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“In the Old Language”: A Glossary of Ojibwe Words, Phrases, and Sentences in Louise Erdrich’s Novels¹

PETER G. BEIDLER

Slowly the language has crept into my writing, replacing a word here, a concept there, beginning to carry weight.²

The constant murmur of the pines, her beloved music, now became comprehensible to her in the same way that flows of Ojibwe language first began to make sense—a word here, a word there, a few connections, then the shape of ideas.³

It’s amazing that we even have Ojibwe speakers in this century. I get very troubled when I talk about the language. I really do have such regard for it. It’s a very deep, earthy, descriptive, gnarled language. It’s a great language. It’s not simple. It’s intellectually complex, and it’s so far beyond what I could ever hope to achieve in understanding. It’s so tied to the landscape.⁴

My love for the language far exceeds my ability to speak it. I just keep trying.⁵

In *Love Medicine*, Lulu Nanapush, who spent her formative years at a boarding school speaking only English, tells about the time Moses Pillager talked to Nanapush: “One summer long ago, when I was a little girl, he came to Nanapush and the two sat beneath the arbor, talking only in the old language.”⁶ Much later, as a young woman, Lulu visits Moses on his cat-ridden island and sleeps with him. She wakes up beside Moses to discover that he is

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talking in a language that she scarcely recognizes: "I woke to find him speaking in the old language, using words that few remember, forgotten, lost to people who live in town or dress in clothes" (*LM* 81). When Fleur is raped in the town of Argus in *Tracks*, she cries out for help "in the old language."⁷ In the chapter of *Tracks* where Pauline talks about trying to obey the call of Jesus by urinating only twice a day, she tells us that the mischievous Nanapush gives her delicious tea to drink and then torments her with talk of water: "In the old language there are a hundred ways to describe water and he used them all—its direction, color, source, and volume" (*Tr* 149). He asks her why Jesus never calls her to "relieve yourself." Pauline tells us that "He said this last to me in the old language, and the words were strong and vulgar" (*Tr* 147).

We know that for Louise Erdrich the "old language" is Ojibwe, sometimes called Anishinaabe or Ojibwemowin, a language that is still spoken but that, like most Native American languages, is losing ground to English or, more rarely, Spanish.⁸ We do not know precisely what words Nanapush said to Pauline "in the old language," but we can perhaps assume that at least one of the words he used for "relieve yourself" was a form of *zaukumowin*, the Ojibwe word for female pissing.⁹

Erdrich has been learning the Ojibwe language for some years, and she is increasingly macaronic in her fiction—that is, she increasingly uses Ojibwe words, phrases, and even sentences, intermixed with and juxtaposed against English. Often Erdrich's use of the scattered Ojibwe words and phrases is straightforward enough. Sometimes, as in Nanapush's use of the "strong and vulgar" Ojibwe words, it is comic. Usually, it is serious. Erdrich seems interested in lending an air of realism to her writing and in educating her readers to the fact that Ojibwe is still a living language. Although she modestly admits that her own knowledge of Ojibwe is "at the level of a dreamy four-year-old child's," she is committed to learning it better and feels strongly her sacred need to use it: "In the past few years I've found that I can talk to God only in this language."¹⁰

ERDRICH'S USE OF THE OJIBWE LANGUAGE

The use of Native languages in books by American Indian authors has attracted little commentary. One notable exception is Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, who writes about the way literary agents and book editors have sometimes tried to coerce American Indian writers into being more fully accessible to mainstream (that is, Euro-American) readers. She quotes an editor's query on a submitted manuscript: "How and why is it that you use an Indian language word or phrase at certain places in your narrative, and don't you think you should have a glossary at the end of the manuscript?"¹¹ It is interesting that Erdrich has increasingly used "an Indian language word or phrase" in her fiction. Although she had no Ojibwe words in the first and shorter 1984 edition of *Love Medicine*, in the expanded 1993 edition she includes many. It might be that her commercial success as a novelist has given her the authority to embed more and more Ojibwe words, phrases, and sentences in her fiction. Naturally, in her novels with an Ojibwe setting and traditional Ojibwe characters she uses more Ojibwe than in other novels. There are no Ojibwe words or

phrases in *The Beet Queen*—not surprisingly, since most of the characters in the novel are white. There is only one Ojibwe expression each in *Tales of Burning Love* and *The Master Butchers Singing Club*,¹² in which most of the characters are also white. The two Erdrich novels that make the greatest use of Ojibwe words and phrases are *The Antelope Wife* and *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. It is instructive to consider a few more examples of Erdrich's references to the old language in her novels.

