

18. Équipe d'amérindianisation, Services éducatifs, Betsiamites, Cté Saguenay, Quebec G0H 1B0.
19. I wish to thank Céline Castonguay and Robert Sarrazin from Atikamekw-Sipi for kindly providing information.
20. The offices of Atikamekw-Sipi (and the affiliated Atikamekw Linguistic Institute) are located at 317, rue Saint-Joseph, LaTuque, Quebec G9X 3P6.
21. It is quite astonishing that two groups as close in cultural and linguistic terms as the Atikamekw and the Montagnais, both of which share French as their second language, should have adopted such dissimilar graphic conventions.
22. I am indebted to Roger Spielmann for providing part of the information contained in this section.
23. Lisa Valentine, Dept of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario N6A 5C2.
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25. Available from Native Council of Nova Scotia, Micmac Language Programme, P.O. Box 1320, Truro, Nova Scotia B2N 5N2.
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28. *Let's speak Mohawk* is available through Audio Forum, 96 Broad Street, Guilford, CT 06437, USA.
29. These publications are distributed by the Centre for Research and Teaching of Canadian Native Languages, Dept of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario N6A 5C2.
30. A catalogue of publications related to matters Iroquoian such as books and teaching materials from Kanien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Centre, P.O. Box 1988, Kahnawake, Quebec J0I 1B0.
31. For more information contact: Dean Snow, Dept of Anthropology, SUNY-Albany, Albany, NY 12222.
32. Contact: John D. Nichols, Dept of Native Studies, 532 Fletcher Argue Building, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg R3T 2N2.
33. It is not rare for a writing system to be either maintained or put in place with the precise aim of maintaining a distinct identity (Fishman, 1977).

## Chapter 5A

# Grammatical Sketches: The Mohawk Language

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### Introduction

Mohawk is currently spoken in three major communities in Quebec: Kahnawà:ke (Caughnawaga), Kanehsatà:ke (Oka), and Ahkwesáhsne (St Regis), as well as in Ontario and New York State. It is a member of the Iroquoian family of languages. Iroquoian speakers may well have been the first North Americans encountered by Europeans. When Jacques Cartier sailed into the Bay of Gaspé in 1534, his party met an Iroquoian group, now referred to as the Laurentians, on a fishing expedition from their homes around what is now Quebec City. It was from their language that the name of Canada came. By 1603, when Champlain returned to the area, the Laurentians had vanished without a trace. Related Iroquoian peoples, however, the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora and Cherokee, are still speaking their languages today, and the Huron language and its descendant Wyandot were spoken into this century. The word *kaná:ta* persists in modern Mohawk as a noun for 'settlement' or 'town'.

Mohawk is, in many ways, an exotic language when compared with more familiar European languages. Like other languages indigenous to Quebec, it is of a type termed 'polysynthetic'. Polysynthetic languages are distinguished by the rich internal structure of their words, a characteristic that has major effects on the ways in which ideas are expressed.

### The Sounds of Mohawk

The repertoire of Mohawk sounds is compact. The language is now written with only 12 letters: *t, k, s, n, r, w, ' , h, i, e, a, o*; plus marks for stress and tone *´, `*; and vowel length *: .* (The symbol *'* stands for glottal stop.)

Unlike most languages of the world, Mohawk contains no sounds made with the lips, like *p* or *b*, apart from a few borrowed words and nicknames.

Most of the letters are pronounced much as in French, although some vary slightly according to the sounds around them. There are two nasalised vowels, represented by the sequences of letters *en* (pronounced much like French *en*) and *on* (pronounced nearly like the vowel in English 'moon').

Mohawk is a pitch-accent language, which means that the tone of a syllable can change the meaning of a word. Every Mohawk word has one syllable that is louder than the others. This stressed syllable may have high or rising tone, which is marked with the symbol ' , or falling tone, marked ` : compare *owí:ra'* 'baby (animal)' and *owì:ra'* 'scar'.

The colon : indicates vowel length; a long vowel lasts twice as long as an ordinary vowel. Length, too, can change the meaning of words: compare *iawékon* 'it is delicious' and *iawé:kon* 'she has eaten'.

