

**Castel's English-Cree Dictionary
and
Memoirs of the Elders**

Castel's English-Cree Dictionary
and
Memoirs of the Elders

based on the Woods Cree
of Pukatawagan, Manitoba

Translated by Robert J. Castel
Compiled, Edited and with a Cree-English Glossary
by David Westfall
Brandon, Manitoba

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To the memory
of Island Lake BUNTEP graduates
of 1994-1995

W. Lloyd Beardy

and

Caroline Flett



Language and its container are far too complex to give up their secrets in one fell swoop by one fell linguist, however hawk-eyed.

--Randy Allen Harris (1993:260). The epigraph refers to Noam Chomsky, who changed the course of linguistics more than any other linguist in the twentieth century. Chomsky has also indirectly brought about profound changes in language teaching methods at the school level.

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Vol. 3: Athanase Castel, Dominique Hart
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Vol. 5: Charlie Bighetty, Sidney Castel
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Vol. 7: Emile Sinclair
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î-kiskisicik kisî-ayak

(These nine files are large print versions of the transcripts of the above nine CDs in Cree only.)

Preface

This collection of Woods Cree material was compiled primarily as an aid to bilingual speakers of Woods Cree and English, especially educators working within the school system. It is based on the Cree of Pukatawagan but will be understood easily by speakers of the "th-dialect" living in other communities. Because translation is an ongoing concern, the first section goes from English to Cree. Later, in the **Memoirs of the Elders**, copious authentic Woods Cree narratives are provided, with interlinear translation and free translation. The collection is, above all, to be an unabridged Cree resource for adult learners. Selection and adaptation will be necessary to create materials appropriate to particular age and grade levels.

The entries of the **English-Cree Dictionary** are English utterances in full sentences and short contexts, expressed also in Woods Cree. Because Cree verbs and nouns are inflected, most of them require affixes for complete meaning. For nonnative speakers, a serious problem with existing Cree dictionaries is that they are mainly lists of particles, stems and third person forms; another is that the currently available Cree dictionaries represent other dialects.

The "Cree language" designation is, in fact, an abstraction that includes many related, but not necessarily mutually comprehensible, dialects spoken from Quebec to northeastern British Columbia; any realization, whether spoken or written, *must* be in a specific dialect. (Some languages previously termed "Cree" are actually dialects of separate but related Algonquian, or Algonkian, languages.) There is no common Cree or Standard Cree. Most currently available dictionaries represent the southwesternmost dialect, the Southern Plains Cree of Saskatchewan and Alberta. This publication concerns Woods Cree, the dialect with the longest recorded history but neglected by publishers for the past hundred and fifty years.

Most of this compilation's Cree words have been included in the **Cree-English Glossary** in their full inflected forms, inevitably resulting in some redundancy. Most nonpersonal prefixes, though, are entered separately from their attached words, with the exception of a few examples that have been grouped together to show grammatical patterns. The aim is to be as useful as possible to the reader, not to economize on space. There is also extensive cross-referencing.

The full-sentence and small-context **English-Cree Dictionary** includes a variety of styles, from conversational to standard written English. Full English utterances are given, including ones more literary than conversational, to show how ideas may be expressed naturally and fluently in Cree, with a degree of *coherence* equivalent to the English. Because of semantic differences, though, even the literal translations are often just approximations. There are, in fact, very few lexical items that have *exact* equivalents in any two languages and very few concepts that are shared among languages, as Wierzbicka documents copiously in *Semantics, Culture, and Cognition* (1992).

In spite of these difficulties, people have engaged in translation since prehistoric times; people have always needed it for communication with others speaking different languages. Some of the earliest writings of Egypt and Asia Minor include translations carved in stone or pressed into clay tablets. Historical linguists understand very well the importance of translation; Grace goes even further, arguing that translation is "of very central significance for an understanding of the nature of language" (1988). A very popular translation practice is one based on the WTWS principle, or "what-they-would-say-in-the-same-situation" (Grace:1988). Often, literal translations are needed, too, in order to understand the grammatical structure; linguists use them all the time, generally placing the literal translations within single quotation marks.

Translation, a highly useful and often marketable application within the linguistic discipline, is more of an art than a science. Translation for practical purposes and for teaching is based on a different premise than is pure linguistics. It explores different ways of transporting ideas from one language to another. On the other hand, the science of linguistics generally seeks to describe, analyse and classify languages accurately, as well as to compare them to discover often highly abstract commonalities. Because of its comparative reliability, professional linguistics should provide the *foundation* for a consistent method of transcribing a language like Cree, which does not have such a long written record as have English and most other European languages. The science of linguistics is to translation as pure mathematics is to engineering and commerce. Translation needs to make no apologies to professional linguistics, but rather should build on the methods and insights of the latter. That is the premise of the following compilation.

Of course, it may be seen as a weakness that the **English-Cree Dictionary** is based on English first, but it is a *bilingual* dictionary, not a Cree textbook. Nevertheless, it contains many examples that could be used as a springboard for Cree language practice. Furthermore, the Cree is the Woods Cree of Pukatawagan, not of another dialect with different sounds, different phrasing, different inflections, and sometimes different words. Occasionally, it has been suggested that simply replacing the Swampy Cree **n** or the Plains Cree **y** in certain words (*if* you already know what they are!) will fix any problems associated with using a dictionary in another dialect. Unfortunately, such is not always the case, at least not with Woods Cree, where there are significant differences in diction and grammar, as well as in sounds.

Upon studying Cree for the first time, many speakers of English are dismayed at the length of many Cree words and at the complexity of Cree grammar. To put things in perspective, one has only to look at Old English with its four cases (and remnant of a fifth) and complex inflectional system. Cree grammar is no more complicated than English grammar once was, and there is a far higher degree of regularity in Cree grammar than there is in English grammar. Furthermore, nearly every syllable of a Cree word can be explained and understood for its meaning or grammatical function; the same holds true for all natural languages. Once all the parts are understood, a polysyllabic word does not seem so long. Of course, this kind of exercise can contribute to an intellectual understanding but do little to bring about fluency or understanding of the spoken language. To that aim, sound recordings, pedagogical exercises and a native speaker trained in second language teaching methods can help; complete immersion in Cree at the same time would be most effective, but because of the nondominant status of Cree, such immersion is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. Totally fluent speakers of Cree are becoming fewer in number, as well, and even they can no longer express themselves fully in Cree, *using no English at all*.

In Pukatawagan, the Cree language is the preserve of persons over twenty years of age, most of whom understand and speak the language. Very few young people speak the Native language now, although many understand it. Of children at play, none can be heard speaking *only* the Native language; it may be evidence of language tip, "a case of sudden shift from a minority language to a dominant language after centuries of apparent strong survival" (Craig 1997:259; see also Nettle & Romaine 2000:92).

It is a worldwide phenomenon. Even the formerly thriving Navajo language is experiencing a "shocking decline" in the number of native speakers. Recently, Irene Silentman, a bilingual specialist for the Navajo language, commented that she "never heard any of the students interact in Navajo" in the immersion classes (Shaffer 2000). Such an apparently complete "tip" has not yet occurred in all Northern communities, of course; at the Island Lake communities of St. Theresa

Point and Wasagamack, for example, many young children at play communicate almost exclusively in their Northern Ojibwa dialect. At Oxford House, too, some children at play can be heard speaking their Western Swampy Cree dialect. The language of choice for young children at play can be seen as one indicator of future language survival or demise.

So, what will become of Cree in Pukatawagan and in other small Northern reserves? In the school, to be sure, Cree is taught with minimal, often inappropriate resources, based on another dialect. There will never be the wealth of printed material that is available for European languages like English. There is no financial incentive for publishers to produce books in a dialect spoken by only eight thousand people, so the speakers themselves have to do the job with little guidance from language experts. Algonquian linguists with expertise in Woods Cree can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and none of them live in the concerned communities.