Erdrich refers to Ojibwe in *The Bingo Palace*, where Gerry, fearing that Lipsha's telephone is tapped, speaks to him "in the old-time language" about where to meet him in Fargo. We never see what the words are, and Lipsha, who hears the brief message, is sufficiently rusty in his knowledge of that language that he's not sure where he is to meet his father: "My father is either playing Star Wars games at Art's Arcade, or he is holed up at the Fargo library, or he is hiding curled up in the lodge dumpster of the Sons of Norway."¹³

The only use of the old language in *Tales of Burning Love* comes just when the drunken Jack Mauser is alone in his new house, hounded by bad debts, bad marriages, and angry creditors. The scene, despite its near-tragic dimensions, is also broadly comic:

Mauser lifted the bottle again and then lay back carefully in the king-size pillows. *Booshkay neen*, he said. *Booshkay neen*. Where had that come from? Some book? His mother? Sometimes Ojibwa words snared his tongue. Sometimes German.¹⁴

Although Erdrich in the novel gives no hint what *booshkay neen* means, a recent dictionary of the Ojibwe language shows that a near form, *booshke giniin* means something like "it's up to me, it's my decision."¹⁵ The appositeness of the phrase becomes clear a little later in that chapter when Jack makes, quite on his own, a joyously drunken decision—to let his new house burn down and collect the insurance. If the phrase is his mother's, then her advice is ironical at best: "And then, at that moment, he decided what to do. Or rather, what not to do. He decided not to move" (*TBL* 109). Part of his decision is to make it look as if he has been burned to death in the fire, and then to escape naked into the freezing night. The decision, of course, is less rational than he thinks it is, and its consequences are at best ambiguous, since he is found out almost immediately after the event to be still alive, but it is his decision. Without some knowledge of Ojibwe, we would have no way to know what *booshkay neen* means, or even that it's an Ojibwe expression.

In *The Antelope Wife*, Cally Roy tells us that "Grandma Mary, then Zosie, made a long talk in our old language."¹⁶ In this novel we can guess from the context what some of the Ojibwe words mean, but not all of them. One of the key words, *daashkikaa*, spoken by the old dying woman whom Scranton Roy has just bayoneted on page 4, is not defined until just a few pages from the end of the novel, on page 213, as meaning "cracked apart." And some of the Ojibwe words and sentences are defined only in the most general terms. For example, we find this conversation about the quality of the moose dinner:

“This moose is tough!”

“Dahgo chimookoman makazin!”

“Magizha gaytay mooz.”

“The old are the tenderest, though, really they are!”

“Magizha oshkay.” (AW 171)

The “translation” is given afterwards, but only in the most general terms:

Cecille understood enough Ojibwa to know that they were talking about meat and hunting, though she didn’t understand that the grandmas thought the meat was tough as a whiteman’s shoe, probably from an old skinny bull, poached midwinter, stored until it burned from cold, given by Puffy to Chook because he wanted to make room in his freezer. (AW 172)

Perhaps part of Erdrich’s private joke, to be shared only with readers who know a little Ojibwe, is that only part of this “translation” is actually said in the Ojibwe quoted in the conversation. The three sentences in Ojibwe are translated at the end of the glossary, below.

