

LESSON 6

3RD PERSON AND OBLIATIVE POSSESSORS, PLURAL POSSESSIVES, PROPER NOUNS

DIALOGUE

Pinûte, Shîmûn mâk Nâpâien (Benedict, Simon and Raphael)

- P. *Eukuana â nenua tshipâssikannâna?* Are those our (incl) guns?
- S. *Mâuât. Tshéken nemenu upâssikan?* No. Whose gun is that one over there?
Tshân â nenu upâssikan? Is it John's gun?
- N. *Tshân ûtâuia nenu upâssikannu. Tânite etâht tshitapuûuâuat?* That's John's father's gun. Where are your (pl) paddles?
- P. *Nete pessîsh ashinît tâuat. Tshân utapuûa nete iât tânua.* They are over there near the rock. John's paddle¹ is over there too.
- S. *Tshân ûtâuia utapuûnua nete iât tânua.* John's father's paddles are there, too.
- P. *Eukuannua Tshân utauâssîma mâk utishkuema.* Here are John's children and wife.

VOCABULARY

<i>ashinî</i>	(an or inan noun)	stone, rock
<i>eukuan</i>	(an or inan pro)	that is, here is
<i>eukuana</i>	(inan pro pl)	those are, here are
<i>eukuannua</i>	(an obv pro)	those are, here are
<i>etâht</i>	(conj pl of verb <i>tâu</i>)	be (in existence, or in a place)
<i>iât</i>	(indecl part)	too, also
<i>nemenu</i>	(obv of inan pro <i>neme</i>)	that one over there
<i>nenu</i>	(obv of inan pro <i>ne</i>)	that one

¹ As the animate nouns 'paddle' and 'child' display an obviative suffix *-a* that is indifferent to number, these noun phrases could equally well be understood as 'John's paddles', 'John's father's paddle', and 'John's child'. See II below.

<i>nenua</i>	(inan plural pro)	those ones
<i>tânuu</i>	(obviative form of verb <i>tâu</i>)	s/he is, they are (here, in a place)
<i>ûtâuia</i>	(dep an noun)	his/her father

POINTS OF GRAMMAR

I. Third Person Possessors

Nouns possessed by a 3rd person take the possessive prefix *u-*, as in:

u + mashinaikan his/her book

This prefix takes the form *ut-* before a vowel other than *u-* (e.g. *ut + apuî + a* (obviative suffix) 'his/her paddle'). When the 3rd person possessor combines with a noun in initial vocalic *u-*, the *u + u...* combination results in a single long *û-* (e.g. *u + ushpuâkan + a > ûshpuâkana* 'his/her pipe'). Note that when the initial *u-* is consonantal, however (that is, when this initial *u-* is followed by a vowel), this process does not occur:

u + uâum [owawm] his/her egg

Third person plural possession ('their') is formed through the use of the 3rd person possessive prefix *u-* plus the third plural suffix *-uâu*, as in:

u + mashinaikan + uâu their book
ut + akûp + uâu their coat/dress/jacket

II. Animate Nouns Possessed by a 3rd Person: the Obviative

Innu-aimun, like other Algonquian languages, possesses what is often referred to as a 'further third person', distinguished from the third person by a distinct set of inflectional suffixes. This category, the obviative, might be better regarded as both syntactically and contextually determined. A third-person noun or pronoun becomes obviative when it is 'out of focus' in any given discourse, that is, when it is not the most prominent subject or topic of discourse. This would typically occur in a situation where another third person is already 'in focus'. An animate noun marked for obviation – henceforth noted as 3' – is indifferent to number, and can be understood as either singular or plural, as the context demands. Thus *utema* can be translated as either

'his dog' or 'his dogs', and *utauâssîma* may mean 'her child' or 'her children'. Note also that when the possessor is plural, as in *ûtshimâmuâua*² 'their boss(es)', the obviative marker *-a* may not be pronounced, but is heard instead as a difference in 'tone', or the pitch of the voice.

A typical obviative context arises when a 3rd person animate noun displays a relationship of possession to another animate 3rd person. Here the topic of discourse is the possessor, and the entity possessed is in the position of a 'second' 3rd person – i.e. an obviative. The noun phrase *Tshân ûtâuia* 'John's father' may be broken down as follows:

<i>Tshân</i>	<i>ûtâui</i>	+	<i>a</i>
John	his father		(obviative marker)
(3rd person topic of discourse)	(cf. <i>nûtâu</i> 'my father')		

If the possessed noun is inanimate, however, it does not take obviative endings, but rather the regular inanimate singular (zero) and plural *-a* endings, as in:

<i>umashinaikan</i>	his/her book
<i>umashinaikana</i>	his/her books

The obviative also occurs in other contexts besides that of possession – notably when a noun is the object of a verb with a 3rd person subject. Since in this case obviation **is** marked for inanimates, it will be discussed in a later lesson.

III. Nouns with an Obviative Possessor

Should any noun, animate or inanimate, be possessed by a noun that is already marked as obviative, a different set of endings will be called for in the form of 'second obviative' endings. Examples of this would occur in such noun phrases as 'John's father's dogs', or 'Mary's sister's book'. These 'second obviative' endings are as follows:

	Animate	Inanimate
Singular	<i>-inua</i>	<i>-inu</i>
Plural	<i>-inua</i>	<i>-inua</i>

² The initial long *û-* results from the combination of the *u-*possessive marker plus the (first) short *u-* of the word *utshimâu* 'boss', as noted in I above.

