

## Montagnais and Naskapi

### 2. Some Grammatical Features of Montagnais and Naskapi

Montagnais and Naskapi, as spoken in Labrador, are dialects of a complex of languages which extends from the Rocky Mountains through the Northern Prairies, Northern Ontario and Quebec to the coast of Labrador. This language complex consists of a chain of dialects, or dialect continuum, and is referred to as Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi.

The language complex is, in turn, a member of the Algonquian language family, which includes the major Indian languages of Micmac, Ojibway, Fox, Menomini, Arapaho, Blackfoot as well as many others. All of these languages are related to each other in the same way that English, French, German, Russian, etc. are related. The language which has been reconstructed as the historical ancestor of these Indian languages is referred to as Proto-Algonquian.

The many dialects along the Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi continuum can be sub-grouped into larger sets, usually on the basis of systematic differences in sounds, but also differences in grammar and lexicon. Through historical circumstance, different names for these sets have come into common usage: Plains Cree, Woods Cree, Swampy Cree, Moose Cree, Atikamekw (Tête-de-Boule) Cree, East Cree, Montagnais and Naskapi.

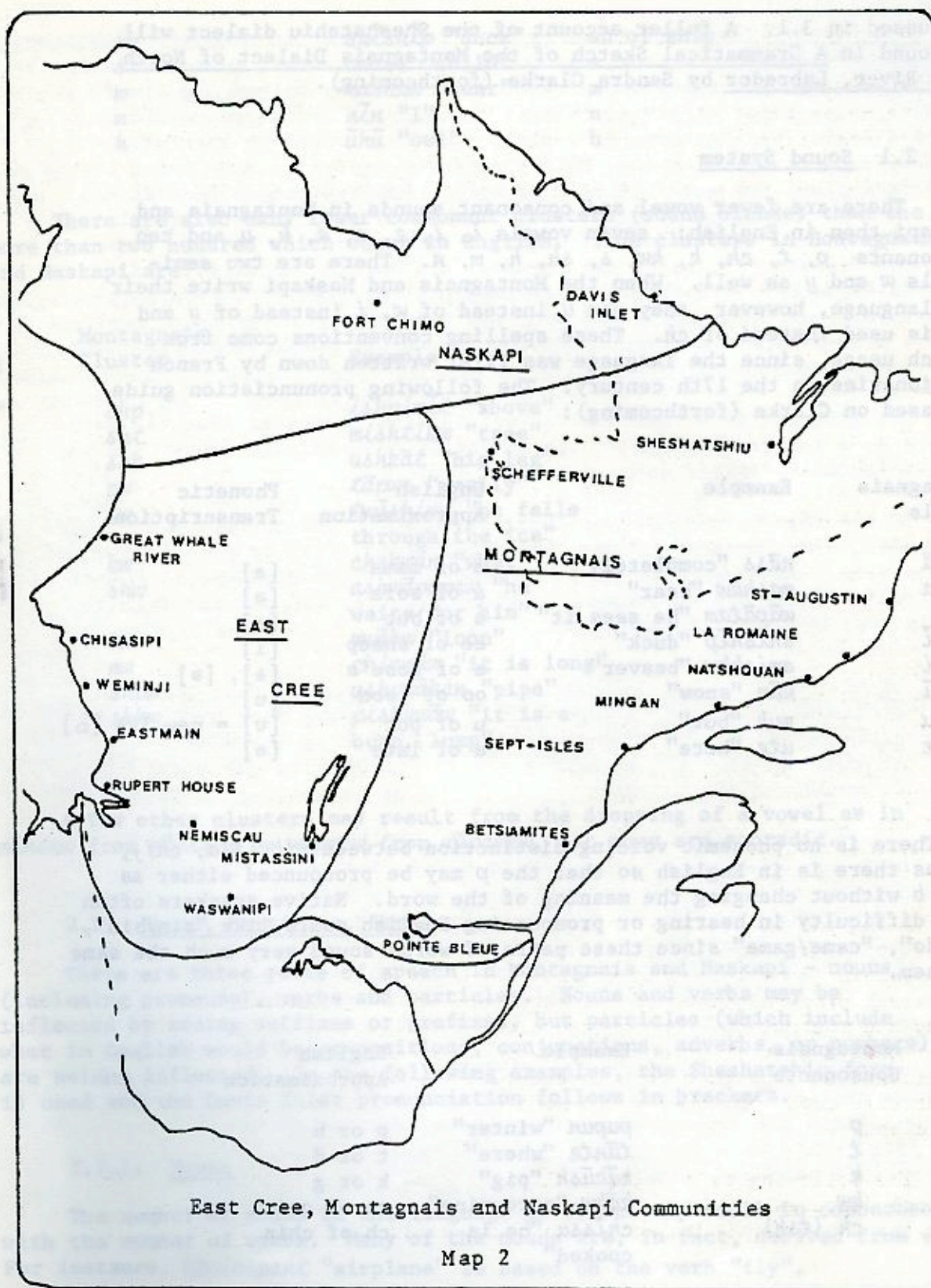
This paper will focus on the dialects within the Quebec-Labrador Peninsula, the area of greatest terminological difference. There are three major dialect groupings: East Cree, Montagnais and Naskapi as outlined on Map 2. There are eight East Cree communities between the coast of James Bay and Lake Mistassini. There are only two Naskapi communities, the Fort Chimo group which now lives at Schefferville, and the Davis Inlet group in Labrador. The nine Montagnais villages stretch from east of Lake Mistassini, along the Lower North Shore of the St. Lawrence River, to the coast of Labrador. Further discussion of the sub-divisions will be found in section 3.

