

SHANNON VICKERS AND ERIC ARMSTRONG

COACHING INDIGENOUS ACCENTS



Family of Eight, Tim Pitsiulak (2008)



Hanan, Grade 6

EAGLE

LOVE • ZAAGIDWIN

Eagles mate for life and raise their young with love. Sometimes this means “tough love,” as the parents must prepare to let go of their young as they leap and fly out of the nest.

OJIBWAY MIGIZI
CREE MIKISEW
DAKOTA WANBDI

WHAT DOES **LOVE** MEAN TO YOU?



Ana, Grade 6

WOLF

HUMILITY · DIBAADENDIZIWIN

Wolf shows humility by living not for oneself, but for the pack. All pack members have the responsibility to help each other as family and community.

OJIBWAY MA'IINGAN
CREE MAHIHKAN
DAKOTA SUNTOKCA

WHAT DOES **HUMILITY** MEAN TO YOU?



Jacob, Grade 6

BEAR

BRAVERY • AAKWADE'EWIN

A mother bear has limitless courage and strength to fight when her young are in danger, and will face up to challenges despite her fear.

OJIBWAY **MUKWA**
CREE **MUSKWA**
DAKOTA **MATO**



Samira, Hanan, and Dustin, Grade 5 + 6

SABE

HONESTY · GWEKWAADIZIWIN

Sabe (sasquatch) is the four-legged who walks on two legs and is very tall. He stands tall as he is true to himself and others, and so those that are truly honest are said to “walk tall”.

OJIBWAY *GITCHI SABE*
CREE *MISTAPÊW*



BEAVER

WISDOM • NBWAAKAAWIN

Beaver uses the gift of wisdom to engineer dams and create new habitat. But if a beaver does not use their teeth, they will grow too long to use.

OJIBWAY **AMIK**
CREE **AMISK**
DAKOTA **CAPA**

WHAT DOES **WISDOM** MEAN TO YOU?



De'Angelo, Grade 5

TURTLE

TRUTH · DEBWEWIN

Turtle moves slowly, understanding that the key to finding truth is in living life's journey.

OJIBWAY *MISKWADESI*
CREE *MĪKINĀK*
DAKOTA *PUTKASIDA*



BUFFALO

RESPECT • MNAADENDIMOWIN

Buffalo shows deep respect for hunters
by giving its body to feed many people.

OJIBWAY **BASHKODE' BIZIKI**
CREE **PASKOWIMOSTOS**
DAKOTA **TATANKA (MALE)**
PTE (FEMALE)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN CANADA

1,673,785 Indigenous people,
4.8% Canada's 35 million

(Statistics Canada, 2016; *Census Topic 2017*).

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN CANADA

First Nations (58%)

Métis (35%)

Inuit (3.9%)

Multiple Indig. identities (1.3%)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN CANADA

Growing rapidly in comparison to the overall Canadian population.

“Since 2006, the Aboriginal population has grown by 42.5%—more than four times the growth rate of the non-Aboriginal population over the same period”

(Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples, 1).

70+ INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN

12 Language Families:

- Algonquian languages,
- Inuit languages,
- Athabaskan languages,
- Siouan languages,
- Salish languages,
- Tsimshian languages,
- Wakashan languages,
- Iroquoian languages,
- Michif,
- Tlingit,
- Kutenai
- Haida

HOW MANY SPEAK WHAT...

- **Algonquian** languages, such as **Cree**, **Ojibwe**, and **Oji-Cree**, make up the largest portion of speakers, with 67%.
- The second largest family, **Inuit**, is the group of languages spoken in Canada's north; **Inuktitut** is the largest language within that family, and it is spoken by 95% of the Inuit people.
- **Dene**, spoken mostly in Saskatchewan and Alberta, is the largest language from the **Athabaskan** language family;

LANGUAGE FACTS

- **Siouan** languages, including its largest language, **Stoney**, are found in Alberta and Manitoba.
- **Mohawk** is the largest **Iroquoian** language, which is rooted in Québec and Ontario.

