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# English-Innu dictionary

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MAMU TSHISHKUTAMASHUTAU

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English-Innu dictionary

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Kassinu innu-auassat  
atamishkuakanuat umenu  
aimun-mashinaikannu

*This dictionary  
is dedicated to all  
the Innu children*

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## Foreword

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Nimishta-minueniten ume anutshish manikauian tshetshi uauitaman apishish ume aimun-mashinaikan tshiashtakanit.

Shashish tshitanishkutapannanat nakatuapatamupanat kie minu-kanuenitamushapanat tshitassinannu eshpish mishta-minuashinit kie nenu tshitinniunnannu.

Tshinanu anutshish innuat tshitshue tshishutshikapaunan kie anitshenat nikan tshe taht innuat tshika minu-uitshi-atussemeuat akaneshaua kie tshishe-utshimaua.

Tshitshue shashish eshpish tat innu eukuan ne tshitinnu-aimunnan uet tshi uauitshituiaik<sup>u</sup> mak uet tshi aimituiaik<sup>u</sup>.

Ek<sup>u</sup> anutshish nimamitunenimauat innuat eshpish mishanit ushutshishiunuaua kie eshpish mishta-ishpitenitakuannit innu utinniun kie utaimun.

Tshitshue ishpitenitakuan tshitaimunnan kie apatan tshetshi aimiakut tshishennuat. Ekute uetinamak<sup>u</sup> shutshishiun.

Mamitshetina tshekuana nanitam ueshkuishtamak<sup>u</sup>, iapit peikuan katshi uni-tshissitutatak<sup>u</sup> tshishe-utshimau anite pet 1949, muk<sup>u</sup> iapit tshitshi nakauananat kapimipanissat ute tshitassinat mak tshitshi katshitinenan ne ka pikunakanit tshitassinan mak tshishipiminan anite Mishta-Paushtikut.

Anutshish eshk<sup>u</sup> tshitatushkatenan mak tshimashikuanan tshishe-utshimau tshetshi minu-minitak<sup>u</sup> tshekuannu ute tshitassinat mak tshetshi nishututishuiai<sup>u</sup>. Ishpitenitakuan innu-aimun tshetshi pimipanitishuiai<sup>u</sup>, mak tshetshi takuaki innu-katshishkutamatsheutshuapa mak innu-tshishe-utshimau-mashinaikana tshe ishi-nashatamak<sup>u</sup>.

Tshitshue ishpitenitakuan ume innu-mashinaikan tshe unuipanit tshetshi uauitshikuht innuat kie tshetshi tshissitutuakaniht tshitanishkutapannanat.

*It is a deep honour and privilege for me to be able to offer a few words on the occasion of the publication of this Innu-aimun Dictionary.*

*I dedicate the Dictionary to the ancestors of the present generation of Innu. For thousands of years our ancestors have built, sustained and cherished a rich and vibrant relationship with our homeland, Nitassinan, and have fostered a culture with respect for the land and its bounty, beauty and plant life.*

*As Innu today we stand on the tall, broad, and strong shoulders of our ancestors, and as we do so, we look forward to millennia of Innu people who will build on their rich heritage and seek meaningful reconciliation with non-Innu peoples and governments.*

*Throughout our long and precious history Innu-aimun has been the foundational pillar of our culture; our medium of interaction, communication, and creativity.*

*As I reflect on the Innu struggle for self-determination I am mindful of and thankful for the inherent strength of Innu culture and the central importance of Innu language in that culture.*

*Communication in Innu-aimun with Innu elders and each other has been and continues to be central to our emergence as a nation and self-determining Innu people.*

*When I say that I am thinking of many struggles, including our resolve to be recognized, even though Canada and Newfoundland forgot us in 1949, our resolve to achieve a measure of redress for the building of the Upper Churchill Hydro Project, and our resolve to defeat the plan for a NATO base on our land.*

*Currently we are negotiating a Final Innu Rights Agreement with Canada and Newfoundland and as we do so we fully understand the importance of Innu-aimun for rebuilding Innu Government, Innu Institutions, and Innu Laws.*

*Innu education will be central to the re-emergence of more fulsome Innu Institutions and for the future of a rich Innu culture.*

Ume innu-mashinaikan tshitshue atushkatepan anite ut innuat mak akaneshauat.

