THE MYSTERY OF THE VANISHED LAURENTIANS

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When Jacques Cartier first sailed into the Bay of Gaspé in 1534, he encountered a large fishing party. The group had come from Stadacona, a settlement up the Saint Lawrence River where Quebec City now stands. Cartier did not remain long in the area, but when he left for France, he took two Stadaconan captives with him. His adventures in the New World are documented in an account of this first voyage. He returned the following summer, along with his captives, who now spoke some French. This time he remained longer, spending most of the winter near Stadacona, with a brief excursion to the settlement of Hochelaga, on present Montreal Island. The account of this second voyage is also rich with descriptions of the area and its inhabitants. In 1536, Cartier again set sail for France, this time with ten captives, most from around the area of Stadacona, although one girl came from a town further upriver, Achelacy. Cartier undertook a third voyage in 1541, but little mention is made of the Laurentian inhabitants in the account of this voyage, nor in the journal of Roberval, who attempted to found a colony there several years later. In fact, little more was ever to be known of these people at all. When Champlain arrived in the region in 1603, they had completely vanished.

Who were these people, and what became of them? Some traces, lurk in archaeological sites uncovered in the vicinity of Hochelaga. These upper Saint Lawrence sites are clearly Iroquoian in character, but no lower sites have yet been uncovered which could be identified as Stadaconan. Some ethnographic clues can be gleaned from Cartier’s descriptions of the people and their way of life. Although he spent only one day at Hochelaga, his description of that settlement is quite detailed. It seems to have been a typical, palisaded Iroquoian village, consisting of a large number of longhouses sur-

1 For an excellent critical discussion of previous work directed at this question see Trigger 1972.
rounded by extensive cornfields. Cartier’s description of Stadacona is sparser. The Stadaconans appear to have resembled Algonquian speaking groups in the area more than the Hochelagans, with a relatively greater dependence on fishing, although this may simply have been due to the harsher climate which prevented total reliance on agriculture. A third set of clues to the identity of the Laurentians lies in the words from their language which accompany the accounts of the voyages.

1. The Linguistic Traces

Appended to the account of Cartier’s first voyage is a list of over fifty words of the ‘Langage de la terre nouvellement descouverte nomme la Nouvelle France’. All of these are drawn from the text of the account. Appended to the account of the second voyage is another list, partially overlapping with the first, of the ‘Langage des pays et royaumes de Hochelaga et Canada, aultrement dicte la Nouvelle France’. Together, the two accounts yield a little over two hundred words of the mystery language, probably the first North American language to be recorded.

Circumstances surrounding the transcription of these words are somewhat mysterious. First, it is not clear exactly whose language the vocabularies represent. Cartier spent only one day at Hochelaga, but a number of words in the second account occur in his description of that settlement. The words could have been supplied by Hochelagans, by Stadaconan guides, or later by the captives in France. The general quality of the work suggests that all of the words accompanying the accounts were transcribed at leisure by someone more philologically inclined than a ship captain. If the vocabularies were transcribed in France, the issue is not settled. The captives seized during the second voyage were not all from the village of Stadacona. They came from several surrounding villages. If their languages differed, the vocabularies could represent any one of the settlements, or a mixture.

Furthermore, without knowing when and where the vocabularies were recorded, we cannot accurately assess the degree of bilingualism of the participants nor the context of the recording. In several cases, this hampers critical evaluation of the strength of the evidence. Consider a term for ‘salmon’ in the second account.