There are some differences in pronunciation among the Mohawk communities. The differences are not great enough to interfere with understanding, but noticeable enough to mark the origin of a speaker. Where Kahnawà:ke and Kaneshatà:ke (K/K) speakers use 'r', for example, most Ahkwesáhsne (A) speakers use 'l': compare K/K *rató:rats* with A *lató:lats* 'he hunts'. Where K/K speakers use 'ti' before vowels (pronounced *dj*), Ahkwesáhsne speakers use 'ki': K/K. *tióhtia:ke*, A *kióhkià:ke* 'Montreal'.

## The Words of Mohawk

Probably the most impressive difference between Mohawk and more familiar European languages is in the ways in which words are formed and used. Structurally, there are three types of words in Mohawk: particles, nouns and verbs.

### Particles

Particles are words with no internal structure. They serve a variety of functions: as numbers, demonstratives, adverbials, conjunctions, exclamations, and more. The set below provides a sample of the kinds of roles they perform.

<i>oh</i>	'what'	<i>ne</i>	'the'	<i>tsi</i>	'that'
<i>kén:</i>	'here'	<i>kú:</i>	'this'	<i>tanon</i>	'and'
<i>se'</i>	'only'	<i>á:re'</i>	'again'	<i>kati'</i>	'thus'
<i>iá:ken</i>	'it is said'	<i>kwáh</i>	'just'	<i>iáh</i>	'no'

### Nouns

Most true nouns in Mohawk consist of several parts. Like English nouns, they identify persons, objects, etc. They normally contain a prefix that indicates the gender of the person or object they refer to.

<i>ra-ksà:'a</i>	<i>e-ksà:'a</i>	<i>ka-nákta'</i>
MASCULINE-child	FEMININE-child	NEUTER-bed
'boy'	'girl'	'bed, campsite'

If a noun refers to people, number may be distinguished.

<i>ra-ksà:'a</i>	<i>ni-ksà:'a</i>	<i>rati-ksa'okòn:'a</i>
MASCULINE.SINGULAR-child	MASCULINE.DUAL-child	MASCULINE.PLURAL-children
'boy'	'(2) boys'	'(3 or more) boys'

If an object is possessed, the prefix refers to the possessor.

<i>kanákta'</i>	'bed'
<i>akenákta'</i>	'my bed'
<i>sanákta'</i>	'your bed'
<i>raonákta'</i>	'his bed'
<i>akonákta'</i>	'her bed'

The relationships expressed by English possessive pronouns are not all expressed in a single way in Mohawk, however. Objects like beds can be acquired, given away, bought, sold, etc. Such ownership, termed 'alienable possession', is expressed by the prefixes above. Ownership of one's own body parts, termed 'inalienable possession', is expressed with a different set of pronouns.

<i>onéntsha'</i>	'arm'
<i>kenentshà:ke</i>	'(on) my arm'
<i>senentshà:ke</i>	'(on) your arm'
<i>ranentshà:ke</i>	'(on) his arm'
<i>ienentshà:ke</i>	'(on) her arm'

Kinship relationships are expressed in a third way, with words that closely resemble verbs: *rakhsótha* 'he is father to me' → 'my father'.

Mohawk nouns can appear with a variety of suffixes. Many of the suffixes would correspond to separate words in English. One suffix adds the meaning 'original', 'prototypical' or 'genuine'. (Because the location of the stressed syllable in words depends in part on syllable count from the end of the word, the addition of a suffix usually results in a change of stress and sometimes tone.)

<i>ón:kwe</i>	'person'
<i>onkwehón:we</i>	'prototypical person' → 'Indian'

A common suffix adds the meaning 'at, on, in', etc.

<i>kanákta'</i>	'bed'
<i>kanaktâ:ke</i>	'on the bed'
<i>kahná:wa'</i>	'rapids'
<i>kahnawâ:ke</i>	'at the rapids'

Another suffix adds the meaning 'in the style of...'

<i>kahnawa'kéha'</i>	'in the style of the place at the rapids'
	'Caughnawaga style, dialect, language, etc.'