In *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, the priest Father Damien makes a concerted effort to learn “the formidable language of my people” (LRM 49). Indeed, we are told that “early on, Ojibwe words and phrases had crept into Damien’s waking speech and now sometimes he lapsed into the tongue” (LRM 51). In this novel Erdrich gives in-text definitions of some, but not all, of the Ojibwe words that she uses. Indeed, she sometimes gives whole sentences in Ojibwe that readers are left to guess at. For such sentences, perhaps the general meaning is all that we really need, and the context usually provides this.¹⁷ In any case, I’ve included these sentences verbatim at the end of the glossary, along with translations that I have worked out, sometimes with the assistance of Marlene Stately. Because of the dialect, however, some of the words do not appear, at least in these spellings, in any readily available dictionaries. Using Ojibwe-English dictionaries is difficult because some dialects of the language sometimes substitute “p” for “b,” “d” for “t,” “k” for “g,” “z” for “s,” “j” for “tch,” “a” for “aa,” “ii” for “ee,” and so on. Some of these variations are regional, with, for example, Canadian forms differing somewhat from forms in the United States, but some are just different ways of “hearing” the words. Besides, the word forms shift with grammatical function, so dictionaries cannot always give reliable word equivalents. The effect, of course, is to frustrate the reader. Erdrich might not want non-Ojibwe speakers to understand the meaning of some of these sentences, or at least might not care if they do not understand them precisely. She might want to keep some phrases as private messages for those few readers, most of them Ojibwe, who can understand the old language. Or she might want to encourage her readers to struggle to learn at least the rudiments of the language, and so help to keep it alive.

Although Erdrich sometimes seems not so concerned that all readers understand precisely the Ojibwe words and phrases that she uses, I feel that there is a need for a glossary such as this. In building the glossary, I have come

to see that readers who make no effort to understand Erdrich's Ojibwe words, phrases, and sentences miss something. The *booshkay neen* example above shows that without consulting a glossary readers would have no way to know what message Jack's memory seems to want to give him. Another example of the importance of access to an Ojibwe glossary comes at the very end of *The Antelope Wife*. Klaus Shawano sends Sweetheart Calico, his antelope wife, back to her people. His parting words to her are in Ojibwe. "Ninimoshe," he tells her in Ojibwe. "Gewhen, gewhen!" If we don't know that *ninimoshe* means "my sweetheart" or "my love," we miss the combined affection and grief with which Klaus sends her off. And if we don't know that *gewhen* means "go home," we fail to understand both her destination and the connection of this novel with other novels that end with a character's returning home. I'm thinking primarily of the ending of *Love Medicine*, where Lipsha finally decides that it is right to "cross the water, and bring her home" (*LM* 367). The referent here for "her" is June, who at the end of the first story-chapter in the novel had walked over the snow "like water and came home" (*LM* 7). The *gewhen* lets readers know that for Erdrich June and Sweetheart Calico are both women whose only way to survive, even in death, is to return home.¹⁸ Without a glossary, most readers would miss this important connection. Besides, in creating this glossary I hope to stimulate an interest in the old language among Erdrich's many non-Indian readers and thus help to encourage further study of it.¹⁹

BACKGROUND AND SOURCES

The purpose of this glossary is to help the readers of Erdrich's novels understand her Ojibwe words, phrases, and sentences. Often the context provides or implies the definitions, but not always. Where it does not, I have consulted several Ojibwe-English dictionaries. I have not always been able to find the words listed there, due to the use of prefixes or inflectional markers, to the variable ways of spelling the words, and to differences among the various Ojibwe dialects. Marlene Stately corrected several of my errors and filled in a number of blanks. This list is not, in any sense, a complete glossary of the Ojibwe language. Rather, it gives only those Ojibwe words, phrases, and sentences that Erdrich uses in her novels, spelled as she spells them.

Ojibwe was originally only a spoken, not a written language. Because it has no alphabet, there is no official or standard English-letter spelling for many Ojibwe words. Thus, the Ojibwe command *neshke*, meaning "look, behold," is variously spelled *neshke*, *nashke*, *neshkey*. The orthography is complicated by the fact that there are several dialects of Ojibwe. The variant and sometimes phonetic spellings make it difficult to look the words up in modern dictionaries, which usually give only one spelling. And, of course, sometimes readers will guess wrong. For example, the two words in Erdrich's phrase *kitchi manitiminin* on page 96 of *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* do not appear in the Nichols and Nyholm dictionary. I did find there the word *gichi-manidoo*, meaning "Great Spirit," which I assumed was the meaning intended. In reading through an earlier draft of this article,

however, Marlene Stately told me that it meant, rather, “having a big sexual intercourse.” Oops.

