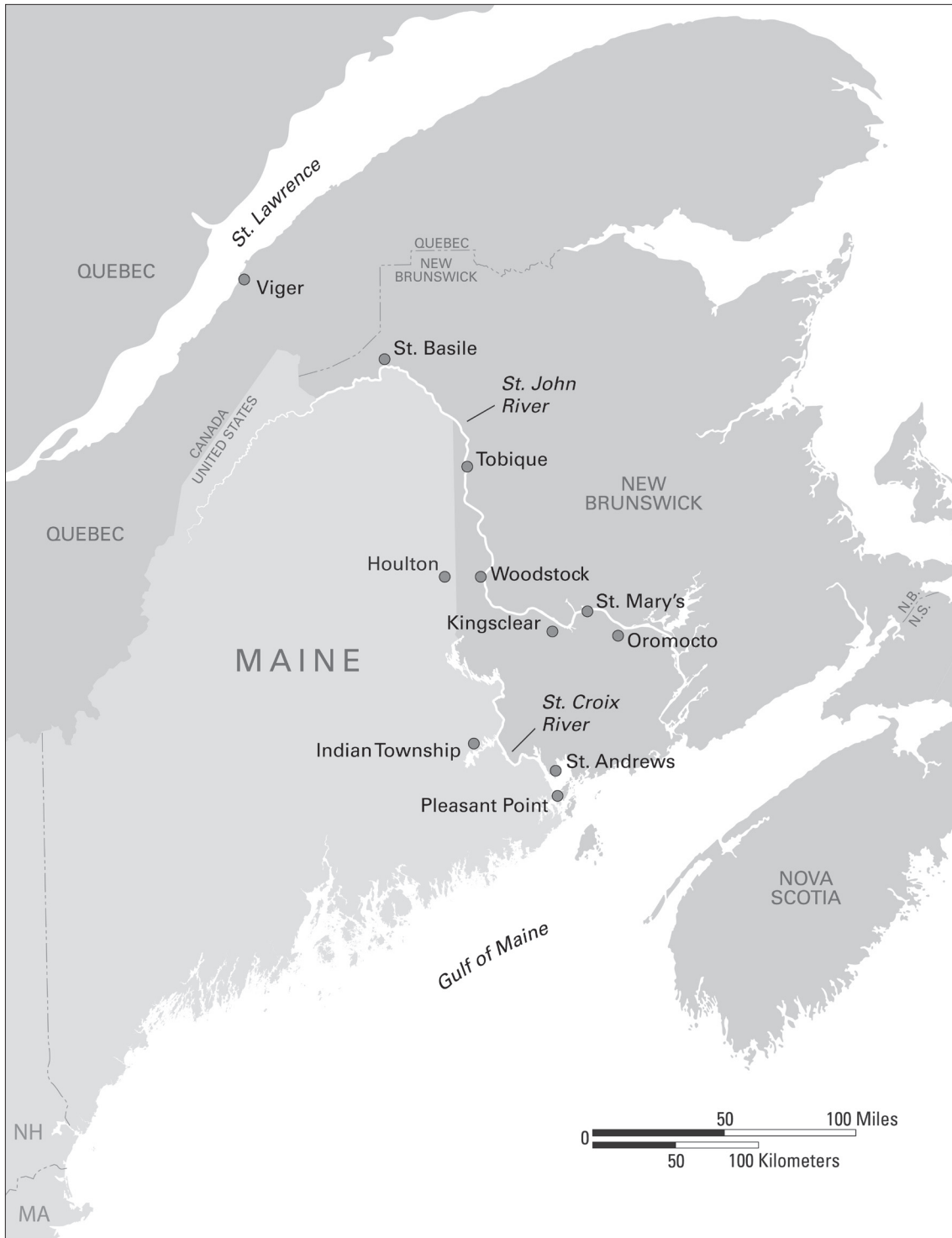
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Dustjacket illustration: Mail Pouch, by Tomah Josef. Collections of the Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor, Maine. Photograph by Stephen Bicknell. Reproduced with permission. Image titles (with current spelling) are as follows: Kuhkukhahs, *Great Horned Owl*; Apiqosikon naka Mahtoqehs, *Canada Lynx and Snowshoe Hare*; Munimqehs Teppu Ponapskulokuk, *Groundhog Sitting in a Stone Boat*.