Another creates words referring to the inhabitants of a place.

<i>kahnawa'kehró:non'</i>	'people of the place at the rapids'
	'Caughnawaga Mohawk nation, people'

A diminutive suffix indicates small size or affection.

<i>raksâ:'a</i>	'little boy'
<i>rakhsótha</i>	'my grandfather'

An augmentative suffix indicates a large **type** of object.

<i>takò:s</i>	'cat'	<i>kahonwé:ia</i>	'boat'
<i>tako'skó:wa</i>	'wildcat'	<i>kahonweiahkó:wa</i>	'ship'

A decessive suffix indicates that a person is no longer alive, that an object no longer exists, or is no longer possessed by the same person.

<i>kahnawa'kehró:non'</i>	'people of the place at the rapids'
<i>kahnawa'kehronon'kénha'</i>	'the former/late Caughnawaga Mohawk(s)'

As can be seen, Mohawk nouns can consist of many parts, each of which might correspond to a separate word in a European language. Even more complex than nouns, however, are Mohawk verbs.

### Mohawk verbs

The central part of a verb, the portion that carries the basic meaning, is the verb root. Mohawk verb roots never stand alone as words, even in commands. In fact, few Mohawk speakers would even recognise a verb root if it were pronounced without prefixes or suffixes. Roots may be very short, such as *-t-* 'stand' or *-k-* 'eat', but full verbs always contain at least two syllables.

The simplest Mohawk verbs are commands. Commands need not contain suffixes, but, like all verbs, they always contain pronominal prefixes.

<i>s-ká:we</i>	'(You) paddle!'
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The pronoun in *s-ká:we* '(you) paddle!' is *s-* 'you', referring to the one person who is to do the paddling, the agent. If two people are addressed, a dual agent pronoun is used.

<i>seni-ká:we</i>	'You two, paddle!'
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If three or more persons are addressed, a plural agent pronoun must be used.

<i>sewa-ká:we</i>	'You all, paddle!'
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If the hearer is commanded to do something to another person or persons, both agent and patient pronouns appear.

<i>s-he-kétsko</i>	'(You) get her up!'
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If the speaker wishes to urge the hearer to join in an activity, agentive pronouns meaning 'you and I' are used: a dual pronoun *teni-* or a plural pronoun *tewa-*.

<i>teni-ká:we</i>	'Let's both paddle!'
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<i>tewa-ká:we</i>	'Let's all paddle!'
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Pronouns referring to the speaker alone or to other people may be used to urge that someone be allowed or left to do something.

<i>k-ká:we</i>	'Let me paddle!'
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<i>ie-ká:we</i>	'Let her paddle!'
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<i>ra-ká:we</i>	'Let him paddle!'
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### Time

Verbs that are not commands must carry a specification of time. Mohawk aspect suffixes indicate the internal temporal consistency of events or states. The habitual aspect describes customary, ongoing, or repetitive actions. The perfective aspect (traditionally called the punctual) describes events conceived of in their entirety, with definite beginning and end points. The stative aspect describes inherent or resultant states.

<i>ká:ris</i>	'it ripens'	(habitual aspect)
<i>enká:ri'</i>	'it will ripen'	(perfective aspect)
<i>ió:ri</i>	'it is ripe, has ripened'	(stative aspect)

The classification of actions and states is not always the same in Mohawk and French or English. What might be expressed as an activity in French or English might be classified as a state in Mohawk, for example, but the

previous descriptions should provide an idea of the meanings of Mohawk aspects.

The time at which an event did or will take place may also be specified. The particular way in which tense is indicated depends upon the aspect of the verb.

<i>katshókwas</i>	'I smoke'	(habitual)
<i>katshókwas<sup>w</sup>kwé'</i>	'I used to smoke'	(past habitual)
<i>wa'katshó:ko'</i>	'I smoked'	(past perfective)
<i>enkatshó:ko'</i>	'I will smoke'	(future perfective)
<i>akatshó:ko'</i>	'I might/could smoke'	(optative perfective)
<i>wakatshókwen</i>	'I am smoking'	(stative)
<i>wakatshokwèn:ne</i>	'I was smoking'	(past stative)

#### Pronominal prefixes

All Mohawk verbs contain pronouns referring to major participants: their agents and/or patients. In the verb 'I smoke' above, the pronoun for 'I' is the prefix *k-*. The Mohawk pronominal prefix system is unusually rich. As in many languages, there are separate pronouns for first person ('I'), second ('you'), and third, and within third person, for neuter gender ('it'), masculine ('he'), and feminine ('she').

