SSHRC Aboriginal Research   Marie-Odile Junker
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Title of project: **The Cree living language encyclopedia**

This project is co-created between Prof. Junker, from Carleton University, Prof. MacKenzie from Memorial University, the Department of Cree Programs of the Cree School Board in Quebec, the Saskatchewan Cree Curriculum Units of Lac LaRonge, Onion Lake, Peter Ballantyne Band and Prince Albert Grand Council, the Innu Education Authority in Labrador, and l'Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais in Quebec.

The first part of the project is to co-create an on-line, multimedia linguistic atlas of the Cree dialects of Canada (see prototype at atlas.eastcree.org). **The creation of the atlas will allow us to offer many training opportunities for sound editing, multimedia programming and linguistic description to aboriginal students** and to create contacts between the curriculum developers of the Western Cree dialects and those of the Eastern Cree/Innu dialects.

The second part is to publish the East Cree lexicon on-line, and develop the tools for an on-line encyclopedic dictionary of East Cree, with Cree Programs. For this we will expand the existing eastcree.org website by integrating the existing stories database, the East Cree reference grammar and the East Cree lexicon into a large relational database that will be like an encyclopedic dictionary of the language. We will record and add sound files for the pronunciations found in different communities, link words to oral stories (the elders had a story for almost every word during the Cree lexicon workshops), to images, and develop the morphological analysis tools for a user-friendly search of all verb forms (we already have an almost complete database of verb paradigms). This will culminate in the creation of the first ever spell-check for Cree. This encyclopedic database will offer on-line possibilities for maintenance and updates. **The encyclopedic dictionary will be built in a modular fashion, allowing Cree students at Carleton to take on areas of interests that they can combine with their disciplinary studies (geography, biology, environmental studies, history, traditional knowledge, ...) and for which they can produce both term papers for courses and multimedia contributions to the encyclopedia.**

The two parts of this project will be woven together by an investigation of user-friendly and culturally appropriate computing interfaces and database structures. We will be encouraging dialogue between Western and Eastern Cree/Innu educators who are developing their websites, sharing our Open Source programs, and **providing linguistic and computer training** and technical support.

The Western Cree and the Innu (Montagnais) people are interested in the many tools for enhancing and teaching the language that were already developed in the eastcree.org project: on-line spelling lessons, read- and sing-along tools (prototypes at lessons.eastcree.org), an oral stories database (stories.eastcree.org), an interactive grammar (grammar.eastcree.org), a book catalogue (pubcat.eastcree.org) and a resources section (resources.eastcree.org).

This project will be fertile ground for knowledge transfer and mutual inspiration, with all parties working in a collaborative spirit. Our ultimate goal is to make sure that the beautiful Cree and Innu languages and the cultures they embody will be heard and spoken by many more generations to come.