ENDANGERED LANGUAGE



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

“Under UNESCO's endangered languages criteria, more than two-thirds of the more than 70 Indigenous languages still spoken in Canada are **endangered**, and the rest are **vulnerable**”

(Coles).

ENDANGERED LANGUAGE

Today, as in the past, Aboriginal languages continue to be **caught between the majority languages** of English and French, which for many people are the dominant languages of work, education and everyday life. Several Aboriginal languages are now "**endangered**," with few speakers, although a few others are considered "**viable**" in the long term

(O'Donnell, 1).

LANGUAGE DECLINE

“In each subsequent younger age group, the percentage of First Nations people who could speak an Aboriginal language declined. In 2016, 35.6% of First Nations seniors could speak an Aboriginal language, compared with 24.5% in the 25-to-64 age group, 16.5% in the 15-to-24 age group, and 15.8% in the 0-to-14 age group”

(O'Donnell, 7).

CONTACT WITH ENGLISH/FRENCH

A range usage:

- using a dialect with many features of a creole— which first developed as a pidgin, used as a lingua franca to communicate with English speaking settlers and traders
- speaking English with a significant accent,
- speakers with a standard, mainstream accent.

CONTACT WITH ENGLISH/FRENCH

Some Indigenous languages are proper **creoles**, "or languages that arise as a result of contact between speakers of unrelated languages. ***Chinuk Wawa/Chinook Jargon*** originated as a trade language. It combines elements of *Chinook* (extinct), *Nuu-chah-nulth* (Wakashan), and *Canadian French*"

(Rice n.p.).

CONTACT CHANGES LANGUAGE

As contact continues, and speakers become more integrated in mainstream culture, Indigenous languages can evolve to be more like the dominant English.

E.g. younger *Kwak'wala*-speakers (a polysynthetic language) are less likely to use suffixes to build meaning and rather choose to use *English* grammatical structures, such as noun phrases.

EXAMPLE OF PIDGINIZATION

suffix = əxst(a)

(opening; mouth of animal; to eat, meal; to talk about) "small mouth"

Older generation

t'óg^wəxsta *mouth's small*

Younger generation

amáʔi səms *small mouth*

CONTACT CHANGES LANGUAGE

“In the phonological examples, we see a loss of some of the distinctive features of **Kwak’wala** (such as the loss of the voiceless velar fricative **/x/**), probably because they do not exist in English. So, in essence, the younger speaker is speaking Kwak’wala with an ‘English accent’”

(Goodfellow et al 215).

Older generation

həbəxsté? (beard)

Younger generation

həbəstá

WHAT NORTH AMERICAN
INDIGENOUS ENGLISHES HAVE
IN COMMON

—WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Sources: Ball & Bernhardt (2003), Leap (1993)

Vowels:

- lack of contrast between short and long vowels (e.g. FLEECE vs. KIT, KIT vs. DRESS, FACE vs. DRESS);
- general opening/lowering of vowels, but not by a full degree;
- vowel length rules may be transferred over from the traditional language
- monophthongs in traditional diphthong places: **FACE**, **PRICE**, **GOAT**;

Consonants:

- lack of contrast between θ/δ
- **substitution of t/d for θ/δ**
- substitution for f/v (often with b)
- **/z/ devoices to /s/, esp. on plurals and in spelling pronunciations ("bags, design")**

Consonants 2, *Electric Boogaloo*:

- substitution of /s/ → /ʃ/ (when absent) ("fish, shoe")
- ts/dz or c/ɟ → tʃ/dʒ ("chicken, Jean")
- substitution of /s/ → /z/ ("vision, measure")
- -ɪŋ → -ɪn ("singin', thinkin' ")

EXAMPLES

- some languages (e.g. Kwak'wala) lack rhotic consonants, so may substitute /l/ for /r/
- some languages (e.g. Mohawk, Cayuga) lack bilabials, or use nasals differently
- presence of lateralized consonants used as substitutions (e.g. Dene Suline has $\text{ɬ}/\text{ɬ}^{\text{h}}$, which might be used for s/z, and be perceived as a speech disorder "lateral lisp")

TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE NOT NECESSARILY ALWAYS THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Sometimes when a language lacks a sound, it may substitute another sound that is also not part of the traditional language: e.g. Cheyenne, which lacks /d/, still substitutes /d/ for /ð/ in Cheyenne English.