<i>keráthens</i>	'I am climbing'
<i>seráthens</i>	'you are climbing'
<i>karáthens</i>	'it is climbing'
<i>raráthens</i>	'he is climbing'
<i>ieráthens</i>	'she is climbing'

The feminine-indefinite pronoun *ie-* 'she, one, someone' is used for some women, for persons of unspecified sex, and as a collective 'people'. The neuter-zoic pronoun *ka-* is used not only for animals and objects, but sometimes, under interesting conditions, also for women.

There is a three-way number distinction: singular for one person, dual for two, and plural for three or more.

<i>raráthens</i>	'he is climbing'
<i>niráthens</i>	'they two (males) are climbing'
<i>ratiráthens</i>	'they all (males) are climbing'

When discussing a group including himself or herself, a speaker specifies whether the hearer is included or not.

<i>teniráthens</i>	'we two (you and I) are climbing'	(inclusive)
<i>tewaráthens</i>	'we all (you all and I) are climbing'	
<i>iakeniráthens</i>	'we two (he/she and I) are climbing'	(exclusive)
<i>iawkaráthens</i>	'we all (they and I) are climbing'	

A further distinction is made within the pronominal system. The two columns of verbs below contain different pronouns for 'he'.

<i>ratekhwákwás</i>	'he bites'	<i>rohterón:ni</i>	'he fears'
<i>ra'nikòn:rara'</i>	'he is careful'	<i>ro'nikónhrhens</i>	'he forgets'
<i>rarákwás</i>	'he chooses'	<i>rotshenón:ni</i>	'he is happy'
<i>ratíta's</i>	'he climbs in'	<i>roiéshon</i>	'he laughs'

The pronouns in the left column refer to agents: actors in control of voluntary actions. Those in the right column refer to involuntary patients, those who simply experience events. The difference is especially clear in the pairs of verbs below.

<i>raié:nas</i>	'he holds'	<i>roié:nas</i>	'he is epileptic'
<i>ratshénries</i>	'he finds'	<i>roié:was</i>	'he cannot find'

When actions involve both an agent and a human patient, both are specified in a special set of transitive pronominal prefixes.

<i>shakohrewáthta'</i>	'he punishes her'
<i>konwatihrewáthta'</i>	'she punishes them (female)'

If the agent and patient are the same person, a reflexive prefix *-(a)tat-* is used.

<i>ratathrewáthta'</i>	'he punishes himself'
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The total set of Mohawk pronominal prefixes, distinguishing three persons, three genders, three numbers, and two cases, is quite large, as can be seen in the paradigms below.

#### AGENT PRONOUNS

<i>wa'-ke-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'I escaped'
<i>wa'-akeni-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	's/he and I escaped'
<i>wa'-akwa-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'they and I escaped'
<i>we-teni-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'you and I escaped'
<i>we-tewa-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'you all and I escaped'
<i>wa-hse-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'you escaped'
<i>we-seni-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'you two escaped'
<i>we-sewa-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'you all escaped'
<i>wa'-ka-'nyá:ken'ne'</i>	'it/she escaped'
<i>wa-ha-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'he escaped'
<i>wa-hni-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'they two (masculine) escaped'

<i>wa-hati-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'they all (masculine) escaped'
<i>wa'-e-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'one/she escaped'
<i>wa'-keni-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'they two (neuter/feminine) escaped'
<i>wa'-konti-'niá:ken'ne'</i>	'they all (neuter/feminine) escaped'

