

What Do You Mean? Languages, Colonialism and Miscommunication

Algonkian is a family of languages that was, and in some cases still is, spoken in Native communities throughout much of Northeastern North America. When Europeans arrived, they recorded names for things in Algonkian languages as they heard them. This means that many of the words we use today come from Algonkian words, but they have changed over time as people forgot their original meaning. Can you guess which of the following words were originally Algonkian words? In the answers section, find out what the original Algonkian words meant, and where they originally came from.

1.) Moccasin



or

Sneaker



2.) Connecticut



or

New York



3.) Fish



or

Quahog



4.) Chipmunk



or

Squirrel



5.) Opossum



or

Rabbit

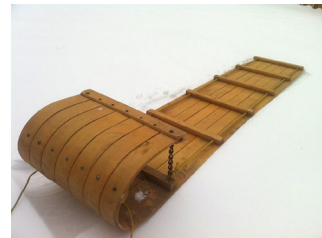


6.) Sled



or

Toboggan



7.) Bear



or

Moose



8.) Raccoon



or

Horse



9.) Corn



or

Squash



10.) Hickory



or

Maple



Answers: 1.) Moccasin, which comes from the word in Powhatan for “shoe” 2.) Connecticut, which comes from an Algonkian word meaning “Place of the Long Water” 3.) Quahog, which comes from a Narragansett word meaning “round clam.” 4.) Chipmunk, which comes from an Ojibwe word meaning “one who descends trees headlong.” 5.) Opossum, which comes from a Delaware word meaning “white beast.” 6.) Toboggan, which comes from a Micmac word meaning “drag made of skin.” 7.) Moose, which comes from an Abenaki word meaning “he strips off” because they strip bark off the trees with their antlers. 8.) Raccoon, which comes from a Powhatan word meaning “he who rubs, scrubs, and scratches with his hands.” 9.) Squash, which comes from a Narragansett word meaning “eaten raw or uncooked.” 10.) Hickory, which comes from a Powhatan word for a dish made from nuts.