1 From Ramusio as printed in Hoffman 1961.
2 Manuscript A. (See Cartier, 1636 in Index of Sources).
1) L2. ondaccon (A, B, C, BR)/ L2. ondacon (Hak, Th) ‘vng sallon- 
mon’
This word resembles no modern word for any kind of fish in any of
the Iroquoian or Algonquian languages in the area. It does resemble
words in several Iroquoian languages for a kettle, however.
M. ū:ta(k) Oe. ū:tak Su. owntack ‘kettle’

1 Each Laurentian term will be given with a key to its source. L1. refers
to words from the first account, L2 to words from the second. Sources are abbre-
viated as follows. A, B, and C refer to manuscripts 5653, 5589, and 5644 re-
spectively in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. BR refers to the Bref recit of
1545, Hak to Hakluyt’s printed version of 1600 (see under Burrage in index),
Th to Thevet’s version in Le Grand Insulaire (taken from Hoffman 1961),
R to Ramusio’s translation from the Italian in 1565, and M to the Moreau ma-
nuscript, also taken from Hoffman 1961. For fuller citations of these sources
consult Cartier in the Index of Sources.

2 The sources for the other Iroquoian languages cited are the following. The
Huron is from Sagard’s Dictionnaire de la langue huronne (HS), from Chau-
monot’s Grammar of the Huron Language (HCh), and from Potier’s manu-
scripts (HP). The Mohawk is from my notes from Leatrice Beauvais, Mary
Cross, Annette Jacobs, Connie Jacobs, Georgina Jacobs, Verna Jacobs, Doro-
thy Lazoré, Margaret MacDonald, and Mary MacDonald (M). The Susquehan-
nock or Andaste is from Campanius (1696: 155-166) (Su) and is cited in
his transcription. The Oneida (Oe) is from my notes from Dick Chrisjohn, Mercy
Doxtador, and Georgina Nicholas. The Onondaga is from Shea’s seven-
teenth century dictionary (OoS), from Zeisberger’s eighteenth century dic-
tionary (OoZ), from Hanni Woodbury (Oo), and from my notes from Reginald
Henry and Audrey Shenandoa (Oo). The Cayuga (C) is from my notes from
Jim Skye and Reginald Henry. The Seneca (S) is principally from Chafe’s dic-
tionary with some forms from my notes from Alberta Austin, Lovina Huff,
Barbara Lee, and Myrtle Peterson. The Tuscarora (T) is from my notes from
Elton Greene and Robert Mt. Pleasant. The Nottoway is from Wood’s notes
(NW) and Trezvant’s notes (NT), both in their original transcription. The
Cherokee (Ch) is taken from Feeling’s dictionary. Fuller citations can be
found in the list of references.

In all of the modern Iroquoian languages, voicing is not distinctive, so it is
not marked in transcription. Obstruents are voiced before vowels and reson-
ants, essentially. Nasalization is shown by a comma under the vowel.
ε = [e]
η = [X] in Mohawk and Oneida, [S] in Tuscarora
q = [o] or [ɔ]
Words which look suspiciously like this term appear elsewhere in both of Cartier's accounts meaning 'earthen dish'.

L1. undaco (R)/ L2. undaccon (C) ‘vng pot de terre’

This appears to be a case of understandable semantic confusion, in a situation where someone was gesturing toward fish in a pot. The extent to which such interpretation is justified depends upon the language skills of those involved.1

\[ \eta = [\ddot{u}] \]

Voicelessness is indicated by underscoring in Cayuga. \[ \alpha = [\ddot{a}] \]. 8 was used by the French missionaries for \( w \) and \( q \).

1 The degree of creativity of interpretation evoked by the translations covers a wide range. Some slight adjustments are easily admitted, as the form of the verb below.

L2. quedaqué (A, B, C, BR, Hak, Th) ‘cheminez’ ('walk along') (command) M. ktkhé ‘I am running’ Oe. ktkhé ‘I am running’ Oo. ktkhé ‘I am running’ S. ktkhé ‘I am running’ (k = first person subjective pronoun ‘I’)

Others are to be anticipated as the confusion of questions and answers.