Examples:

(Animate)

	<i>Tshân</i>	<i>û + tâui + a</i>	<i>u + tem + inua</i>
(lit.	John	his father	his dog(s))
	John's	father's	dog(s)

(Inanimate)

	<i>Mânî</i>	<i>u + kâui + a</i>	<i>u + mûkumân + nu³</i>
(lit.	Mary	her mother	her knife)
	Mary's	mother's	knife
	<i>Mânî</i>	<i>u + kâui + a</i>	<i>u + mûkumân + nua</i>
	Mary's	mother's	knives

IV. Plural Possessed Nouns

As already seen, possessed nouns are constructed as follows:

1	2	3	4
prefix	noun	-im⁴	plural of
designating	stem	possessive	possessor
possessor	suffix	marker	(and/or
			obviative)

Examples:

<i>ni</i>	<i>mînûsh</i>	<i>im</i>	<i>inân</i>	our (excl) cat (<i>niminushiminân</i>)
<i>u</i>	<i>mashk</i>	<i>um</i>	<i>a</i>	his bear(s) (<i>umashkuma</i>)

If the possessed noun is plural (e.g. 'our cats', 'your bears'), the animate plural marker **-at** or the inanimate plural/animate obviative marker **-a** is added in word-final position, after all of the above, as follows:

<i>ni</i>	+	<i>mînûsh</i>	+	<i>im</i>	+	<i>inân</i>	+	<i>at</i>	our (excl) cats (<i>nimînûshiminânat</i>)
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³ This is normally written **-inu**, but the *i* is deleted after a word ending in **-n**.

⁴ The **-im** possessive marker does not appear with all nouns, as seen in Lesson 5.

<i>tshi</i>	+	<i>mashk</i>	+	<i>um</i>	+	-	+	<i>at</i>	your (sg) bears (<i>tshimashkumat</i>)
<i>u</i>	+	<i>mashinaikan</i>	+	-	+	-	+	<i>a</i>	her books (<i>umashinaikana</i>)
<i>u</i>	+	<i>minûsh</i>	+	<i>im</i>	+	<i>uâu</i>	+	<i>a</i>	their cat(s) (<i>uminûshimuâua</i>)

Recall that an animate noun with a 3rd person possessor will bear the obviative marker *-a* which is indifferent to number. Thus *umashkuma* may be translated as either 'his/her bear' or 'his/her bears', depending on the particular context.

In conversation, the *-a* plural/obviative marker is typically not heard as such after a 3rd plural possessor, but may occur in the form of a tone or pitch distinction.

V. Proper Nouns

Proper nouns (e.g. names of people) may take obviative endings, as in:

<i>Tshân</i>	+	<i>a</i>	John (obviative)
<i>Pûn</i>	+	<i>a</i>	Paul (obviative)

Should the name end in a vowel, the obviative will appear as *-ua*, as in:

<i>Mânî</i>	+	<i>ua</i>	Marie, Mary (obviative)
<i>Antane</i>	+	<i>ua</i>	André, Andrew (obviative)

The following list contains a number of Innu-aimun proper names:

<i>Ân</i>	Ann	<i>Âtuân</i>	Anthony, Antoine
<i>Ishpâshtien</i>	Sebastian	<i>Kânânîn</i>	Caroline
<i>Mânî-Ân</i>	Mary Anne	<i>Mânî-Nûsh</i>	Mary Rose
<i>Mânîshân</i>	Marie-Jeanne, Mary Jane	<i>Mîshen</i>	Michael, Michel
<i>Nâpâien</i>	Raphael	<i>Nîshâpet</i>	Elizabeth
<i>Nuîsh</i>	Louise	<i>Pânâtet</i>	Bernadette
<i>Pâtnîk</i>	Patrick	<i>Pinâshue</i>	François, Francis
<i>Pentenimî</i>	Barthelemy	<i>Pinûte</i>	Benedict
<i>Pien</i>	Pierre, Peter	<i>Pinîp</i>	Philip
<i>Pûn</i>	Paul	<i>Shuâush</i>	George

<i>Sheshîn</i>	Cecilia	<i>Shîmûn</i>	Simon
<i>Shûshân</i>	Suzanne	<i>Uniâm</i>	William

EXERCISES

I. Translate the following possessive phrases into English:

1. *ushîma umashkuminua*
2. *Ân ukâuia ushûniâminu*
3. *uîkânisha utûtinu*⁵
4. *ûtâuia utakûpinu*
5. *tshutâpânnâna*
6. *utetapuâkana*
7. *ûshpuâkanuâu(a)*⁶
8. *tshinatûkunimuâu(a)*
9. *nitamishkuminânât*
10. *nushpuâkannânât*

II. Translate the following into Innu-aimun:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. their beavers | 2. my coats |
| 3. our (incl) dogs | 4. their toys |
| 5. your (sg) shoes | 6. your (pl) money |
| 7. her children | 8. her father's mother |
| 9. his father's car | 10. her mother's rabbit |
| 11. Where is John's dog? | 12. He is over there by the house. |

Additional Vocabulary

<i>uîkânisha</i>	(dep an noun)	his/her relative
<i>ushîma</i>	(dep an noun)	his/her younger brother/sister

⁵ The word *ûsh*, meaning 'boat, canoe', displays the irregular stem *ût-* when followed by another suffix, as outlined in Lesson 7 following.

⁶ In this form, the *-a* suffix is deleted by the recorded speaker after a plural suffix (as it also often is after the obviative suffix *-inu*), a tendency common among younger speakers. There are many examples in the sound recording of such deletion, whether *-a* represents an inanimate plural or an obviative marker (as for example in some of the dependent stems in the next Lesson).