*The publication of the Innu-aimun dictionary is a pivotal milestone for the Innu people as we move boldly forward enriched by our amazing ancestors.*

Ume innu-mashinaikan mitshetupipuna mamu atushkatamupanat innuat mak akaneshauat tshetshi tutahk atusseuakannu e minuanit tshetshi uauitshikuht innuat anite katshishkutamatsheutshuapit mak anite nikan tshe petuteht.

*This dictionary is a first-rate labour of love and dedication of many Innu and non-Innu people who have collaborated for years to produce a high quality educational, language and cultural tool that is both a tribute to the Innu past and will be a beacon of hope for the Innu future.*

Tshitshue ninashkumauat anitshenat ka atushkatahk, Shushei Mailhot mak Manakanet MacKenzie umenu innu-mashinaikannu mak nenua innua ka uauitshikuht kie anitshenat ka uinakaniht ute mashinaikanit.

*My sincere thanks to the directors of this project, José Mailhot and Marguerite MacKenzie, as well as to all Innu and others who have worked with them, and who are listed at the beginning of this book.*

Nin,  
Penitenimi Jack  
Utshimau ka tshimanakanit anite mamuitunit  
ka takuaitshenanut  
Mamu Tshishkutamashutau

*Bart Jack  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
Mamu Tshishkutamashutau*

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## Introduction

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The Innu language, spoken over an immense territory stretching from Lac Saint-Jean in Quebec to the coast of Labrador, consists of two large dialect areas: western (Mashteuiatsh, Betsiamites, Schefferville, Sept-Îles, Maliotenam) and eastern (Mingan, Natashquan, La Romaine, St-Augustin, Sheshatshiu, Natuashish). In the west, where the majority of the lexicographic work has been carried out, the speech of Mashteuiatsh and Betsiamites forms one sub-dialect (the only one with the 'l' sound) while the speech of Schefferville, Sept-Îles and Maliotenam forms a second; to the east, the four Lower North Shore villages form a surprisingly homogenous sub-dialect. To add to this complexity, the majority of the Innu live in Quebec and speak French as their second language, but those in the two Labrador communities speak English.

To date, lexicographic work by linguists has always focussed on one or other of the Innu dialects. The first published bilingual Innu-French lexicon (Mailhot and Lescop 1977) documented the western sub-dialect of Schefferville-Sept-Îles-Maliotenam, while the next (McNulty et Basile 1981) documented that of Mingan, an eastern dialect. Ten years later the *Dictionnaire montagnais-français* (Drapeau 1991), a more complete work than its predecessors, appeared for the western Betsiamites dialect. Its principal merit, in addition to the impressive number of entries, was its solution to the spelling of short 'i' and 'a', which are often pronounced the same way: the quality of the historical vowel in Innu was restored, based on detailed historical and comparative research by Drapeau and her team. The Drapeau dictionary immediately became the principal reference work for the Innu language and the main resource book for translators, teachers and creators of classroom materials. However, in one respect it remained a limited tool, in that it focussed exclusively on the speech of Betsiamites.

Although Drapeau's (1991) dictionary represented a major work in Innu lexicography, subsequent to its publication important advances were made in the standardization of Innu spelling, a process that had been ongoing since 1989: Mailhot 1997 presents

the principles for a common spelling system for the two main dialect areas. Within a few years these guiding principles were implemented in a reading manual for post-secondary Innu students (Bellefleur et al. 2003). From the pressing need for a dictionary which took account of all the dialects and varieties emerged the idea of creating a comprehensive dictionary of the Innu language, published in three languages (Innu, French, English), for use by speakers in both Quebec and Labrador.<sup>1</sup>

### Methodology

The first task was to establish a database that would integrate all of the lexicons and dictionaries produced since 1970 using modern tools for computerized lexicographic work.