It is not difficult to recognize that Cree is endangered, but it is even more obvious that *Woods Cree*, with so few speakers, is especially threatened. As Joshua Fishman noted in an address to the second Stabilizing Indigenous Languages forum of May 4, 1995,

the loss of a dialect is as much a loss of authenticity as the loss of a language. Having the language shrink down to one dialect is itself a great loss because those dialects were different because there were also other differences. There are never just dialect differences. They go along with differences in customs, and those differences also get lost. (1996)

Cree may well be facing extinction overall before it is reduced to a single dialect or two. Woods Cree may vanish as the older generations pass away. However, extinction is *not* inevitable.

It is sometimes claimed that nobody ever learned to speak a language in school. Although the generalization certainly contains an element of truth, formal instruction can bolster competence in a language. However, a nondominant language like Cree needs to be practised officially and publicly and to become *visible*, i.e., written, to gain prestige. English enjoys that status to the virtual exclusion of Cree. Prestige is certainly one of the predictors of the sustainability of a language (Grenoble & Whaley 1998:ix).

The most important condition, though—in fact, a *prerequisite* to the success of Cree literacy—is that Cree must be spoken consistently by the parents and grandparents with the children *at home* during their first five years and beyond if true native fluency is a goal. The language has to be used at home with sufficient safeguards to ensure intergenerational transmission. Otherwise, as Nettle and Romaine have observed, “attempts to prop the language up outside the home will be like blowing air into a punctured tire” (2000:178). Furthermore, a living language has to be *flexible*, with ongoing modifications in terminology and an expansion of vocabulary to reflect the modern world. Children have to be able to talk about the topics that interest them in a technological age, as well as about those things and activities that, for many, reflect a distant past (Nettle & Romaine 2000:54,173-174). *After* the contribution of the home is securely in place, and the language is reinforced by a home-community network, the school can make an invaluable contribution to language maintenance and growth (Nettle & Romaine 2000:186-187; cf. Grenoble & Whaley 1998:32-33).

Is it too late? As long as there is still a core group of fluent speakers, and as long as there are the political will and the educational drive to help the language survive, it is never too late to turn the tide, which until now has headed towards extinction. After all, Hebrew, a virtually dead language used only

within narrow literary and religious contexts for centuries, was revived just recently to become one of the official languages of Israel (Nettle & Romaine 2000:188). If the political imperative is there, anything seems possible. At the very least, the Cree language can be taught as the national treasure it is, much as Irish Gaelic is taught and treasured by the people of Ireland, although spoken routinely by an almost vanishingly small minority (Nettle & Romaine 2000:189-190; Grenoble & Whaley 1998:ix-x).

A century of Euro-American and Euro-Canadian monolingualist nationalist ideology, which is still a potent force in North American politics today, has convinced many of the few remaining native speakers of Cree that there is no point in passing the language on to their children. Many gatherings of Cree-speaking politicians are characterized by English-only presentations; this in itself is an example of the extent of the problem. The Dauenhauers, who conducted a study of language maintenance programs in Alaska which largely failed, came to the following conclusion: "Language reversal cannot be done to one or for one by others" (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1998:97; see also Dorian 1998:21). Language loss reversal requires a deep community-level commitment. In other words, the pernicious, outdated ideology of nation-state monolingualism has to be replaced by a *community* commitment to an ideology of postnationalist multilingualism (See Dorian 1998:18-20). (Of course, French and English are *both* official languages in Canada; nevertheless, outside of Quebec English clearly predominates.)

The idea that the people of a nation-state should speak only one language is based on ignorance of history, psychology and education, whereas the benefits of multilingualism are well-attested. It is ironic that the United States has never had an "official language," yet many uninformed people assume such a status for English (García 1997:405-409. On the roles that nationalism plays in official language issues, see Blommaert & Verschueren 1995:137-160). Prior to the fifteenth century, multilingualism and multiculturalism were usually taken for granted; great empires rose and fell without having a single "official" language. If Latin had been the only language allowed by the Romans, the New Testament would have been written in Latin instead of Greek, for example—or not written at all. Recently, the European Union has had to recognize many languages; some previously persecuted minority languages like Basque, Breton and Catalan are finding acceptance, even local official status (Dorian 1998:12-20).

Although Canada has two official languages—both of them European—on many Aboriginal reserves, the Native language, although under stress, is still the working language of the community outside of the schools and government services such as nursing stations. Some Native tribes in the United States are taking aggressive measures to bolster their ancestral tongue; the Cheyenne are just one such example: "On April 21, 1997, the Tribal Council of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe passed an ordinance which declares Cheyenne as the official language of the tribe" (Cheyenne Language Web Site:2000). An effort to revive the Wampanoag language of southern New England, drawing on the extensive written records of the extinct language (Hale 1998:214), is another example—an interesting parallel to the resurrection of Hebrew.

There is a growing body of scholarly literature on the history of language loss and the problems associated with minority language maintenance. A lack of materials in the language is certainly one of those problems. It is hoped, however faintly, that this compilation will make at least a contribution to the reference sources local people can draw on, as well as shed some light on Woods Cree for speakers of English who wish to learn some of the language and something about it. Younger Cree speakers whose knowledge of the language is passive may find the narratives of the Elders useful in expanding their own vocabulary.

The Cree language represented in this book is the contribution of native speakers of Pukatawagan Woods Cree. The English text, explanations and analyses are provided by the compiler-editor. The **Memoirs of the Elders** are verbatim transcriptions of tape recordings, also available in digital format on a set of CDs made by the compiler-editor; as precisely as possible, a sound-for-sound, word-for-word correspondence has been attempted. Where there are unclear or incomplete utterances, they are so indicated. The interlinear English translations were made initially by the author of the **English-Cree Dictionary**. Free translations of the narratives are provided for readers whose interests in Cree are more broadly anthropological than linguistic. For a deeper understanding of the Woods Cree culture, however, some knowledge of the language is essential. Robert Brightman would never have discovered the wealth of cultural details documented in *Grateful Prey* (1993) if he had not immersed himself in the language. (Contributor Charlie Hart commented following his interview that "Bob Brightman spoke pretty good Cree!") After fellow anthropologist Bradd Shore had acquired some competence in the Samoan language, he too realized that language is the key that unlocks the door to culture:

... A year passed, then two. I went home to pursue graduate studies and returned to Samoa three years later armed with a little training in anthropology. Gradually my Samoan had improved and windows began to open for me onto a world I had not imagined existed. (1996:5-6)

Sadly, many members of the younger generation of Woods Cree have suffered such severe ancestral language loss that they have only an inkling of the original worldview of their own grandparents and great-grandparents. In the recorded *Memoirs of the Elders* we have attempted to capture some of the traditional worldview of the Pukatawagan Woods Cree in their own words and in their own language. This authentic material will be of interest to other Cree communities, too, as their oral history has with few exceptions not yet been recorded and made readily available on Cree language audio discs. Most fluent native speakers of the other western Cree dialects will understand the spoken Pukatawagan Woods Cree.

Many photographs have been embedded in the text; separate scanned images of higher resolution are included in the photos folder on the CD-ROM for most of the pictures. Unless otherwise credited, the pictures are originals taken by the compiler-editor. The sepia-toned historic photographs provided by the Pukatawagan Band appear to date from about 1955. The pencil sketches were made by the translator.

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Introduction

The English key words of the dictionary are sorted alphabetically. The author has attempted to render the English ideas into a Cree which is grammatically and idiomatically sound.

As any teacher of a second or an additional language knows, few words in one language correspond exactly to words in the other language in their semantic range (Mithun 1998:165). Differences in the semantic range of lexical items from language to language are apparent in basic colour terms, for example. Different languages divide up the colour spectrum differently. Cree has fewer colour terms than does English. (See **osâw-** 'yellow, brown, orange' in the **Cree-English Glossary** and **What Colour Is It?** in the **Appendices**.) The semantics of kinship is another example; Cree terms for in-laws and cousins, for example, are tailored to the sex of the speaker and referent in ways that are unknown in European languages. Many Cree speakers fail to realize these differences, too, often confusing non-Crees with imprecise English translations. Younger Cree in particular do not understand the kinship terms as they are used by the elders but tend increasingly to adopt English meanings for Cree terms. Semantics is a problematic area that is in flux. Linguists and anthropologists alike tend to be sceptical of attempts to discover semantic universals, although some scholars are seriously grappling with the problem regardless (Moore, Romney, Hsia & Rusch 1999:529-546).

