# *COMPARATIVE STRUCTURES OF EAST CREE AND ENGLISH*



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## FOREWORD

This document aims to provide a description of some of the principal features of the Cree language, from the perspective of someone whose mother tongue is English. We have tried to think of the reader as a classroom teacher, and to anticipate the types of information the teacher may want to know about how, as languages, Cree and English are similar, and how they differ. We hope in particular that teachers whose first language is English, and whose students' first language is Cree, will find this booklet useful.

Every language in the world has a grammar – a set of rules speakers follow without, for the most part, being aware of doing so. Every language also has a vocabulary – a finite set of words that speakers combine in different ways to build sentences, or to understand other people's sentences. It is thus not surprising that the grammars of Cree and English are alike in many ways, and we highlight these similarities in this booklet. For example, one answer to the question, "How are Cree and English the same?" will be that they have many of the same parts of speech. Teachers can create lessons which focus on identifying these grammatical categories in both languages.

How about the differences? Clearly, any two languages we look at are going to differ in some respects. Most obviously, the words are different: the Cree word for 'man' is *naapeu*, the Spanish word is *hombre*, and so on. The grammar rules will also differ in some, but never all, respects. As we explain in this booklet, while English adjectives are separate words (e.g., *red, black, happy, sad, soft, hard*), in Cree the same concepts are often expressed as part of the verb. Here, the grammars of each of these two languages have rather different ways of doing essentially the same thing. What does this mean for second language learning?

There is an academic literature which focuses on the ways in which a person's first language (L1) may interfere with the proficient learning of a second language (L2), and clearly the substance of this discussion differs depending on what the L1 and L2 are; for example, L1 Chinese/L2 Spanish will be a different discussion than L1 German/L2 Dutch. In our booklet, we provide detailed discussion of this issue for Cree speakers learning English with respect to pronunciation. We also highlight some areas where the grammars of the two languages differ somewhat and in these cases recommend explicit teaching as a short cut to the children learning the point well. (See places marked with the symbol ✍) Paying particular attention to these grammar points in class may help students learn more rapidly by raising their awareness of the grammars of both languages.

We wish to be very clear about one thing from the outset, however: **none of the differences between Cree and English will pose a major obstacle to a Cree-speaker learning English**. To reiterate, no two languages are alike in all ways and so every learner of a second language, no matter what the L1 and L2, has some challenges to overcome. Children are especially good language learners, as most adults will have noticed. For reasons science has yet to adequately explain, children are particularly well-placed in terms of their cognitive abilities to acquire new languages. With adequate exposure to the second language, with good teaching, and with lots of practice, it is generally the case that any child can learn any language.

What we feel will help the child in learning the second language, and in particular in learning how to read and write in this language, will be understanding the grammar of his or her own mother tongue (in this case Cree), and knowing how to write in the mother tongue. If students and teachers can talk about the grammar of Cree and about how to write Cree, this knowledge will be transferred to the second language. With the appropriate pedagogical support (curriculum, materials and teaching) there is no impediment to Cree-speaking children successfully acquiring English (and/or French) as a spoken and written language.

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# 1. THE PLACE OF THE CREE LANGUAGE

## 1.1 The Cree Language Family

East Cree is a language of the Algonquian language family, which also includes Ojibwe or Anishnabemowin, Innu[1] or Montagnais, Attikamek, Naskapi and further east, Mi'kmaq. The Cree language family in Canada is made up of a number of languages and dialects. Although they have different names, Naskapi and Innu (formerly called Montagnais) are closely related to Cree. Within the Cree language, East Cree, Swampy Cree, Moose Cree, Plains Cree and Woods Cree are recognized. Dialect variation is found in all languages.[2]



Cree-Montagnais (Innu)-Naskapi Dialects In Canada

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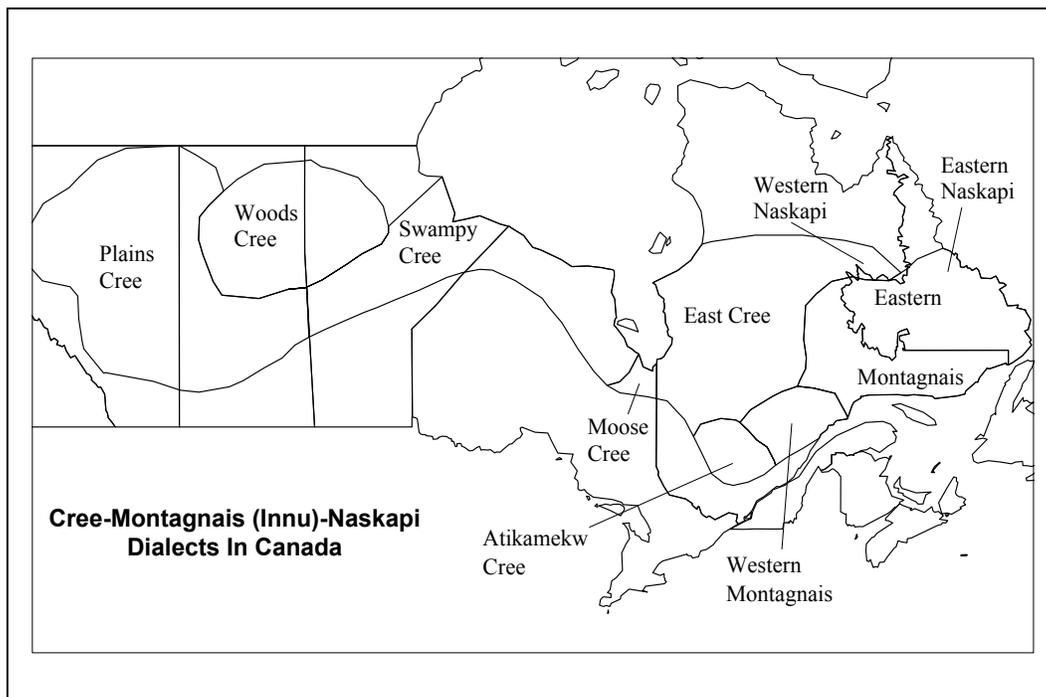
[1]     Do not confuse Innu, an Algonquian language like Cree, with Inuktitut, a different language spoken by the Inuit.

[2]     Just as the Cree language spoken in James Bay belongs to a language family, English is part of the large Indo-European language family, of the smaller Germanic family where it is related to German, Dutch, the Scandinavian languages, and has itself many dialects. Think of the differences between British English, Newfoundland English, Southern American English and standard Canadian English.

A map of the dialects with the pronunciations of many words and phrases can be found at www.ling-atlas.ca.

## 1.2 Dialects of the East Cree Language

There are two main dialects of James Bay Cree, northern and southern. Each dialect has its own spelling conventions (see the Spelling manuals downloadable at: www.eastcree.org/cree/en/resources). As students often move from one dialect area to another, it can be important that teachers be aware of these differences. Further details are available in Part 1 of the spelling manuals.

The communities where the northern dialect is spoken are Wemindji, Chisasibi and Whapmagoostui. The communities where the southern dialect is spoken are Waskaganish, Nemaska, Waswanipi, Ouje-Bougoumou and Mistissini. The community of Eastmain is in between northern and southern dialects, but has chosen to belong to the Southern dialect by adopting the southern writing system.

The southern dialect area can be further subdivided into the coastal and inland dialects. The southern communities on the coast are: Eastmain and Waskaganish. The inland communities are: Nemaska, Waswanipi, Ouje-Bougoumou and Mistissini.
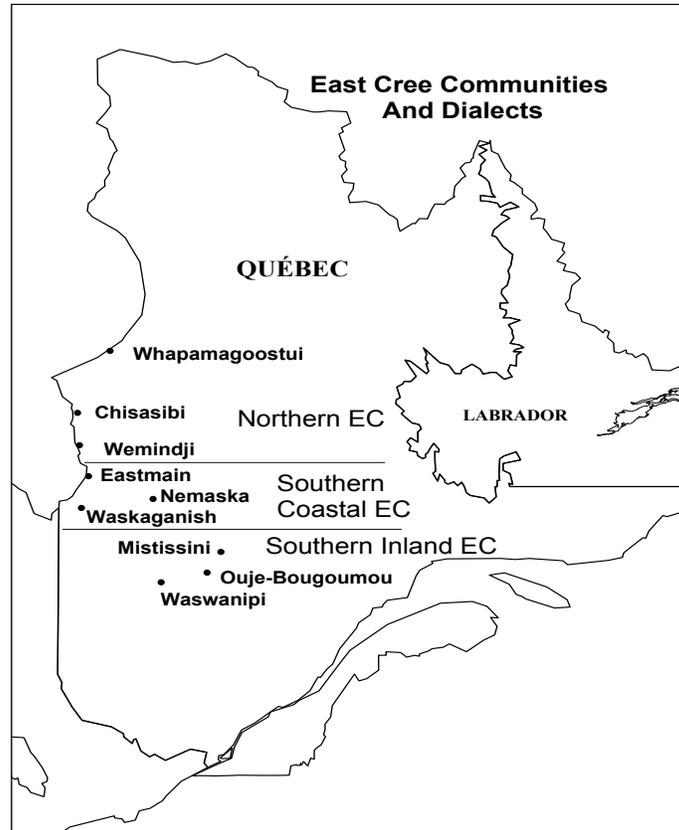
A common misconception with respect to the division of East Cree is that the two dialects are Inland and Coastal, bundling together all the Coastal communities from Waskaganish to Whapmagoostui. This geographical distinction does not accurately characterize the Cree dialects; the northern and southern dialect distinction is the basic divide and within the southern dialects a further distinction can be made between coastal and inland, as explained above.

In this document, the southern spelling will be used for Cree words.

The following table shows a few of the differences in pronunciation between the various East Cree dialects (reflected in the different spellings).

|  | SOUTHERN INLAND | SOUTHERN COASTAL | NORTHERN |
|---|---|---|---|
| man | *naapeu* | *naapeu* | *naapaau* |
| Cree | *iinuu* | *iyiyuu* | *iyiyiu* |
| net | *ahapii* | *ahiipii* | *ahiipii* |
| thing | *chekwaan* | *chekwaan* | *chaakwaan* |
| on the side | *napate* | *napate* | *nipitaa* |

Note that the Northern dialect has the vowel *aa* where the Southern one has the vowel e, and that Northern has the vowel i where Southern has the vowel *a*. The coastal dialects have y in some words when the inland dialects have n. There are also a few differences in spelling rules, such as writing *iyiyuu* and *iyiyiu*, but they are minor.