In this glossary I attempt to translate only Ojibwe words and phrases, not words in other languages, such as the German *blitzkuchen* in *The Antelope Wife* or the various words that appear on the last page of *The Master Butchers Singing Club*. Proper names appear only when Erdrich herself translates them or gives English equivalents. I have listed as main entries the spellings that Erdrich uses, but have indicated in the definitions some alternate spellings I found in the various dictionaries I consulted. I have used parenthetical question marks to indicate where I am unsure of the accuracy of guesses at the meaning of words and phrases.

The glossary lists the words and phrases that Erdrich uses in her novels published through the year 2003, excluding *The Birchbark House*, a juvenile novel. I generally capitalize only names of people and cities. Others I generally leave in lower case, even though Erdrich might have capitalized them sometimes (for example, at the start of a sentence). I have not included words and sentences used in her acknowledgments, since these generally offer private thanks to specific individuals who have helped her. Where possible, I have used the definitions given or implied in Erdrich’s novels. I indicate at the end of each reference the novels (using abbreviations) and page numbers where the word or phrase can be found. When I am able to, I verify the word through a dictionary, using one of five key reference works that contain relevant references to certain words. Here are these dictionaries in order of publication:

Baraga refers to Frederic Baraga’s *A Dictionary of the Ojibway Language* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992, orig. published 1878). This 700-plus-page dictionary, in two parts, was the work of an early Christian missionary to the Ojibwe. My page references are all to Part II, the Ojibwe-to-English half of the dictionary. Its entries reflect the state of the language on the southern shores of Lake Superior around 150 years ago. An introduction by John D. Nichols to the 1992 one-volume reprint gives biographical information about the Catholic priest who wrote the dictionary, mostly for the use of other missionaries. Baraga might have been a model for one feature of Father Damien, who in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* is said to want “to finish an incomplete Ojibwe grammar and dictionary” (LRM 180).

Johnston refers to Basil Johnston’s *Ojibway Language Lexicon for Beginners* (Ottawa: Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada, 1978), which Erdrich acknowledges in the front matter of *Tracks*: “There are many dialects of Ojibway, or Anishinabe. I tried to conform to Basil Johnston’s excellent *Ojibwa Language Lexicon*.” Johnston is difficult to use since the words are grouped not alphabetically, but by type. Nouns are separated from verbs, for example, and the nouns themselves are grouped—and alphabetized—by categories such as geography, weather, anatomy, and so on. The dictionary was designed for teaching the language, not for ease of looking up the meanings of Ojibwe words.

Kegg refers to Maude Kegg’s *Portage Lake: Memories of an Ojibwe Childhood*, edited and transcribed by John D. Nichols (Edmonton: University of

Alberta Press, 1991). This dual-language volume is graced by a useful glossary which is prefaced by an equally useful discussion of the language (see pp. 187–272). There is evidence that Erdrich was familiar with this book: see especially, in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, the chapters on the steamboat (pp. 26–27) and the chase by a big black dog (pp. 96–101). Perhaps because the glossary was prepared by Nichols, the spelling of the words generally accords with that in the next item.

Nichols refers to *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe*, by John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). Erdrich refers readers to this volume in her “Author’s Note on the Ojibwa Language” in *The Birchbark House* (p. 240). It has apparently become her own most frequent reference for orthography and meaning, although she often seems to rely on the advice of Ojibwe-speaking friends and teachers, whether or not their dialect, vocabulary, or spelling coincide with the Nichols and Nyholm dictionary. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that “I think it is important to note that many Ojibwe do not accept the Nichols and Nyholm spellings and prefer phonetic spellings. Also that the double vowel spellings are an academic distinction I’ve adopted on the advice of speakers (Canadian) who teach at the University of Minnesota. But all spellings that convey meanings are ‘correct.’”

