

## Misconceptions about the LCC

**Myth:** *The LCC thinks our elders were wrong and is disrespecting them by questioning the accuracy of their words.*

**Fact:** As a committee devoted to the preservation of Mohican culture, honoring our elders is time honored and central aspect of our tribal traditions which we consider to be one of our sacred duties. In 1949, Webb Miller was asked for the word for shoe and he responded [máksʌn] ‘one shoe’ and when asked for the plural, he said [máksʌnʌk] ‘shoes’ using the *animate* plural ending. Does it disrespect him if this word is taught as /máksʌnʌn/ with the inanimate plural ending? A careful reading Harrington’s papers shows that he often questioned his informants about the words they supplied, and offered Menominee and Abenaki words with similar meanings or gave them words from Michelson’s transcriptions to jog their memory. He also questioned each person about the same words on different days and oftentimes they changed their minds about the way a word should be said. Bernice and Webb took no offense from this and in many cases revised their words or expressed uncertainty. If this word [máksʌn] is taught as an inanimate noun does it disrespect Mr. Miller? If it is rebranded based on this data as an *animate noun* does that disrespect other elders which remembered it as an *inanimate noun*? Or should we just assume that Mahican had evolved to eliminate the distinction between animate and inanimate gendered nouns? Would it not honor and please our grandparents and great grandparents that we are taking extra care to ensure the accuracy of our words?

**Myth:** *The LCC is cherry-picking data. There are glottal stop symbols in Harrington's notes.*

**Fact:** Harrington did record some glottal stops which he wrote using a backwards apostrophe /'. A forwards apostrophe /' was used for soft aspiration and /x/ for strong aspiration. Harrington himself defines these symbols in a microfilm version of his papers named "Phonetics." The glottal symbol /ʔ/ can be found in Harrington's aborted project of rewriting the Michelson transcriptions the William Dick/Sot Quinney stories of 1914 using a more modern method of transcription. On page 1213 of reel 12 he explains his methodology, with his intention of making no changes to the transcription other than the substitution of symbols to more modern (for 1949) versions. These glottal stops symbols are nothing more than the repetition of old data from 1914 and in no way do they negate the findings of aspiration on the speech of 1949 era Mohicans for a number of words. Had speech evolved to the use of glottal stops, no aspirated words should have been found. Cherry-picking data is fraudulent and manipulative. The LCC has and will have no tolerance for this practice

**Myth:** *The LCC is seeking to control the language program.*

**Fact:** There is no agenda for "control." We are an advisory committee tasked with informing the community of important culture and language matters. We have noted some culturally relevant issues with the language program and these warrant a closer look. We believe that it is a wise move to have a close

look at the data as objectively as possible rather than simply accepting the conclusions of one language consultant who is not a tribal member. To the extent there is a consensus in the factual support for a component of the language, then it should be included in the teaching curriculum. A collaborative process would be our first choice, but the needs of the community with regard to cultural integrity must be taken into account and not just the perspective of the language learners, teachers or outside consultant(s). Where there is reasonable doubt, a multidisciplinary team process should re-examine the data and find a reasonable solution. The LCC aims to teach the community how to fish and does not want to be in the business of distributing fish of questionable quality and provenance.

**Myth:** *The LCC does not have the language expertise to challenge the language consultant who holds a Masters degree in linguistics.*

**Fact:** It is true that no LCC member holds a degree in linguistics. But several do hold advanced graduate degrees and are familiar with scientific methodology. The LCC has reached out to fully qualified linguists for feedback regarding the concerns which have been raised. Also, if a patient does some research and finds an error in a doctor's prescription and then brings it to the doctor's attention along with the supporting data, no doctor would summarily reject it on the basis of the patient not having attended medical school. Many doctors would apologize for the mistake and express gratitude for the good research. The whole medical system is built on doctors having their work checked and corrected by colleagues, nurses, administrators, government agencies and patients. Are there doctors who make zero

mistakes? No absolutely none. Our language program therefore deserves to have extra pairs of eyes on the work.