In translation, we can at best approximate. Even the grammatical labels that we attach to a word in one language may not apply to its translation in another language. Languages do not all have the same parts of speech: there are, for example, no words we can clearly label "adjectives" in Cree (see, however, the paragraph on particles on page xxiv). Even well-educated lexicographers who have little familiarity with the technical aspects of morphology and syntax easily fall into the trap of applying inappropriate, Latin-based grammatical terms to Cree.

Confusion also surrounds other aspects of language study. For example, much unfounded speculation and even nonsense has been written—occasionally even by academics—about Cree and other indigenous languages of North America. An example is the now-discarded theory that Eskimo languages have only one part of speech: the noun (Sadock 1999:383). Perhaps the most notorious instance of this inventiveness, though, is the ever-expanding myth of the unusually large number of words for "snow" amongst the Inuit and Yupik peoples. Not only has the number of words grown, but other northern peoples, including the Cree, have been added to the list of those whose lives are purportedly governed by snow in all of its manifestations. In fact, because of the wealth of scientific and sports terms, some of which have been appropriated from other languages, English may have far more bona fide terms built on unique morphemes for snow and similar phenomena, along with activities related to snow, than does Cree. [The popular snow myth was apparently launched by the language philosopher Benjamin Lee Whorf; that bit of exaggeration has been researched by professional linguist Geoffrey K. Pullum, to the consternation of even some of his professional colleagues (1991:159-171). The snow myth continues to irritate and embarrass linguists. Perhaps it is human nature not to part willingly with a good story, even if the facts do not support it. Admittedly, a couple of Whorf's contributions—the term allophone and the

insight that ultimately led to the decipherment of Mayan writing, for example—have proved invaluable to the study of languages.] So, what are the facts about Cree? Fortunately, Algonquian linguistics provides many of the answers, and because Cree is a highly inflected language, one with many essential prefixes and suffixes, we cannot ignore the technical issues if we hope to write Cree consistently and analyse it accurately. Hence, the Cree glossary contains many references to the highly reliable studies by Algonquian scholars.

Cree, like English, has nouns, pronouns and verbs. Their forms change to indicate, for example, *number* (singular and plural). Beyond that fact, the classification of lexical items becomes trickier. Once the preceding words have been identified and labelled, what is left over is a large group of uninflected words, ones with no paradigm, called particles. Particles include adverbs, interjections, prepositions, postpositions and assorted prefixes with specific grammatical functions. Some of these forms are not free-standing words. Cree has just four parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, verbs and particles.

Nouns and Pronouns

Cree nouns fall into two classes, termed *gender*: animate and inanimate. Many European languages have masculine, feminine and neuter genders, a distinction that is purely grammatical, aside from the aspect of natural gender when applied to most animate beings. Even then, there are many exceptions; for example, *Weib* "woman" is neuter in German, although no German should be confused about the sexual gender of *Weib*. Grammatical gender is not necessarily natural gender. The same is true of Cree gender, based on an animate/inanimate dichotomy: a number of Cree nouns are grammatically animate, but their referents are clearly not animate beings. Overt grammatical gender has vanished from the English noun system; a vestige survives in the third person singular personal pronouns (See **gender** in the **Terminology** section of the appendix.)

Because there are no clearly distinguishable adjectives in Cree, Cree noun phrases tend to be short. Pronouns and quantifiers frequently serve as modifiers in a noun phrase; the head, normally a noun, is the right-most constituent. Occasionally, a pronoun may fill that position.

There are two cases in Woods Cree: locative and vocative. The locative occurs frequently; prepositions tend to be used mainly, although not exclusively, with such living animate entities as a person, or even a tree, if its proximate singular form ends in *-i* (i.e., *sihti* 'fir'). (See **sîko** in the glossary; cf ... *askiy sîko nisiti* 'the earth beneath my feet' in entry **feel**). When a preposition is not used, the locative suffix *-i(h)* is attached to the noun, which then does not overtly display number (singular or plural) or obviation (a key Cree grammatical concept of third person focus). The vocative, a direct address case similar in concept to that of the Latin vocative, is used in Cree terms of kinship, if it is used at all. It appears to be disappearing from the language, at least from Woods Cree. In the following **English-Cree Dictionary**, there are many instances of kinship terms that are syntactically vocative, but none that are morphologically vocative; in other words, they are vocative in meaning, according to the context, but there are no distinctive vocative inflections. Even the extensive **Memoirs of the Elders** contain no examples of the kinship vocative.

Personal pronouns have their own paradigm in Cree. *Third persons* are of animate or inanimate gender. Inanimate third persons have their own verbal and pronominal inflections and so will not be confused with animate third persons. In the morphology of Cree pronouns and verbs, there is no distinction based on sex: there is only one animate third person. (English does not make this distinction in the plural, either: "they" can include members of either sex, and

"they" can refer to neuter entities as well.) In Cree, the natural gender of a third person will be indicated by the context.

We sometimes read or hear that Cree has "no gender." This is simply not so, in spite of the popularity of the overgeneralization. Perhaps only the snow myth has gained greater currency. Of course, in the animate third person pronouns and in the verb morphology Cree does not distinguish "he" and "she." However, gender distinction is otherwise far more pervasive in the Cree language than it is in modern English, which preserves only a vestige of the Indo-European third person singular he/she/it (masculine/feminine/neuter) differentiation. The Cree natural gender distinction is one of animacy and inanimacy; in the world of nature, this distinction is obviously more basic than is a gender distinction *apparently* based on sex but riddled with exceptions.

Obviation is a dimension of focus that applies to third persons, sometimes even to *inanimate* nouns in Pukatawagan Woods Cree. (See **masinahikanōiw** 'book' in the **Cree-English glossary**.) Whenever there are two animate third persons in the same clause, the one in focus will typically be "unmarked" (uninflected) for obviation. This is the main third person, termed **proximate**. All other animate third persons within the same clause are **obviative**, and as such take special obviative suffixes. In rare instances, a sentence may contain two or more obviatives but no proximate form (Brightman, personal communication). Obviation is expressed on verbs, as well, so that they agree grammatically with the nouns. Obviative forms do not overtly show number, which has to be deduced from the context. Two third persons of the same sexual gender and number are represented by the same pronoun in English, creating some ambiguity. Because of obviation, there is no third person ambiguity of this type in Cree, unless there are more than two third persons within the same context. Usually, though, the focus will shift within a larger context, and a person who was obviative becomes proximate later on. Unlike gender, obviation is not a characteristic of the noun itself, but an indication of the speaker's focus. Within a narrative text, the choice of which referent is proximate typically changes at least twice (Russell 1996:368). Consult Wolfart (1996:401) on focus changes in Cree. In *Castel's English-Cree Dictionary*, see entry **tow** for an example of shifting focus.

The Cree first person singular [*nīōa*, *nīsta* (emphatic form), along with the *ni-* prefix or clitic pronoun] corresponds to English "I, me, myself; my" (1). The other pronouns require closer scrutiny. "You" is clearly divided into a "singular you" (2) and a "plural you" (2p), as it once was in English with the *thou, thee, thy/thine* (singular) and *ye, you, your/yours* (plural) distinction. The Cree first person plural "we" is split into two persons: a first person *exclusive* (1p, which excludes the person being spoken to) and a first person *inclusive* (2¹ or 1², which includes the person being addressed, and which is morphologically a second person). Readers should consult Wolfart (1973:16, 1996:400) on the Cree first person inclusive categorization. The inclusive-exclusive distinction is made in some of the world's other languages, but in English "we" is ambiguous. Only from the context can we tell if "we" is meant to include or exclude the person being addressed.