Birchbark refers to Erdrich’s own short “Glossary and Pronunciation Guide of Ojibwa Terms” that appears at the end of *The Birchbark House* (New York: Hyperion, 1999), pp. 241–44. This glossary is only four pages long, but it’s particularly useful in that it provides Erdrich’s own definitions of her own Ojibwe words, and gives some indication of how to pronounce the words. The glossary below does not include words from *Birchbark House* unless they also appear in her other novels.

GLOSSARY OF ERDRICH'S OJIBWE WORDS

- A**
- Aadizokaan (ag)** - sacred myth(s), legend(s), or spirit(s). The **-ag** or **-ug** suffix usually marks the plural in Ojibwe. Nichols 16, spelled **aadi-zookaan**. *Birchbark* 241, spelled **adisokaan**, "a traditional story that often helps explain how to live as an Ojibwa." *LRM* 95, 243, 285, 310.
- aaniin, ahnee** - greetings, hello, how? See also **aneesh**, below. Kegg 223. Nichols 18. *Birchbark* 241, spelled **ahneen**, "a greeting, sometimes in the form of a question." *LM* 263, *LRM* 79, 187, 245.
- aaniindi** - where? Nichols 18. *LRM* 241.
- Agongos** - Swedes or Scandinavians. See Nichols 5, where we learn that the term literally means "chipmunk." In her article reprinted in *North Dakota Quarterly* (see note to the first epigraph above), Erdrich says on p. 215, "Agongosiniwag, the chipmunk people, are Scandinavians. I'm still trying to find out why." *AW* 215.
- Ahabikwe** - Ahab-woman (Nanapush calls Margaret this during the moose hunt, a combination of Captain Ahab of Melville's *Moby-Dick* and the Ojibwe **ikwe** or "woman"). *LRM* 285.
- ahau** - okay. *LRM* 96.
- akikoog** - kettle(s). Nichols 7. *LRM* 256.
- anama'ay** - praying. Nichols 8, spelled **anami'aa**, "pray, be Christian." *LRM* 182, "the Ojibwe word for praying . . . with its sense of a great motion upward."
- anamibiigokoosh** - hippopotamus (underwater pig). Nichols 9, spelled **anaamibiig** "underwater," and 62, spelled **gookoosh**, "pig." Erdrich notes in private correspondence: "According to Jim Clark's uncle, who invented a name or knew one for every non-indigenous creature he saw in the zoo." *LRM* 246.
- ando** - search out. *LRM* 305.
- aneesh** - how, why? Kegg 223, spelled **aaniin** and **aaniish**. Nichols 18, spelled **aaniish**. *Tr* 47.
- ani** - going on. Baraga 283, under "**ni, ani**." Kegg 219, **ani**, "going away from, on the way." *LRM* 95.
- animosh(ug)** - dog(s). Nichols 10, spelled **animoshag**. *AW* 80.
- Anishinabe, Anishinabeg** - human, Indian, Ojibwe, or their language. Johnston 6, spelled **Anishaubeg** Kegg 219 and Nichols 10, spelled **anishinaabe**. *AW* 48, 107, 137, *LRM* 81, 150, 261, etc., spelled **Anishinaabekwe**, Indian woman, *Tr* 1.
- anokee** - work. Nichols 11, spelled **anokii**. *AW* 104.
- Apijigo Bakaday** - So Hungry. Nichols 18, spelled **aapiiji**, "very, quite," and 24, spelled **bakade**, "hungry." *AW* 56.
- Asainekanipawit** - Standing in a Stone. *Tr* 220.
- Asasaweminikwesens** - Chokecherry Girl. *Tr* 7.
- asemaa** - tobacco. Nichols 13. *LRM* 187.
- asin(iig)** - stone(s), rock(s). Nichols 14. In her article reprinted in *North Dakota Quarterly* (see note to the first epigraph above), Erdrich says on p. 215, "The word for stone, *asin*, is animate. Stones are called grandfathers and grandmothers and are extremely important in Ojibwe philosophy. Once I began to think of stones as animate, I started to wonder whether I was picking up a stone or it was putting itself into my hand." Erdrich notes in private correspondence that "in *Birchbark House* Omakayas uses stones as people." *LRM* 256.
- audoomobiig** - automobiles. Erdrich notes in private correspondence: "The word is in common use, clearly derived from the *chimookoman* word for car." *LRM* 243.
- ayiih** - exclamation of surprise or approval. *Birchbark* 241, spelled **ayah**, "yes." *LRM* 222.
- awiyaa** - someone, anyone. Kegg 221, spelled **awiiya**. *LRM* 95.
- Awun** - mist, fog. Johnston 9. Nichols 14,