## PATIENT PRONOUNS

<i>wake-'nikónhrhens</i>	'I forget'
<i>ionkeni-'nikónhrhens</i>	'we two forget'
<i>ionkwa-'nikónhrhens</i>	'we all forget'
<i>sa-'nikónhrhens</i>	'you forget'
<i>seni-'nikónhrhens</i>	'you two forget'
<i>sewa-'nikónhrhens</i>	'you all forget'
<i>io-'nikónhrhens</i>	'she/it forgets'
<i>ro-'nikónhrhens</i>	'he forgets'
<i>iako-'nikónhrhens</i>	'she/one forgets'
<i>ioti-'nikónhrhens</i>	'they (neuter/feminine) forget'
<i>roti-'nikónhrhens</i>	'they (masculine) forget'

## TRANSITIVE PRONOUNS: AGENT + PATIENT

<i>wa'-kón:-nonte'</i>	'I fed you'
<i>wa'-keni:-nonte'</i>	'I fed you two'
<i>wa'-kwá:-nonte'</i>	'I fed you all'
<i>wà:-ke-nonte'</i>	'I fed her/it'
<i>wa-hí:-nonte'</i>	'I fed him'
<i>wa'-khé:-nonte'</i>	'I fed her/someone/them'
<i>wá-hske-nonte'</i>	'you fed me'
<i>wa-hskeni:-nonte'</i>	'you fed us two'
<i>wa-hskwá:-nonte'</i>	'you fed us all'
<i>wá-hse-nonte'</i>	'you fed it/her'
<i>wa-htshé:-nonte'</i>	'you fed him'
<i>wa-hshé:-nonte'</i>	'you fed her/someone/them'
<i>ónke-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed me'
<i>wa'-onkeni:-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed us two'
<i>wa'-onkwá:-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed us all'
<i>we-sá-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed you'
<i>we-seni:-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed you two'
<i>we-sewá:-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed you all'
<i>wa'-ó:-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed it/her'
<i>wa'-otí:-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed them (neuter/feminine)'
<i>wa-hó:-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed him'
<i>wa-hotí:-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed them (males or mixed)'
<i>wa'-akó:-nonte'</i>	'it/she fed her/someone/them (all women)'

<i>wa-háke-nonte'</i>	'he fed me'
<i>wa-hshonkeni:-nonte'</i>	'he fed us two'
<i>wa-hshonkwá:-nonte'</i>	'he fed us all'
<i>wa-hiá:-nonte'</i>	'he fed you'
<i>wa-htshiseni:-nonte'</i>	'he fed you two'
<i>wa-htshisewá:-nonte'</i>	'he fed you all'
<i>wa-há:-nonte'</i>	'he fed it/her'
<i>wa-hó:-nonte'</i>	'he fed him'
<i>wa-hshakó:-nonte'</i>	'he fed her/someone/them'
<i>wa'-ónke-nonte'</i>	'she/someone fed me'
<i>wa'-onkhi:-nonte'</i>	'she/someone fed us (two or more)'
<i>wa'-esá:-nonte'</i>	'she/someone fed you'
<i>wa'-etshí:-nonte'</i>	'she/someone fed you (two or more)'
<i>wa'-konwá:-nonte'</i>	'she/someone fed it/her'
<i>wa-honwá:-nonte'</i>	'she/someone fed him'
<i>wa'-ontáte-nonte'</i>	'she/someone fed her/someone'
<i>wa-konwatí:-nonte'</i>	'she/someone fed them (neuter/feminine)'
<i>wa-honwatí:-nonte'</i>	'she/someone fed them (males or mixed)'
<i>we-teni:-nonte'</i>	'we two (you and I) fed it/her'
<i>wa-htshiteni:-nonte'</i>	'we two (you and I) fed him'
<i>wa'-ethí:-nonte'</i>	'we two (you and I) fed them'
<i>we-tewá:-nonte'</i>	'we all (you all and I) fed it/her'
<i>wa-htshitewá:-nonte'</i>	'we all (you all and I) fed him'
<i>wa'-ethí:-nonte'</i>	'we all (you all and I) fed them'
<i>wa'-keni:-nonte'</i>	'we two (s/he and I) fed you (one or two)'
<i>wa'-kwá:-nonte'</i>	'we two (s/he and I) fed you all'
<i>wa'-akeni:-nonte'</i>	'we two (s/he and I) fed it/her'
<i>wa-hshakeni:-nonte'</i>	'we two (s/he and I) fed him'
<i>wa'-akhi:-nonte'</i>	'we two (s/he and I) fed her/someone/them'
<i>wa'-kwá:-nonte'</i>	'we all fed you'
<i>wa-hshakwá:-nonte'</i>	'we all fed him'
<i>wa'-akwá:-nonte'</i>	'we all (they and I) fed it/her'
<i>wa'-akhi:-nonte'</i>	'we all (they and I) fed her/someone/them'
<i>wa-hskeni:-nonte'</i>	'you two fed me or us two'
<i>wa-hskwá:-nonte'</i>	'you two fed us all'
<i>we-seni:-nonte'</i>	'you two fed it/her'
<i>wa-htshiseni:-nonte'</i>	'you two fed him'
<i>wa'-etshí:-nonte'</i>	'you two fed her/someone/them'