## 1.3 Writing in East Cree

The writing system used for East Cree is transparent orthography, meaning that it is very close to the pronunciation (as in Spanish, things are written almost as they are pronounced). It is syllabic, meaning that each symbol represents a syllable, combinations of consonant + vowel. Frequently the vowel i is not pronounced, which makes reading a bit more difficult. The words from the above table are written in syllabics in the following way:

| ENGLISH | SOUTHERN INLAND | SOUTHERN COASTAL | NORTHERN |
|---|---|---|---|
| man | ȧ Vᵒ | ȧ Vᵒ | ȧ <̇ᵒ |
| Cree | Ȧ ȯ | Δᴬᴬ᷂ | Δᴬᴬᵒ |
| net | ◁"◁∧̇ | ◁"Ȧ∧̇ | ◁"Ȧ∧̇ |
| thing | ᒉ·ᑕᵃ | ᒉ·ᑕᵃ | ᒡ·ᑕᵃ |
| to the side | ᖇ<∪ | ᖇ<∪ | ᔅ∧Ċ |

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All the Cree syllabics can be written in roman orthography, although it is not used by the Cree, except for typing syllabic characters on the computer. Thus, one types *naapeu* in order to get ᓈᐯᐤ. A chart of the syllabics, with the sounds, can be viewed and downloaded in the resource section of the [www.eastcree.org](http://www.eastcree.org) site.

To make reading this document easier for speakers of English, the standard roman spelling[3], which corresponds exactly to each syllabic, is used.

## 1.4 Questions

### 1.4.1 What is the difference between Cree and Inuktitut, spoken further north?

Both language use a syllabic writing system, but are totally different. They belong to different language families. A Cree person who knows how to read can read Inuktitut without understanding it and an Inuit can read Cree without understanding it, just as a speaker of English can read Turkish without being able to speak it.

### 1.4.2 Do other Cree people in Canada understand each other?

The language form a dialect continuum: the closer they are geographically, the easier it is to understand; the further away, the more difficult. A Cree who speaks the Plains dialect from Alberta would have difficulty understanding a Cree from Quebec, but would have a head start on learning the language, because they are from the same family, just as someone who knows French finds it easier to learn Spanish.

## 2. CREE AND ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

When Cree children are learning to speak English they may make certain pronunciation errors which are the result of interference from their first language, Cree. The use of Cree pronunciation of English words is most noticeable among older speakers. As Cree speakers are increasingly bilingual, and hear English regularly on TV, their pronunciation of English will be less problematic. Nevertheless, spelling difficulties often arise from pronunciation differences while children are learning the rules of English spelling. It should be

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[3]     A variant of the roman spelling uses a circumflex accent to mark long vowels, rather than writing double vowels. For example *naapeu* can be written *nâpeu*. This orthography has the advantage of making the words shorter, but cannot be used at the moment for typing syllabics.  We use double vowels in this document to reflect the syllabic keyboard.

remembered that the same spelling difficulties occur for children who speak non-standard varieties of English, for instance rural Newfoundland or African American dialects. Thus good teaching of the pronunciation of English words and rules of spelling is necessary for all.

A useful handbook, *From Cree to English* by Marilylle Soveran (c. 1968), focuses on the Plains dialect of Cree and contains valuable explanations and pronunciation drills for teachers, most of which can be used with James Bay Cree students. A copy of this book is available for download in the Resources section of the www.eastcree.org website.

Cree has fewer consonant and vowel sounds than English, which means that children will have to learn to hear and pronounce several new sounds. Until they can do this, they will use the closest sound from their own language in place of the English one. This replacement of unknown patterns of pronunciation (and grammar) by known ones in the early stages of learning a new language is referred to as interference from the first language. Speakers of Cree may experience interference in pronouncing *r,* the pairs of consonants, some vowels and most consonant clusters of English. Examples of this process occur in the traditional Cree pronunciation of proper names:

| ENGLISH | CREE | |
|---------|------|---|
| Mary | *Melii* | *'l'* replaces *'r'* |
| Andrew | *Aantaluu* | *'ndr'* difficult so *'a'* is inserted before *'r'*; *'l'* replaces *'r'* |
| Alfred | *Aalpili(d)* | *'lfr'* difficult so *'a'* is inserted before *'r'*; *'l'* replaces *'r'* |
| Margaret | *Maakalet* | *'rg'* difficult s*o 'r' is* deleted; *'l'* replaces *'r'* |
| Matthew | *Mâtiu* | no *'th'* so is pronounced as *'*t*'* |
| Helen | *Enen* | *'h'* is not used at the beginning of a word; *'n'* replaces *'l'* |

These pronunciation modifications are not serious obstacles to understanding what a student is saying and will usually resolve themselves as the student gets older.

English has six stop consonants (ones which momentarily stop the air as it leaves the mouth) which occur in three voiceless/voiced pairs *p/b, t/d, k/g*. Additionally, there is a voiceless/voiced pair of affricates, *ch/j*. These sounds begin with a stop, and we will include them in this description of stop consonants. When the voiced members of the pairs (*b, d, j, g*) are pronounced, the vocal cords vibrate, giving a louder sound. The voiceless sounds (*p, t, ch, k*) have no vibration and are closer to whispers.

Cree does not have this voiceless/voiced distinction, which means that only the four voiceless sounds are written (*p, t, ch, k*). Each has several possible pronunciations, either more like the English voiceless sounds *p, t, ch, k* or like the voiced ones *b, d, g, j*. For a Cree child learning English, then, the minimal pairs "pin/bin," "tin/din," "chin/gin," "come/gum" will sound virtually the same. As a result, the child may pronounce these pairs, and others such as ''puck/buck," "tab/dab," "cab/gab" in the same way. The difference between the pairs of English sounds can be taught by use of a drill in which students must hear and pronounce pairs of problem words. ✍

Cree has only three fricative consonants (consonants which make a hissing sounds when pronounced), *s, sh, h*. English, on the other hand, has nine, four voiceless/voiced pairs *f/v, th* as in 'those' [D], and *th* as in 'thick' [T], *s/z, sh/zh* plus *h*. As expected, the nearest equivalent sound in Cree will be substituted: **p** for *f/v*; **t** for *th* ([D] or [T]); **s or sh** for *s/z, sh/zh*.

In the case of *f/v* and *th* ([D ]or [T]), not only do students need to distinguish between fricatives and stops but they also must learn to distinguish between voiceless/voiced pairs of fricatives such as the following:

|  | **F/V** | **P/F** | **B/V** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **BEGINNING** | ferry/very | pair/fair | berry/very/(ferry) |
| **MIDDLE** | wafer/waver | supper/suffer | rebel/revel |
| **END** | safe/save | leap/leaf (leave) | dub/dove/(duff) |

|  | **TH** | **T/TH [T]** | **D/TH [D]** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **BEGINNING** | theft/then | tin/thin | den/then/(ten) |
| **MIDDLE** | ether/either | sheeting/sheathing | udder/other/(utter) |
| **END** | bath/bathe | bat/bath | tide/tithe/(tight) |

Similarly, words which contain the voiceless/voiced pairs *s/z* and *sh/zh* will present the same difficulties.

|  | **S/SH** | **S/Z** | **SH/ZH** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **BEGINNING** | see/she | seal/zeal | masher/measure |
| **MIDDLE** | masses/mashes | prices/prizes | thresher/treasure |
| **END** | muss/mush | lice/lies | dilution/allusion |

More suggestions for drilling these problem sounds can be found in Soveran (c. 1968). ✋

With practice, students will learn to pronounce the individual new sounds, particularly at the beginnings of words. It is relatively easy to hear the difference between consonants when they occur before a vowel. However, it is much more difficult to hear and pronounce these sounds when they occur in consonant clusters.

Cree has only a few consonant clusters (less than twenty) when compared with English (over two hundred). One strategy which Cree speakers use to make these clusters pronounceable is to insert a vowel between the consonants (*Aantaluu* for *Andrew*). Cree children may have difficulty in, first, hearing, and secondly, pronouncing these clusters. It is to be expected, then, that they will also have difficulty in spelling them; teachers have confirmed that this does happen. ✋

Clusters ending in *s* or *z* which mark the plural and possessives of nouns ("pants, bands, John's, aunt's") as well as the third person singular present tense ("hit/hits, stand/stands"), may be problematic in terms of pronunciation as the *-s* may be hard to hear or pronounce. In another instance, the -ed past tense in English ("pass/passed, buzz/buzzed") which has several actual pronunciations (see section 5.3.1), is often deleted. If the student does not write the -ed ending because it is not pronounced,  the teacher may think that the student is unaware of the existence of the past tense, when such may not in fact be the case. Other problem pairs will be "can/can't, could/couldn't, should/shouldn't."  Telling the children to pronounce "can't" as "cannot" or "shouldn't" as "should not" is not a good option as this is not natural English and is not frequently heard in normal, everyday speech. The aim should be to make them aware of the normal, casual style of speech which is most frequently used.

The pronunciation of vowels is less problematic and there are exercises in the Soveran book, should they be needed. ✋

## 3. INTRODUCTION TO GRAMMATICAL COMPARISON

## 3.1 The size of words

While English and French complexity is found at the sentence level, Cree complexity is rather found at the level of the word. In Cree, a single verb can always make up a whole sentence. This can be seen in the Cree dictionary definitions: the translation of all verbs are complete sentences.

English uses many separate words and few grammatical prefixes and suffixes. Cree is quite different in that there are hundreds of different prefixes and suffixes which combine with verbs and, to a lesser extent, with nouns. Whereas a simple English sentence might consist of, say, five or six words, the same information may be conveyed in Cree using just one or two (complex) words. Verbs predominate in the Cree language; of 18,000 Cree words in the Southern dictionary 3,000 are nouns and 14,000 are verbs. The rest are words like adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, etc.

Here are sentences in English and in Cree that mean the same thing.

