

Eastern Algonquian

Within Algonquian, the Eastern languages are generally considered to constitute a genetic subgroup (Goddard 1967, 1974a, 1979a, 1980, 1983). Goddard 1978a provides a good overview of the languages in this branch. The precise number of distinct languages spoken at contact and their interrelationships are difficult to establish with certainty for several reasons. Many have disappeared. Attestation of some is limited to short wordlists, some showing internal dialect variation. Languages of many groups mentioned in early accounts were never documented at all. There was also continued contact among groups. Early authors differ in their appraisals of mutual intelligibility; some emphasize similarities, others differences.

The northernmost and most divergent of the Eastern languages is Micmac or Mi'kmaq, spoken by 8,100 (SIL 1996) in the Canadian maritime provinces (Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, eastern New Brunswick), the Gaspé of Quebec, Labrador, and now Boston. Some children are still learning the language. There is dialect diversity among communities and age groups, with the greatest differences setting off the Restigouche community in Quebec. Major published documentation includes reference grammars (Maillard 1864, Pacifique 1938 in Hewson & Francis 1990), a teaching grammar (Delisle & Metallic 1976), dictionaries (Rand 1888, 1902, DeBlois & Metallic 1984), and texts (DeBlois 1991). Rand published a newspaper in the

language, *The Micmac Messenger*, for 17 years. Fidelholtz 1968 contains a discussion of phonology with short dictionary, and Fidelholtz 1978 and Proulx 1978 verb morphology. The development of native writing systems is traced in Battiste 1984.

Mithun, Marianne. 1999. *The Languages of Native North America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.