CONTEMPORARY PASSAMAQUODDY AND MALISEET COMMUNITIES

Indian Township, Pleasant Point, and St. Andrews are Passamaquoddy communities;
the remaining communities shown on the map are Maliseet.

Kulankeyutoniya latuwewakon, kwinpasultiniya ktokekhamaniya macekulticik, ktopi-tahatomoniya elihc-ona nekomaw cuwi-ihitit. Take good care of the language, make an effort to teach the next generation, think about how they too will need to have it.

– Joseph A. Nicholas, Passamaquoddy Elder

1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Passamaquoddy and Maliseet have lived in the region which now includes eastern Maine (United States) and western New Brunswick (Canada) for thousands of years. Among the first Native peoples to have contact with European voyagers to North America, the Passamaquoddy greeted Samuel de Champlain at the mouth of the St. Croix River in 1604. Passamaquoddy territory embraced the watershed of this river, which today forms the easternmost segment of the U.S.-Canadian border. Maliseet territory consisted of the adjacent St. John River watershed, to the east, and extended northward into present-day -. The two peoples' names for themselves indicate their origins in these territories: the Passamaquoddy are *peskotomuhkatiyik* 'people who spear pollock,' a fish abundant in coastal waters; the Maliseet are *wolastoqewiyik* 'people of the St. John River.' Today there are Passamaquoddy and Maliseet communities on both sides of the border. Although they share a common language, the two peoples are distinct political entities.

The Passamaquoddy and Maliseet had close relations with the early colonists and were among the first Native peoples converted to Roman Catholicism by French missionaries. Despite the early, devastating effects of European diseases on their populations — *lahpihkut* 'smallpox' is a word of Acadian French origin, from *la picote noire* — the people of both tribes continued to live throughout the region and were instrumental in helping the earliest European settlers adapt to the local environment. Often, though, they found themselves caught between the competing economic and political interests of the French and English. Though most of the armed conflicts between colonists and Indians took place to the west of their territories, in the mid-1700s the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet did become directly involved in a number of clashes with the English. During the Revolutionary War, in which both peoples sided with the Americans, the Maliseet confronted the English in 1777 on the St. John River, in New Brunswick. Later that same year, the Passamaquoddy, with help from the Maliseet, repelled an attack at Machias, Maine.

During colonial times, the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet, together with the Mi'kmaq, Penobscot, and Abenaki, formed the Wabanaki Confederacy to counter aggression from European colonists and the Iroquois. While the exact dates of its origin are unknown, the Confederacy lasted into the 1860s. Its main achievement appears to have been maintaining peace with the Iroquois, particularly the Mohawks, who in oral history are still spoken of as the traditional enemies of the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet. The protocols of the Confederacy were first written down from Passamaquoddy oral tradition by Lewis Mitchell, the tribe's representative to the Maine legislature, in the 1880s. In his *Wampum Records*,¹ he tells how peace was maintained and offers insight into the traditional

governance of the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and other nations of the Confederacy. According to Mitchell, for example, the nations helped choose one another's chiefs by sending delegates to a village when the chief there had died. Though their languages were closely related, they would have relied on bilingual or multilingual interpreters in these deliberations.

The remoteness of the region allowed the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet to keep control over most of their territory until after the French and Indian War, 1754–1763, when the English began to expand settlement in the area. By the late 1700s, Massachusetts was administering Passamaquoddy lands; these fell under the jurisdiction of Maine when it gained separate statehood in 1820. Final determination of the border between Maine and New Brunswick, with the signing of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty in 1842, divided both Passamaquoddy and Maliseet territory between the United States and Canada.