spelled **awan**, “be foggy, there is a fog.” *LRM* 277, 278, etc..

ayaan’na - own, does he or she have? Nichols 15, spelled **ayaan**. *LRM* 133.

B

babaumawaebigowin - driven along by waves. Johnston 54. *LM* 102, 103.

baubaukunaetae-geezis - April, patches of earth, developing sun. Johnston 22. *Tr* 192.

bayzhig - one. Johnston 19, Nichols 30, spelled **bezhig**. *AW* 1.

be izah - come. Nichols 31, spelled **bi-izhaa**. *AW* 109.

bebezhigongazhii - horse, one-nailed animal. Nichols 30, spelled **bebezhigooganzhii**. *LRM* 359, 360.

beeskun k’papigeweyaun - put on this shirt. Johnston 36, 51, spelled **beeskoniyaewin** and **beeskoniyaewin**, “dressing, putting on clothing” and 20, **pupagewiyaun(un)** “shirt(s).” Nichols 20, spelled **babagiyawaan**, “shirt.” *LM* 263.

bekaayan - wait, hold on. Nichols 30, spelled **bekaa**. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it means “You, wait!” *LRM* 167.

bimautiziwaad - those who are living the good life. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it “refers to *bimaudiziwin*—the good life—a very complicated concept.” *LRM* 95.

Bineshii - Small Bird. *Tr* 7, *BP* 23.

bizindan, bizindamoog - listen. Nichols 34. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it means “all of you be quiet.” *LRM* 85, 167.

boogidiwin(an) - fart(s). Johnston, 72, “farting.” Nichols 38, spelled **boogidi**. *LRM* 291.

boonishin - leave me alone. Nichols 39 spelled **booni**, “leave . . . alone, quit.” *LRM* 284.

booshkay neen - it’s up to me, it’s my decision. Nichols 39, spelled **booshke** or **booshke giniin**. *TBL* 102.

boozhoo - greetings, hello. According to Erdrich in *Birchbark* 242, “an Ojibwa

greeting invoking the great teacher of the Ojibwa, Nanabozho.” Nichols 39.

The word is sometimes thought to be related to the French *bonjour*, but Erdrich insists in private correspondence that it “is *not* related to *bonjour*.” *AW* 109, 126, 228, *LRM* 79, 91, etc.

Bungeenaboop - almost soup. Nichols 52, spelled **gegaa**, “nearly, almost,” and 90, spelled **naboob** “soup.” *AW* 81.

Bwaan(ag) - Sioux or Dakota Indian(s). Kegg 230. *Birchbark* 242, spelled **Bwannug**, “the Dakota or Lakota people, another Native tribe, whose reservations spread across the Great Plains.” *LRM* 96, 150–53, 360.

Bwaaninini - Sioux man, human. See **inini** (man) below. *LRM* 360.

Bwaanakeeng - Sioux country, land of the Dakotas. *AW* 75, 80.