Of the existing published works, only the Betsiamites dictionary (Drapeau 1991) had been generated from computerized data, but the database had not been made publicly available. Drapeau agreed to have her database integrated into the proposed new comprehensive Innu dictionary. Another database, informally referred to as *Lablex*, compiled by Marguerite MacKenzie primarily for the Sheshatshiu Labrador dialect between 1985 and 2000, had never been published. This lexicon incorporated a large part of the data published in Mailhot and Lescop (1977) for western sub-dialect of Schefferville-Sept-Îles-Maliotenam and included English translations of the French definitions. The two databases were converted to a common format by linguist and computer programmer Bill Jancewicz and merged by Will Oxford, using Toolbox, a lexicographic program distributed by SIL International. We now had a sizeable database which primarily covered the western dialect. It was time to enlarge it to include the

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<sup>1</sup> For historical reasons the community of Mashteuiatsh did not participate in the standardization of the Innu orthography. Furthermore, the fact that its speech is intermediate between that of Innu and of East Cree gives it an exceptional status. These facts make it very difficult to compile a dictionary that would also take account of the speech of Mashteuiatsh. Therefore the label "western dialect", as used here, excludes this dialect even though it is without doubt part of the western dialect of Innu.

remaining eastern dialects, for which the linguistic work was not advanced to the same degree.

### **The Lower North Shore sub-dialect**

Two works focussed on the Lower North Shore sub-dialect: one for the speech of Mingan and the other for La Romaine. The former (McNulty et Basile 1981) is written in a largely phonetic orthography, with numerous errors in the transcription of vowels. It was digitized to facilitate the task of checking the phonetic transcriptions. Once these had been checked by Yvette Mollen, a Mingan speaker, about half the words from this lexicon were added to the main database.<sup>2</sup>

As for the speech of La Romaine, the dictionary that had been produced by the Cultural Committee (1978) is a unique work. It is an in-house publication of 486 typed pages containing 400 illustrations by young local artists. It was in fact created under the guidance of the local Oblate missionary, Alexis Jouveveau, although it does not mention his name. Jouveveau was renowned for speaking fluent Innu but clearly had little training in linguistics. The main drawback of the dictionary is the fact that there are several entries for the same word: verbs appear in different conjugated forms, nouns are often found as plurals or locative forms, all of which obviously increased the number of lexical entries considerably. Nevertheless, its great advantage is that the meanings of words are illustrated either by drawings—of impressive precision—or by Innu sentences with French translations.

Despite its unconventional format, this dictionary is a treasure-trove of documentation for the Lower North Shore sub-dialect. The decision was made to digitize it and create a carefully edited version, a task that involved deleting extra entries, extracting the relevant verb from sentences illustrating conjugated forms, creating an entry for each word which was not an entry but nevertheless occurred in a sentence, adding basic grammatical information, improving the spelling, etc. Thus the dictionary began to approach professional quality. However, the task of checking and completing its content with Lower North Shore speakers still remained. An editorial committee consisting of speakers from La Romaine (Madeleine

Menicapo), Natashquan (Christine Kaltush and Charlotte Bellefleur), and Mingan (Yvette Mollen) met periodically on the Uashat reserve to carry out the revisions. Phonetic transcriptions were added, the spelling of words was corrected, French definitions were improved and example sentences and their translations were corrected. Problematic lexical items were flagged for final verification with elders. When this work was complete, the La Romaine dictionary was converted to Toolbox format by Bill Jancewicz and merged with the main dictionary database by Will Oxford.

The Lower North Shore data was subsequently revised and expanded through consultation sessions held on the Uashat reserve. Elders were assisted by bilingual speakers literate in their language: Zacharie Bellefleur for the speech of La Romaine (with the assistance of Céline Bellefleur) and Raphaël Mollen for that of Mingan (with the assistance of Yvette Mollen). These sessions focussed on specialised vocabulary familiar only to those who have known the life of a hunter: terms related to hunting, anatomy of animals and distribution of resources, nomenclature of geographic features, verbs for travel on the land and place names, just to name a few.

During the two years preceding the publication of the current *English-Innu Dictionary*, numerous items were checked with different speakers from the Lower North Shore. Among the resource persons who played a crucial role during this phase of the work we would like to mention in particular Thérèse-Adélaïde Bellefleur and Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur from La Romaine, as well as Judith Mestokosho from Natashquan.

### **The Labrador dialects**

The main source for the Innu spoken in Labrador was a database (MacKenzie 1985-2000) of the speech of Sheshatshiu, with some entries from Natuashish (whose speakers resided previously at Davis Inlet). Once this database had been merged with that of Betsiamites, the work of standardizing the spelling, eliminating duplicates and adding phonetic transcriptions was begun. Over the final two years of the project, many field trips allowed the pronunciation and meaning of words to be checked with elders Kathleen Nuna and Elizabeth (Tshaukuesh) Penashue

<sup>2</sup> The remaining words could not be checked due to lack of time.

in Sheshatshiu and Marie Josette Mistenapeo in Natuashish.

