

Short verbs in Algonquian

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Algonquian verbs are notable for their morphological complexity. Most verb stems are effectively compounds containing at least two lexical morphemes, an initial and a final (Goddard 1990). This fact creates a problem for lexical comparison. Standard tools like the Swadesh list (Swadesh 1971) or Leipzig-Jakarta list (Tadmor, 2009) depend on meanings that are realized in Algonquian only as finals, 'burn', 'cut', 'fall', 'pull', and so on. The prompts therefore do not readily elicit a single Algonquian verb, but a family of specialized verbs. But for purposes of comparison within the family a modified approach is possible. Every language has a few hundred "short" verbs, that is to say verb stems in which the final has only agreement properties, i.e., an ABSTRACT FINAL. Meskwaki 'find' exemplifies a short transitive, and Menominee 'soft' a short intransitive.

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| (1) | <i>mehkaweewa</i> 's/he finds h/' | <i>mehkamwa</i> 's/he finds it' |
| | [<i>mehk</i> - <i>aw</i>] - <i>ee</i> - <i>wa</i> | [<i>mehk</i> - Ø] - <i>am</i> - <i>wa</i> |
| | find - AN - 3 - 3 | find - INAN - INAN - 3 |
| (2) | <i>noohken</i> 's/he is soft' | <i>nuuhkiw</i> 'it is soft' |
| | [<i>noohk</i> - <i>en</i>] - <i>w</i> | [<i>noohk</i> - <i>yii</i>] - <i>w</i> |
| | find - AN - 3 | soft - INAN - 3 |

Short verbs are widely cognate across the family, but none are universally so. Typical is PA **ateme-wa* 's/he overtakes h/'. Exact reflexes are attested in Cheyenne, Menominee, Miami-Illinois and many varieties of Cree and Ojibwe, but Meskwaki, Shawnee, and most of Eastern Algonquian lack any reflex of the root. The geographic distribution of short verb cognates follows patterns known from the borrowing of initials discussed in Rhodes (2020). Lastly, many short verbs show irregularities of derivation, suggesting that they are old and hence are probative for classificatory purposes.

Goddard, Ives. 1990. Primary and secondary stem derivation in Algonquian. *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 56(4), 449-483.

Swadesh, Morris. 1971. *The Origin and Diversification of Language*. Joel Sherzer, ed. Chicago: Aldine.

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Tadmor, Uri. 2009. "Loanwords in the World's Languages: Findings and results," in Martin Haspelmath & Uri Tadmor, eds. *Loanwords in the World's Languages: a comparative handbook*. Berlin: de Gruyter. pp. 73-74.