> I was eating/ate a lot of caribou.
>
> *Nichii mishtamuuwaatihkwen.*
>
> ni+chii              mishta+muuwaa+atihkw+e+n
>
> 1$^{st}$+past       a.lot+eat+caribou+VTI+1$^{st}$.IIN

There are hundreds of verb endings in Cree, while there only a few in English (*-s*, *-ed*, *-en*, *-ing*). Many of the Cree verbal suffixes function as subject or object agreement (Section 3.4). The *–n* suffix in the example above, together with the prefix *ni-*, indicates that the subject is a first person. The corresponding English sentence requires the use of a separate word (the pronoun "I"). Because so much information is included as part of the verb in Cree, speakers often have the option of leaving pronouns and nouns out of the sentence. Further, as this example shows, certain nouns (in this case *–muuwaa-*"caribou") may even be included within the Cree verb. Cree sentences thus tend to have fewer words than the English equivalent, but this is due to the fact that Cree verbs can contain so much information. English, on the other hand, English tends to have sentences made up of more words; that is to say, the information is spread across many different words.

## 3.2 Parts of Speech

Cree has many of the same parts of speech as English has (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and so on.), but the proportion in the vocabulary is different (section 3.1); many concepts will be expressed by verbs in Cree rather than by nouns. Cree pronouns express a  variety of meanings not used by English pronouns, such as pronouns of doubt, hesitation and being absent. A participle in Cree is a nominal form of a verb (a noun derived from a verb) as happens in English, for instance 'I finished the **baking**' from the verb 'bake'. Even if the same categories exist in both languages, it is not the case that if a word which belongs to a category in one language, it will belong to the same category in the other.

Adjectives, as we know them in English (as separate words), do not exist in Cree. Articles do not exist either. English adverbs are found within the Cree categories of particles, initials and preforms, which are invariable (do not take suffixes). English conjunctions (coordinate and subordinate) correspond to particles and to preverbs in Cree. To better understand the Cree categories and what they represent, consult the on-line Cree grammar on the eastcree.org website.

In table below we present a list of categories used in current grammars and dictionaries for both languages. Following this chart, we will demonstrate certain points of comparison between the two languages which will facilitate learning and understanding the grammar of each.

| PARTS OF SPEECH | CREE | ENGLISH |
|---|---|---|
| Nouns | √ | √ |
| Verbs | √ | √ |
| Pronouns | √ | √ |
| Participles | √ | √ |
| Prefixes, suffixes | √ | √ |
| Preverbs | √ | no |
| Preform | √ | no |
| Particles | √ | no |
| Initials | √ | no |
| Medials | √ | no |
| Finals | √ | no |
| Adjectives | no | √ |
| Adverbs | no | √ |
| Prepositions | no | √ |
| Conjunctions | no | √ |
| Articles or determiners | no | √ |

## 3.3 Grammatical Gender

As most people know, French nouns are either masculine or feminine (*le chalet* 'the cabin' (masculine) vs. *la maison* 'the house' (feminine)). This grouping of nouns is called gender and the gender of the noun affects the choice of word which goes with the noun (*le* agrees with a masculine noun and *la* agrees with a feminine noun).

Cree nouns are also divided into two groups, animate and inanimate; this division is also referred to as gender. Animate and inanimate nouns have different plural markers (*-ich* or *-ch* for animate and *-h* for inanimate).

| ANIMATE NOUN | | INANIMATE NOUN | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *awaash* | child | *tehtapuwin* | chair |
| *awaash**ich*** | children | *tehtapuwin**h*** | chairs |

In English, animate and inanimate are represented only by pronouns and question words: *she, he, who* for animae and *it, what* for inanimate. In Cree pronouns, as well as nouns, have animate and inanimate gender. One says *awen uu?* 'who is this?' and *chekwaan uu* 'what is this?'

While there are a small number of exceptions, in general it tends to be the case that things which are animate (living) in the real world are also grammatically animate. Conversely, things which are inanimate (non-living) in the real world tend to be grammatically inanimate. We see evidence of this general rule applying in the examples above, where *awash* 'child' belongs to the animate gender class (forming the plural with *-ich*) and *tehtapuwin* 'chair' belongs to the inanimate gender class (forming the plural with *-h*).

## 3.4 Agreement and Suffixes

Agreement is an extremely important feature of the Cree language. By agreement, we mean what happens when one word changes its form to match a grammatical feature, such as Gender (animate vs. inanimate, section 3.3), of a neighbouring word. English has very little in the way of agreement, French has a good deal more, and Cree has a great deal more even than French. We begin our overview of Cree agreement with a brief look at agreement in English and French.

English has very little agreement. In Standard English, we see it in the verbal system; the (non-past tense) verb takes an *–s* if the subject is third person singular (*he/she/it*). This is an example of subject-verb agreement.

*I/you/we/they sleep*

he/she/it sleep**s**

The *–s* on the end of the verb appears when the subject is "he", "she" or "it" (third person singular).

French exhibits a richer subject-verb agreement system than English; in the examples below we see that the suffix on the verb changes depending on the subject.

| FRENCH | ENGLISH |
|---|---|
| *Je parl**e*** | I speak |
| *Tu parl**es*** | You speak |
| *Il/elle/on parl**e*** | He/she/it speak**s** |
| *Nous parl**ons*** | We speak |
| *Vous parl**ez*** | You speak |
| *Ils/elles parl**ent*** | They speak |

Another type of agreement commonly found in the world's languages is between nouns and adjectives. We see this in French, where an adjective will match the Gender and Number (singular/plural) of the noun it describes.

| FRENCH | ENGLISH | | FRENCH | ENGLISH |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| grand homme | great man | ➔ | grand**s** hommes | great men |
| grand**e** femme | great woman | | grand**es** femmes | great women |

In Cree, verbs take different suffixes and prefixes depending on the Gender (animacy), Number and Person of the subject and frequently also of the object, if there is one. Here is one set of possible suffixes and prefixes for the Cree verb stem *nipaa***-** 'sleep', which has an animate subject.

| | ENGLISH | CREE |
|---|---|---|
| | I sleep | ***ni****nipaa**n*** |
| | You (singular) sleep | ***chi****nipaa**n*** |
| | He/she/it sleep**s** | *nipaa**u*** |
| **(me and him)** | We (me and him) sleep | ***ni****nipaa**naan*** |

| (you and me) | We (you and me) sleep | ***chi**nipaa**naanu*** |
|---|---|---|
| | You (plural) sleep | ***chi**nipaa**naawaau*** |
| | They sleep | *nipaa**uch*** |
| (obviatif) | The other one/others sleep | *nipaa**yuuh*** |

If the subject is grammatically inanimate, there are no "you/me" (first and second person) forms; the subjects of Inanimate Intransitive verbs are third persons.

| ENGLISH | CREE |
|---|---|
| It is white | *waapaau* |
| They are white | *waapaau**h*** |

Because the verb carries so much information, it isn't always necessary to use the subject in the sentence[4]. In the following sentence, for example, the Cree word for 'you' (*chii*) would normally not be used because the verb already has a prefix (*chi-*) that means 'you'.

> *(chii)* ***chi**nipaa**n***
>
> (chii)             chi+nipaa+n
>
> $2^{nd}$ pers       $2^{nd}$ pers+sleep+$2^{nd}$ or $1^{st}$ pers
>
> (you) sleep

Here the verb agrees with the subject, the second person pronoun *chii* ('you'), allowing it to be dropped from the sentence. In a case like this, *chii* would be used if the speaker really wants to emphasize who is doing the sleeping.

In Cree, the verb may also inflect to agree with its object (object-verb agreement), allowing the speaker the option of dropping both (or either) the subject and the object from the sentence. So long as we know we are talking about dogs, *atimuch* may be dropped.

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[4]     The same thing happens in Spanish, where you do not have to use a subject pronoun because the verb already has a suffix indicating who wants (for example) to sleep. If you do add a pronoun, it is emphatic.

        Quier**o** dormir.               **Yo** quier**o** dormir.

        "(I) want to sleep"         "Me, I want to sleep"

*niwaapamaau**ch** atimu**ch**.*

ni+waapam+aa+**u+ch**                       atimu+**ch**

1<sup>st</sup> pers+see.VTA.1 >3+3<sup>rd</sup> pers+an.pl[5]    dog+an.pl

I see                                                    dogs

'I see (the) dogs.'

Pronouns in Cree agree the same way the nouns do. For example if *dogs* is replaced by *these ones*, it is necessary to use a demonstrative plural pronoun.

*niwaapamaau**ch** ᴜᴜ**ch***

ni+waap+amaa+**u+ch**              ᴜᴜ**+ch**

I see them                                    these one

'I see these ones.'

As in English and French, many words are invariable. English examples would be conjunctions and prepositions, in Cree they are particles and preforms or preverbs.

## 3.5 Word Order in Cree

Word order in Cree is freer than in English, partly because of rich agreement. In English the normal word order for a declarative sentence is Subject-Verb-Object:

*Me, I*             *see*      *dogs*

SUBJECT        VERB     OBJECT

If we change this order, but do not wish to change the meaning of the sentence, the sentence becomes ungrammatical.

*???*      *dogs*             *see*      *I*

OBJECT             VERB     SUBJECT

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[5]        Abbreviations used: pers: person; VTA: transitive verb with an animate object; 1>3 first person subject acting on a 3<sup>rd</sup> person object, an: animate, pl: plural

In Cree the order of words is freer, and this allows for subtle variations in meaning. The first word of the sentence is the one most emphasized.

| *nii* | *niwaapimaauch* | *atimuch* | FOCUS ON **SUBJECT** |
|---|---|---|---|
| SUBJECT | VERB | OBJECT | |
| me | I see them | dogs | |

"It's **me** (not him) who sees dogs."

| *atimuch* | *niwaapimaauch* | | FOCUS ON **OBJECT** |
|---|---|---|---|
| OBJECT | VERB | | |
| dogs | I see them | | |

 "It's **dogs** that I see (not cats)."

| *niwaapimaauch* | *atimuch* | FOCUS ON **VERB** (ACTION) |
|---|---|---|
| VERB | OBJECT | |
| I see them | dogs | |

 "I **see** dogs (I don't hear them)."

# 4. NOMINALS

## 4.1 Nouns

### 4.1.1 Nouns in English and Cree

Cree has nouns, but many English nouns are expressed by verbs in Cree. For example, one does not speak of rain or snow, but instead says *it is raining (chimuwin), it is snowing (mispun)* in Cree.

Furthermore, many Cree nouns are derived from verbs. Some these are still partial verbs, and are called participles (not to be confused with present and past participles in English). For example, the noun for a jet plane is *kaakwaapitepayihch*, literally 'that which fly giving off smoke', the name for fizzy medicine is *kaauhtepayich,*'that which fizzes'. To learn more, see the section on Cree participles in the grammar at eastcree.org.