L2. canada unagney (A, B, C)/ L2. canada unagney (BR, Hak, Th) ‘D’ou venez-vous?’ ('Whence come you?') M. kanat̓ak̓ n̓u-t̓ay̓k̓ene ‘we two came from town’ Oe. kanat̓a::ke n̓u-t̓ay̓k̓ene ‘we two came from town’ Oo. kanat̓a::k̓ w̓ a:: n̓u-t̓ay̓k̓ene ‘we two came from town’ C. kanat̓a::k̓ n̓u-t̓ay̓k̓ene ‘we two came from town’ S. kanat̓a::k̓ n̓u-t̓ay̓k̓ene ‘we two came from town’ (‘kanat̓a::k̓ = ‘town’)

Others must be more tentative. Words appear for ‘olives’ and ‘figs’, foods which the Laurentians certainly were not consuming at home. Some possibilities suggest themselves.


Olives could not have been a Laurentian staple. They could well resemble small round beans or peas, however, particularly to the inexperienced eye.

L1. asconda (R, Th)/ L2. absinca (A, B, C, BR, Hak, Th) ‘figues’ ('figs') HCh. askont ‘it is roasted’ M. osk̓ u::ta:: ‘something dried out, roasted, or crispy, either from fire or the sun’ Oe. osk̓ u::ta:: ‘it is burned’ OoZ. watescuntah ‘burned by the sun’ C. wat̓ e’sk̓ u::t: ‘it is roasted, burned’ S. osk̓ u::t::a::t ‘it is scorching hot’.

Any figs that Laurentian speakers were likely to see were probably dried, either on board ship or in Brittany. Finally, a few words leave room only for flights of fantasy. One such term appears in the first account.

L1. aignetaze (R)/ aignetase (Th) ‘laton’

The French term refers to a type of bronze. The Laurentian term looks very
Another question raised by the possibility of transcription in France is the identity of the scribe. Several possibilities have been suggested, but none with any certainty. Without this information, we cannot know what dialect of French the scribes spoke, nor what spelling conventions he would be most likely to follow, since both French phonology and orthography were undergoing considerable change at the time. (Brunot; Gougenheim and Richard).

Finally, as Hoffman (1961) points out, we have three manuscript versions of the first account and six of the second. It is not even clear whether any of these is the original, although some appear to be more reliable than others in general. The discrepancies among manuscripts do not constitute a significant problem for the most part, since they involve scribal departures which should be anticipated in any case, such as the confusion of u and n, or the substitution of s for z, or y for i, insignificant variation in the French orthography of the period. In a few cases, however, they do involve diagnostic sound shifts.

2. The Method of Detection

In 1869, the Abbé Cuoq concluded correctly that the vocabularies were from an Iroquoian language, probably Mohawk, on the basis of resemblances between a number of words on the lists and words in Mohawk, the Iroquoian language with which he was most familiar. Since that time, the vocabularies have been identified variously as nearly all of the other Northern Iroquoian languages, principally on the basis of the same kind of evidence: resemblances between individual Laurentian words and their equivalents in some much like the combination of two Iroquoian roots, -ny- ‘finger’/‘hand’ and -tase’ ‘to ‘encircle’ or ‘go around’. The noun root -ny- appears elsewhere in the vocabulary.

L1., L2. aignoascon (R, Th, A, C, B, BR, Hak) ‘les mains’ HS. eingya ‘les doigts’
M. a’nyá:nawy ’mitten’ Oc. a’nyá:nawy ’mitten’ Oo. ake’nýo:skó: ‘my bare hand’ C. e’nyánhahfra ’ring’ S. ke’nya ‘my hand, my finger’