In Maine, the state continued to run Passamaquoddy affairs, generally without consulting the leaders or members of the tribe, although from 1842 on the tribe had a non-voting representative in the state legislature to express its concerns, and the two state-created reservations elected their own governors and tribal leaders according to the terms of a state statute. Maine was the last state to grant voting rights to reservation Indians, in 1954.² The Passamaquoddy continued under state jurisdiction until they gained federal recognition during the land claim negotiations of the late 1970s. The tribe claimed that the states of Massachusetts and Maine had taken Passamaquoddy lands illegally: the Indian Nonintercourse Act of 1790, still in effect today, stipulates that Indian lands may be acquired only with the consent of the United States Congress. After several court decisions that favored the Passamaquoddy, the claim was settled out of court in 1980.

In Canada, the Maliseet were under the jurisdiction of the colony of New Brunswick until (after Confederation, in 1867) the Indian Act of 1876 placed them, like all other First Nations peoples, under the jurisdiction of the Canadian federal government. The government's policy was one of assimilation. In an attempt to solve what he famously called "the Indian problem," Duncan Campbell Scott, minister of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, put forward legislation making it mandatory for all Native children to attend residential schools, where they might become "civilized." The residential schools had destructive, long-lasting effects on the children who attended them (not all did) and on their families. Speaking Maliseet was severely punished, and survivors of the schools see this as a major factor in the loss of their language.

From the colonial period onward, the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet were beset by poverty, discrimination, and isolation. Despite increasing pressure to assimilate, the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet kept their communities largely intact on the small parcels of their original territories "reserved" for them by the U.S. and Canadian governments. Like many rural people of the late 1800s and early 1900s, they worked hard to keep family and community together. Wood-harvesting, guiding, trapping, making and selling baskets, and construction work supplemented subsistence activities like hunting and fishing.

David A. Francis's account of his experience is typical of Passamaquoddy and Maliseet men and women born in the first half of the 1900s (see narrative on the following page). When he finished the eighth grade at Pleasant Point, he still rarely spoke English. He relied on his ability to read and write in his second language in order to graduate from the high school in Eastport in 1935. It was only when he joined the U.S. Army in World War II that his English finally became fluent.

Nisokehs Nkisokehkims

Pihce nit tuciw, nit etolokehkimkiyek,
ma nkiseltomakuwonewin ntuwehkanen
ntolatuwewakonon; cuwi ikolisomanatuwewey. Nil
kahk-ote nit tehpu nehtawihitom, skicinuwey.
Ntiyalayawolotipon qocomok, iyey, recessuwimok;
psi-te wen skicinuwatuwe. Kenuk elomikotokil
ahaci-te ikolisomanuwey ksehe; ntuwehkanen,
nkisuwehkanen.

Malom-ote kisi-tutkom yut skicinuwi-
kehketuwakon. On neke ntepassin ihik
'somakonossuwihkuk. On ntahcuwi-te tan
eli-kisi-nonom ikolisomanatuwewakon, 'sami
ma nostakew ntolatuwewakon wehkiyan.
Motuweyu. Anqoc ma nihtawihitomuwon
keqsey, ikolisomanuwey wehkiyan. Nit nit
weci-mace-nonom ikolisomanuwey qeni ihik
etolihtonoltimok, ihik 'somakonossuwihkuk. 'Sami
ma kiseltomakuwon ktuwehkan kil ktolatuwewakon
skicinuwey. Ktahcuwi-ikolisomanatu, 'sami psi-
te wen ikolisomanatuwe. Niktok-ona kotokik,
piluwatuwulticik, ma kiseltomuawon wen
'tuwehkan. Skicinuwok tehpu. Polecomonok kotama;
kisewestuwamtultuwok nekomaw. Skicinuwok cuwi
ikolisomanuwey.