In addition, non-lexicographic sources contained unpublished vocabulary which was added to the database. A number of words were extracted from pedagogical materials prepared for Innu teachers (Snow and Hill 1996) and from small readers prepared by classroom assistants. A rich vocabulary relating to geography, hunting activities and many other areas of traditional life was extracted from the database of Labrador toponyms (Mailhot and Armitage 2008) and from oral texts which had been edited for publication (Mailhot and collaborators 1999 and 2004).

The Innu dialects spoken in the two Labrador communities differ significantly from each other. That of Natuashish, referred to by linguists as ‘Mushuau’, has unique features of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, some of which are noted in this dictionary. The speech of Sheshatshiu, on the other hand, is characterized by a high degree of variation, the result of immigration by Innu speakers from different regions of Quebec. Pronunciation and vocabulary alternate between variants typical of the western dialect and the Lower North Shore sub-dialect. In the current dictionary, phonetic transcriptions for Sheshatshiu are based on the pronunciation of Kathleen Nuna, who represents but one set of local pronunciations.

### **Toponyms**

The Drapeau dictionary contains over one hundred place names, the majority of which refer to the Upper North Shore region. It was evident that the new pan-dialectal dictionary should include toponyms from all regions in Quebec and Labrador.

As it happens, important toponymic research had been completed in the Innu territory since the 1990s. A database was created for place names in the Sainte-Marguerite and Moisie river basins, carried out within a large historical research project of the Uashat-Malietenam Band Council. Innu researcher Philomène Jourdain graciously accepted the task of selecting a significant number of toponyms for the Sept-Îles and Schefferville regions, which were added to the dictionary. A second database (Mailhot and Armitage 2008) contained over 800 toponyms for Labrador. Our

colleague Peter Armitage kindly agreed to supply the dictionary with a list of macro-toponyms covering the areas of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish.

Only place names from the Lower North Shore region remained to be selected. Many toponyms for the Mingan region are found in Dorion (1967) and Comtois (2008). Fifty of these were added to the lexical database and later checked with an elder from Mingan, Raphaël Mollen (with the assistance of Yvette Mollen). We were then able to add phonetic transcriptions, determine the spelling, and verify the exact referent for each item. As well, approximately thirty toponyms for the La Romaine region had been recorded in the Cultural Committee dictionary (1978), but this data still needed to be verified and finalized. Peter Armitage was dispatched to La Romaine with the task of checking this list with local speakers using topographic maps. Thanks to the collaboration of Thérèse-Adélaïde Bellefleur and Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, an acceptable list of place names for this region was added to the dictionary.

As a result of this process, the Innu dictionary contains over 500 toponyms, from Labrador and several regions in Quebec.

### **The editorial committee**

A year and a half after work began on the new dictionary, another two Innu language specialists were invited join directors Mailhot and Mackenzie to establish a committee of four linguists who would make decisions on the many questions related to the production of this work: Lynn Drapeau, who was working on a grammar of the Innu language, and Anne-Marie Baraby, who was preparing a doctoral thesis on the production of reference grammars intended for Innu speakers.

The committee was subsequently expanded to include Innu speakers representing different varieties of the language: Hélène St-Onge (Betsiamites) and Yvette Mollen (Mingan), both trained in linguistics, as well as author Anne-Marie André (Schefferville-Sept-Îles-Malietenam). Between August 2006 and October 2011, the Editorial committee met twelve times in Montreal for sessions of one to three days in length. At each session participants were provided with a working document outlining the issues to be dealt with, and subsequently each member received a



report documenting the decisions made by the committee. Along the way these decisions were implemented in the database by the two directors of the project.

The Editorial committee examined numerous questions related to the production of the pan-dialectal dictionary. During the meetings various grammatical issues arose. The members of the committee pooled their understanding of new types of verbs that had been documented and standardized the terminology to be used in the dictionary and a future grammar. The question of reduplicated forms was the subject of numerous discussions, as was the diminutive form of verbs. In spite of a considerable amount of time spent on this last question, the committee never succeeded in formulating a single rule for the use of citation forms of diminutive verbs. Unfortunately, on this point, the new dictionary lacks consistency.

