

## Colors as paths versus colors as points: Patterns of use of color terms in traditional Meskwaki and in Euro-Meskwaki literature

by Lucy Thomason • ThomasonL@si.edu

Ives Goddard once noted that traditional Meskwaki stories tend to focus on the relations between the characters in the stories, with only few and brief bursts of description. (Goddard 1990:167–170.) This observation holds for the nature and the distribution of color terms in attested Meskwaki lexica and literature. Color terms crop up primarily in the following five contexts: (1) In names: names of places, manitous, people, pet dogs and horses, species of animals (especially birds and insects), and species of plants. (2) In descriptions of natural events: for instance, colors of clouds, or the sun setting red. (3) In cases where particular colors indicate a character's intention or emotional state: for instance, red cheeks, or bloodshot eyes, or symbolically-laden or camouflage-appropriate choices of colors of face-paint. (4) In descriptions of the aspects of ceremonies where color symbolism figures prominently. And (5) in stories of European origin and tales that involve Euro-American characters or Euro-American manufactured goods.

Strikingly, Meskwaki stories with European themes are much more likely than Meskwaki stories with prevailingly North American-rooted themes to deploy color terms as scene-setting rather than as any kind of indication of the positioning of humans and other beings relative to each other or relative to the wider cosmos.

At the 55<sup>th</sup> Algonquian Conference I gave an overview of attested Meskwaki color terms and of their patterns of use. At the 56<sup>th</sup> Algonquian Conference I propose to give a brief review, with corrections, of my remarks from last year, before describing in greater detail exactly how and where and which color terms appear in the texts.

### References:

Cha kä ta ko si [Charley H. Chuck]. (1907) *A collection of Meskwaki Manuscripts*. State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

Goddard, Ives. (1990) Some literary devices in the writings of Alfred Kiyana. In *Papers of the Twenty-First Algonquian Conference* (ed. William Cowan), pp. 159–171. Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

In addition to these: several hundred manuscripts from the William Jones, James A. Geary, and Truman Michelson collections housed at the National Anthropological Archives; three other manuscripts written in Meskwaki *papepipo*; and sixteen years' worth of notes from Ives Goddard's consultations with Adeline Wanatee and other Meskwaki speakers and scholars from the Meskwaki Settlement in Tama, Iowa.