Nonpersonal pronouns, such as the deictics (this, that, 'yonder' and their plurals) and terms corresponding approximately to English *who, what, other, someone, something, which and where* have their own paradigms of inflection to show number, gender and obviation. There is a three-way deictic distinction in Cree, as there once was in English.

Verbs

Cree verbs fall into the four Algonquian stem classes: *AI verbs*, which have an animate actor and which are morphologically intransitive, although some are

syntactically transitive and *do* take an (inanimate) object and may for that reason be classified as *TI₂*; *II verbs*, which are either impersonal, like weather terms, or are "personal" but have inanimate actors; *TI verbs*, which are transitive and take an inanimate object; and *TA verbs*, which have an animate or inanimate actor and an animate goal or object. The inflections are distinct for the different stem-classes; the last stem-final suffix determines the stem-class of the verb. For a technical analysis of the basic Cree verb types, consult Wolfart (1996:402-404).

Cree verbs may be inflected for three orders: independent, conjunct and imperative. The inflections are different for the different orders. Independent order is often used for isolated statements, and conjunct more for connected discourse and in subordinate clauses. The independent versus conjunct usage is quite complex, however, as the notes in the glossary indicate, and cannot be reduced to one or two blanket statements. Verbs are inflected for the imperative order in commands and prohibitions.

With the exception of the preterit tense forms, which have their own special suffixes, Cree tenses are indicated just by verb prefixes. Morphologically, Cree, like English, has only two tenses: past and nonpast. The inflected Cree past tense forms (preterits) are restricted in their usage, however, and are thus considered "marginal," unlike the English past tense forms. Thus, the widely stated claim that Cree has "no tenses" is *almost* true, in the *morphological* sense. Like English, however, Cree has composite tenses, but the Cree composites are created by attaching tense prefixes to the independent and conjunct order verbs to indicate past and future, not by employing separate words.

There is a *subjunctive* mode in Woods Cree. One of the conjunct order modes, it has its own paradigm, with forms ending in an *-i* attached to the conjunct forms, except for the second person plural, which has an *-o* ending. Some of the older grammars, based on nineteenth-century Latin-based notions, fail to distinguish clearly between the subjunctive and the more general conjunct. There is some correspondence between situations that allow the present subjunctive in English and those that require the subjunctive in Cree, but see the Cree examples in the dictionary and glossary for details. The subjunctive corresponds to the iterative in its inflections; often, a customary, repetitive situation or action is indicated by the iterative ("whenever"). It is occasionally prefixed by a conjunct preverb (*î-*).

Many inflected verb forms, and a few particles, show partial *reduplication*, the process of repeating an initial sound in the form of a prefix. English reduplication is marginal, of imitative nature, e.g., splash-splash. (See **reduplication** in the section **Terminology**.) Found in various languages around the world, reduplication varies in its purposes. The purpose of Cree reduplication is, generally, to show that the condition or action is ongoing (light reduplication), or intermittent but intense (heavy reduplication). Occasionally, reduplication is used to create a verb with a slightly different meaning from the unreduplicated form.

Cree has a limited number of **particles** like *kihci-* 'big' which may be prefixed to nouns and verbs. They often translate as English adjectives, but they are rarely words. See *kihci* 'he's the main one!', however, in the glossary; consider also some translations of *mistahi* 'lots, much, many' and *pîtos* 'different, other, strange'. A few ambiguous examples scarcely constitute a lexical category (See Bakker 1997:236). English adjectives usually translate as Cree verbs, as in the Cree verb phrase *î-misikicik* 'they are big'. [Even English adjectives, it has been argued, may have evolved from "deep structure" verbs! One might even be led to think that in the realm of the mind, where thought arises, there are no lexical categories at all. Perhaps—but all such arguments seem rather ad hoc, with data selected to prove whatever one chooses to imagine (See Harris

1993:109,278). The focus of our analyses will be what can actually be heard in normal speech—that is, the surface features of the Cree and English languages.

Phonology: Significant Features

In any language, the distinctive sound segments, or phonemes, have their *allophones*, surface variants that may sound different to the speaker of another language, but which are not significant to the speaker of the language in question. Thus, *ô* in Cree *ôma* may sometimes sound a bit like English “oo” as in “boot” or more like “o” as in “oh”; those are significantly different sounds in English, but not in Cree. In English the two sounds contrast here and there, as in “who” versus “ho” and “boot” versus “boat”; there is no such contrast for these sounds in Cree.

Voicing is not a phonemic feature of Cree stops, fricatives and affricates; thus, [g] is just an allophone of /k/, [b] an allophone of /p/, etc. An example of the [g] can be heard in a typical Woods Cree pronunciation of “Pukatawagan” as [pʌgítʰwâgən], standardized phonemically as /pakitahwâkan/. A different voicing characteristic of Woods Cree—actually a *lack* of voicing—is the tendency to leave final syllables of many words unvoiced, e.g., the second syllable of /nâpîw/ may be whispered and thus barely audible. (How the fourth letter in the English spelling of this placename came to be “a” is curious, as the sound is clearly an /i/ in Woods Cree and in other dialects of Cree, sounding like the *i* in English *sit*.)

One may still ask, “Why not just write Cree like English?” The reason is twofold: English, with its inconsistent orthography makes a poor model for another language, and the English sound system does not match the Cree sound system, anyway, especially with respect to the vowels. For example, the English letter **a** may represent at least half a dozen significantly different sounds! Do we mean **a** as in *water*, **a** as in *any*, **a** as in *ant*, **a** as in *hate*, **a** as in *war*, or **a** as in *about*? In none of these English examples is vowel *length* significant, yet it is precisely this feature that is important in Cree words.

Cree sounds are *individually* not at all difficult for non-Cree speakers, but their distribution is different from that of similar sounds in English. For example, *h* does not occur at the beginning of a word in Cree, with a few rare, nonphonemic exceptions. On the other hand, the *h*-sound occurs immediately *before* certain consonants, such as *p*, *ð* and *t*; this type of consonant cluster, a kind of phonemic preaspiration, does not occur in English and, for that reason, seems difficult, or has often gone unrecognized by grammarians and lexicographers since Howse (1844).

Phonology: Vowels

Cree has fewer significant sounds than does English. There are, in Woods Cree, only three vowels, with a long and a short version of each, making a total of six vowel phonemes. These are *a*, *i* and *o*, with the long versions represented by *â*, *î* and *ô*. Because Cree is such a highly inflected language, it is difficult to find perfect minimal pairs to illustrate contrasting vowel length; examples do exist, though, such as *nimaskisin* ‘my shoe’ versus *nimâskisin* ‘I am crippled’.

Linguists have used different methods to indicate vowel length, such as placing a colon (:) after the vowel, a macron (¯) above it, or, as in this book, a circumflex (^) above it. The circumflex is gaining in popularity because it is already used to type French and, hence, is easily accessed on modern word processors.

In modern English, vowel quality rather than length is phonemically significant. In Cree, however, as in German, it is vowel *length* that is significant. (English has not had long vowel phonemes for hundreds of years, despite the long-standing use of the term to refer to diphthongs, which are not necessarily longer in any measurable way than some of the so-called short vowels, depending upon one's dialect of English! Further to the length of Cree vowels, see Wolfart 1981:5-7.)

Other Cree dialects have another vowel, which is heard only in the long version: the ê. An ê is sometimes discernible in Pukatawagan Woods Cree, but it is no longer significant. Native speakers of Woods Cree cannot tell the difference between ê and î in their language, because there is no difference that matters to them (cf. Greensmith 1986:95-97). Hence, there is no need to use ê in Woods Cree phonemic transcription. Where a phonetic ê does occur, it does not reliably correspond to the phonemic ê of other dialects.