Along the whole Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi dialect continuum, the speech of each community is slightly different, but is still understood by speakers in neighbouring villages. As in English, there are many different pronunciations of the same words and variation in grammatical forms and vocabulary. The geographical distance across Canada is so great that a speaker from Alberta would have difficulty in immediately understanding a speaker from Labrador; if, however these two speakers spent time together, they would soon be able to communicate fairly efficiently.

The following is a brief outline of some of the significant grammatical features of Montagnais and Naskapi. Examples are primarily drawn from the Sheshatshiu dialect, with changes for the Davis Inlet dialect



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discussed in 3.1. A fuller account of the Sheshatshiu dialect will be found in A Grammatical Sketch of the Montagnais Dialect of North West River, Labrador by Sandra Clarke (forthcoming).

### 2.1 Sound System

There are fewer vowel and consonant sounds in Montagnais and Naskapi than in English: seven vowels  $\bar{i}$ ,  $i$ ,  $e$ ,  $\bar{a}$ ,  $a$ ,  $\bar{u}$ ,  $u$  and ten consonants  $p$ ,  $t$ ,  $ch$ ,  $k$ ,  $kw$ ,  $s$ ,  $sh$ ,  $h$ ,  $m$ ,  $n$ . There are two semi-vowels  $w$  and  $y$  as well. When the Montagnais and Naskapi write their own language, however, they use  $u$  instead of  $w$ ,  $i$  instead of  $y$  and  $tsh$  is used instead of  $ch$ . These spelling conventions come from French usage, since the language was first written down by French missionaries in the 17th century. The following pronunciation guide is based on Clarke (forthcoming):

Montagnais Vowels	Example	English Approximation	Phonetic Transcription
$\bar{a}$	<i>nāss</i> "completely"	a of mama	[a]
$a$	<i>mashkw</i> "bear"	a of sofa	[ə]
$\bar{i}$	<i>wāpātam</i> "he sees it"	u of but	[ʌ]
$i$	<i>shishīp</i> "duck"	ee of sheep	[i]
$\bar{u}$	<i>amishkw</i> "beaver"	e of Rose's	[ɛ], [ə]
$u$	<i>kūn</i> "snow"	oo of loon	[u]
$e$	<i>muk</i> "but"	u of put	[ʊ] = new IPA [o]
	<i>ute</i> "here"	a of late	[e]

There is no phonemic voicing distinction between  $p/b$ ,  $t/d$ ,  $ch/j$ ,  $k/g$  as there is in English so that the  $p$  may be pronounced either as  $p$  or  $b$  without changing the meaning of the word. Native speakers often have difficulty in hearing or pronouncing English pairs like "pin/bin", "to/do", "came/game" since these pairs of words sound very much the same to them.

