

Activity 2

Sound Differences in Cree-Innu

One of the major sound changes that linguists have noticed in the Cree-Innu languages is the palatalization of **the original ‘k’ sound** in some of the modern languages. When you make a ‘k’ sound, the back of your tongue touches the back of your mouth, called the velum. When you make a ‘ch’ sound, your tongue moves forward and touches the palate, hence the name ‘palatalized’. Some of the daughter languages have retained the original ‘k’ sound, whereas others have changed to the palatalized ‘ch’ sound.

Instructions:

- ▶ Open the Linguistic Atlas found at www.atlas-ling.ca.
- ▶ Go to the ‘at the school’ category.
- ▶ Select the phrase “your book”.
- ▶ Click on each marker on the map and listen carefully.
- ▶ When you find the speakers listed below, write the first sound that you hear and copy the written word on the corresponding line.

What is the first sound that you hear?

	First Sound	Written Word
▶ Hélène St-Onge - Innu - Pessamit	_____	_____
▶ Yvette Mollen - Innu - Ekuanitshit	_____	_____
▶ Silas Nabinicaboo - Naskapi	_____	_____
▶ Louise Blacksmith - East Cree - South - Inland	_____	_____
▶ Leda Corrigal - Plains Cree	_____	_____
▶ Martha Michell - Woodland Cree - North	_____	_____

Answer:

	First Sound	IPA*	Written Word
▶ Innu - Pessamit	ts	/ts/	tshimashinaikan
▶ Innu - Ekuanitshit	ch	/tʃ/	tshimashinaikan
▶ Naskapi	ch	/tʃ/	chimisinaahikin
▶ East Cree - South - Inland	ch	/tʃ/	chimasinahiikan
▶ Plains Cree	k	/k/	kimasinahikan
▶ Woodland Cree - North	k	/k/	kimasinahikan

Notice that the languages sometimes use different spellings for the same sound. For example, East Cree and Naskapi use ‘ch’ in the spelling; whereas, Innu uses ‘tsh’. Sometimes the pronunciation differs from the spelling as in the Pessamit dialect.

(*IPA= International Phonetic Alphabet)