An important task for the committee was to decide on the spelling of Innu words in the new dictionary. Work underway on the Lower North Shore sub-dialect continually uncovered differences in pronunciation between the two main dialect areas. Was a single spelling possible in spite of these differences, or were the differences insurmountable? Would two spellings have to be allowed for the same word? If so, how would they be represented in the dictionary? The committee had to make decisions on hundreds of cases that arose. Solutions were usually found in the historical forms documented in dictionaries compiled by the Jesuits of the 17th and 18th century (Silvy 1974, Fabvre 1970, Laure 1988). The committee also had to examine very difficult cases of systematic variation between the western and eastern dialects. Lists of words were compiled from the database and submitted to speakers of both dialects for review, allowing this variation to be adequately documented.

Questions of translation were also brought to the committee. What were the best phrases to translate passive and impersonal verbs into French and English? Should the colloquial, as well as the learned, terms in French be used as equivalents for the names of animals? What would be the best way to translate reduplicated verbs that refer to a collective plural? These were some of the questions the committee dealt with. The committee also settled cases where the

translations of different lexicographers did not agree. For example, what was the best translation of the verb *kushkuenitam* : 's/he is serious?' 's/he is in a pensive mood'? or even 's/he appears solemn, preoccupied'? The committee settled on 's/he has an austere, pensive look', which was then entered in the dictionary.

Finally, many questions related to the making of the dictionary itself were sorted out by the Editorial committee: what type of grammatical information to include, which abbreviations to use in French and English, the citation form of toponyms, which system to use for phonetic transcriptions, to name only a few.

### **French and English definitions**

The most difficult aspect of the new Innu dictionary was undoubtedly the definitions. To come up with an equivalent that does justice to each Innu word is no small task.

Once the lexicographic database was established, there arose the problem of differing translations for the same word found throughout the entire set of dictionaries. Were they simply the result of choices made by different authors or did they reveal differences in usage according to variety or dialect? In all such cases it was necessary to determine which translation would be used. Consultation with several speakers from different regions often led to the improvement of definitions. In other cases, such consultation revealed differences in the meanings of words. One example is the case of the noun *aissimeu* which means 'Inuit' in most varieties; in the speech of Betsiamites, however, this term means 'Mi'kmaq or Huron'. The new dictionary uses geographic designations to indicate such variations in meaning.

Supplying equivalents for the many Innu terms for fauna raised the issue of species identification. In spite of the comprehensive work of Clément (1995) on Innu ethno-zoology, the identification of many species of animals revealed a lack of consensus among lexicographers. Peter Armitage was charged with verifying the identification of species with elders in La Romaine. Thanks to the collaboration of elders Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur and Thérèse-Adélaïde Bellefleur, many of these issues were resolved. There remain only a few species of birds and insects which could not be identified with certainty from an illustration alone.

Because the new Innu dictionary is also intended for speakers in Labrador—whose second language is English—the database needed to include English, as well as French, equivalents. As a general rule, the definitions were finalized in French, the language of all previously published lexicons and dictionaries, and the French definitions were subsequently translated into English. In all cases, keywords in each language were entered in the database to allow for the production of reverse versions of the dictionary.

### **Products of the lexical database**

At the time of publication, the lexical database contains 27,078 Innu words with translations into French and English. It may well be the largest database compiled for a North American aboriginal language.

From this database, several dictionaries will be printed in addition to the *English-Innu Dictionary: the Innu-English Dictionary*, the *Dictionnaire innu-français* and the *Dictionnaire français-innu*. In coming years it will also be possible to produce—according to the needs of the Innu—an abridged dictionary for students and various thematic lexicons (e.g. health, toponymy, fauna, flora, geography, traditional technology).

The Innu dictionary may also be accessed on the internet and searched in Innu, French or English. The online version contains example sentences as well as sound files demonstrating the pronunciation of certain words. The on-line dictionary is updated regularly.

### **Characteristics of the pan-Innu dictionary**

#### ***The spelling of citation forms***

One of the biggest challenges of the pan-dialectal dictionary was to provide a single spelling for each word. In many cases, this objective was not reached, either because the existing variants were too divergent, or because of our inability to conceive of a single solution or to have one approved.