The verb root incorporates the noun referring to the object encircled adding epenthetic a between roots to break cluster, as in Mohawk ka’nhyatá:se’ ‘it goes around the stick’ (-’nyh- ‘stick’). A not implausible translation for this Laurentian term is ‘it encircles the finger’. The earliest brass uncovered in upper Laurentian sites was probably from finger rings (James Wright, personal communication). Such tenous explanations must, of course, remain sheer speculation.
The nature of the relationships among the Northern Iroquoian languages weakens the reliability of brute summation of lexical similarity as an indicator of identity. Because they are fairly closely genetically related, all of the languages share recognizable cognates. Furthermore, because they have maintained contact through trade and adoption, speakers have continually borrowed words from their neighbors. Finally, the number of lexical similarities found between languages depends not only on their degree of relationship but also on the skill of the researcher and the quality of the resources available. In the case of Northern Iroquoian, the nature of the resources complicates comparisons further. For the modern languages (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora), we are fortunate to have the assistance of speakers who can search their minds for near synonyms and homonyms, rather than being limited by the gaps and organization of dictionaries. At the same time, the languages of these speakers are 450 years removed from the time of Cartier. A large number of words can be replaced during such a length of time. Our best sources of Huron, on the other hand, date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, less than one hundred years after the transcription of the Cartier material. The Huron data are closer in time to Laurentian, but limited by the interests of the missionary lexicographers. For all of these reasons, simple enumeration of resemblant lexical items alone cannot constitute a reliable method for identifying the Laurentians.

In order to determine the position of a language within a family, two distinctions are necessary. First, borrowings must be separated from inherited features. This can be accomplished from a knowledge of sound change. Second, among inherited features, joint retentions must be distinguished from joint innovations. Shared retentions between languages are indicators only of common origin, and not common development, since languages can easily retain the same features independently over thousands of years of separation. Only common innovation can be considered an indicator of joint development, since languages do not innovate certain features in the same way independently. There are simply too many possibilities. Determining the relationship of Laurentian to the other Northern Iroquoian languages involves identifying all of the innovations characteristic of each subbranch of the family and of each in-
individual language, then examining the Laurentian vocabularies to see which, if any, they share.

The documented Iroquoian languages are related essentially as follows. For convenience, the language or languages represented in the vocabularies will be referred to as Laurentian, although it is not clear whether this is one language or more, the language of Stadacona, of Hochelaga, or more.

In what follows, evidence for classifying the vocabularies in each subbranch and in each language within the subbranch will be summarized and evaluated.

3. The Evidence for Tuscarora-Nottoway

Beaugrand-Champagne (1937) suggested that the Laurentian vocabularies represent an early state of Tuscarora. A number of items
on Cartier’s lists do resemble Tuscarora and Nottoway words. Where Tuscarora and Nottoway differ from the rest of the Iroquoian languages in vocabulary, however, Laurentian fails to match.

Several phonological innovations characterize Tuscarora. One is a counterclockwise shift in the vowel inventory (*o > u, *a > b, *e > æ ...). Another is the nasalization of *t before vowels. A third, shared by Tuscarora and Nottoway, is the denasalization of *n before oral vowels. Laurentian did not share any of these innovations.

2) L2. tigneny (A, B, C, BR, Hak)/L2. tignini (Th) ‘deux’ (‘two’)
   *tekhni: HS. teni HCh. tendi M. tékeni Oe. téken Su. tiggene
   Oo. tek(e)nǐh C. tehkni: S. tekhni: T. nà:kti: NW. dekanee
   NT. tekene

Since Laurentian fails to show the innovations which characterize Tuscarora and Nottoway, there is no basis for classifying it with this subbranch of Northern Iroquoian.

4. The Evidence for Huron

In 1948, Percy Robinson hypothesized that the Laurentian vocabularies were Huron, after finding a number of words in Huron which resembled those in Cartier’s accounts. In 1959, Marius Barbeau (Cp. Chafe 1962) published an ambitious list of resemblances among words in all of the modern Northern Iroquoian languages and concluded, from the relative numbers of shared words he found, that Laurentian was mainly Huron with some Mohawk mixed in. Although the Laurentian vocabularies do share a number of terms with Huron, the evidence for identifying them as Huron is somewhat slim.

Nearly all consonants underwent radical change in Huron: *k was spirantized (*k > s, (V) – (w) V), *t shifted to k before velar vowels and semivowels (*t > k, (h) w) and was lost before k, *s was palatalized between h and any vowel, *n was denasalized before oral vowels, *r was lost between h and y, *w of pronominal prefixes was lost word initially and *y disappeared word initially before vowels and intervocalically. In each case, nearly all of the Laurentian data exhibit a failure to share the Huron innovations.