Phonology: Consonants and Semivowels

There are two semivowels in Woods Cree, *y* and *w*, and nine consonants, *p*, *t*, *c*, *k*, *s*, *h*, *m*, *ǫ* and *n*. The *c* is pronounced rather like the *ts* in English *hits*, but in Cree it is clearly one sound, not two. The *l* is a marginal phoneme in Woods Cree, used in very few words, and in "baby talk." Most personal first names and surnames are of French or British origin; they retain to varying degrees some of the phonemes of their European language sources, e.g., the tongue-flap *r* of *sîril* 'Cyrille'. The same can be said of borrowings like *lapatâkwa* 'les patates' ('potatoes'), in which the French forms have been partially adapted to the Cree sound system.

The *ǫ* ("eth"), the single phoneme that marks Woods Cree as a dialect separate from the others, deserves special attention. It derives from an original, prehistoric Proto-Algonquian **l*. The *ǫ* is basically the sound of voiced "th" in English but often shorter in duration, rather like the Spanish *d*; the letter *ǫ*, called an "eth" or "edh" and pronounced like the "eth" in *tether* and *whether*, was sometimes used to represent that sound in Old English and is still used in written Icelandic for the same purpose.

Joseph Howse (1844:38) mentions two distinct varieties of the Woods dialect: one with an unvoiced "th", as spoken at York Factory, the other with a voiced "th," spoken upriver and in the interior. The *interior* *ǫ*-variety mentioned by Howse—if in fact it existed as a separate variety—remained largely unrecorded until the twentieth century. As a native speaker of English, Howse might have noticed the phonetic difference between the unvoiced theta sound [θ], heard in English *thin* and its voiced counterpart, the eth [ð], heard in English *that*. Linguists are not entirely convinced, though, that there were two varieties distinguishable by [θ] and [ð]. Prior to the modern linguistic studies of Woods Cree by Starks and Greensmith, Howse was often consulted for examples of Woods Cree, possibly leading to overgeneralizations that may not apply to the modern variety or to its largely undocumented premodern stages. For details of the Woods Cree /*ǫ*/ and its phonetic and phonemic representation, see Greensmith 1986:112-120.

In modern Woods Cree, /*ǫ*/ rarely surfaces as a phonetic [θ], or voiceless "th", e.g., in stem final position following /h/. The command *wîhǫ* [wîhθ] (but sometimes [wîhð]) 'name him!' [entry **what (is it)?**] and, occasionally, with hypercorrection, such related forms as *wîhǫwin* [wîhθowin] contain the only examples of [θ] in this collection. Given the rarity of the [θ] sound in the modern *ǫ*-dialect, it is curious that the theta [θ] has occasionally been used instead of the eth [ð] as the Woods Cree dialect identifier, e.g., in Wolfart & Carroll (1981:xvii), although Wolfart (1973:8) did note previously that the voiced "th" is more common in Woods Cree today.

The Woods dialect, with its distinctive /ǝ/ phoneme, has been recorded continuously since 1670, mainly in the journals and other documents of the Hudson's Bay Company trading posts located along the shores of Hudson Bay; the Swampy, Moose and Plains dialects, by contrast, have been copiously documented only since the nineteenth century (Pentland 1978:107-114; cf. Thistle 1986:16-17,96). Admittedly, many of the early Woods Cree records represent just a few isolated words, but there are occasional Cree-English word lists, such as Henry Kelsey's 600-entry vocabulary list and the approximately 800-item vocabulary published by Chappell as an appendix to his navigation journal. Bakker suggests that the "remarkably good quality" of the Chappell vocabulary points to Joseph Howse as the source of the information, although Howse did not arrive in North America until 1795 (1996:11). The Chappell word list is attributed to "a Trader who had resided Thirty Years in that Country [the western shores of Hudson Bay]" (1817:256-279). The most detailed early study, in fact, is the 1844 grammar by Joseph Howse.

A close examination of the vocabulary and grammatical features recorded by Howse in *A Grammar of the Cree Language* indicates that the Woods Cree variety described there is probably not the direct predecessor of the Woods Cree spoken today in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, although it is known that some of the ancestors of Pukatawaganites migrated to the High Rock and Pukatawagan area from the west coast of Hudson Bay about a hundred years ago (Bighetty 1986:18-21 & personal communication by community members). The linguistic facts also support an even earlier migration hypothesis. Evidence for migration can be seen, too, in the fact that some present-day Swampy Cree localities such as Norway House, The Pas and Cumberland House were, according to the earliest records, initially Woods Cree territory (Pentland 1978:109-112), which extended from the west coast of Hudson Bay in the east to perhaps as far inland as present-day northern Alberta. The northern limit of Woods Cree may have fluctuated only slightly since the 1600s, but the southern boundary has clearly been pushed north to Nelson House and Sherridon (Helm 1981:ix). If the "unvoiced th" variety of Cree spoken by migrants from the Hudson Bay coast had any influence on modern Woods Cree, however, it would simply have merged with the ǝ-variety of the interior, leaving perhaps just a few traces in Pukatawagan Cree.

Another significant difference between the putative, now-extinct ǝ-variety of Woods Cree and the extant ǝ-variety is the merger of /s/ and /š/ in all the Cree dialects west of Ontario, including modern Woods Cree. The Woods Cree described by Howse still distinguished the two sibilants (Howse 1844:17), as do the n- and l-dialects (West Main Cree) now spoken in the Hudson Bay coastal region once occupied by speakers of the ǝ-variety of Woods Cree.

Cree has no phonemic doubled consonants, called *geminate*s. However, on phonetic, *nondistinctive*, geminate s in Pukatawagan Cree (e.g., [pʌgíttʌhwāgən]), see Greensmith 1986:56-57; cf. Wolfart 1996:430. (Contrasting long and short consonants do exist in the Ojibwa dialects, with the exception of Northern Ojibwa.) The needless duplication of letters, even the writing of letters that represent no sound at all, is a characteristic of *English* and *French* orthography. The reasons are usually historical, but in Cree there is no justification for such duplication or for the writing of "silent letters." For each significant Cree sound, one and the same letter is used consistently; the few exceptions occur for morphophonemic reasons to maintain a standard form where slight variations are entirely predictable, e.g., the -ow sequence in Cree, where the pronunciation is, at least for Plains Cree, [-ôw], even when the original base o is short. See Wolfart & Ahenakew (1987:113-121) regarding these phonemic writing principles.

Cree Writing

Linguist Nora C. England, experienced in methods of writing Mayan languages, offers the following advice concerning Mayan, which may be applied to all previously unwritten, or inconsistently written, endangered languages (or dialects):

Standardization is the single most technical issue in language reinforcement. Unless it is accomplished, literary production and the expansion of literacy will always be problematic, because people need both good models and a certain amount of technical reference materials to be comfortable with literacy. The reference materials do not yet exist. ... Bilingual dictionaries, writers' guides, specialized vocabularies, and so on are also helpful. (1998:113)

Since the mid-1800s, Cree has been written with syllabic characters that have been modified and expanded in number to suit other languages, such as Ojibwa and the unrelated Inuktitut. Available Cree syllabics materials are for the most part in the Plains, or *y*-dialect, and use of that system for other dialects tends to obscure the actual pronunciation. In other words, Plains Cree norms do not well represent the spoken language of other dialects. This is especially true with respect to Woods Cree, which has the /*ǝ*/ phoneme, the reflex of an *l* sound that has coalesced with *y* in Plains Cree and with *n* in Swampy Cree and Ojibwa. Regardless of the writing system used, though, teaching materials in another dialect, such as the *y*-dialect, are generally confusing to speakers of the *ǝ*-dialect, as is discussed by Greensmith in her study of Pukatawagan Cree phonology (1986:3-5). In Pukatawagan, the syllabic characters have been modified to conform with Swampy Cree (*n*-dialect), but a line is placed above the *n*-symbols to indicate the *ǝ*-pronunciation where needed. This adaptation is surely better than using *y*-characters to stand for *ǝ*-sounds. Full forms are generally used in syllabic writing, even when the spoken Cree contains contractions.