GLOTTAL STOPS

- Glottal stops and glottal reinforcement of stop consonants are common in many Indigenous languages, and this can also transfer over to their form of English, especially in these environments:
 - substituting for medial t/d
 - substituting for word final t/d
 - onset, or emphasis of a word-initial vowel

SIMPLE VS. COMPLEX (10 vs. 39)

Table I. Plains Cree consonant inventory.

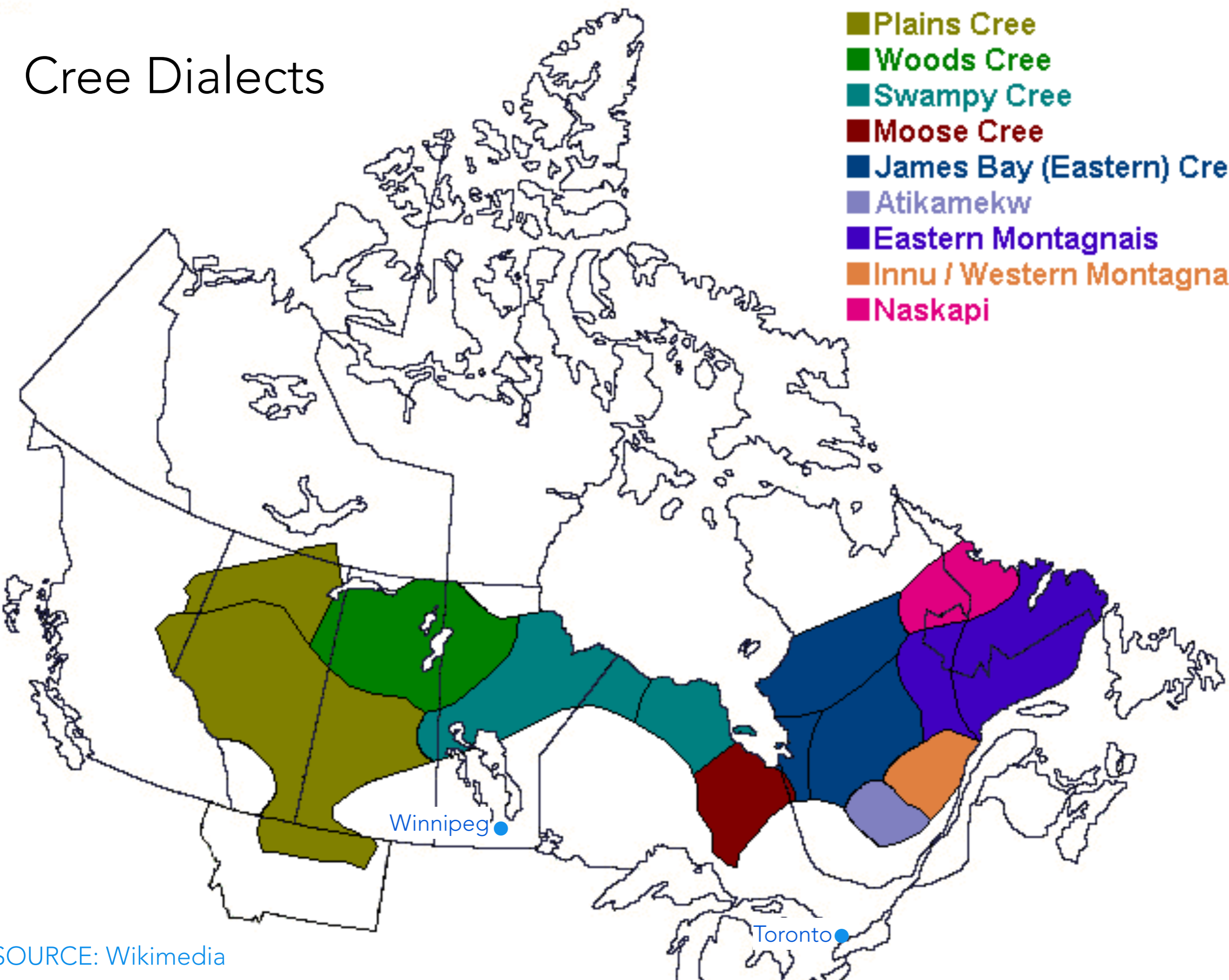
	Bilabial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Obstruents	p	t s	c	k	h
Resonants	m	n	j	w	