<i>wa-hskwá:-nonte'</i>	'you all fed me or us'
<i>we-sewá:-nonte'</i>	'you all fed it/her'
<i>wa-htshisewá:-nonte'</i>	'you all fed him'
<i>wa'-etshí:-nonte'</i>	'you all fed her/someone/them'
<i>wa'-ónke-nonte'</i>	'they fed me'
<i>wa'-onkhí:-nonte'</i>	'they fed us (two or more)'
<i>wa'-esá:-nonte'</i>	'they fed you'
<i>wa'-etshí:-nonte'</i>	'they fed you (two or more)'
<i>wa-hatí:-nonte'</i>	'they (males) fed it/her'
<i>wa-hshakotí:-nonte'</i>	'they (males) fed them'
<i>wa'-konwá:-nonte'</i>	'they (women) fed it/her'
<i>wa'-akotí:-nonte'</i>	'they (women) fed them'
<i>wa'-honwatí:-nonte'</i>	'they like them (males)'
<i>wa'-konwatí:-nonte'</i>	'they like them (women)'

#### Additional verbal prefixes

Mohawk verbs may contain a variety of other prefixes as well. Some indicate whether action is directed toward the speaker or away.

<i>satá:wen</i>	'swim!'
<i>tasatá:wen</i>	'swim this way!'
<i>ia'satá:wen</i>	'swim away!'

One indicates that an action is repeated or restores an earlier state.

<i>sasatá:wen</i>	'swim back!'
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One can intensify the action.

<i>nikatá:wens</i>	'I was really swimming'
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Another, in combination with a particle, signals negation.

<i>iah thakatá:wen</i>	'I won't swim'
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#### Verbal suffixes

Prefixes account for only part of the complex structure of Mohawk verbs. There is also a wealth of suffixes. Among these is a reversive that undoes the central meaning of the verb root.

<i>satíta'</i>	'get in!'
<i>satitáhko</i>	'get out!'

Others can add the meaning 'cause'.

<i>iotékha'</i>	'it is burning'
<i>enkatéka'te'</i>	'I'll cause it to burn, start a fire'

Instrumental suffixes can add the meaning 'with'.

<i>ieksóhare's</i>	'she washes dishes'
<i>ieksóhare'tákhkwa'</i>	'she washes dishes with it'

A benefactive suffix indicates that an action is for another's benefit.

<i>enkà:iako'</i>	'I will pick berries.'
<i>enkonhiákwahse'</i>	'I will pick berries for you'

A distributive suffix indicates that an activity is done at various locations, at various times, to various objects, etc.

<i>kahiawenhá:tons</i>	'I go around picking berries'
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Mohawk contains additional verbal prefixes and suffixes as well. There is, however, yet another way in which verbs may be complex.

#### Noun incorporation

A noun stem may appear inside of the verb, immediately before the verb root. The verb below contains the noun root *-ahi-* 'fruit'.

<i>kahiákwas</i>	'I am berrypicking'
------------------	---------------------

Incorporated noun roots generally narrow the meaning of the verb by specifying the kind of patient they apply to. Incorporation is also used to provide a background for an entity that is already under discussion. This use of incorporation can be seen at the beginning of a description of corn preparation by Kaieríthon Home, of Kahnawà:ke. In the first line, the noun 'corn' appears by itself, unincorporated, since it is introducing the main topic of discussion. (The translation is hers.)