In phonemic writing, the text adheres more closely to the spoken language. Occasionally, contractions are used, particularly where full forms are almost never heard. Nevertheless, for readability, somewhat expanded, full forms are sometimes used to make the grammatical functions clearer, and to maintain a standard form or "shape" for verb stems. Hence, for example, *kî-ihkin* 'it happened' may be written, although in normal speech [*kîhkin*] would be spoken. For information on "reading styles" for Cree writing, see Wolfart & Ahenakew 1987:113-125 and Wolfart 1992:351-356. A practical, intermediate level of standardization has been chosen for this book.

Phonemic orthography represents the sounds of the language only as accurately as is necessary for practical purposes, whereas syllabic writing practice tends to ignore both vowel length and the phonemic *h*. Phonemic characters are used in this text because of the greater degree of accuracy; nonnative speakers of Cree would not be able to tell where to insert an *h* or where to pronounce a vowel long when presented with a typical, nonscholarly text in syllabics. With the aid of the sound recordings, a native speaker of English can become acquainted with Cree expressions as they are actually pronounced in context: for example, listeners will notice a common narrative technique—that of ending an apparent sentence with the first word or two of the next sentence, perhaps to indicate to the listener that the speaker has not finished speaking. Native speakers of Cree may benefit from learning the phonemic system (one sound, one letter) and try to overcome the problem of English orthographical interference. One advantage of the syllabics system is, admittedly, the circumvention of such interference, which can be considerable in the case of

persons with no training in linguistics. Extreme interference by English in romanized Cree can be seen in Kelsey's orthographically grotesque notation, the topic of the next section.

Woods Cree and Henry Kelsey

The earliest substantial record of Woods Cree is a 600-entry dictionary by Henry Kelsey, a Hudson's Bay Company employee at York Factory. The book, published by 1709, but probably as early as 1701, was thought to have vanished without a trace until a copy turned up as the *Dictionary of the Hudson's-Bay Indian Language*, which had been bound together with the Malay dictionary of Thomas Bowrey. Bowrey was a prosperous East India sea merchant (Bowrey 1927:3-5) and a contemporary of Kelsey, although the two may never have met. The volume is held by the British Museum library (Wolfart & Pentland 1979:37-42). The York Factory variety of Woods Cree described first by Henry Kelsey and then, over a century later, by Joseph Howse was spoken along the coast of Hudson Bay until it was displaced by the eastern n-dialect and the l-dialect in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Kelsey's journals of the 1690s also contain a few Cree vocabulary items, chief of which is a three-line notation, quoted as follows:

Cakiththa keeshquebbaujwahtchee j aihttee naunneewee
kahkiōa[w] 'everyone, all' kiškwēpēw 'is drunk' wēhci-ayēhtināniwi[w] 'because there is a gathering of people, a celebration'.

Ne wee No tee / Squea wan Kescot nee Kiththee Chua quoaming Pee lanee ma
niwī-nātiskwēwān 'I want to get a (my?) woman'; kēskat 'often, always'
nikiōiciwāhkamin 'I have trouble sleeping; I toss and turn' [?]. pitanima 'if only;
I wish' [IPC ADVERB]

Newa Wha / pimnok Kagi a Nee pa autta Meshshee woan
niwā-wāpamak 'I were to see her', ka-ki-nipā 'I would be able to
sleep', āta 'even if' mēšihowān 'I get into trouble'

poos co Tabbiscanura^d
pōsko-tipiskā 'through (in the course of) the night', [?] niōa 'myself' [?] isa
'indeed'.

The Kelsey passage, except for the interlinear phonemic transliterations and the English translations, is taken from the Doughty & Martin edition (1929:60-61). The items that also appear in Kelsey's dictionary are underlined here. In the dictionary, there is also a space separating most of the syllables, e.g., *ca kith tha* (1701:1) *kahkiōaw*. Apparently, the passage was Kelsey's note for his own reference, written as a comment on drunken festivities following the Christmas of 1696 (Pentland 1991:127-138). Perhaps he was missing his Cree wife, who was no longer with him in the fort after it had fallen to the French in 1694. The implication could be that she was assumed still to be alive, but probably back among her people. Year after year, directives from Company headquarters included complaints about the "wickedness" displayed by employees who kept company with Native women. Such dicta were usually ignored (Pentland 1991:130-131).

Thanks to advances in the science of genetics, it may someday be proved that Kelsey is an ancestor of many of today's Woods Cree! *Written* records are certainly not entirely reliable as proof of parentage, and, in any case, few records of the vital statistics of Native people were kept until the arrival of the priests as late as the early twentieth century. Also, there were no family

names used by the Cree in the seventeenth century, just personal monikers like that attached to poor, starving "Whiskers," who was beaten and driven away by the Governor of York Factory (Kelsey 1929:61,67-68).

Now, back to the problematic passage! The meaning of the first word is obvious: *kahkiðaw* 'all', which may refer to a singular or a plural in Pukatawagan Woods Cree. (See *kahkiðaw* in the **Cree-English Glossary**.) Otherwise, some of the bits and pieces can only be guessed, as shown by the interlinear translations, most of which are based on the analyses of Wolfart & Pentland (1979:40) and Pentland (1991:127-138), who had access to Kelsey's dictionary. The dictionary proved to be a kind of Rosetta Stone, as many of the passage's words occur there with similar spelling (Pentland 1991:131). Unfortunately, because of the passage's inconsistent orthography, uncrossed t ("l"), apparent mistakes in grammar and unseparated words, or, more often, words broken up into nonmeaningful segments, there is still some uncertainty in translating certain words, or in transliterating into modern phonemic segments from beginning to end. Some vocabulary items, such as *ayéhtinâniwiw* and *kêskat* appear to have died out of the language since the seventeenth century (Pentland 1991:132-133).

Pentland comments on the "missing" personal prefix before *ka-* (*ka-kî-nipâ*), but modern Woods Cree needs no personal prefix preceding *ka-* or *ta-* followed by a verb inflected for the independent order. Even without the *ka-* or *ta-* prefix, some of the Elders occasionally omit the personal prefix on independent forms, or it is virtually inaudible. Perhaps this feature was already present in seventeenth-century Woods Cree. If so, there would be no need to supply [*ni*], as does Pentland (1991:133), whose Cree native consultants spoke the Plains dialect. [Likewise, Campana's comment that "independent verbs are ungrammatical when the clitic pronouns do not appear" (1996:211) is incorrect if applied to Woods Cree independent *ka-* and *ta-* forms.] Admittedly, in *this* instance, *na-kî-* may be possible in modern Woods Cree (cf. examples following *ka-* and *ta-*, as well as *na-kî-*, in the **Cree-English Glossary**). Prefixes aside, there is no question that Kelsey omitted some inflectional endings. We would expect an independent order ending on the verb stem *nipâ-* 'sleep'. Pentland suggests that *poos co Tabbisca* /*pôsko-tapiskâ*/ most likely contains an archaic form, *tapiskâ-*, which survives today as *tipiskâ-* 'be night' (1991:134). Or does the "a" represent "a" as in *any*?

The final three syllables of the last word, *if it is just one word*, are entirely open to conjecture (cf. Pentland 1991:134). A posited *nîðā* 'I, myself' may have been pronounced as *nîθa* in the θ-variety of Woods Cree. [Having little understanding of which sounds were significant, Howse used the same é character to represent both long and short stressed *i*, that is, *î* and *i*, as in *néthă* /*nîðā*/ [*nîθa*]?' 'I', *ne nîppahow* /*ninipahâw*/ 'I kill him', *népin* /*nîpin*/ 'it is summer' and *pépoon* /*pipon*/ 'it is winter' (1844:49,77,185).] Or, perhaps, the mysterious final two syllables represent the clitic intensifier *isa* 'indeed'. Kelsey's final raised *d* is actually just a squiggle, possibly representing no sound at all (cf. Pentland 1991:134).