Montagnais Consonants	Example	English Approximation
$p$	<i>pupun</i> "winter"	$p$ or $b$
$t$	<i>tānte</i> "where"	$t$ or $d$
$k$	<i>kūkūsh</i> "pig"	$k$ or $g$
$kw$	<i>kākw</i> "porcupine"	$qu$ of quick
$ch$ ( $tsh$ )	<i>chīssu</i> "he is cooked"	$ch$ of chip



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sh	shīshīp "duck"	sh of ship
s	awāss "child"	s
m	mashkw "bear"	m
n	nīn "I"	n
h	ūhū "owl"	h

There are also many fewer consonant clusters (sound blends) than the more than two hundred which occur in English. True clusters in Montagnais and Naskapi are:

Montagnais Cluster	Example
shp	ishpimīt "above"
sht	mishtikw "tree"
shk	ushkāt "his leg"
pw	tāpwe "really"
tw	twāshinu "he falls through the ice"
kw	chekwān "what"
shw	ashwāpamew "he waits for him"
mw	mwākw "loon"
nw	chinwāw "it is long"
shpw	ushpwākan "pipe"
shkw	pishkwāw "it is a bump, lump"

A few other clusters may result from the dropping of a vowel as in *māntew* from *mānitew* or *wāpmew* from *wāpamew*, but they are sporadic.

### 2.2. Nouns, Particles, Verbs

There are three parts of speech in Montagnais and Naskapi - nouns (including pronouns), verbs and particles. Nouns and verbs may be inflected by adding suffixes or prefixes, but particles (which include what in English would be prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs, or numbers) are seldom inflected. In the following examples, the Sheshatshiu form is used and the Davis Inlet pronunciation follows in brackets.

#### 2.2.1. Nouns

The number of nouns in the language is relatively small in comparison with the number of verbs. Many of the nouns are, in fact, derived from verbs. For instance, *kāpimipant* "airplane" is based on the verb "fly".



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Each noun has a grammatical gender, but unlike the masculine/feminine grammatical gender of French, the Montagnais and Naskapi gender is animate/inanimate. All inanimate nouns refer to non-living things and almost all animate nouns refer to living things. Thus "tree" *mishtikw*, would be animate gender but "stick, log", still *mishtikw*, would be inanimate. A small group of animate nouns, thirty or forty, refer to non-living things such as a pipe, the sun, the moon, a ball. One hypothesis is that all those non-living animate nouns refer to objects which have to do with spiritual power. Unfortunately examples such as *astish* "mitten" and *anushkan* "raspberry", which are animate, and *massin* "mocassin" and *uteimin* "strawberry" which are inanimate, do not seem to fit this explanation. One easy way to discover the gender of a noun, is to look at the plural form. Animate nouns add the suffix *-at(s)* while inanimate ones add the suffix *-a*.

The addition of a "diminutive" suffix *-iss* indicates that the noun refers to a smaller version of the object so that *shiship* "duck" can be made *shishipiss* "little duck, duckling".

If the noun is used with a preposition which indicates a place such as "under, over, beside", then a locative suffix *-t(s)* or *-it(s)* is added to the noun. An example is *mistikw* "tree" but *shipā mistikut(s)* "under the tree". There are no prepositions for "at, to, in" and the locative suffix must be used with the noun.

<i>uāshā-t(s)</i>	<i>itūteu</i>	he goes to Sept-Isles
<i>utshimāssī-t(s)</i>	<i>ūchiw</i>	he comes from Davis Inlet
<i>nipī-t(s)</i>	<i>tāw</i>	he is in the water
<i>michiwāp-it(s)</i>	<i>pīchew</i>	he goes in the house
<i>tetapwākan-t(s)</i>	<i>apu</i>	he is sitting in the chair

There are a number of instances where the Montagnais and Naskapi dialects, and indeed all Algonquian languages, make distinctions which do not exist in English. One of these occurs when Montagnais and Naskapi distinguish more than one kind of third person. In the sentence "John told Bill to feed his dog", "John" is the first third person mentioned, "Bill" is the second-mentioned, and "dog" is the third-mentioned. Montagnais and Naskapi classify the first-mentioned as "proximate", the second-mentioned as "obviative" and the third-mentioned as "further obviative" and assign each of them different suffixes. In the English sentence quoted above, it is unclear who the dog belongs to. In the Montagnais and Naskapi sentence it would be immediately obvious, since the noun "dog" would have one ending if it belonged to John, and a different ending if it belonged to Bill.