Table II. Dene Suline consonant inventory.

		Bilabial	Interdental	Dental		Post-alveolar	Velar		Uvular		Glottal
				Central	Lateral		Plain	Labial	Plain	Labial	
Stop	unaspirated	p		t			k	k ^w			
	aspirated			t ^h			k ^h	k ^{wh}			
	ejective			t'			k'	k' ^w			?
Affricate	unaspirated		tθ	ts	tɬ	tʃ					
	aspirated		tθ ^h	ts ^h	tɬ ^h	tʃ ^h					
	ejective		tθ'	ts'	tɬ'	tʃ'					
Nasal		m		n							
Trill				r							
Fricative	voiceless		θ	s	ɬ	ʃ			χ	χ ^w	h
	voiced		ð	z	ɬ̚	ʒ			ʁ	ʁ ^w	

Cree Dialects

- Plains Cree
- Woods Cree
- Swampy Cree
- Moose Cree
- James Bay (Eastern) Cree
- Atikamekw
- Eastern Montagnais
- Innu / Western Montagnais
- Naskapi



PROJECT PHASE 2

WHAT WE FOCUSED ON



FOCUS GROUP PREFERENCES

EITHER:

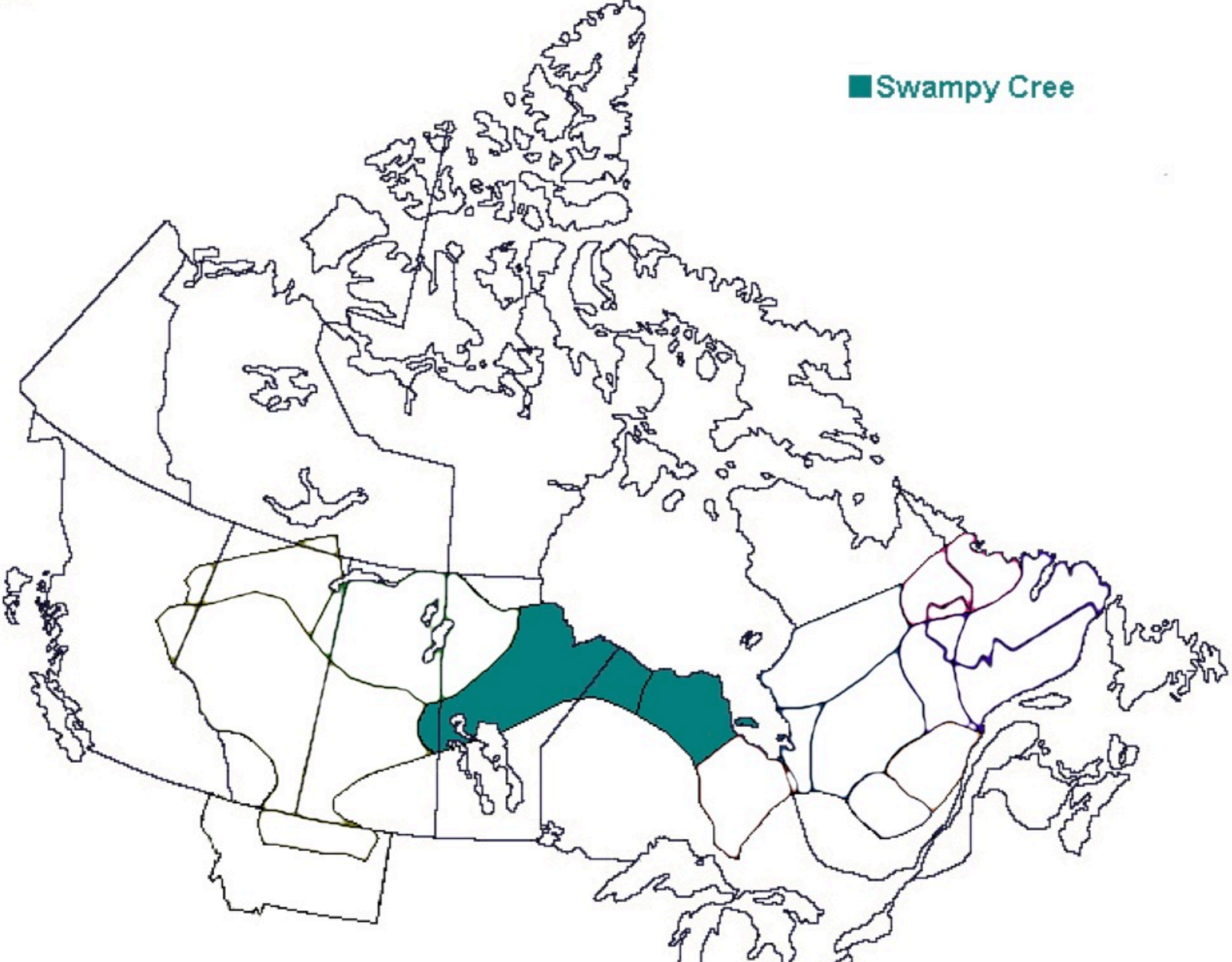
- **Most popular languages,** as it is more likely to be useful in theatre, film, tv, or storytelling

OR

- **Endangered languages,** as they need support.



■ Swampy Cree



SWAMPY CREE

- A variety of the **Algonquin** language, **Cree**
- Also known as *Inilîmowin*, *Maskekon*, *Moskégon*, *Omaškêkowak*, *O mushkego*
- In 1982, there were 4,500 speakers of **Swampy Cree**.