The 600-entry dictionary, only seven folio pages in size, will doubtless prove less frustrating to the casual reader than the above passage, because the translations are provided. It is to be hoped that at least a facsimile reproduction of the pamphlet will soon be made available to the general public. In addition, the Kelsey papers themselves should be reproduced in facsimile form; the scribal handwriting of the single page from the hand-written journals reproduced from a photograph and included in the Doughty and Martin edition of *The Kelsey Papers* is remarkably legible, and one would not have to be a scholar to be able to read it. Apparently, the peculiar orthography of the perplexing

Cree passage, which is in Kelsey's own handwriting, and that of the dictionary show them to be the product of the same person: Henry Kelsey (Wolfart & Pentland 1979:40-41).

In spite of continuing controversy about the precise route taken by Kelsey in the 1690s and the motives of the Hudson's Bay Company in *perhaps* suppressing Kelsey's publication, namely, the dictionary, at one point in their history and then later using the journals to bolster Company claims to the interior lands, the *Kelsey Papers* are generally accepted as authentic, along with the Woods Cree samples contained in them. (See Kelsey 1929:ix-xxxix, 1994:vii-xxvi; Russell 1993:74-88; & Ronaghan 1993:89-94 on the history of the *Kelsey Papers*.) In fact, virtually all of the Native vocabulary items in Kelsey's writings are Cree of the variety that was spoken by the Home Indians, as the Hudson Bay coastal Cree living near York Factory were termed in Kelsey's journals (1929:5). The Home Indians clearly belonged to the same linguistic group that Kelsey identified as Nayhaythaways, that is, *nêhiðawêwak*, or "Cree speakers" (1929:9). See the notes following *nîhiðaw* 'Cree' in the **Cree-English Glossary**.

It is curious that Kelsey, who spent two years among the Stone Indians, or Assinae Poets, as they are called in Company records (Kelsey 1929:xx,2), recorded no vocabulary from the Siouan language of those people, a fact duly noted by archaeologist Dale Russell (1993:79). Incidentally, Assinae Poets are *asinî-pwâtak* 'Stoney Sioux', known in today's English as the Assiniboine. Kelsey apparently limited his linguistic focus to the one Native dialect that was accessible to him throughout his career, the Woods Cree of the Hudson Bay coast, also spoken in the interior at least as far west as present-day The Pas, Manitoba, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Surprisingly, either Kelsey ignored the language of the Assiniboine, which he *purportedly* understood (Warkentin, in Kelsey 1994:x), or he did not have actual protracted, intimate contact with them. Kelsey mentioned a stay in the *country* of the Stoney Indians (1929:xx), but while there he may well have kept with his Cree companions whom he knew and trusted. The fact that the two groups kept distinctly apart, in spite of alliances for trade and defence, is well known (Russell 1993:79,84). Even in times of relative peace, Kelsey's Cree companions probably did not trust implicitly any of the Sioux, including the friendly Assiniboine.

So, the only proof that Kelsey actually knew Native languages is limited to the Woods Cree data alone, and his knowledge of Cree grammar and sounds was far from perfect. Notwithstanding the fact that other Company employees of the eighteenth century were less competent in Cree than Kelsey, Kelsey wrote a Cree that was clearly faulty (Pentland 1991:134-136). Until Howse's publication of 1844, we have no examples of Woods Cree grammar that are reliable. The scanty Hudson's Bay Company notations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are in imperfect Cree, the products of nonnative speakers. Kelsey's prowess in mastering Native languages, too, has clearly been exaggerated in the past by people who have not examined the linguistic data. At last, Algonquian scholarship has laid to rest the myth of Henry Kelsey as talented polyglot. Kelsey should be remembered for his accomplishments, but he should not be mythologized.

Currently Available Dictionaries

Readers should be warned that the older Cree dictionaries and grammars, as well as some of the more recent ones that are not based on modern linguistic principles, such as the copious Beaudet publication (1995), do not show vowel length reliably, if at all; in addition, they contain such orthographic

Now orthographically outdated, the Faries dictionary (1938) is far more reliable as a pronunciation guide, although it, too, is based on obsolete concepts of Cree grammar. Moreover, it claims to cover all the major Cree dialects, including Woods Cree, examples from which are conspicuously missing, aside from a few rare items like those in the preface. In fact, the overwhelming majority of lexical entries come from Southern Plains Cree.

The Student's Dictionary of Literary Plains Cree based on contemporary texts (1998), compiled and edited by Wolfart and Ahenakew, with about 5500 entries, is based on the the glossaries of the linguists' previous publications. Its reliability for the southern Plains Cree dialect of Saskatchewan is beyond question, but the small number of words will still force students to resort to the other less reliable dictionaries that are far more comprehensive.

A recent scholarly publication compiled by Arok Wolvengrey, *nēhiyawēwin / ᐃᓄᓂᓴᗇᓂᓴ* (2001), is highly recommended as a resource for any of the Western Cree dialects. With well over 15,000 Cree entries in both phonemic standard roman orthography and Western Cree syllabic script, it is a most welcome contribution. It adheres to the museum approach, though, rejecting most borrowings from other languages which may nevertheless be well-embedded in colloquial Cree. Its rejection of translation from English ignores the reality of a living minority language, which at the spoken level borrows copiously from English. (English, too, would hardly be the language it is without having borrowed most of its vocabulary from other languages!) Also, some common words found in the copious Beaudet compilation are missing from this more scholarly publication. As a model, though, Wolvengrey's collection is superb, and it systematically indicates Woods Cree and Swampy Cree equivalents to the Plains Cree entries.

Modern Algonquian scholarship has not yet produced an unabridged Cree dictionary for any of the dialects. Creating a large Cree dictionary is a monumental task, in part because Cree is a highly inflected language with an infinite number of verbs and nouns. However, the number of morphemes is probably finite, and it should be possible to compile a complete inventory with numerous supporting full-word and short sentence examples. This language resource deficiency has hampered attempts to promote Cree language literacy at the school level. Most school teachers have neither the linguistic training nor the time required to produce such a much-needed reference work on their own. At present, an accurate, consistent orthography is sorely lacking at the school level.

Some Thoughts on Algonquian Scholarship, Linguistics and Language Teaching

Algonquian scholarship owes a great debt to Bloomfieldian linguistics, particularly in the areas of phonology and morphology. It is those areas that are of chief concern in the creation of a dictionary. Without a practical, reliable writing system (orthography) and an accurate but not overly abstract description of word formation and derivation (morphology), a dictionary will be of little use to nonlinguists. Recently, strides have been made in linguistic analysis, particularly in syntax and, to a lesser extent, in semantics. Notwithstanding the theoretical advances made by Chomskyan and post-Chomskyan linguists in these two areas, descriptive work of the type initiated by Leonard Bloomfield for Algonquian languages has been continued and updated for at least one of the Cree dialects by Wolfart and Ahenakew; their outstanding contributions to the documentation of Plains Cree are ongoing but remain far from complete. For Woods Cree, there has been little recent documentation. Meanwhile, the language is fast disappearing.

Attempts by many professional linguists to disregard Bloomfield's work because they deem his methods to be hopelessly outdated are debatably misguided. In the meantime, other professional linguists have recently expressed a fresh appreciation for Bloomfield's contributions to our awareness of the diversity among languages (Harris 1993:248-252). Diversity receives the attention it deserves in Daniel Nettle's scholarly overview (1999), for example. Surely, it would be more honest to acknowledge one's debt to the past than to pretend that there is no debt owing. In fact, professional linguists are in disagreement concerning the very direction their discipline should be taking. [On the dissension within the field of linguistics, see Harris (1993).] Their behaviour towards one another is reminiscent of the habits of certain tent caterpillars that devour their own kind at the first opportunity; their reluctance to acknowledge their intellectual roots is remarkable. The condescending attitude of some Chomskyan and post-Chomskyan linguists towards the linguists of the SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics), who at least are taking direct measures at the community level to rescue dying languages from oblivion, is a case in point (see Grinevald 1998:146-147). One of the most rational voices in the linguistic debates is that of the fell Chomsky himself. He acknowledges the usefulness of comprehensive dictionaries that skim the surface; they are appropriate for helping people to learn another language or to look up definitions and pronunciations of words, and he gives credit to anthropological linguistics for

enriching our understanding of diversity. He even recognizes the debt owed to structural linguistics in advancing the study of sound systems (2000:7).