Peskuwok-ona eci-koti-nutomuhtit skicinuwey,
peskotomuhkatuwey. Ntoli-skicinuwatu,
nuskicinuwokehkimak. On ntikolisomanokehkimken,
iyey, elewestu. Nil komac... , psi-te npiyemi-
skicinuwatu katok ntikolisomanatuwan. Anqoc
kahk keqsey, awonehe nmace-skicinuwi-kolulak
yukk sergeants. — “What’s that?” — “Oh, that’s my
own language.” — “What is it? Say it! Say it!” On
solahkiw 'koti-nonomoniya.

Apaciyayan nunitahasin ntolatuwewakon.
Motuweyu weskinuwatuwi: “Keq yut liwihtasu?”
Kenoq nulehtun yut, 'sami toqi-te ntuwehkanol toke.

I Learned My Language Twice

Long ago when we were in school they didn’t let us
use our language; it had to be English. But all I knew
was Passamaquoddy. We played outside at recess and
everyone spoke it. But as the years went on, English
came in; we used it — we could use it.

Finally I got through the school in the community
[and high school]. Then I went into the Army. And
I had to learn English any way I could, because
they didn’t understand my language when I used
it. It was hard. Sometimes I didn’t know how to say
something if I used English. That’s why I started to
learn English during the war, in the Army. Because
they didn’t let you use your Native language. You
had to speak English, because everyone spoke it. The
others, those who spoke different languages, weren’t
allowed to use them; that is, Native people only. Not
French speakers; they had one another to talk to.
Native people had to use English.

Some of the non-Natives really wanted to hear
Passamaquoddy. I’d be speaking it, teaching them
in the language. And I’d get taught in English,
learning how to speak it. I really could speak
more Passamaquoddy than English in everything.
Sometimes I’d say something in my language instead;
I’d start speaking it to the sergeants. “What’s that?”
“Oh, that’s my own language.” “What is it? Say it!
Say it!” And suddenly they’d want to know it.

When I came back I had forgotten my language.
It was hard to speak Passamaquoddy: “What is this
thing called?” But I got it back, because now I use
both.

– David A. Francis

Following World War II things began slowly to change, and by the 1950s the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet communities were less isolated. Many ex-servicemen went to work in Boston, Hartford, and other large cities. Family members followed. Employment, marriage, and schooling took people to nearby Maine and New Brunswick communities. Those who moved away returned frequently to visit family and friends at Pleasant Point and Indian Township, Tobique and St. Mary’s, but they now spoke largely in English. Teachers encouraged parents to use English with their children. Even for those who stayed, the language of the community had shifted.

In the 1960s and 1970s the struggles for civil rights and the assertion of cultural identity by minority groups across North America inspired the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet communities to empower themselves. Through conversations with elders and from the study of historical documents, the younger generations learned details of their legal and political relations with the federal governments. Native scholars framed their own accounts of history, adopting a Passamaquoddy or Maliseet perspective. In Maine this research led to the land claim settlement, mentioned above, and to federal recognition of the Houlton Band of Maliseets. In New Brunswick, Sandra Lovelace, a Maliseet from Tobique, successfully challenged, in the United Nations, the Canadian law that denied Indian status to a Native woman who married a non-Native man. The UN held this to be in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Canada subsequently changed the law.

This period also saw the growing presence of Passamaquoddy and Maliseet men and women in the broader society, where they are now represented among teachers and professors, judges and cabinet ministers, doctors and attorneys, corporate executives and technology experts, archeologists, artists, writers, and musicians. Their work has expanded public knowledge of Passamaquoddy and Maliseet cultures and has influenced education, health care, and the arts beyond the Native communities.

Since the 1960s and 1970s, when community leaders first recognized the endangered state of the language, they have taken an increasingly assertive stance with government authorities in setting education policy. Educators have moved toward more traditional models of education, establishing school-based programs to keep the language alive and maintain cultural knowledge. Outside the schools, spiritual leaders have reintroduced Passamaquoddy and Maliseet spirituality, teaching ancient beliefs and rituals such as fasting, sweat-lodge ceremonies, and smudging (spiritual cleansing) with the smoke of sweetgrass and other plants. Oral and written literature, art and music — also revived in the 1960s and 1970s — are vital parts of every community’s cultural life today.

