

MUSKOGEAN = MUSKHOGEAN FAMILY**WESTERN****Choctaw-Chickasaw****CENTRAL****Alabama = Alibamu****Koasati = Coushatta****Apalachee = Apalachi*****Hitchiti, Mikasuki = Miccosukee****EASTERN****Creek = Muskogee = Maskoke, Seminole**

Muskogean people were first encountered by DeSoto in 1539, when they lived entirely within the Southeast in what became South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and Louisiana. Most were forced to move west during the Great Indian Removal of 1836-40.

Hitchiti and Mikasuki are close dialects. Perhaps two Hitchiti speakers remain in the Seminole Nation. Mikasuki, by contrast, is still spoken by between 1000 and 2000, including children. It is used by most Seminole and nearly all members of the Miccosukee Tribe in Florida (Jack Martin p.c. 1997).

The Creek or Muskogee language (from *ma·sko·ki*, the Creek name for themselves (Haas 1976: 577)), was the dominant language of the Creek Confederacy numerically and politically. Many speakers of other Southeastern languages were bilingual in Creek. Among the dialects is Seminole. The term 'Seminole' actually refers to a political unit that originated in the mid-18th century when Creeks and Hitchitis left the Creek Confederacy and moved south into Florida. The name comes from Creek *simaló·ni* or *simanó·li*, borrowed from Spanish *cimarrón* 'wild one', for those living in the wild territory of Florida (Boynton 1982: 4 citing Fairbanks 1973: 6). The Seminole Indians of Florida consist of two linguistic groups, the majority speaking Mikasuki, the others a dialect of Creek. Some Seminoles were moved to Oklahoma in the 1830s. Jack Martin estimates that Creek speakers, including some children, now number between 4000 and 5000 (p.c. 1997).

Genetic relationships among the Muskogean languages were recognized early in work by Barton (1797: lxviii), Gallatin (1836: 94-9), and Gatschet (1884). The four subgroups, Choctaw-Chickasaw, Alabama-Koasati-Apachee, Hitchiti-Mikasuki, and Creek-Seminole, have been clear since Gatschet 1884, but higher-level subgrouping is problematic, due to crosscutting resemblances, many from borrowing. The first careful historical work is Haas 1941b, in which a Western branch, consisting of Choctaw-Chickasaw, is distinguished from an Eastern branch, consisting of all others. Following work by Swanton, Munro 1987b proposes an alternative division into a Southern branch (Choctaw-Chickasaw, Alabama, Koasati, Apachee, and Hitchiti-Mikasuki) versus a Northern branch, (Creek-Seminole). Kimball (p.c. 1989) proposes a three-way split: Western (Chickasaw-Choctaw), Central (Alabama-Koasati, Apachee-Mikasuki-Hitchiti), and Eastern (Creek-Seminole). Subgrouping is discussed in Crawford 1975, Booker 1980, Munro 1987b, 1993, Booker 1988, Martin 1991 and others. Comparative work is in Haas 1941b, 1945, 1946a, 1947a, 1949, 1950a, 1966, 1969b, and 1977. Extensive reconstruction of the Proto-Muskogean verb is in Booker 1980. The Muskogean family has been linked with isolates of the area, Natchez, Tunica, Chitimacha, and Atakapa in a hypothesized Gulf stock, but relationships are not considered demonstrated (Brinton 1873, Swanton 1907, 1924, Haas 1951, 1952). Links with the little-attested Gule and Yamasee have proven spurious (Sturtevant 1996).

There are several excellent overviews of languages of the Muskogean family and the Southeast, in particular Haas 1973a, 1979a, Crawford 1975, Booker 1980, and Kimball 1993a. Bibliographies are in Pilling 1889 and especially Booker 1991a.