Conceptually, the world is seen through the Cree language as fluid and changing, in process, and expressed best through verbs, rather than separate static things, which can be labelled with nouns. One must pay attention to this tendency for Cree to favour verbs over nouns. Children could have a tendency to try to use a verb in English, rather than a noun when speaking of an object.

## 4.1.2 What markers are found on nouns in English and in Cree?

The following table summarizes the prefixes and suffixes found on the nouns in each language.

|  | CREE | ENGLISH |
|---|---|---|
| Gender (masculine-feminine) | no | no |
| Gender (animate-inanimate) | √ | no |
| Number (singular-plural) | √ | √ |
| Diminutive | √ | √ |
| Locative | √ | no |
| Obviative | √ | no |
| Person (possessive) | √ | no |

## 4.1.3 Number on nouns (singular-plural)

As in English, Cree has suffixes on nouns and pronouns which indicate that the word is plural. The difference is that the plural suffix varies according to gender (animate or inanimate) and obviation (according to whether the person is the main subject of the conversation (proximate) or is another" things or person (obviative)).

| ANIMATE NOUN | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **PROXIMATE** | **OBVIATIVE** | |
| **SINGULAR** | *shiishiip* | *shiishiip* | duck |
| **PLURAL** | *shiishiip**ich*** | *shiishiip-**h*** | ducks |

| INANIMATE NOUN | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **PROXIMATE** | **OBVIATIVE** | |
| **SINGULAR** | *masinahiikan* | *masinahiikan**iyuu*** | book |
| **PLURAL** | *masinahiikan**h*** | *masinahiikan**h*** | books |

## 4.1.4 The diminutive

Cree nouns may take diminutive endings, as can English nouns. Often, in Cree, a sound in the word is also changed, imitating children's pronunciation.

**Diminutives in Cree**

| *iskweu* | 'woman' | → | *ishkwe**sh*** | 'girl' |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *aamuu* | 'bee' | → | *aamuu**sh*** | 'small bee, biting fly' |
| *uhuumisuu*[6] | 'owl' | → | *uhuumi**shiish*** | 'young owl' |

**Diminutives in English**

| dog | → | dog**gy** |
|---|---|---|
| pig | → | pig**gy** |
| mouse | → | mous**ie** |

---

[6]  The stem of the word is *uhuumis**i**u*, which explains why *uu* changes to *ii* in the diminutive suffix. n addition, the consonant *s* changes to *sh*.

## 4.2 Determiners

## 4.2.1 What determiners?

In English, a noun may be preceded by a determiner: a definite or indefinite article (the, a), a possessive pronoun (my, your), a demonstrative (this, that)...

In Cree, a noun has no need of a determiner but it can appear alone, as it often does on English. To express possession, Cree uses prefixes; to express demonstratives, Cree uses pronouns. The category of determiner (definite, indefinite, possessive, demonstrative) as occurring obligatorily with a noun, does not exist in Cree.

The correct usage of the definite and indefinite determiners (the articles *the* and *a*) can present problems, it does for most learners of English, and will need special attention.

## 4.2.2 Possessive determiners

Whereas in English a noun may be represented as being possessed by a first, second or third person by combining it with *my, your, her/his, our, their* (see left column, below) in Cree, this same information is conveyed in a single word (see right column, below). In Cree, the owner of (in this example) the book is encoded in a prefix and a suffix which are added to the noun. In the following examples, the prefixes and suffixes are in bold:

**Inanimate possessed noun, singular**

| | |
|---|---|
| **my** book | ***ni***masinahiikan |
| **your** book | ***chi***masinahiikan |
| **her/his** book | ***u***masinahiikan |
| **our** (mine and his) book | ***ni***masinahiikan***inaan*** |
| **our** book (mine and yours) book | ***chi***masinahiikan***inuu*** |
| **your** (plural) book | ***chi***masinahiikan***awaau*** |
| **their** book | ***u***masinahiikan***awaau*** |

These possessed forms may be made plural in the normal way for inanimate nouns.

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**Inanimate possessed noun, plural**

| | |
|---|---|
| **my** book**s** | *ni*masinahiikan**h** |
| **your** book**s** | *chi*masinahiikan**h** |
| **her/his** book**s** | *u*masinahiikan**h** |
| **our** (mine and his) book**s** | *ni*masinahiikan**inanh** |
| **our** book (mine and yours) book**s** | *chi*masinahiikan**inuuh** |
| **your** (plural) book**s** | *chi*masinahiikan**awaauh** |
| **their** book**s** | *u*masinahiikan**awaauh** |

If the possessed noun is animate, the possessive is formed a little differently for third persons (*his/her/their*). Also, an additional (possessive) suffix (*-im*) may be required. If the possessed noun is plural, the animate plural suffix follows the *-im* possessive suffix. We illustrate this latter point first, for first and second person forms:

**Animate possessed noun singular, (1st et 2nd persons)**

| | |
|---|---|
| my duck | *ni*shiishiip**im** |
| your duck | *chi*shiishiip**im** |
| our (mine and his) duck | *ni*shiishiip**iminaan** |
| our (mine and you) duck | *chi*shiishiip**iminuu** |
| your duck | *chi*shiishiip**imiwaau** |

**Animate possessed noun, plural, (1st et 2nd persons)**

| | |
|---|---|
| my duck(s) | *ni*shiishiip**imich** |
| your duck(s) | *chi*shiishiip**imich** |
| our (mine and his) duck(s) | *ni*shiishiip**iminaanich** |
| our (mine and you) duck(s) | *chi*shiishiip**iminuuch** |
| your (plural) duck(s) | *chi*shiishiip**imiwaauch** |

Animate nouns possessed by third persons (*he/she/their*) require an ***obviative*** suffix. Addition of this suffix has the effect of allowing the noun to be interpreted as either singular or plural (and it is ungrammatical to mark such forms with the animate plural suffix *–ich*).

<div align="center">

**Animate possessed noun (3<sup>rd</sup> person)**

| | |
|---|---|
| his/her duck | *u*shiishiip***imh*** |
| his/her ducks | *u*shiishiip***imh*** |
| their duck | *u*shiishiip***imiwaauh*** |
| their ducks | *u*shiishiip***imiwaauh*** |

</div>

While there are some exceptions, in general the possessive *–im* suffix does not attach to possessed inanimate nouns.

How does possession work in Cree when you wish to do more than say *my, your, his, her, our, their book/duck*; how does it work when you wish to name the possessor (e.g., *the girl's book, Simon's cat* and so on)? In this case, you just put the name of the possessor next to the possessed noun and everything else we describe above remains unchanged:

**Inanimate**

| *Aanii* | *umasinahiikan(h)* | | *awashich* | *umasinahiikanawauh* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aanii | u-masinahiikan-(h) | | awash-ich | u-masinahiikan-awaauh |
| Annie | 3-book-(plural) | | child-plural | 3-book-plural |
| 'Annie's book(s)' | | | 'The kids' books.' | |

**Animate**

| *Aanii* | *ushiishiipimh* | | *awashich* | *ushiishiipimiwaauh* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aanii | u-shiishiip-im-h | | awash-ich | u-shiishiip-im-iwaau-h |
| Annie | 3-duck-poss-obv | | child-plural | 3-duck-poss-plural-obv |
| 'Annie's duck/ducks' | | | 'The kids' duck/ducks' | |

You will have noticed in this section that the plural inanimate and the animate obviative suffixes sound the same – both are *–h*. This is a common phenomenon in language. In

English, for example, we see this with the possessive *-s* (*Peter's hat*) and the *–s* suffix found on certain verb forms (*Peter wins the race.*)

Certain (animate or inanimate) nouns in Cree must always be used with these personal prefixes and suffixes. They are called dependent nouns in the Cree grammar. They refer to body parts and kinship terms. Here are a few examples:

**Nouns, animate dependent (nad)**

| | |
|---|---|
| ***ni***mis | 'my older sister' |
| ***chi***mis | 'your older sister' |
| ***u***mis-***h*** | 'his/her older sister' |

**Nouns, inanimate dependent (nid)**

| | |
|---|---|
| ***u***tuun | 'his/her mouth' |
| ***ni***tuun | 'my mouth' |
| ***chi***tuun | 'your mouth' |
| ***mi***tuun | 'a/someone's mouth' |

To find out more about these types of construction, consult the grammar pages at www.eastcree.org.

Learning the possessive pronouns of English should not be a problem for Cree children, as these can compared to the possessive prefixes of Cree.

## 4.3 Pronouns

### 4.3.1 Personal pronouns

There are personal pronouns in Cree, which, like those in English (I, *me, you, her, him, she, he, us, we, them, they)*, are separate words. In Cree, however, these pronoun words are used mainly to give emphasis to a sentence.

> ***wii***     *kaa*     *ihtuutahk*
>
> She     past     she did it
>
> '**She** is the one who did it (and not someone else)'.

In English we achieve this same effect by putting extra stress on the word (indicated by the bold type in the translations).

There are seven personal pronouns in Cree. They look much like the personal prefixes used for possessed nouns and with verbs.

|  | CREE | ENGLISH |
|---|---|---|
| **1ST SINGULAR** | *nii* | I, me, mine |
| **2ND SINGULAR** | *chii* | you, yours |
| **3RD SINGULAR** | *wii* | she, her, hers<br>he, him, his |
|  |  |  |
| **1ST PLURAL (ME AND HIM)** | *niiyaan* | we, us, ours |
| **1ST & 2ND PLURAL (ME AND YOU)** | *chiiyaanuu* | |
| **2ND PLURAL (YOU ALL)** | *chiiwaau* | you, yours |
| **3ERD PLURAL** | *wiiwaau* | they, them, theirs |

As you can see, Cree makes a distinction that English does not, letting us know whether the person we are talking to is included in the first plural ('we, us, ours') or not. If the 'we' excludes the one we are talking to, *niyaan* is used; if the 'we' includes the person, then *chiiyaanuu* is used.

For example, to say *our duck*, Cree will distinguish between the duck belonging to me and my friends, and the one belonging to you and me.