Also in each case, however, one or two Laurentian words appear to exhibit the Huron innovation. These exceptions could be due to scribal error. *s is palatalized between h and a vowel more often than not, but this could easily be a natural independent development. It could be argued that all of the Huron shifts examined occurred between 1536 and 1623, when Sagard compiled his dictionary. This is rendered highly unlikely, however, by the presence in Laurentian of a number of irretractable innovations which Huron still had not undergone a century later. Many of these innovations are characteristic of the Inner Iroquois languages.

5. The Evidence for Inner Iroquois.

A number of phonological innovations distinguish the Inner languages from each other, particularly in the areas of vowel color, laryngeals, and *r.

Among the Inner Iroquois languages, Mohawk has been chosen the most often as the identity of the Cartier vocabularies, probably because until recently Mohawk was the best known of them. The Eastern languages, Mohawk and Oneida, are characterized by shifts of *e to o and of *o to u. Laurentian does not show these shifts.

5) L2. quejon (A, B, C)/L2. queion (Br, Hak, Th) ‘poisson’ (‘fish’)
PNI *-itsyg kantisyg *itqysyg ‘itqyszg ‘itqysyg ‘itqyszg Oo. ptyq’ta C. ptyq’ta S. kejoh W. ptyq T. k’tysyg NW. kaintu NT kancheu M. K, ptyq Oe. K, tsyu’

The Eastern languages are also characterized by the replacement of laryngeals with falling tone and vowel length under stress. (h>V:/–RV (R=n, r, l, w, y), V”>V:/–CV) Some Laurentian words clearly indicate the retention of the laryngeal, others are ambivalent, while still others show s for this, a letter commonly used in the French orthography of the period to represent vowel length. Whether the scribe was in fact using it for length, or rather for the spirantization of h or a released glottal, cannot be determined.

6) L2. quahouachon (A, B)/L2. quahochon (C)/L2. quahouason (Br, Hak)/ L2. quahanason (Th) ‘chair’ (‘flesh’) *ka+ ’wáhq’ Oo. o’wáha C. o’wáhoh S. o’wa:’ T. u’wáhrh NW. oharag M. o’wá:ry’ Oe. o’wá:ly’
7) L1. isnez (T, Th)/ L2. ysnay (A, B, C, BR)/ L2. ysmay (Hak, Th) ‘le soleil’ (‘the sun’) *hihne T. hfh+æ’ NW. aheeta NT. hiheteh

Cayuga is distinguished by the behavior of laryngeals in odd-numbered syllables. Here, syllable-final laryngeals spread features leftward over the syllable. The results are laryngealized (creaky) syllables in the case of glottal stop, voiceless syllables in the case of h. The term for ‘arrow’ suggests that Laurentian did not share this.

8) L1. cacta (R) ‘une fleche’ (‘an arrow’) PNI *ka’-t-a’ Oe. Ka’tätsla’ ‘quiver’ S. ka’to:t ‘Standing Feather’ (woman’s name) C. k’atå’thra’ ‘quiver’

Voiceless syllables are more difficult to discern. Some words might show them, others might not. Some are orthographically ambiguous.

9) L1. casaomy (T, Th) ‘navire’ (‘ship’) PNI *ka-hq:w-a’ C. káqw’a (where a is voiceless) M. kahùwé:ya’ Oe. kahù:wà: Oo. kahq:wà’ S. kaqwq’T. uhq:wa‘h NT. ohunwahk

The s could indicate intervocalic h, suggesting that metathesis did not take place. Alternatively, the sequence ao following the s could suggest that metathesis did occur, yielding a diphthong which was long and partially voiced.

An alternative explanation for the shapes of Laurentian reflexes of h is the loss of intervocalic h, a Seneca innovation. Although Laurentian often appears to share this loss, many words contain intervocalic h.