A particular difficulty for the standardization of the Innu orthography arises from the fact that varieties at the extreme west of the Innu territory have retained the phoneme 'l' as the reflex of old Innu 'r', while in all other dialects the reflex of 'r' merges

with that of 'n'. The fact that Betsiamites has one phoneme more than the other dialects continues to pose problems. The only practical way to resolve this difference is to write the 'l' as 'n', but in spite of the undeniable logic of this solution, speakers of this dialect are very reluctant to adopt it. In the Drapeau dictionary, not only is the 'l' in question indicated by a special character (n with a grave accent above) but the 2,275 words with a root containing 'l' have the benefit of a duplicate lexical entry. For example the word for 's/he breathes' is entered as *leleu* and is entered again as *nènèu*. The editorial team of the pan-dialectal dictionary did not adopt this convention. Words with the phoneme 'l' are spelled with a plain 'n' and the special pronunciation of Betsiamites speakers is indicated in the phonetic transcription.

In the current dictionary, many words have the same spelling as found in the Drapeau dictionary. The fact that a word from outside the western dialect has a different pronunciation does not necessarily lead to a change in spelling. Take for example the word for 'bread' which, in the Lower North Shore region, is pronounced [pa:whin]. Speakers know that this is a contraction of the standard form *pakueshikan*. Similarly, when the Innu of Natuashish in Labrador pronounce [uʃpwa:ke:j], the word for 'pipe', they are able to make the connection with the word *ushpuakan* in the dictionary.

Nevertheless, a significant number of lexical items did have their spelling changed in view of the documented differences between the two large dialect areas. The Editorial committee decided on a large number of spelling changes which are generally supported by the historical forms.

#### ***English keywords***

The Innu language is significantly different from English in terms of grammatical structure and contains a much larger number of verbs, and a much smaller number of nouns. This difference means that it is often impossible to translate an Innu word with a single-word English equivalent. For the English-Innu dictionary, therefore, keywords have been assigned, and one English keyword often corresponds to a large number of related Innu words, which appear in a list under the keyword. Also, because one Innu word often has several corresponding English keywords, the

English-Innu dictionary is substantially longer than the Innu-English version.

We have tried to make the system of keywords as user-friendly and consistent as possible. Keywords were chosen based on the following principles:

1) Wherever possible, use a one-word English equivalent for a corresponding Innu word. For example, the keyword **CHIPMUNK** corresponds to the Innu word *shashaku-anikutshash* ‘eastern chipmunk’, **CIGAR** corresponds to *nessikau* ‘cigar’, and **BUT** corresponds to *muk<sup>u</sup>* ‘but’.

2) Use a shared English concept as the keyword when it corresponds to a group of Innu words. For example, the keyword **APPLE** corresponds to the Innu word meaning ‘apple’, but also to related Innu words meaning ‘apple skin, peel’, ‘apple tree’, ‘apple juice, cider’, ‘applesauce’, and ‘apple pie’.

3) Keep the number of Innu words associated with a keyword manageable (so a particular Innu word is as easy to locate as possible) by subcategorizing keywords into more specific semantic groups. For example, **LYNX** and **LYNX (PARTS OF)** are separate keywords. Similarly, **MEAT** is its own keyword, but so are **RAW MEAT**, **DRIED MEAT**, and **MEAT JUICE**.

4) When Innu words correspond with English expressions or idioms, use the full expression as the keyword. Examples include: **MAKE A FACE**, **MAKE FUN OF**, **CATCH SIGHT OF**, **CAUGHT IN THE ACT**, **CURL UP**, and so on.

5) Place names/toponyms: Include the full place name as the keyword, e.g. **LA ROMAINE**, **GOOSE RIVER**, **LAKE MELVILLE**, **NORTH WEST RIVER**.

6) Distinguish parts of speech for verbs (V), nouns (N), and adjectives (A) when keywords have the same spelling. Examples include: **HOLLOW (N)**, **HOLLOW (V)**, and **HOLLOW (A)**; **CANOE (N)** and **CANOE (V)**; **CLEAR (A)** and **CLEAR (V)**, and so on.

7) Use different verb tenses and parts of speech in one keyword (separated by a slash) when this will be helpful to users. For example, **WRITE/WRITTEN**; **CIRCLE/CIRCULAR**; **CONSCIOUS/CONSCIOUSNESS**.

### Core words

In cases where a large number of Innu words correspond with a particular English keyword, “core words”—the most basic or commonly-used Innu

words—have been highlighted and raised to the top of the list so that they can be located as quickly and as easily as possible. For example, the keyword **EAT** has 141 corresponding Innu words, spanning 2 pages. To make it easier for people using the dictionary to find the most basic forms *mitshishu* ‘s/he is eating’, *mitshu* ‘s/he eats it’, and *mueu* ‘s/he eats it (anim)’, these three Innu words have been highlighted and appear at the top of the list of Innu words, followed by the remaining Innu words in alphabetical order, as illustrated in Figure 1.