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Subject	Verb	Object	
Chān	ashamew	utema	John feeds his (own) dog
Chān	ashamew	uteminu	John feeds his (someone else's) dog
Chān	mishkam	umashinaikan	John finds his (own) book
Chān	mishkuew	umashinaikaninu	John finds his (someone else's) book

Singular possessors of nouns are marked by the addition of a prefix (to indicate "my, your(s), his/her/its") while plural possessors are marked by both a prefix and suffix (to indicate "our, your (pl), their"). These affixes are very closely related to the personal pronouns which we translate as "I, you, he/she/it, we, they".

nīn	I	nitūwān	my ball
chīn	you (s)	chitūwān	your ball
uīn	he	utūwān	his ball
nīnān	we	nitūwānnān	our ball
chīnān	we-all	chitūwānnān	our ball
chīnawāw	you-all	chitūwānwāw	your (pl) ball
uīnawāw	they	utūwānwāw	their ball

As mentioned before, no distinction is made between masculine and feminine gender. Some nouns, such as names of parts of the body or relatives, can never appear without a possessive affix, since, by definition, they belong to someone.

The pronouns provide another example of a distinction not made in European languages. In English there is only one first person plural pronoun "we", but in Montagnais and Naskapi there are two. The "exclusive" *nīnān* refers to the speaker plus a third person but not the one being spoken to (the addressee), and could be glossed as "me and him". The "inclusive" *chīnān* refers to the speaker and the addressee and also any third persons, and could be glossed as "me and you" or "we-all".

It is possible to form new nouns from existing nouns, either by adding on one of a small set of finals or joining two nouns in a compound; as well, a compound of a verb plus a noun will create a noun, and participial forms of verbs function as nouns.

Some noun finals are -āshkw "stick", -āpiss "metal", -yāpī "string", -yān "sheet", -āpuī "liquid" and -chīwāp "building".



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<i>mitāsh</i>	sock	<i>mīn</i>	fruit
<i>mitāshyāpī</i>	wool	<i>mīnāpui</i>	jam
<i>shūniāw</i>	money	<i>nīpīsh</i>	leaf
<i>shūniāwchiwāp</i>	bank	<i>nīpīshāpui</i>	tea
<i>shūniāwāpui</i>	silver polish		
<i>shūniāwāpiss</i>	silver metal	<i>ashām</i>	snowshoe
		<i>ashāmāshkw</i>	snowshoe frame
<i>mashinaikan</i>	book		
<i>mashinaikanwiyān</i>	paper	<i>astish</i>	mitten
<i>mashinaikanāshkw</i>	pencil	<i>astishyāpī</i>	mitten string
<i>mashinaikanichiwāp</i>	office		
		<i>atīkw</i>	caribou
<i>peikw</i>	one	<i>atīkwiyān</i>	caribou hide
<i>peikwāpiss</i>	one dollar (lit. one piece of metal)		

Examples of compounds formed from two nouns are:

<i>ishkwew</i>	woman	<i>ishkutew</i>	fire
<i>akūp</i>	coat	<i>utāpān</i>	car, truck
<i>ishkwew-akūp</i>	dress	<i>ishkutew-utāpān</i>	train
<i>mīchīm</i>	food	<i>meskanaw</i>	road, path
<i>ishkwew-mīchīm</i>	food eaten only by women	<i>ishkutew-utāpān- meshkanaw</i>	railroad track

The following example illustrate how a noun is added to a verb in order to form a new noun:

<i>mūshwāw</i>	it is barren	<i>nīpūw</i>	she gets married
<i>shīpū</i>	river	<i>akūp</i>	coat
<i>mūshwāw-shīpū</i>	George River (lit. barren ground river)	<i>nīpūw-akūp</i>	wedding dress