10) L2. adayan (A, B)/ L2. odaian (C)/ L2. odazan (BR)/ odazani (Hak, Th) ‘chault’ (‘hot’) PNI *yo’tarîhë: S. o’taïq: HS ota-rixein HCh. atarihen M. yo’tarîhë Oe. yo’talîhë Oo. o’táiheh C. o’táihe: T. yu’nàrîhë: NW tariha

11) L1. hontasco (R, Th)/ L2. ahontascon (A, B, C, BR)/ L2. abontascon (Hak, Th) ‘les oreilles’ (‘ears’) PNI *-ahqht- HS ahontta HCh. ahonta M. ohúhta’ Oe. ohúhta’ Oo. ohúhta’ C. ohúhta’T. uhîhnae S. kâqhta’

Either the scribe was erratic in recording intervocalic h, not surprising for a Frenchman, or the vocabulary is inconsistent.

Probably the single most dramatic characteristic distinguishing the Inner Iroquois languages from each other is the development of *r. In Oneida, some dialects of Mohawk, some Susquehannock, and some old Onondaga, it appears as l. In other Mohawk, Susquehannock, and old Onondaga (as well as Tuscarora, Huron, and
Wyandot), it appears as r. The Laurentian vocabularies contain numerous instances of both r and l.


13) L2. wadellon (A, B, C)/ L2. madellon (Br, Hak, Th) ‘neuf’ (‘nine’) PNI *wa’tro’ Oe. wâ:thu’ Su. waderom OoS. 8aderom Oo. wa’t÷e:’ HCh. entron W. e’tro’

The difference is neither conditioned by context nor by list, since both occur in identical environments and on both lists.

In the Western languages, *r caused and underwent more radical change. It conditioned vowel fronting in some, developed into other resonants, then disappeared. In Cayuga and Seneca, *r became n before y, while in Onondaga, it disappeared in this context. Laurentian shows the Onondaga loss.

14) L2. aggayo (A, B, C)/ L2. agayo (BR)/ L2. agaya (Hak)/ L2. agayo (Th) ‘vng chian’ (‘a dog’) PNI *karyo: ‘wild animal’ Oo. ka:y0’ HS. ayot HP aic C. kanyo:’ S. kanyo:’ M. karyo’ Oe. kâ:yo’ Su. abgarijw T. ká:ryu:’

In Seneca, *a was fronted to æ following *r. In Onondaga, all back vowels were fronted following *r (*a>æ, *q>ç, *o>e). The *r was subsequently lost. A number of Laurentian terms share the fronting.

15) L2. quahetan (A, B, C, Hak, Th)/ L2. quahetam (BR) ‘vne flesche’ (‘arrow’) PNI *ka-hrá’t-a’ ‘feather’ Oo. ohá’ta’ S. oè’ta’ C. ohá’ta’ W. yará’ta’ Oe. kahlà:tu’ T. uhrá’næe

Note that others fail to share the fronting and *r loss, however, as 12), above. Although 15) and several others show Onondaga fronting and loss, others show only the loss, resembling Seneca and Cayuga.

16) L2. condà (A, B, C, BR, Hak, Th) ‘le boys’ (‘wood’) PNI *ka-rō’t-a’ C. kàqta’ S. ka:qta’ HCh. a’ronta M. karù:ta’ Oe. kalù: tå: Oo. ka:q:ta’

To further complicate matters, the vowel fronting and *r loss was not to take place in Onondaga until 1800.

1 In 1779, the Onondaga took refuge from Sullivan’s army, a punitive force sent by Washington to burn their village, among the Seneca and Cayuga at Buffalo Creek. Shortly after 1800, most began to return home, but the interval provided sufficient time to borrow the vowel fronting and loss of *r from their hosts. This borrowing is further discussed in Mithun 1979 and Woodbury 1981.
6. The Verdict Based on Shared Innovation

The search for shared innovations has yielded incompatible conclusions. Different Laurentian words show different developments in identical contexts. Nearly all of the innovations which characterize the known Lake Iroquoian languages are present in some Laurentian terms, and conspicuously absent from others. Such alternations are too extreme to be attributable to free variation within one individual. Cartier's lists must represent more than one language. This is borne out by the discrepancy between two renditions of the same word, one from the first list the other from the second. Both are derived from the root *-'kar- 'dark'.