<b>EAT</b>	
<b>mitshishu</b> VAI s/he, it (anim) eats	} core words for EAT
<b>mitshu</b> VAI s/he eats it	
<b>mueu</b> VTA s/he eats it (anim)	
<b>aiashkumueu</b> VTA REDUP s/he eats it (anim) as it becomes available	} other words involving EAT
<b>aiashkutam<sup>u</sup></b> VTI REDUP s/he eats it as it becomes available	
<b>akaimueu</b> VTA s/he serves him/her something to eat	
[list continues...]	

Figure 1: Use of core words

### Cross-references for English keywords

In order to make finding particular Innu words as easy as possible, a system of cross-references directs users to keywords that might facilitate their search. For example, below the English keyword **LODGE** is a box that directs the user to “see also **BEAVER LODGE**”. Similarly, for the keyword **BACK**, a list of cross-references instructs “see also **AT THE BACK**, **BARE-BACKED**, **DRIVE BACK**, **GO BACK**, **HUMPBACKED**, **MOVE BACK**, **ON THE BACK**, **PUSH BACK**, **SEND BACK**, **SET BACK**, **STAND BACK**, **TO THE BACK**, **TURN BACK**”.

### Synonyms and spelling variants

The extensive vocabulary of the Innu language is by no means shared by all Innu speakers. Many words are used only in one dialect area and have a synonym in the other. This is the case for *pishakaniapi* and *apish*, both of which mean ‘cord, string’: the first belongs to the western dialect and the second to the eastern dialect. In each entry for these words, the synonym is also mentioned. Certain words are even exclusive to one community. Neologisms, in particular, have a very restricted distribution. For example, we have collected

four different words for ‘ice cream’, each used only in the community where it was invented. The Innu have not attempted to standardize this recently invented vocabulary and appear to be content with the profusion of synonyms.

At times, it is not a word which has a synonym in another dialect, but a root. This is the case for *naneu-* and *shinueu-*, which both mean ‘along the shore’. The first root is used in the west and the second on the Lower North Shore and in Natuashish. Each root appears in dozens of derived verbs with corresponding forms in the other dialect. Good examples are the pairs *naneueim<sup>u</sup>* / *shinueueim<sup>u</sup>* ‘s/he follows the shore by canoe’ and *naneuetuateu* / *shinueuetuateu* ‘s/he follows the shore carrying it on her/his back’. The dictionary includes several cases of this type of synonymy.

As well, we have labelled as synonyms words with spelling variation that we have not been able to reduce to a single written form. An example is the pronoun meaning ‘we (including you)’: speakers on the Lower North Shore say *tshinan*, those of the western dialect say *tshinanu*, while those in Sheshatshiu use one or the other. The Innu do not feel that these two forms can be reduced to one, and neither form can be acceptably chosen as the written norm. The dictionary thus treats the two forms as synonyms: the entry for *tshinan* mentions the synonym *tshinanu* and the entry for *tshinanu* mentions the synonym *tshinan*.

Not all cases of duplicate spelling are so simple. In order to avoid extensive multiplication of lexical entries, we sometimes resort to a single citation form which contains an element in parentheses. Such a situation arises for a particular set of verbs that systematically end in *n* in one dialect while the *n* is absent in the other. For example, the word for ‘it is green’ is *shipekun* in the west and *shipeku* in the east. Rather than create two entries and treat them as synonyms, we have created a single entry *shipeku(n)*, as a way of indicating that both spellings are acceptable: some will write *shipekun* and others, *shipeku*. A few other systematic alternations in verb endings have received the same treatment.

Parentheses are also used in certain words which contain still unresolved variation. For example the word for ‘crawberry’, which varies between *assimin* in

the west and *assiminan* in the east, is entered in the dictionary as *assimin(an)*, indicating that either variant is an acceptable written form.