An ending may be added to a verb to make it into a noun:

<i>nīpūw</i>	he gets married	<i>tetapu</i>	he sits on something
<i>nīpūwīn</i>	marriage	<i>tetapwākan</i>	chair
<i>ākushu</i>	he is ill, sick	<i>mīchishu</i>	he eats
<i>ākushun</i>	illness	<i>mīchishuwākan</i>	table



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Finally, the participial form of a verb is used as a noun:

<i>akunichew</i>	he takes photographs	<i>nakamu</i>	he sings
<i>kāikunichet</i>	photographer	<i>kānakamusht</i>	singer
<i>wāpekaichepanu</i>	it washes	<i>chishāpissitew</i>	it is hot metal
<i>kāwāpekaichepant</i>	washing machine	<i>kachishāpissitesht</i>	stove, furnace

### 2.2.2. Particles

As mentioned previously, particles include all those words which cannot usually be inflected like nouns or verbs. These would include location prepositions ("over, under, between, around, past"), time words ("when, early, late, long ago, soon, always"), quantity words ("how much, a lot, a little, more, almost"), manner words ("quickly, slowly, suddenly, continuously, in exchange") greetings, affirmative and negative words (yes, no, not, never") conjunctions ("and, but, while, so then") and demonstratives ("here, there, over there"). Demonstrative pronouns such as "this, that, these, those" and "who" do inflect for plural and obviative, and are classified with the nouns.

No adjectives exist as independent words and either a verb phrase or a preform is used instead. Rather than saying "the red ball" a speaker of Montagnais and Naskapi would say "the ball which is red".

<i>tūwān</i>	ball	<i>tūwān kāmīkushit</i>	the red ball, the ball which is red
<i>shīpū</i>	river	<i>mishta-tūwān</i>	big ball
<i>nāpew</i>	man	<i>mishta-shīpū</i>	big river
		<i>machāpew</i>	bad man

### 2.2.3. Verbs

The verbal system of Montagnais and Naskapi is extremely complex and each verb form contains much more information than it would in English. It may include reference to the subject, object, indirect object, modifier, gender of the object, manner of performing the action, all in addition to the verb root itself. As well, there are seven sets of personal endings which fall into three orders: Independent suffixes, used mainly in declarative sentences; Conjunct suffixes, used mainly in dependent clauses; Imperative suffixes, used for commands. Examples will be given with Independent suffixes.



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Verb stems are classified by whether they take an object (transitive) or do not (intransitive); if they are transitive, by whether the object is animate or inanimate; if they are intransitive, by whether the subject is animate or inanimate. Thus there are four main possibilities:

Transitive Animate (TA)		Transitive Inanimate (TI)	
<i>wāpamew</i>	he sees him	<i>wāpātam</i>	he sees it
<i>utāmew</i>	he hits him	<i>utāmaim</i>	he hits it
<i>muwew</i>	he eats him	<i>mīchu</i>	he eats it
Animate Intransitive (AI)		Inanimate Intransitive (II)	
<i>nīpāw</i>	he sleeps	<i>chimwan</i>	it rains
<i>mīchishu</i>	he eats	<i>nīpin</i>	it is summer
<i>mīkushiw</i>	he is red	<i>mīkūw</i>	it is red

The person of the subject and object are indicated by the use of a personal prefix and suffix on the verb. Again, these are related to the personal pronouns, as were the possessive affixes. Examples of the pronominal affixes are used with the AI verb stem *nīpā-* "sleep":

<i>ni-nīpā-n</i>	I sleep
<i>chi-nīpā-n</i>	you sleep
<i>nīpā-w</i>	he sleeps
<i>ni-nīpā-nān</i>	we (excl) sleep
<i>chi-nīpā-nān</i>	we (incl) sleep
<i>chi-nīpā-nāw</i>	you (pl) sleep
<i>nīpā-ut(s)</i>	they sleep

It is relatively easy to indicate the person with a prefix in an AI verb since there is only a subject, no object. In the transitive verbs, which have both subject and object, it is more complicated. In English we usually indicate the subject of a sentence by putting it before the verb, and the object after, as in "he sees me" or "I see him". Montagnais and Naskapi cannot do this because the position of the affixes cannot be changed. Instead, another morpheme *-ikw-* called an inverse marker, is inserted to indicate which of the people (or things) involved in the action is the subject.