> ***ni***shiishiipim***inaan***                      our duck (me and my friends)
>
> ***chi***shiishiipim***inuu***                       our duck (you and me)

This difference also appears in all the verb conjugations (when pronoun information often appears as prefixes to the verb) and in the possessive forms of nouns. When we say, for example, 'we are leaving' in Cree, there is a choice of verb endings, depending on whether the person we are talking to is coming with us or not.

| | |
|---|---|
| ***ni****chistuhte****naan*** | we (me and him) are leaving |
| ***chi****chistuhte****naanuu*** | we (me and you) are leaving |

You will also notice from the table that in English there more pronoun forms than there are in Cree. There are a few reasons for this. The most important reason is that in English (but not in Cree) the form of the pronoun often changes to reflect its grammatical role in the sentence (a phenomenon referred to as **case**). If we take the first singular form in English as an example, we see that as a subject it is *I* but its object form is *me* and its possessive form is *mine*:

| | |
|---|---|
| **English** | **I** ate the **cake**. |
| | Caroline saw **me**. |
| | I think that's **mine**. |

We have seen that Cree distinguishes between an inclusive and exclusive first person plural, a distinction English lacks. Conversely, we see that English makes a distinction that Cree lacks; in the third person English distinguishes male (*he, him, his*) from female (*she, her, hers*) and has yet another pronoun reserved for inanimate (or sometimes non-human) entities (*it*). Cree uses the same form (*wii* (singular), *wiiwaau* (plural)) to refer to both male and female (i.e., there is no 'he/she' distinction). The English third plural pronoun lacks a 'he/she' distinction (*they/them/theirs*).

## 4.3.2 Cree is rich in pronouns

Other types of pronouns in Cree include demonstratives (this, that, these, those), question words (who, what), focus words (s/he is the one), hesitation words (the uh uh one...), pronouns of doubt (it must be him/her/it), question pronouns of doubt (I wonder which one), absentative words (the missing one). These pronouns, which are single words, can be animate or inanimate and can have plural and obviative suffixes, just like nouns. See http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/grammar/southern-dialect/pronouns/ for more information.

Notice that the same word is used in Cree for the indefinite pronoun, the interrogative pronoun and the noun. Cree students should be made aware of this as they might generalize a single English form to cover all the Cree uses of *awen* or *chekwaan*. ✋

**Animate**

| *awen* | who, someone, a person |
|---|---|
| *awen**ichii*** | who (plural) , some people |

**Inanimate**

| *chekwaan* | what, something, a thing |
|---|---|
| *chekwaan**ihii*** | what, something (plural), things |

The Cree demonstratives *uu* 'this' and *an* 'that' are used to modify nouns in order to point to things.

**Demonstratives**

| *naapeu* | a/the man |
|---|---|
| *uu naapeu* | this man |
| *an naapeu* | that man |

The use of 'a' and 'the' is one of the most difficult things to master in English as a Second Language (ESL). This grammar point should be taught specially to Cree-speaking students as in this area the two grammars differ from each other. Particular attention should be paid to this point. ✋

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## 4.4 Questions

### 4.4.1 What is obviation in Cree?

Obviation does not exist in French and English grammar.  In Cree, however, obviation is a powerful tool for providing contrast in the characters of a story.  Specifically, obviation is a mandatory marking of third person characters who are not the subjects of the story or conversation.  It's akin to facing a theatre stage with a single spotlight that can only illuminate a single actor at a time; the subject would be the one illuminated, and the others (3rd persons) are marked by obviation (they are not illuminated) to signify that they are "the others", secondary characters.  In the following sentence, the child is under the single spotlight and the toad is of less importance and is therefore in the darkness, so to speak.  We could, however, express the same sentence with a different point of view that gives the toad the importance.

*Chii waapameu ayikh an awaash.*

| *chii* | *waapameu* | *ayik-h* | *an* | *awaash* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| past | he sees it | toad-obviative | that one | child |

'This child saw a toad (or toads).'

*Chii waapamikuu ayik aniyuu awaasha.*

| *chii* | *waapam**ikuu*** | *ayik* | *an**iyuu*** | *awaash-**a*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| past | he sees it | toad | that one-obv | child-obv |

'This child saw a toad.'

In the second sentence, the verb ending has also changed to indicate that the subject (the child) is obviative and that we accord more importance relative to the point of view of the toad.

### 4.4.2 Why do Cree-speaking children sometimes mix up the pronouns *she* and *he* (as well as *her/his*, *her/him*, *hers/his*)?

There are several reasons for mixing up the masculine and the feminine pronouns. One reason is that, as we explain in this section, Cree is a non-sexist language when it comes to personal pronouns and uses only one word (*wii*) to mean either *he* or *she*, and one

pronominal prefix (*u-*) to mean *his* and *her* (section 4.2.2). Another reason might be the transfer of the obviative category to a gender category. Cree distinguishes between an obviative third person and a non-obviative (proximate) third person. It is possible that bilingual speakers transfer the Cree category of obviation to the English category of gender for pronouns, using for example *he* for the proximate (this one) and *she* for the obviative (the other one).

If student mix up *he* and *him*, or *she* and *her*, this is because Cree does not distinguish whether the emphatic pronoun *wii* bears a different case (marking the difference between the subject *(he)* or the object function (*him*).

This is an area of the grammar where the teacher can highlight the differences between the English (or French) and Cree for his or her students. A special lesson can be designed to draw the children's attention to the differences. ✍

## 4.4.3 English nouns can take a plural *–s* (*two dog<u>s</u>*) or a possessive *–s* (*the dog'<u>s</u> tail*). These suffixes sound the same but have different meanings.

Standard English has three different *–s* suffixes; the plural noun suffix -s, the possessive suffix, 's, and the third person verbal agreement suffix -s (when the subject of the verb is *he/she/it*, the (non-past) verb takes an *–s*.). Finally there is an increasingly common fourth use of 's in English, as an abbreviation for *is* in *she's tall*, or *he's talking*.

| PLURAL *–S* | POSSESSIVE *–S* | VERBAL *–S* | VERBAL *–S FOR* IS |
|---|---|---|---|
| shoe | dog | I run | I am tall |
| shoes | dog's tail | he/she runs | she's tall |

In all languages of the world we find cases where two (or more) affixes, which differ in function, have the same pronunciation. The phenomenon is referred to as homophony.

The teacher can highlight this issue for his or her students by showing them some commonly occurring Cree examples, and then showing them that the same thing happens in English. It will help students to understand the grammars of both languages better, and it will help them remember what may be, if not explicitly taught, a confusing point of grammar in the second language.✍

For example, in Cree, the final *–h* can indicate the plural proximate and plural obviative of an inanimate noun, like *maschisin*, as well as the obviative singular or plural of an animate noun, like *ayik* (see also section 4.4.1 above on obviation).

|  | **PROXIMATE** |  | **OBVIATIVE** |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SINGULAR** | *maschisin* | shoe | *maschisiniyuu* | shoe |
| **PLURAL** | *maschisin**h*** | shoe**s** | *maschisin**h*** | shoes |

|  | **PROXIMATE** |  | **OBVIATIVE** |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SINGULAR** | *ayik* | toad | *ayik**h*** | toad |
| **PLURAL** | *ayik**h*** | toads | *ayikach* | toads |

## 4.4.4 How different is the possessive in Cree and in English?

There are two main ways of expressing a possessive relationship in English and students need to learn the general rule of usage. In general, we add *-'s* to the possessor when it is a living (animate) thing (like *dog, Daisy, teacher* in *the dog's leg*, *Daisy's son*, *the teacher's book*). We don't usually add the possessive *-'s* to a non-living (inanimate) possessor, so it would not sound right to say *the table's leg* or *the house's door*, even though tables have legs and houses have doors. Here we use the other possessive construction: *the leg of the table* and *the door of the house*. The distinction between living (animate) and non-living (inanimate) things is very important in the grammar of Cree so it should be easy for the teacher to explain to his or her class how the English possessive rule works. ✍ In Cree, nouns are either animate or inanimate (Section 3.3); see also http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/grammar/southern-dialect/nouns/inflections-gender/

Animate and inanimate nouns take different plural markers (section 3.3). When nouns appear as part of a sentence, along with a verb, the distinction between animate and inanimate is usually marked on the verb too, as agreement (section 3.4). Here's a difference between English and Cree that can be explained to students: in Cree the possessive form of a word differs depending on whether the thing which is possessed (i.e., *book*, in *the teacher's book*) is animate or inanimate (section 4.3.1), much like French, where what matters is the gender of the thing possessed, not the gender of the possessor as in English.

|  |  |  |  | **POSSESSIVE** |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **INANIMATE** | *maschisin* | shoe |  | ***u**maschisin* | his/her shoe |
| **ANIMATE** | *astis* | mitten |  | ***u**tastis-**h*** | his/her mitten |

We also note that in many dialects of English, certain possessive relationships between two inanimate things may be expressed as a compound construction so that the following expressions are equally correct.

| COMPOUND | "OF" POSSESSIVE |
|---|---|
| the table leg | the leg of the table |
| the house door | the door of the house |
| the book cover | the cover of the book |

### 4.4.5 Why is spelling with an apostrophe s ('s) a problem for students?

It is a problem for all speakers of English. The use of the apostrophe added to possessive forms of a noun needs special attention in class even for students whose mother tongue is English. The teacher should give the students lessons in the correct usage of this item of grammar. ✍ Lots of practice and reinforcement will help them remember the few simple rules for correct usage:

The boy's book(s).     One boy owns the book(s).

The boys' book(s).     More than one boy owns the book(s).

## 5. VERBS, TENSES AND MODES

Cree speakers are used to adding many endings to verbs. There are hundreds of verb endings in Cree, encoding a large amount of information about who does what to whom, when and how, while there only a few in English (*-s*, *-ed*, *-en, -ing)*. These are called verb inflections.  In addition, the Cree verb itself is made up of many meaningful parts that

include meanings expressed in English by adjectives and adverbs (section 6). We focus here on the inflection of the verb.

## 5.1 Cree verbs do not have an infinitive form, but always have a subject

A verb in an English dictionary is given in a 'bare' form, with no suffixes; a verb in the Cree dictionary appears in the third person (he/she/it) form. This means that a Cree verb always includes a subject (i.e. a noun or pronoun). The following forms have third person subjects and are thus referred to as "citation forms" (i.e., the form a word takes when it is listed in the dictionary).[7]

| CITATION FORM VERBS IN CREE-ENGLISH DICTIONARY | TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH |
|---|---|
| *nikimuu* | s/he sings |
| *nipaau* | s/he sleeps |
| *michisuu* | s/he eats |
| *waapau* | it is white |

## 5.2 Cree verbs can be grouped into four basic types: VAI, VII, VTA, VTI

In English, verbs are transitive verbs and take an object (like *see: I see something or someone)* or they are intransitive and have no object (it is snowing, I am sleepy).