All these aspects of culture are deeply embedded in the language of their origin and gather richness from the study of that language. The reclaiming of Passamaquoddy and Maliseet identity, therefore, has produced a renewed commitment to maintaining the language as a key to Passamaquoddy and Maliseet culture.

2 . L A N G U A G E A N D C U L T U R E

When Passamaquoddy-Maliseet speakers say, as they often do, that the language makes them feel “connected with the environment,” or “closer to the land,” they are not romanticizing or idealizing a bygone era, but instead referring to deep cultural understandings rooted in the language. For them, Passamaquoddy-Maliseet is a communication system responsive to the immediate social and physical circumstances in which they find themselves. Native Passamaquoddy speaker Margaret Apt’s description of the language as “a unique mindset, in which I feel completely at home,” acknowledges on a very deep level how a people’s cultural history and sense of collective identity are embedded in the words and constructions of their native tongue.

This mindset is distinguished by characteristic ways of structuring words and narratives that suggest a more participatory, interactive relationship with the speaker’s surroundings than do their

English equivalents. We see this in language expressing concepts as fundamental as space, the environment, and relationship itself.

Speakers conceptualize physical space, at whatever scale, in reference to their personal point of view at the moment, that is, in relative terms, not using indicators such as fixed landmarks or latitude and longitude, whose values are independent of human presence. A spatial referent, for example, may be expressed as extending toward or away from the speaker (*ckuwarwtihiw* ‘on the road toward here,’ *elomaskutek* ‘away over the field’) or indicate whether or not an object or event can be seen by the speaker (*sakhahte* ‘it extends into view,’ *akuwahte* ‘it is situated out of sight’). Space is active; the perception of the directionality of movement, extension, and orientation gives the surrounding space its structure. In English, for example, a *field* is usually thought of as a delimited area of open land located in a particular place: a thing, a noun. In Passamaquoddy-Maliseet the notion of field is conveyed by a verb root (*-askute-*). The verb indicates how land “fields,” how an open area lies and extends; *field* is experienced as a dynamic phenomenon rather than as a static object. Literal translations of *weckuwaskutek* ‘where it fields toward here’ and *elomaskutek* ‘where it fields away’ suggest the distinctiveness of this way of perceiving. Because all aspects of the physical environment are so constructed, it is unnatural to speak of one’s surroundings as separate from the human being experiencing them; people are integral to the world in which they live.

Other verbs further illustrate the Passamaquoddy-Maliseet speaker’s personal sense of space. *Cicokawse* ‘s/he walks toward land’ and *milawuhse* ‘s/he walks out into the water’ refer to the sun and describe the changing location of sunrise as the days lengthen and shorten, respectively. The initial roots of these verbs (*cicoka* ‘ashore’ and *milawi* ‘offshore’) are two of a large number of spatial determiners used by speakers to indicate their immediate relationship with the environment, in this case as they stand on the south-facing seacoast of Maine or New Brunswick. Many other initial roots have meanings dependent upon the speaker’s or subject’s location, as *wesuwe* ‘going back,’ *api* ‘back from having gone elsewhere,’ and *sakhi* ‘coming into view.’ These initial roots, in combination with the vast number of medial and final roots, make the number of potential “whole” verbs almost limitless and allow accomplished native speakers to convey an extraordinary range of distinctions in expressing their interdependent relationship with the environment.

In like manner, personal space and power are shared by all people, whatever their particular roles. Personal identity is also dynamic, determined by and depending upon shifting relations both with the natural world, as indicated in the preceding paragraphs, and with family and community. This participatory mindset is especially evident in Passamaquoddy-Maliseet oral tradition, which tells in large part how the people came to be who they are today, and how they came to have their present relationship with the natural world.