<i>Nia'té:kon</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>ó:-nenhst-e'</i>	
so many	the	NEUTER-CORN-NOUN.SUFFIX	
<i>tsi</i>	<i>ní:tsi</i>	<i>iako-ia't-akéhnh-en</i>	<i>n-okweh-ón:we.</i>
as	so as	it/them-body-help-STATIVE	the-person-real

'Corn had many missions for the Indians.'

In the next sentence the noun root for 'corn', now a familiar topic to the audience, was incorporated into the verb 'wash'.

<i>Kí:ken</i>	<i>oká:ra'</i>	<i>ne tsi</i>	<i>ni-ie-iér-ha-hkwe'</i>	<i>ak-hsót-ha</i>
this	story	the so	so-she-do-	she/me-
			HABITUALLY-PAST	grandparent-DIM

'This is a story about how my grandmother

*n-ó:nen* *en-ie-nenhst-óhare-'* *tánon* *en-ie-the'ser-ón:ni-'*.  
the-now FUTURE-she-corn-wash-PRF and FUTURE-she-flour-make-PRF  
would wash the corn and make flour.'

Incorporated nouns, along with multiple prefixes and multiple suffixes can all co-occur within a single verb, and they often do.



'be old'. Instead of saying that the couple went to church, the speaker said they went to pray.

Finally, the order of words is of special interest. In line (6), the predicate 'went out' precedes the subject 'the couple'. In line (8), by contrast, the subject 'the old woman' precedes the predicate 'watched'. Mohawk word order seems at first quite variable. In many European languages, words are ordered primarily according to their syntactic roles as subjects, predicates, direct objects, etc. Since grammatical relations are already specified by pronominal prefixes within the Mohawk verb, word order can be used for other stylistic purposes. In Mohawk, words are ordered according to their importance to the discussion. Words conveying newsworthy information appear early in clauses, while more predictable or incidental information appears later. Newsworthy information might be new. In line (6), 'they went out', the first mention of a new event, precedes 'the couple', who had already been introduced earlier. Newsworthy information need not be brand new, however. It might introduce a new topic of discussion, or highlight a focus of contrast. In line (8), for example, 'the woman' appears at the beginning of the sentence, because she is contrasted with the couple that went out.

## Conclusion

Mohawk is unlike more familiar European languages in many ways. Mohawk speakers often specify different distinctions, such as the source of information, the direction of motion, the degree of agency or volition involved, the distinction between dual and plural number, and much more. Information is packaged differently into words, and words are combined in different ways into sentences.

The polysynthetic structure of Mohawk offers rich resources for the creative use of language and a vast repertoire of stylistic devices. Mohawk speakers have long had a reputation for their skilful use of language. The earliest Europeans to encounter them commented on their impressive political oratory. The appreciation and cultivation of linguistic virtuosity is still very much alive today in a multitude of contexts, from ceremonial speeches, through well-told tales and personal anecdotes, to snappy repartee.

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## Contents

Acknowledgements . . . . .	vii
Biographical Notes . . . . .	viii
Preface to the English Edition <i>William F. Mackey</i> . . . . .	xi
1 The Situation of Aboriginal Languages in the Americas <i>Jacques Maurais</i> . . . . .	1
2 The Aboriginal Languages of Quebec, Past and Present <i>Louis-Jacques Dorais</i> . . . . .	43
3 Aboriginal Language Policies of the Canadian and Quebec Governments <i>François Trudel</i> . . . . .	101
4 The State of the Art in Linguistic Research, Standardisation and Modernisation in Quebec Aboriginal Languages <i>Lynn Drapeau</i> . . . . .	129
5 Grammatical Sketches	
A The Mohawk Language <i>Marianne Mithun</i> . . . . .	159
B Montagnais: an Ethnogrammatical Description <i>Danielle Cyr</i> . . . . .	174
C Inuktitut <i>Ronald Lowe</i> . . . . .	204