In Cree, in addition to transitivity, verbs are indicate the gender (animate inanimate) of their subject or object. Thus, there are four basic verb types in Cree, which are represented by the following abbreviations:

---

[7]      The third person plural suffix will be used is a verb is always used on the plural.

| VAI | verb, animate intransitive |
|-----|----------------------------|
| VII | verb, inanimate intransitive |
| VTA | verb, transitive animate |
| VTI | verb, transitive inanimate |

English verbs agree with their subject (*I see, he sees*). Cree verbs agree with their subject, but if they take an object, they usually also agree with their object. This is one reason why, when there is only one form of a verb in English (say, *write*), there will be several different forms of the same verb in Cree, depending on the transitivity of the verb, and on the whether the subject (or object if there is one) is animate or inanimate**.**

Thus, the English verb 'to write' has four realizations in Cree:

**Intransitive verb with inanimate subject (VII):**

*masinaateu*　　　　　'It is written.'

**Intransitive verb with animate subject (VAI):**

*masinaasuu*　　　　　'He/she (his/her name) is written.'

**Transitive verb with inanimate object (VTI):**

*masinaham*　　　　　'He/she is writing it.'

**Transitive verb with animate object (VTA):**

*masinahamuweu*　　　　　'He/she writes (his/her name) to him/her.'

You will have noticed that these four verb types all have different endings. These differences are due in part to agreement (verb inflection), but they are also due in part to the fact that a VAI and a VII verb pair are usually distinguished from each other by having distinct suffixes (referred to as finals*)*. Likewise, VTA and VTI verb pairs are distinguished by having different finals. Here are some more examples showing the different Cree verb classes.

**Intransitive** verbs only have a subject. The subject may be animate or inanimate.

An ***Animate Intransitive (AI)*** verb agrees with its animate subject:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *puushii* | *waapisuu* | 'The cat is white.' |
| cat | is.white | |
| ANIMATE SUBJECT | | |

An ***Inanimate Intransitive (II)*** verb agrees with its inanimate subject:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *michiwaahp* | *waapaau* | 'The teepee is white.' |
| tent | is.white | |
| INANIMATE SUBJECT | | |

**Transitive** verbs have a subject and an object. The object may be animate or inanimate.

A ***Transitive Animate (TA)*** verb agrees with its animate object:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *niwaapimaau* | *puushii* | 'I see a cat.' |
| I.see | cat | |
| | ANIMATE OBJECT | |

A ***Transitive Inanimate (TI)*** verb agrees with its inanimate object:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *niwaapihten* | *michiwaahp* | 'I see a teepee.' |
| I.see | tent | |
| | INANIMATE OBJECT | |

A Cree verb is always classified as belonging to one of these four categories in the Cree dictionary. The VAI class has some exceptions, noted VAI+O in the dictionnary.

When teaching English verbs, teachers need to be aware that Cree speakers might be looking for English equivalents to these Cree distinctions.  On the other hand, grammatical concepts like transitivity should be relatively easy for Cree speakers to master, if they are provided with Cree examples. Practical exercises could include comparing verbs in the Cree and English dictionaries. ✋

## 5.3 Tense and Mood in Cree

## 5.3.1 Tense

Cree has past, present and future tenses for verbs

**Present tense:** The verb as it appears in the dictionary is already present tense.

    's/he eat**s**'             *michisu**u***

**Future tense:** In main clauses (section 8.4), the verb is made future tense by adding a preverb.

    'he/she **will** eat'      ***chika***   *michisu**u***
                           FUTURE

The verb and the future tense preverb are written as separate words.

**Past tense:** In main clauses (section 8.4), the verb is made past tense by adding a preverb.

    'he/she ate.'         ***chii***    *michisuu*
                           PAST

In Cree the past tense is quite different from the English past tense suffix *–ed* and the teacher may want to highlight this difference for his or her students. ✋ If students encounter problems learning to master the English *–ed* past tense forms, it could also be because:

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a. The *–ed* suffix has different pronunciations:

|  |  |
|---|---|
| she/he lov**ed** | pronounced as 'd' |
| she/he look**ed** | pronounced as 't' |
| she/he land**ed,** paint**ed** | pronounced as 'id' |

The past tense pronunciation should be formally taught to students. There are many resources for teaching this, and for showing students the rules.

b. It is often difficult to hear the past tense -*ed* because it is not always a full syllable so it is easy to leave it off in pronunciation and in spelling.  Even English speakers forget to add this ending when writing. Lots of special exercises are needed to practice this. ☝

c. Many verbs do not use -*ed* to make the past tense. The English 'strong' verbs change the vowel instead of adding an ending, like *sing - sang*, *run - ran, think - thought*. Some strong verbs do not change, like *hit – hit*, or *put - put*. Again, the teacher can focus the attention of students on these special cases with classes and practice. ☝

## 5.3.2 Mood

Cree does not have separate modal auxiliary verbs like *might/may, can/could, should/ought to* and *would*, but much of what English does with these modal verbs is done in Cree either with preverbs or inflectional suffixes on the verb.

English modals are verbs (in bold italics below) which appear to the left of the principal verb, expressing ideas such as the future (a), likelihood (b), ability (c), obligation (d), as well as conditionality (e):

(a) She **will** help you.

(b) She **might/may** help you.

(c) She **can/could** help you.

(d) She **should/ought to** help you.

(e) She **would** help you.

Cree preverbs are small words which are part of the verb, acting much like a prefix. There are approximately 20 preverbs in Cree, most of which do a grammatical job, expressing roughly equivalent ideas to those that English encodes with modals and tenses. The non-grammatical preverbs express ideas equivalent to English adjectives and adverbs (see eastcree.org grammar).

## 5.4 Questions

### 5.4.1 Why do students not seem able to keep the tenses consistent in a piece of narrative writing (i.e. all past tense)?

In Cree, it is often enough to use the past tense in the first sentence of a story to set the scene and then to go back to using the present tense.

Also, many of the grammatical prefixes and suffixes added to the Cree verb are less concerned with tense than with what is referred to as "modality". By modality we mean the encoding of distinctions such as whether an event happened in reality, or in a dream (for example), reference to things that appear to be so (expressing uncertainty), things that might have happened, or could potentially happen. It could be that students are paying more attention to these aspects of language than to tense, or it could be that they are transferring Cree modality distinctions onto English tenses. We recommend special teaching to assist the students in keeping the English tenses consistent. Ideally in the advanced Cree classes, the use of rich Cree conjugation system will be taught and studied in narratives and legends.

Ideally, in advanced Cree classes, the system of verb conjugations will be taught and studied. (See the verb grammar on the [www.eastcree.org](www.eastcree.org) website.)

## 5.4.2 Does Cree have a suffix like the continuous -ing?

No, this does not exist in Cree; Cree verbs are translated into English with or without the *-ing*, according to the context. French speakers encounter the same difficulty learning English. This English suffix must be specially taught, as there is an important difference in meaning in English between non-progressive forms of the verb (a), sometimes referred to as the "habitual", and the progressive form of the verb, which is formed with auxiliary *be* and *-ing* suffixed to the principal verb. The progressive form refers to an activity in progress at the time of speaking (b), or one which is securely planned for the future (c). ✍

(a) *She sings.* (habitually, but not necessarily at the time of speaking).

(b) *She is singing.* (action in progress at the time of speaking).

(c) *She is moving down south next year.* (planned future)

## 5.4.3 Why do students have trouble adding -s to verbs in English?

This happens mostly because in Standard English *-s* is added only to the third person (he/she/it) form of the verb in a conjugation, not to all of the forms:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| I sleep | we sleep |
| you sleep | you sleep |
| he/she sleep**s** | they sleep |

Many English speakers have problems with this too. In some dialects of English the *-s* is added to all forms of the verb, and in other dialects it is left off of all forms. Both options make the verb paradigm more regular:

| NEWFOUNDLAND DIALECTS | AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH DIALECTS |
|---|---|
| I sleep**s** | I sleep |
| you sleep**s** | you sleep |
| she/he sleep**s** | she/he sleep |
| we sleep**s** | we sleep |
| you sleep**s** | you sleep |
| they sleep**s** | they sleep |

As shown above, Cree has many endings, so you might think Cree speakers would find it easy to get the right ending on the English verb, but remember that even native speakers of English cannot agree on which forms take the -*s* suffix – this variation makes it harder for learners to pick up the rule. In a formal setting, such as in a school, learners of English as a second language will learn the rules for Standard English (add -*s* to third person forms). This is an area of the grammar where the teacher can explain the rule to his or her students. ✍

Another reason why children might have difficulty using -*s* on the verb is that the pronunciation of this suffix varies depending on the final sound of the word it is added to:

| | |
|---|---|
| she/he sleep**s** | -pronounced as 's' |
| she/he run**s** | -pronounced as 'z' |
| she/he watch**es** | -pronounced as 'iz' |

This is an area of the grammar where the teacher can easily explain the rules to his or her students. There are lots of English as a second language books and on-line resources ([www.better-english.com/easier/thirdpers.htm](http://www.better-english.com/easier/thirdpers.htm)) which explain the few simple rules at work here and which provide practice exercises for learners.✍

The past tense suffix in English (-*ed*) also has three different pronunciations depending on the final sound of the word it is added to. (see Section 5.3.1)

### 5.4.4  Are there words in Cree to talk about grammar?

There is not a grammatical tradition in Cree as there is in English. Nevertheless, certain words have been proposed in Cree in order to talk about Cree verbs using Cree (from the Northern verb grammar page on the www.eastcree.org website).

| VERB | IHTUWIN |
|------|---------|
| Inanimate Intransitive (VII) | *aa ispiyich/aa ishinaakuhch chaakwaan.* |
| Transitive  Inanimate (VTI) | *aa ihtuutihk chaakwaayiu.* |
| Transitive  Animate (VTA) | *aa ihtuutiwaat awaayiuh.* |
| Animate  Intransitive (VAI) | *aa ihtik awaan.* |

### 5.4.5 Is there a verb TO BE in Cree?

There is a verb that means *to be, to exist* in Cree (*ihtakun / ihtaau*), but there is no auxiliary verb *to be.* English sentences using auxiliary *be* are translated either by verbless sentences (it is me: *nii*, it is my mother: *nikaawii uu* ), or by verbs containing the equivalent of English adjectives (see next section).