17) L1. aiagla (R, Th) ‘nuyt’ (‘night’) L2. angau (C) ‘le soir’ (‘evening’) HCh. de, aratie ‘tonight’ Hp. onna, aratie ‘la nuit approche, il est tard’ M. yo’kára/yö’kála ‘evening’ Oe. yo’ka-lá:j ‘it is dark’ Oo. wa’ó’ka:k ‘it got dark’ C, eyó’ka: ‘it will get dark’ S. o’ké:q ‘it has become night’ eyó’kæ:h ‘tonight’

The version from the first list resembles Oneida, with 1, while the version from the second resembles modern Onondaga and Cayuga in its loss. The identity of the languages of the vocabularies remains an enigma, unless there is some way to segment them into monolingual chunks.

7. The Numbers

The set of numbers contained in the second list provides such an opportunity. Scribes recording new languages generally do not request number names individually or at random. One asks a speaker to count. The Laurentian numbers probably all came from a single speaker and represent a single language.

The numbers are all clearly Iroquoian in origin. Although each Laurentian number is cognate to equivalents in other Iroquoian languages, no other language has the same set as a whole with one exception: Chaumonot's Huron. The Huron recorded in 1623 by Sagard differs from the Laurentian in the word for ‘nine’, HS. nech-on. Numbers are less likely to have competing synonyms in a language than other terms. Does this mean that at least the Laurentian numbers are the Huron recorded by Chaumonot? In fact, they are not. None of the major phonological innovations which characterize the Huron of both Chaumonot and Sagard are present in the Laurentian numbers. Another discrepancy between Laurentian
and Huron concerns the numbers 'six' and 'seven'. The Laurentian term for 'six' is cognate to Huron 'seven', while 'seven' is cognate to 'six'. This could of course be scribal error, but it may be significant that the Cherokee cognate to the Laurentian 'six' means 'six' as well. It could be argued that all of the phonological innovations of Huron occurred between Cartier's departure in 1536 and Sagard's arrival in 1623. The terms for 'six' and 'eight' suggest otherwise, however. Both show the loss of *r, an innovation which had still not occurred in Huron a century later. The numbers thus cannot be ancestral to Huron, the only set they match.

A final word indicates that at least part of the list came from an Iroquoian language which was not ancestral to any we know of today.

18) L. esno"gy 'wampum' PNI *onko'rha' M. oneko:rha'Oc. oni-ko:lha'/o'nikola'Su. ahghoora/ottchoorhaOo. otko'æ'C. otko'a'S. otko'æ'

This word shows two innovations which do not coexist in any other known Iroquoian languages. It shares the loss of *r with the Western languages (Cayuga, Seneca, and modern Onondaga) but it does not share their denasalization of *n before k. Instead, it shows epenthesis similar to Huron, which retained *r.

8. Conclusion

The Laurentian vocabularies do not represent a single, unified language, but, rather, contain several different Iroquoian languages or dialects, at least one of which was not ancestral to any of the other attested Iroquoian languages. From the data contained in Cartier's accounts, as well as the vocabularies themselves, it is impossible to determine whether the language of Hochelaga was the same as one of these elements. The words cited with the description of that settlement are quite basic and would be likely to appear in any Northern Iroquoian language. It was probably Iroquoian, which prompted Cartier to consider it the same as Stadaconan.

Whoever the Laurentians were, members of the group were clearly Iroquoian and clearly in contact with the other Lake Iroquoian peoples, as evidenced by the spread of sound changes such as the loss of *r and the fronting of back vowels, in addition to the presence of borrowed words for such traded items as beans. As a whole, the vocabularies seem about equidistant from all of the Lake languages.