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*ní-wāpam-āw*  
*ní-wāpam-ikw*

I see him  
he sees me

*chí-wāpam-āw*  
*chí-wāpam-ikw*

you sees him  
he sees you

*wāpam-ew*  
*wāpam-iku*

he sees the other  
the other sees him

Note that if there is a second person "you" involved in the action, the second person prefix *chí-* must be used, whether the "you" is subject or object. If the *-ikw* is used, then "you" is the object. If these inverse markers are not used, then "you" is the subject. Similarly, the marker *-ikw* in *níwāpamikw* shows that the prefix *ní-* refers to the object "me", while the absence of *-ikw* in *níwāpamāw*, shows that the prefix *ní-* refers to "I" as the subject, not the object.

A few of the numerous personal endings which can be suffixed to the verb are given in Table 1. Up to sixty different suffixes may occur with an Animate Intransitive stem while over two hundred exist for use with TA, TI, AI, and II stems. Endings of only the Independent order co-occur with the personal prefixes *ní* "first person", *chí* "second person" and zero for third person. On the chart numbers are used to refer to persons: 1 for "I", 2 for "you", 3 for "he, she", 11 for "we (excl)", 12 for "we (incl)", 22 for "you (pl)", 33 for "they" and 3' for "he (obv)". The Independent and Conjunct Orders have dubitative modes for use when expressing doubt, and preterit modes for expressing completed action or past tense. The neutral mode is used when there is no doubt or completed action. The subjunctive mode of the Conjunct expresses the possibility of future action.

<i>nipāw</i>	he is sleeping	Indep. Indic. Neutral
<i>nipāpan</i>	he slept	Indep. Indic. Preterit
<i>nipāche</i>	he is probably sleeping	Indep. Dub. Neutral
<i>nipākupan</i>	he was probably sleeping	Indep. Dub. Preterit
<i>nipāt</i>	that he sleeps	Conjunct Indic. Neutral
<i>nipāchī</i>	if he goes to sleep	Conjunct Subjunctive
<i>nepākwe</i> <sup>1</sup>	(I do not know) if he is asleep	Conjunct Dub. Neutral
<i>nipātākwe</i>	if he had been asleep	Conjunct Dub. Preterit
<i>Nipā!</i>	Sleep!	Imperative



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## Independent Order

Indicative			Dubitative	
	Neutral	Preterit	Neutral	Preterit
1	-n	(-h)	-nāche	-nākupan
2	-n	(-h)	-nāche	-nākupan
11	-nān	-tān	-nānāche	-nānakupan
12	-nān	-tān	-nānāche	-nānakupan
22	-nāw	-tāw	-nāwāche	-nāwākupan
3	-w	-pan	-lche	-lkupan
33	-wt	-pant	-lchent	-lkupant
3'	-inwa	-nipan(ī)	-niche(nt)	-nikupan(ī)

## Conjunct Order

Indicative		Subjunctive	Dubitative	
	Neutral		Neutral	Preterit
1	-yān	-yānī	-wāne	-yānākwe
2	-yn	-ynī	-wne	-ynākwe
11	-yāt	-yāchī	-wāche	-yātākwe
12	-yāk	-yāchī	-wākwe	-yākākwe
22	-yekw	-yākw(ī)	-wekwe	-yekwākwe
		-yekw(ī)		
3	-t	-chī	-kwe	-tākwe
33	-t	-taw(ī)	-kwent	-tākwen(t)
3'	-nit/ -nichī	-nchī	-nikwenī	-ntākwenī

## Imperative Order

2	∅
21	-tāw
22	-kw

## Sheshatshiu Animate Intransitive Verb Suffixes

Table 1



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As mentioned above, Montagnais and Naskapi are dialects of a verb-oriented language. The proliferation of personal suffixes is one indication of this. Another comes from the fact that verbs make up the major part of the vocabulary. It is very easy to create a new verb stem by adding to the original root or by replacing parts of an existing stem. One example of this process is the inclusion of an instrumental final in transitive verb stems. These finals indicate the method of performing an action and are illustrated with the root *piku*- "break".