# 6. ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

## 6.1 How are adjectives expressed in Cree?

There are no separate words in Cree which function as adjectives, as there are in English. Instead, adjectival ideas are expressed through the use of verbs. In this case, the first part of the verb or the noun expresses what translates into English as an adjective. Constructions corresponding to English 'be+adjective' is expressed through a verb, while adjectives which accompany nouns (e.g., <u>blue</u> ocean, <u>red</u> ball, <u>black</u> hair – the so-called attributive adjectives) are expressed through a relative clause or a complex noun.

| | |
|---|---|
| *waapaau* | 'it is white' |
| *waapau waaskahiikan* | 'a/the house is white' |
| *waaskahiikan kaa waapach* | (the house which is white) = 'a/the white house' |
| *waapishtim* | 'white dog' |

Most common English adjectives exist as Cree verbs, but correspond to several Cree verbs, depending on the size, the shape or other properties of the object the adjective describes. For example, in addition to the general verb *waapaau* 'it is white' illustrated above, there are many other verbs with the same beginning, and whose ending indicates the property of the object.

| | |
|---|---|
| *waapaapekan* | it (string-like) is white |
| *waapaapiskaau* | it (stone, metal) is white |
| *waapekan* | it (sheet-like) is white |
| *waapihtakaau* | it (useful wood) is white |
| *waapaaskun* | it (stick-like) is white |

Like all Cree verbs, these also take into account the gender (animacy) of their subject. Thus all such verbs come in pairs, one to apply to inanimate things (as above), and one to animate things (as below).

| | |
|---|---|
| *waapaapechisuu* | it (anim, string-like) is white |
| *waapaapischisuu* | it (anim, stone, metal) is white |
| *waapechisuu* | it (anim, sheet-like) is white |

The beginning of the word that carries a meaning equivalent to an English adjective can also be found in nouns:

| | |
|---|---|
| *waapishtim* (animate) | white dog |
| *waapiskamkw* (inanimate) | white moss |

A search in the online Cree dictionary for common English adjectives will provide more examples. We recommend teachers point out these differences between Cree and English, outlining the descriptive richness of the Cree language.✍

## 6.2 How are adverbs expressed in Cree?

English adverbs will be expressed either as part of the Cree verb or as separate words (i.e., the part of speech referred to as particles (section 3.2) in traditional descriptions of Cree grammar).

When it is part of the Cree verb, the adverbial meaning is found at the beginning of the verb. Sometimes, as is the case in English, the same expression can be used for adverbial meaning or adjectival meaning:

| | |
|---|---|
| *chishipayuu* (VII/VAI) | he/she/it is fast  (adjective) |
| | he/she/it goes fast (adverb) |

The same Cree initial is used on nouns for expressing an adjectival meaning and on verbs for expressing an adverbial meaning.

| | |
|---|---|
| *naapeu* | a/the man (animate noun) |
| ***mishta****naapeu* | a/the big man |
| ***miyw****aapeu* | a/the good man |
| ***mach****aapeu* | a/the bad man |
| | |
| *miichisuu* | s/he eats (AI verb) |
| ***mishta****miichisuu* | s/he eats a lot |
| ***miyu****miichisuu* | s/he eats well |
| ***machi****miichisuu* | s/he eats badly |

This could explain why Cree second-language speakers might mix up the use of adjectives and adverbs when speaking English. We should point out also that in many non-standard dialects of English the adjectival form is used for both adverb and adjective, thereby regularizing the system. Learners of English can be confused if they are exposed to such dialect variation:

|  | **ADVERB** | **ADJECTIVE** |
|---|---|---|
| go *slow* | slowly | a *slow* car |
| it hurts *bad* | badly | a *bad* blow to the head |
| she did *good* | well | a *good* book |

Whereas English may use a separate word, the adverb, to describe how an action is performed, Cree uses one bigger verb describing both the action and how it is performed. These verbs come in pairs, depending on the gender of the subject (i.e., depending on whether *something* or *someone* is sailing fast in the example below):

>    *chishiyaashtin* (VII)                    it sails fast
>
>    *chishiyaashuu* (VAI)                   he/she sails fast

A search for common English adverbs in the Cree on-line dictionary would provide Cree students and English teachers with more examples to discuss the descriptive richness of the Cree language.

Another way to express English adverbs in Cree is through the use of particles. There are several kinds of particles in Cree that are used to express what adverbs express in English or French. They can be found in the dictionary, marked as p,time (particle, time); p, manner; p, quantity; p, space.

**Particles of Manner**

| *chisiskaa* | 'suddenly' |
|---|---|
| *aayimihaau* | 'slowly' |
| *nipaash* | 'sloppily' |

**Particles of Quantity**

| *miin* | 'again, more' |
|---|---|
| *mitun* | 'completely' |
| *taapishkun* | 'both, same' |

**Particles of Time**

| | |
|---|---|
| *shaash* | 'already, yet' |
| *pwaashtuu* | 'too late' |
| *wiipach* | 'soon, early' |

The particles occur as separate words in the Cree sentence.

*shaash*        *mitun*        *miyupimaatisiiu.*

already        completely      she is well (healthy).

'She is completely well now.'

## 6.3 How are comparatives and superlatives expressed?

There are ways to express the same idea as 'big, bigger, biggest' and 'fast, faster, fastest'. Comparative and superlative ideas can be expressed by a particle. Here are examples to translate the comparative 'faster' and 'whiter':

*chishipayuu*                            'it goes fast'

***etatu*** *chishipayuu*                  'it goes fast**er'**

*waapaau*                              'it is white'

*waapaau waaskahiikan*           'a/the house is white'

***etatuu*** *waapau waaskahiikan*      'a/the house is whit**er'**

As in many languages of the world, there is no single form for the superlative, but it can be expressed as follows, with a particle:

|  |  |
|---|---|
| ***maauch*** *chishipayuu* | 'it goes fast**est'** |
| ***maauch*** *waapau waaskahiikan* | 'a/the house is whit**est'** |

The comparative expressing equality, or inequality (inferiority) may also be expressed:

***ishpish*** *chinukaapuu e* ***ispish*** *chinukaapuutich  aniyuuh.*

'This one is as tall as that one.'

***namui ishpish*** *waapaau uuwaaskahiikan e* ***ispish*** *waapach an kutak.*

'This house is less white (not as white) as that one.'

# 7. OTHER PARTS OF SPEECH

## 7.1 Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions correspond to ***particles*** in Cree.

**Particles of Coordination**

| | |
|---|---|
| *kayeh* | 'and' |
| *nesht* | 'or' |
| *maak* | 'then, so' |

Words which introduce subordinate clauses are often referred to as "subordinating conjunctions". These tend to be preverbs in Cree. In the following example, from eastcree.org (grammar), the preverb *e* introduces the subordinate clause *chii nipahaat namesa* (he caught a fish).

| *miyeyihtam* | *uu napeu* | *e* | *chii* | *nipahaat* | *namesa* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| he is happy | this man | that | Past | he killed | a fish.obviative |

'The man is happy to have caught a fish.'

## 7.2 Prepositions

English prepositions are also expressed in Cree by particles, called locative particles in the Cree dictionary and the Cree grammar.

**Particles of Location**

| | |
|---|---|
| *ishpimihch* | 'above, the roof, upstairs' |
| *piihtakamihch* | 'inside' |
| *niihtaahch* | 'below, down, low' |
| *waaskaa* | 'around' |

Locative particles are frequently used in combination with nouns which have a special ending, referred to as the locative suffix, used when talking about place (location).

*waaska*                *waaskahiikan**ihch***

around                house-**locative**

'around the house'

In Cree, it is not always necessary to use a locative particle, since a noun has a locative suffix. This could lead to children leaving out prepositions such as 'in, on, to, at' before a noun in English. ✍

## 7.3 Quantifiers and Numerals

Quantifiers are words like 'some, any, more, less, a few, a little, a lot'. Numerals are words for numbers, like 'one, two, three, first, second ', etc.

In Cree these words are usually expressed by particles. They do not carry number and gender, and are indicated as particles of quantity in the dictionary.  Here are some examples:

**Particles of Quantity and Numerals**

| | |
|---|---|
| *pasch* | 'some, a few' |
| *mishtahii* | 'much, a lot' |
| *apishiish* | 'a little' |
| *neu* | 'four' |
| *misiwe* | 'all' |

The word for *each* is expressed by a process called reduplication of the numeral, for example 'four' is *neu*, and 'four each' is ***naa****neu*. (For more see www.eastcree.org grammar on reduplication, or the report on Cree mathematics on the www.eastcree.org website**).**

## 8. SENTENCES

## 8.1 Sentence Types

There are in Cree, as in English, different types of sentences: simple sentences (which may be only one word) and complex sentences (containing subordinate clauses). There are declarative sentences, interrogative sentences (questions), and imperative sentences (commands). All these sentences can also be negative. Here are some examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| The house is white. | waapau waaskahiikan. |
| Sleep! | nipaah. |
| Is the house white**?** | waapau **aa** waaskahiikan. |
| | |
| The house is **not** white. | **namui** waapau waaskahiikan. |
| **Do not** sleep! | **ekaa** nipaah! |
| Is**n't** the house white**?** | **namui** waapau **aa** waaskahiikan. |

## 8.2 Punctuation and Uppercase Letters

The syllabic writing system does not use upper case symbols, nor are they are used in the roman spelling system. In written Cree, periods and commas are used, but question marks

and quotation marks are not necessary, since Cree always marks questions with a separate word, even 'yes-no' questions, like the word *aa* in the example below.  As there are already dots above and before the symbols in the syllabic system, people prefer to avoid confusion which could be caused by too many dots (indeed, in syllabics, the period is a small x to avoid confusion).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you see him? | ᒋ·ᐊᐱᒫᐤ ᐊx | *chiwaapimaau aa.* |
| "I'm leaving", he said to her. | ᓂᐳᔒᐣ, ᐃᑎᑯx | *nipuushin, itikuu.* |

Teachers need to make a point of teaching the use of punctuation for written English. ✍

## 8.3 Negative Sentences in Cree

In English, there is just one negating word (*not*), regardless of whether the clause is main or subordinate. In Cree, different words for 'not' must be used in main and subordinate clauses.