Cree has been documented, but not all dialects are well represented in the literature. Woods Cree is an endangered dialect. In the world at large, hundreds of languages, not to mention dialects, are so endangered that their disappearance is virtually guaranteed. Many of these dialects and languages, any one of which may prove to be the exception that undoes a rule proposed by theoretical linguists for a language or for language in general, have yet to be properly documented or analyzed. Many professional linguists are devoting their efforts to creating theories based on what may turn out to be insufficient data, while knowing only too well that the "loss of diversity is the single most serious problem facing linguists," as it diminishes their ability to reconstruct the prehistory of languages and to determine the nature and limits of language itself (Woodbury 1998:234. See also Nettle & Romaine 2000:11; Hale 1998:192). Nevertheless, if one is interested in the interrelationships of languages, i.e., their historic and prehistoric roots, it is necessary to look at *both* sides of the dilemma: the quality of linguistic theory depends on the quality of the linguistic data, which in turn depends on the quality of the theory. In her presentation "Linguistic Diversity and Language Origins," Nichols claims that a sketchy but reliable picture of the world's linguistic diversity is only now becoming possible due to advances in linguistic theory; she further comments that for many languages which were "superbly described decades ago and have since gone extinct ... needed information is irretrievably lost" (1996).

If in fact only the linguistic methods of the past few decades are reliable, what are we to make of two centuries of historical linguistics, which has relied on written records dating back over five thousand years? Even the copious written records of Huron (including the Wyandot dialect) and Miami-Illinois, with no fluent native speakers since the rise of Chomskyan and post-Chomskyan linguistics, may be of limited or dubious value. That fact has not deterred efforts to translate and analyze, and recent linguistic work has in fact been done in those areas (e.g., Kopris 1999; Costa 1994). Other linguists are applying current methods to explain, for example, the evolution of the English language (e.g., Lightfoot 1999).

Aside from the problems of methodology, there are other issues to consider. For example, linguists are not necessarily in touch with the local religious reality of the languages they study. Perhaps they, like most people, avoid highly emotional, contentious issues. Unfortunately, language cannot be divorced from other disciplines, *including religion* (Grinevald 1998:152-153). Although the religious perspective is different in South America, it is not to be discounted in Canada. In northern Manitoba, for example, it is not uncommon to see a Bible in a century-old Plains Cree syllabics translation used as a model for writing an entirely different dialect, or worse, for writing a different language, such as Oji-Cree. There is also the extreme anglocentric perspective to contend with. We may chuckle at the claim of a Saskatchewan farmer that "English was good enough for Jesus Christ" (Colombo 1976:21) or at the sentiment of a misinformed State Senator that "if English was good enough for Jesus, it ought to be good enough for the children of Texas" (Nettle & Romaine 1999:190). (Jesus probably knew at least three languages—none of them English.) In some communities, though, even a flawed translation of the Bible in an alien dialect may be more influential as a language model than the collected works of Algonquian scholars. (How do you say "the circumcision of Christ" in Cree? Is

such a translation possible, or if so, is it really Cree?) More appropriate models are needed as alternatives; it is neither politic nor helpful just to say "Don't use *that*" or "Nobody talks like that!"

A different problem is outright rejection of the Native language by Aboriginal people themselves on quasi-religious grounds. In some Alaskan Aboriginal communities there is the widespread feeling that "God does not like Native American language and culture" (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1998:64). A similar sentiment has been reported in the Interlake area of central Manitoba, where Native language is regarded by some as the devil's language. (As the history of the English language itself shows, the words *god* and *lord* are of pagan origin, and the word *Easter* derives from the name of a pagan goddess. Words are what you imagine them to mean, and meanings change over time.) It should be emphasized that this anti-Native language attitude is held by persons who are monolingual speakers of English. What better way is there to destroy a language than to demonize it!

It is obvious that there is a dearth of *appropriate* materials, particularly print material that employs an accurate, standard spelling system for Woods Cree. As Nettle and Romaine insist, we need to allow "the language and even the content of educational curricula to be devolved to the smallest appropriate level" (2000:174). For reasons explained elsewhere, that "smallest appropriate level" is, in our case, the individual Woods Cree community, e.g., Pukatawagan. Of course, materials alone will not solve the schooling dilemma. Even where there are sufficient materials, as in the case of Alaskan Tlingit, a far more important issue needs to be addressed: training in teaching methods, which, as the Dauenhauers emphasize, "is far more important than developing new teaching materials" (1998:71).

The Dauenhauers suggest that existing materials need to be adapted to the community setting and grade levels, as well as to the personalities and teaching styles of the Native language teachers. It would be wonderful and more appropriate to assemble *original* materials from the local culture and dialect. The economic reality, though, is that it will not happen, except on a very small scale, as in the present *Memoirs of the Elders*. If there is no profit, most publishers will not touch it. It has been noted that teachers of Hawaiian sometimes paste translations over the English words in already published materials (Nettle & Romaine 2000:182). That is, in fact, being done in many other Native language teaching situations at the early elementary level, but it becomes impracticable in the case of novels, biographies, legends and short stories used in the higher grades. (Purists who fret over the suitability of translations should look at the sources of English materials, which include translations from Greek, Hebrew, Latin and countless other languages. Those cultural sources, at first alien to English, have unquestionably enriched the language. Who can say that a similar process will not occur in the few surviving Aboriginal languages, which until recently have rarely been committed to writing?)

Today, much interdisciplinary linguistic work is being done by researchers in education, anthropology, psychology, sociology, second language acquisition, physiology and neurology. Unquestionably, Chomskyan nativism has revolutionized modern education. The innateness of language structure is now generally assumed in language teaching, for example. Nevertheless, no single linguist or academic school can rightfully claim exclusive ownership of linguistics—hence, the epigraph on page vi. Valuable insights may be provided through many approaches in many disciplines. Our publication takes an eclectic approach: if it is useful,

take it with acknowledgement and gratitude; if it is unnecessarily abstract or impractical (for our purposes), leave it to be debated among the theoretical linguists, whose academic domain tends to be a very closed shop characterized by a high level of intellectual infighting. However, as one professional linguist notes, linguists "come in many brands" (Brice 2000:50). Those whose research may turn out to be most pertinent to language learning are the interdisciplinary types: the anthropological linguists, the educational linguists and the sociolinguists, as well as the linguists who work collaboratively with psychologists and anthropologists.

Professional linguists do not have a good track record in language teaching; even their most ambitious foray into language teaching, the Audiolingual Method (ALM), produced disappointing results. (Freeman & Freeman 1998:11-12; see also Grinevald 1998:146-147). ALM proceeded from the "logical" premise that since we learn our first language only by hearing and speaking, we can best learn other languages in a similar manner later in life. The notion, based on neobehaviourist psychology and structural linguistics, is rejected by most linguists and educators today, yet is still adhered to by many teachers of minority languages, such as Lakota Sioux. (Of course, such an approach could seem attractive to underfunded school boards, as there would be no need for written teaching materials. A native speaker or a set of audiotapes would do.)

For Cree, teaching and reference materials that cover all of its distinct dialects do not exist. One often hears complaints from speakers of Woods Cree that the only available materials are (from their point of view) in the wrong dialect. Algonquianists and publishers alike have concentrated almost exclusively on the southern variety of Plains Cree, ignoring the other dialects. Aside from the insightful, groundbreaking technical study by Donna Starks (1992), the present reference work is the first substantial documentation of the Woods variety of Cree since Howse (1844).