*piku*-nam  
*piku*-shkam  
*piku*-sham  
*piku*-pitam  
*piku*-aim  
*piku*-titaw

he breaks it

{ by hand  
by kicking  
by blade or heat  
by jerking, throwing  
by using an instrument  
by dropping

Verb stems may also be extended by the inclusion of a classificatory medial which indicates something about the physical properties of the object referred to - whether it is string-like, stick-like, metal, liquid, gluey, etc. These medials are related to the noun finals described in section 2.2.1. Examples are given with the root *wap*- "white, light".

*wāpaw*  
*wāpāpekan*  
*wāpekan*  
*wāpāshkwan*  
*wāpāpishkaw*  
*wāpākamu*  
*wāpassūkaw*

it is white  
it (string-like) is white  
it (sheet-like) is white  
it (stick-like) is white  
it (metal, mineral) is white  
it (liquid) is white  
it (gluey substance) is white

As well as medials and finals, there is a set of preverbs which may be added before the verb stem. These preverbs may be translated into English as adjectives, auxiliary verbs, separate verbs or noun phrases.

*chī*- possibility  
*wī*- desire  
*mishta*- big, a lot  
*machi*- bad  
*minu*- good  
*pūn*- stop  
*nāchi*- go and do

*chī*-nipaw he can sleep  
*wī*-nipaw he wants to sleep  
*mishta*-mīchishu he eats a lot  
*machi*-atussew he works badly  
*minu*-tutam he does good  
*pūn*-atussew he stops working  
*nāchi*-wītamvew he goes to tell him



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<i>pechi-</i>	in this direction	<i>pechi-nūtin</i>	it blows in this direction
<i>ūchi-</i>	from that direction	<i>ūchi-nūtin</i>	it blows from that direction
<i>nītāu-</i>	be competent at	<i>nītāu-atussew</i>	he works well

### 2.3. Vocabulary

An examination of the vocabulary (lexicon) of a language will reveal the areas which are of greatest interest or concern to the speakers of that language. Thus, the language of people living near the sea will have many words referring to activities related to the water; the vocabulary of northern people such as the Inuit will focus on the precise description of snow and ice conditions which the speakers of Inuktitut encounter regularly; the lexicon of English will show a high number of items referring to the developed technology of a highly industrialized way of life. In the same way, Montagnais and Naskapi have a well-developed vocabulary for talking about animals (their habits, hunting techniques and food and skin preparation) as well as about the land over which they are constantly travelling.

Compared to English the vocabulary of the average speaker of Montagnais and Naskapi is rich in geographical terms. This situation results from the necessity to be able to describe and remember travel routes which span thousands of square miles. A hunter often needs to tell another how to reach a particular river or lake by passing through many miles of unfamiliar territory. Below are listed some of the possible words for a lake. There is, of course, a general word *shākaikan* "lake" or *nipē* "water", but it would be used less frequently than the more precise terms given here, taken from Denny and Mailhot (1976).

<i>massekwākamāw</i>	it is a swampy lake
<i>uāshākamāw</i>	it is a lake with a bay
<i>upākamāw</i>	it is a lake with narrows
<i>upishkākāmāw</i>	it is a lake with rocky narrows
<i>timiyākāmāw</i>	it is a deep bottom lake
<i>chishkāywākāmāw</i>	it is a steep bottom lake

The significant effect of changing, or replacing a single part of the word can be seen in the meaning shift among the following set of words, all referring to liquid *-kam-*:



# Montagnais and Naskapi

<i>pīchishe(y)-ā-kam-āw</i>	it is a foggy lake
<i>pīchishe(y)-ā-kam-iw</i>	it is a cloudy liquid
<i>pīchishe(y)-ā-kam(i)-tew</i>	it is a steamy liquid
<i>pīchishe-kam-iw</i>	it is a mist evaporating from water