**Negated Main Clause**

***namui*** *miichisuu*          S/he is **not** eating.

**Negated Subordinate Clause**

*nichischeyihten **ekaa** miichisut*    I know that s/he is **not** eating.

**Negated Imperative Clause:**

***ekaa*** *nipaah*!          '**Ne** dors **pas**!'

## 8.4 Main Clauses and Subordinate Clauses

A simple sentence is often referred to as a main clause.  Sometimes one sentence is contained within another sentence; the clause which is contained is referred to as a subordinate (or embedded) clause. The verb of a subordinate clause in Cree takes

conjunct suffixes and often a conjunct preverb. Below are some examples, with the subordinate clause underlined in both languages.

Complement clauses (the subordinate clause functions as the object of the main verb):

I know **that** the house is white.

*nichischeyihtaan **e** waapach waskahiikan.*

I asked **if** the house is white.

*nichii kukwechimaau wiyaapaach waaskahiikan.*

I know **that** the house is not white.

*nichischeyihten **ekaa** waapaach waaskahiikan.*

Adverbial clauses (the subordinate clause provides information about the time at which something happened, or the frequency with which it happens):

**While** she was sleeping, he arrived.

***kaa** nipaat chitakushiniyuuh.*

**Whenever** s/he is sick, it rains.

***iy**aahkusich-h maatuu.*

Relative clause (the subordinate clause functions as a complement to a noun):

She sees the knife **that** is (was) broken (the broken knife).

*Waapahtam muuhkumaan **kaa** piikupayiyich.*

## 8.5 Asking Questions in Cree

### 8.5.1 'Yes-no' questions

These are questions which should be answered with either 'yes' or 'no'. In Cree, as in many other of the world's languages, these types of questions are made by adding an extra word, usually referred to as a question particle. In Cree, a yes-no question is made by inserting the word *aa* as the second word in the sentence. In English, and in many other languages, to make a yes-no question you have to change the order of the words.

| | |
|---|---|
| He is walking there. | Is he walking there? |
| *ituhteu* | *ituhteu aa* |

| | |
|---|---|
| He is leaving. | Is he leaving? |
| *chistuhteu* | *chistuhteu aa* |

In addition, the intonation rises at the end of the question in English, which does not happen in Cree.

### 8.5.2 Wh-questions (Question words)

These questions apply to a part of the sentence. In English, they tend to start with a Wh- . Such question words in English and Cree correspond with each other fairly closely:

**Question words in English and Cree**

| who | what | why | where | when | how |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *awen* | *chekwaan* | *taan* | *tanite* | *taayispis* | *taan* |

For such questions the ***Conjunct*** set of verb endings must be used.

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| | |
|---|---|
| *chii miichis**uu*** | S/he was eating. |
| *awen kaa chii miichis**ut*** | Who was eating? |
| | |
| *nika nipaa**n*** | I will sleep. |
| *taanite che nipaa**yaan*** | Where will I sleep? |

To learn more, visit the on-line Cree grammar at [www.eastcree.org](www.eastcree.org).

## 8.6 Exclamations

Exclamations in Cree may be declarative or imperative. They may also be negative.

As in English, Cree exclamations also consist of interjections.[8] Here are some examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Ekwesaa* | 'Oh my goodness!' |
| *Eheh* | 'ouch!' |
| *Entaapwe* | 'How cute !' |

As in all languages, there are swear words, but we will leave things here.

## TO FINISH...

There is much work left to do in comparing Cree and English. We have not mentioned the comparison of narrative structures, of styles, of literary genres: poetry, stories, tales, dialogues, ... or types of speech. Nor have we delved into the internal structure of Cree words, which is very rich...

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[8]     See Junker et Blacksmith (2006). Are there Emotional Universals? Evidence from the Native American Language East Cree. *Culture and Psychology* 12(3). 2006: 275-303

To conclude, we wish to encourage teachers who work with Cree children to make use of the many language resources that are available at the [www.eastcree.org](http://www.eastcree.org) website. We welcome feedback from readers on any of the topics we have covered in this short look at the grammars of Cree and English (which also appears on [www.eastcree.org](http://www.eastcree.org)). We also welcome suggestions for additional topics, as we can add these to web-based versions. To make a comment, contact the Cree Dictionary editorial team at [ayimuwin@eastcree.org](mailto:ayimuwin@eastcree.org).

# RESOURCES

### SITUATING THE CREE LANGUAGE

*Linguistic Atlas of Cree-innu* edited by Marie-Odile Junker and Marguerite MacKenzie: www.ling-atlas.ca.

Contains exercises on for understanding Cree dialectology and for language learning, download for free.

### CREE PRONUNCIATION AND WRITING

Teaching English pronounciation to Cree speakers:
    *From Cree to English* by Marilylle Soveran (c. 1968)
    [http://www.eastcree.org/pdf/Soveran_Cree_to_English.pdf](http://www.eastcree.org/pdf/Soveran_Cree_to_English.pdf)

Phonetic section of the grammar on the eastcree.org website:

    http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/grammar/phonetics/

Syllabic chart with pronunciation:

    http://www.eastcree.org/keyboard.html

Downloadable fonts

    http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/resources/cree-fonts/

Videos in English to see how to type Cree syllabics:

    http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/resources/videos/


### ON THE CREE LANGUAGE (EASTERN JAMES BAY)

On-line Grammar:

www.eastcree.org.

Bibliography of linguistic resources on Cree linguistics:

http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/resources/bibliography/

Reports on Cree math, downloadable from the site

http://www.eastcree.org.

http://www.eastcree.org/pdf/MathWorkshopReport.pdf


**CREE SPELLING MANUALS** *(FREE DOWNLOADS):*

*The East Cree Spelling Manual (Northern dialect),* by Marguerite MacKenzie and Luci Bobbish Salt. © 2006 Cree School Board.

http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/resources/publications/

*The East Cree Spelling Manual (Southern dialect),* by (the late) Annie Whiskeychan, Marguerite MacKenzie, Daisy Moar, Ruth Salt and Ella Neeposh. © 2004 Cree School Board.

http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/resources/publications/


**LANGUAGE LEARNING MATERIALS**

*CD and Cree Conversation Manual,* by Louise Blacksmith, Marie-Odile Junker, Marguerite MacKenzie, Luci Bobbish Salt, Annie Whiskeychan. 2002.

Manual: free download /CD: order from the website
eastcree.org or from the Cree School Board.

http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/resources/cds/

Vaillancourt, Louis-Philippe. *Cours de cris. Dialecte québécois. Premier degré.* Les Presses de l'Université du Québec. 1978.

Vaillancourt, Louis-Philippe. *Cours de cris. Dialecte québécois. Deuxième degré.* Les Presses de l'Université du Québec. 1980.

(Note: in both of the two Vaillancourt books (only in French), the spelling is not standard. The dialect is the one spoken in Eastmain. The books are out of print but are available in libraries. There are also cassettes to accompany them.

# APPENDIX : CHART OF SYLLABIC CHARACTERS

(with corresponding roman letters)                                                                Finals

| | ▽ e | ▲ i | ▲̇ ii | ▷ u | ▷̇ uu | ◁ a | ◁̇ aa | | | ᵒ u | �🅸🅸 h |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ·▽ we | ·▲ wi | ·▲̇ wii | ·▷ wu | ·▷̇ wuu | ·◁ wa | ·◁̇ waa | | | | |
| ∨ pe | ·∨ pwe | ∧ pi | ∧̇ pii | > pu | >̇ puu | < pa | <̇ paa | ·<̇ pwaa | | < p | |
| ∪ te | ·∪ twe | ∩ ti | ∩̇ tii | ⊃ tu | ⊃̇ tuu | Ϲ ta | Ϲ̇ taa | ·Ϲ̇ twaa | | ϲ t | |
| ٩ ke | ·٩ kwe | ρ ki | ρ̇ kii | ᑯ ku | ᑯ̇ kuu | b ka | ḃ kaa | ·ḃ kwaa | | b k | ᑯ kw |
| ٦ che | ·٦ chwe | ᖆ chi | ᖆ̇ chii | ⅃ chu | ⅃̇ chuu | ᒐ cha | ᒐ̇ chaa | ·ᒐ̇ chwaa | | ᒐ ch | |
| ٦ me | ·٦ mwe | Γ mi | Γ̇ mii | ⅃ mu | ⅃̇ muu | �ㄴ ma | ᒫ̇ maa | ·ᒫ mwaa | | ᒷ m | |
| ᔆ ne | ·ᔆ nwe | σ ni | σ̇ nii | ᔆ nu | ᔆ̇ nuu | ᖇ na | ᖇ̇ naa | ·ᖇ̇ nwaa | | ᖇ n | |
| ᒀ le | ·ᒀ lwe | ᒉ li | ᒉ̇ lii | ᒎ lu | ᒎ̇ luu | ᒉ la | ᒉ̇ laa | ·ᒉ̇ lwaa | | ᒉ l | |
| ᒡ se | ·ᒡ swe | ᒥ si | ᒥ̇ sii | ᒧ su | ᒧ̇ suu | ᔆ sa | ᔆ̇ saa | ·ᔆ̇ swaa | | ᔆ s | |
| ᖴ she | ·ᖴ shwe | ᔑ shi | ᔑ̇ shii | ᔥ shu | ᔥ̇ shuu | ᔒ sha | ᔒ̇ shaa | ·ᔒ̇ shwaa | | ᔥ sh | |
| ᔨ ye | ·ᔨ ywe | ᔨ yi | ᔨ̇ yii | ᔨ yu | ᔨ̇ yuu | ᔩ ya | ᔩ̇ yaa | ·ᔩ̇ ywaa | | ᔩ y | |
| ᔪ re | ·ᔪ rwe | ᖇ ri | ᖇ̇ rii | ᖆ ru | ᖆ̇ ruu | ᖇ ra | ᖇ̇ raa | ·ᖇ̇ rwaa | | ᖇ r | |
| ᐁ ve | ·ᐁ vwe | ᐱ vi | ᐱ̇ vii | ᐳ vu | ᐳ̇ vuu | ᐊ va | ᐊ̇ vaa | ·ᐊ̇ vwaa | | ᐊ v, f, ph | |
| ᑌ the | ·ᑌ thwe | ᖶ thi | ᖶ̇ thii | ᖷ thu | ᖷ̇ thuu | ᖸ tha | ᖸ̇ thaa | ·ᖸ̇ thwaa | | ᖶ th | |