- Referred to as the "**n-dialect**," as the variable phoneme common to all Cree dialects appears as /n/ (as opposed to /y, r, l, ǫ/), which is assumed to have evolved from Proto-Algonquin *r. (e.g. "Alright": *nimiłopałin*; *niminopanin*)

"It's Windy"

A comparison of Algonquian Languages

<https://www.atlas-ling.ca>



SWAMPY CREE CONSONANTS

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	m /m/	n /n/			
Stop (unaspirated)	p /p/	t /t/		k /k/	
Fricative		s /s/	š /ʃ/		h /h/
Affricate		c /t͡s/			
Approximant	w /w/		y /j/		
Lateral Approximant		(l) /l/			

SWAMPY CREE CONSONANTS

WHAT'S MISSING?

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	/m/			/n/		/ŋ/	
Stop	/p b/			/t d/		/k g/	
Fricative		/f v/	/θ ð/	/s z/	/ʃ ʒ/		/h/
Affricate				/tʃ dʒ/			
Approximant	/w/			/ɹ/	/j/		
Lateral Approximant				(/l̥ /)			

SWAMPY CREE VOWELS

	Short		Long	
	Front	Back	Front	Back
Close	i /i/	o /u/	ī /iː/	ō /oː/
Mid	a /a/		ē /eː/	
Open			ā /aː/	

Levels Of Accent From
Extremely Mild (Almost
Mainstream) To Fairly
Intense

Maskēkowak Knife and Sheath (circa 1750)



NOTE WELL

These materials were created with and by First Nations persons for the express use of Indigenous Performers. Protocols were observed in their gathering, and express consent to share them here today was obtained from our accent informant-collaborators.