### **Grammatical information**

The dictionary contains grammatical information not found in previous lexicons or dictionaries of the Innu language. Within the extensive set of animate intransitive verbs, we have indicated sub-categories such as ‘reciprocal’, ‘reflexive’, ‘passive’, and ‘inanimate agent’. Furthermore, in cases where the conjugation of a verb poses spelling problems, we have added a conjugated form to guide the user. This is the case for certain inanimate intransitive verbs which written with the suffix ‘k’ in the conjunct but are pronounced with ‘t’ by western speakers. The conjunct form of a verb is also given when the citation form varies from one dialect to another. In the case of passive verbs, which have an irregular conjugation, the dictionary supplies the first person form. These kinds of secondary grammatical information will, we believe, be appreciated by Innu users.

Indeclinable words, which Algonquian linguists have traditionally referred to as ‘particles’ without further qualification, are the object of an innovative treatment in the new dictionary. The importance of further classification of such words was demonstrated by the analysis carried out by Will Oxford (2008) on a corpus collected in Labrador. The classification of particles was the subject of a special meeting of the Editorial Committee, also attended by the author and by linguist Marie-Odile Junker. Several particles with previously unknown translations and functions were then successfully classified thanks to the contribution of Yvette Mollen and H el ene St-Onge, who had compiled a corpus of sentences illustrating these hitherto problematic words. The classification of particles found in the new dictionary is the result of these discussions. The identification of various types of adverbs, conjunctions, interjections and focus particles should prove useful in teaching the Innu language.

### **Example sentences**

The La Romaine dictionary contains approximately 3,500 Innu sentences accompanied by French translations. Of these, 3,200 were corrected and entered into the lexical database.

Example sentences provide a valuable way to clarify the meaning and use of Innu words and were used systematically as a means of refining the French and English definitions. New example sentences from all dialects were thus continually entered into the database as work with Innu consultants progressed. The sub-dialect of the Lower North Shore is particularly well-represented; one speaker alone, Thérèse-Adélaïde Bellefleur of La Romaine, created over 1,000 example sentences.

Since there are several Innu authors who publish in their mother tongue, the corpus of examples also contains sentences from published literature (André 1996, Bellefleur 1998, Kapesh 2004). Other sentences were extracted from a set of oral texts collected in Labrador (Mailhot and collaborators 1999 and 2004).

In total, the usage of 3,990 words in the lexical database is illustrated by Innu example sentences translated into French and English. This corpus is of great interest, both linguistic and cultural, but is so voluminous that the plan of including example sentences in the printed versions of the dictionary had to be abandoned. They are accessible only in the electronic version, which can be consulted online at [innu-aimun.ca/dictionary](http://innu-aimun.ca/dictionary).

José Mailhot, *Montréal*  
Marguerite MacKenzie, *St. John's*

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José Mailhot  
Marguerite MacKenzie

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## Abbreviations

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BETS	Betsiamites	INTER	interrogative
E	East (Eastern dialect)	INTERJ	interjection
GEN	general / generally (across dialects)	LIT.	literally
LAB	Labrador	LOC	locative
MAM	Mamit (Lower North Shore sub-dialect)	LOCU	locution (fixed expression)
MASHT	Mashteuiatsh	MAN	manner
MIN	Mingan	MOD	mode
MUSH	Mushuau (Natuashish speech)	NA	noun animate
NAT	Natashquan	NAP	noun animate participle
ROM	La Romaine	NAD	noun animate dependent
SCH	Schefferville	NEG	negation
SHE	Sheshatshiu	NI	noun inanimate
UASH	Uashau (Schefferville–Sept-Îles–Maliotenam sub-dialect)	NIP	noun inanimate participle
W	West (Western dialect)	NID	noun inanimate dependent
		P	particle
		PASS	passive
ADN	adnominal	PERS	personal
ADV	adverb	PL	plural
AG IN	inanimate agent	PRES	presentative
ALT	alternative	PRO	pronoun
AN	animate	QUANT	quantifier (particle) / quantity (adverb)
ANIM	animate	RECIP	reciprocal
CONJ	conjunction (particle) / conjunct (verb form)	REDUP	reduplicated
CONN	connective	RFL	reflexive
DEG	degree	SUBJ	subjunctive
DEM	demonstrative	SYN	synonym
DIM	diminutive	TOP	toponym
FOC	focus	VAI	verb animate intransitive
HESIT	hesitation	VAI/VII	verb animate intransitive / inanimate intransitive
IMPERS	impersonal	VII	verb inanimate intransitive
IN	inanimate	VOC	vocative
INDEF	indefinite	VTA	verb transitive animate
		VTI	verb transitive inanimate