In sections 2.2.1. and 2.2.3. examples were given of how the vocabulary of Montagnais and Naskapi pays attention to, or emphasizes, different areas of reality than English, through the use of noun finals and classificatory verb medials. These focus on physical properties of objects such as mineral or metallic, liquid, stick-like, string-like and sheet-like. Such a classification indicates that for speakers of the language the natural properties of objects are of sufficient importance that they are noted by a separate part of the word (morpheme). The set of classificatory medials focuses on just those properties of the materials found in their environment: rocks; water in lakes and rivers; trees, logs, sticks; roots and sinews used for sewing; hides, skins, sheets of bark.

The existence of two lexical items for the plural pronoun "we" means that a speaker must always make clear whether the listener is included or not. If so, *chīnān* "you and me" is used; if not *nīnān* "him and me, but not you" is used. Other examples of dividing up and labelling the same reality in a different way occur in the set of names for relatives. In the set of English kinship terms there are only two words used to refer to a person's siblings: "brother," for a male sibling and "sister" for a female sibling. The word "sibling" refers to children of the same parents but does not specify male or female. Montagnais and Naskapi have three terms to refer to siblings: *ustesha* "his elder brother", *umisha* "his elder sister" and *ushīma* "his younger brother or sister". As with the third person pronoun *wīn* "he, she", the gender of the younger sibling is not specified. This does not mean, of course, that speakers are unaware of the sex of a younger sibling.

Another example of a difference in point of view between English and the dialects of Montagnais and Naskapi is found in the terms for "sister-in-law" and "brother-in-law". In English the choice of term is dictated by the sex of the in-law: a female is a "sister-in-law" and a male is a "brother-in-law". The Montagnais and Naskapi terms *nītim* and *nīshtāw* are chosen on a different principle: i.e., whether the speaker and the in-law are of the same or different sex. Thus *nītim* will be translated by "my brother-in-law" when a woman is speaking and as "my sister-in-law" when the speaker is a man. Similarly *nīshtāw* refers to "my sister-in-law" for a woman speaker and to "my brother-in-law" for a man.



These differences in the way in which the English and Montagnais or Naskapi language encode what is basically the same reality only cause difficulties when a speaker of one language tries to communicate in the second. This is particularly true for Indian children who have to learn to speak English. The fact that these differences occur, however, is common among the languages of the world. By learning other languages, we can be provided with an alternate way of viewing the world, and perhaps ourselves.

### 3. Dialect Differences

As explained in section 2, the dialects of Labrador Montagnais and Naskapi belong to a nation-wide continuum of dialects which include Plains Cree, Woods Cree, Swampy Cree, Atikamekw Cree, East Cree, Naskapi and Montagnais. This continuum is also referred to as the Cree Language complex.

One isogloss separates these dialects into two major groupings. The boundary reflects the fact that Proto-Algonquian *\*k* is pronounced as *k* in some dialects and as *ch* in others. This substitution of *ch* for *k* is called a rule of Velar Palatalization, since a velar consonant *k* is changed to a palatal consonant *ch* whenever it occurs before a front vowel *e*, *i*, *ɛ*. Thus the dialects of this language complex split into two large groups, those which undergo the rule of Velar Palatalization and those which do not. The western group which retains *k* is referred to as non-palatalized, and the east group which uses *ch* as palatalized.

A second change subdivides both the palatalized and non-palatalized groups. The consonant which in the ancestor language, Proto-Algonquian, is *\*l*, is pronounced in descendant dialects as either *y*, *n*, *ɛ*, *ɾ*, or *l*. The area covering by both types of subgroupings is shown on Map 3, while Table 2 gives examples of words which illustrate the variation.

The remarks in the remaining sections of this paper will focus on the palatalized dialects of the Quebec-Labrador peninsula. There are nineteen communities which fall into three linguistic sub-groups: East Cree, Naskapi and Montagnais. Each sub-grouped is further sub-divided according to differences in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. In fact the sub-division into smaller and smaller units which show linguistic differences can be carried on to the levels of each community, distinct groups within any one community and variations between individuals within a village.