Norway House MB

A RANGE OF LEVELS

- **Winnipeg 1**: pretty mainstream
- **Norway House 3**: young, contemporary
- **Loon Straits**: light, but intonation worth noting.
- **Norway House 1**: Elder, creaky, choppy
- **Norway House 2**: Elder, but notable

ORAL POSTURE—VIDEO

Canon Norm Wesley: Moose Cree First Nation (YouTube)

ORAL POSTURE—VIDEO



Elder D'Arcy Linklater: Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (YouTube)

ORAL POSTURE—VIDEO

Elder Philip Morin: Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation (YouTube)

NOTABLE SWAMPY CREE FEATURES: CONSONANTS

- /ʃ/ vs. /s/
- Devoicing of final voiced consonants
- Nasalization of vowel final nasal syllables
- /ð/ → /d/
- Light L in final position
- Simplifying final clusters

NOTABLE FEATURES: VOWELS

- U Liquidation /ju/ vs. /u/
- Pure FACE /e/, /eɪ/
- Pure GOAT /o/, /oʊ/
- Short /o/ goes to [u]
- NORTH vs. FORCE [ɔ̃] vs [ɒ]

NOTABLE FEATURES: VOWELS PT 2

- *Canadian Raising* of MOUTH and PRICE before a Voiceless consonant [a_ʊ, a_ɪ] → [ə_ʊ, ə_ɪ]
- -ile endings with PRICE
- "mirror" → NEAR
- happy mostly [ɨ̃], occasionally [ɪ]

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- <https://www.atlas-ling.ca> — comparative atlas of Algonquian languages (e.g. dialects of Cree, Anishinaabemowin, Michif, etc.)
- <https://native-land.ca> — a map of traditional Indigenous territories.
- <https://www.firstvoices.com> — language learning resources supported by The First Peoples' Cultural Council (BC).

HAIDA—VIDEO



Haida Elder: We Don't Want your Wind Farm! (YouTube)

MI'KMAQ—VIDEO



Elder Albert Marshall: Eskasoni Mi'kmaw Nation (YouTube)

HAIDA VS. MI'KMAW



CONCLUSION: WAS IT WORTH IT? SHOULD IT EXIST?

- what our Focus Groups wanted: audio and VIDEO
- what we delivered:
 - audio only,
 - standard Comma passage,
 - limited narrative,
 - some traditional language

WHO WANTS IT?

- some actors, coaches
- some Focus Group members worried we would struggle to get participants
- **Cameron's numbers**
 - 140 Approached
 - 87 responses
 - 16 said Yes
 - Less than 10 said No
 - 114.... sort of said no.

ALARM BELLS...

- very few interested, willing participants
- many wary, concerned participants
- not inspiring for others to come on board to move project forward?

WE HAVE TO ASK: IS IT WORTH IT?

- very few samples: is it useful at all if it doesn't have enough material?
- Metaphor: playing a game of tug of war
- we want to play: standing waiting for Indigenous to come and play, but no one comes
- but unbeknownst to us is that standing behind us, holding onto our side of the rope is 500 years of the colonial project

MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T BE DOING THE WORK,
OR IT SHOULD BE DONE IN A DIFFERENT WAY?

- with individuals, in relationship supported by effective protocols
- on a per project basis, rather than as a repository of resources
- allowing room for connection, sharing, reciprocity rather than merely payment of honoraria

MAYBE THESE *AREN'T* THE **BEST**
PRACTICES WE WERE LOOKING FOR.

Special Thanks

- To our partner, **Native Earth Performing Arts**, who host the materials generated by this project.
- To access materials: visit nativeearth.ca and go to **FOR ARTISTS > INDIGENOUS ACCENT RESOURCES** and follow instructions.

**Native
Earth**
Performing Arts Inc.



THANK YOU!

Find our resources online here:

<https://is.gd/Lh8iZE>

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