Creation stories, for example, tell how Koluskap (Glooscap), the “culture hero” of the Wabanaki peoples, made the world habitable for human beings and taught them their place in it. In one of these stories, Koluskap must tame the wind, in the person of Wocawson, a giant white bird, who is making life difficult for the people with an unremitting gale. Koluskap goes to see Wocawson, addresses him as Grandfather, and entreats him to flap his wings less violently. But Wocawson refuses, and Koluskap must exert his power. He ties the bird up so that he cannot move his wings at all. When this proves equally disastrous — no wind is as bad for the natural world as is too much — Koluskap goes back to the north and unties one of the bird’s wings, restoring harmony. In the

story, the wind's name, *Wocawson*, is not a noun, but a verb meaning 'it is windy.' Likewise, the other elements — such as rain, snow, sunshine, cold, heat — are also expressed as verbs, continuing actions or processes rather than independent things or forces, allowing speakers the possibility of interacting with them and affecting them, as *Koluskap* did.

Just as elements of the environment are defined, not as abstract categorical designations, but in reference to the speaker, so is this characteristic perspective reflected in the language of personal relationships. All kinship terms, for example, are “dependent” nouns and occur only as grammatically possessed forms — *nikuwoss* ‘my mother,’ *kmuhsumsuwak* ‘your grandfathers.’ In speakers’ minds these and similar relationships (including ‘friend,’ ‘sweetheart,’ ‘godchild’) are only personal. To speak of them in the abstract requires an indirect expression, such as *wemihtaqsit* ‘one who has a father,’ the word used to translate ‘the Son’ in reciting the Sign of the Cross (see the entry for *niyalic*).

An intimate connection with the world is so important in Passamaquoddy-Maliseet thought that two grammatical features of the language, “absentative” and “dubitative” forms, are called into use when a speaker is not fully connected to his or her environment. The absentative indicates that the speaker is talking about a person or object that no longer exists or whose whereabouts are unknown. It marks the names of people who are no longer living. When David A. Francis says, *Sepsaw-ona nit ’topin* ‘the late Sepsa [Joseph] was sitting there, too’ (see *’kolonikonol*), his use of the absentative form *Sepsaw* shows that he is separated in both time and space from Joseph.

When speakers cannot use personal knowledge to explain an observation or occurrence, they may use a “dubitative” verb form, which indicates doubt. In *possaq-al kmoskeyiness* ‘I guess you must have been sorry’ (see *moskeyin*), the dubitative ending *-ess* shows that the speaker is making a supposition; the particle *possaq-al*, another indicator of doubt, introduces the inference (see also the entry for *alhi*). Hundreds of example sentences in the dictionary contain another particle, *yaq* ‘reportedly,’ that indicates the speaker’s indirect knowledge. The dubitative also expresses the surprise or bewilderment that results from lack of first-hand knowledge: *nit nit eliwisuwiks?* ‘is that what it’s called?’ (see *liwisuwiw*).

Speakers’ use of dependent, absentative, and dubitative forms underscores the personal nature of their connections with the environment and society in which they live. The very nature of the world depends upon speakers’ personal participation and whether their knowledge is direct and certain or based on inference. It is not difficult, then, to imagine how profoundly the shift to using English — even apart from social, spiritual, political, and economic changes — has affected the Passamaquoddy-Maliseet world.

As European colonists settled in the region, the borrowing of French and English words expanded Passamaquoddy-Maliseet vocabulary but did not change the structure of the language or its ways of conceptualizing society and the environment. Only in relatively recent times, for example, has *wocawson* ‘it is windy’ come to be thought of as a noun meaning ‘wind,’ as in English.

The great number of loan-words from French date to the earliest colonial period. Many of these have to do with the church (*muhsilepehk* ‘bishop,’ from *monsieur l’évêque*), trade (*malsan* ‘shopkeeper,’ from *marchand*), European-style garments (*mahtolet* ‘blouse,’ from *mantelet*), and new household items (*maltuhsis* ‘hammer,’ from *marteau*; *puhtay* ‘bottle,’ from *bouteille*). The French introduced card-playing: the names of the suits (*piks* ‘spade,’ from *pique*; *kalus* ‘diamond,’ from