C

chi - big (sometimes used as a shortened form of **kitchi**). *LRM* 95.

chimooks - white people (see next item). *LRM* 114.

chimookoman(ag)(ug) - big knife, or white person(s). Nichols 283, spelled **gichimookomaan**. *Birchbark* 242, “word meaning ‘big knife,’ used to describe white people or non-Indians.” *AW* 138, 142, 171, 206, *LRM* 81, 92, 94, 95, 100, 120, 158, 186, 261, 283.

ciga swa? - Do you have a cigarette? *LM* 32.

D

daashkikaa - cracked apart, split. Nichols 43. *AW* 4, 196, 212, 213.

daga - please!, come on! Kegg 231. Nichols 40. *LRM* 51, 252, 323.

dagasaa - please now (see previous item). Erdrich notes in private correspondence that this form is an “extra polite” way to say “please.” *LRM* 96.

dahgo - just like. Nichols 96, spelled **indigo**, “just like, as if.” *AW* 171.

djessikid - magician, “tent-shaker.” Cognate with **jeesekekwinini**, see below. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that the term means

“conjurer, illusionist.” *LM* 74, *BP* 132.
dodem - clan. Nichols 66, spelled **indoodem**, “my totem, my clan.” *AW* 135, *LRM* 261, 262.

E

ekewaynze - old man. Nichols 7, spelled **akiwenzii**. *LM* 33.
etaa - only. Kegg 235 and Nichols 46, spelled **eta**. *LRM* 95.
eyah - yes, verily. Nichols 46, spelled **eya'**. *Birchbark* 241, spelled **ayah**. *AW* 85, *LRM* 88, 97.
ezhichigeyan - you are doing. Nichols 71, spelled **izhichigewin**, “way of doing things.” *LRM* 187.

F

G

gaag - porcupine. Nichols 50. *LRM* 85, 86.
Gakahbekong - Minneapolis. *AW* 25, 49, 84, 101, 106, 124, 219.
gakina - all. Nichols 48. *LRM* 95.
gakinago - all of it. Nichols 48, spelled **gakina gegoo**, “everything.” *LRM* 96.
gashkadino-giizis - November, the freezing moon. Nichols 49. *LRM* 258.
gaween - no, not. Nichols 52, spelled **gaawiin**. *Birchbark* 242. *AW* 128.
gaween gego - it's nothing special. Nichols 52, spelled **gaawiin gegoo**, “nothing.” *AW* 135.
gay, gey - as for, only, also. Kegg 237 and Nichols 50, spelled **gaye**. *LRM* 95.
gaytay - old. Nichols 52, spelled **gete-**, “old, old-time.” *AW* 171.
Geezhig - Day, Sky. Johnston 6, 7, 18. Nichols 60, spelled **giizhig**, “sky, heaven, day.” *BP* 57.
gegahwabamayaan - I have come to see you. Nichols 114, **waabandan** “see.” Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it can mean “I'll see you.” *LRM* 133.
geget - surely. Nichols 52, “sure, indeed, certainly, really.” *AW* 107, 224, *LRM* 321.
geget igo - absolutely, unquestionably. *LRM* 321, 322.
geget na - is that right? *BP* 131.

gego - don't. Nichols 52. *AW* 88.
genwaabiigigwed - giraffe. Nichols 52. *LRM* 246.
gewhen - go home. Nichols 60, spelled **giuwe**. *AW* 229, *MBSC* 385.
gey - see **gay**, above.
gigaa - we will. *LRM* 81, 96.
gi-izhamin - we are going. Nichols 71, spelled **izhaamagad**, “go to a certain place.” *LRM* 241.
ginebig(oog) - snake(s). Nichols 55. *LRM* 220.
ginitum - it's your turn. Nichols 59, spelled **giinitam**, “your turn.” *LRM* 232.
gitimishk - lazy! Nichols 56, spelled **gitimishki**, “be habitually lazy, be a lazybones.” *LRM* 285.
gizhawenimin - I love you. Nichols 57, spelled **gizhaawenim** “be jealous of.” Erdrich notes in private correspondence that “it means loving in a kind way—the root is the word for kindness or compassion. The love-word **nizaagi-iin** has the double meaning of being jealous or stingy about keeping another person.” *LRM* 252.
Gizhe Manito - God. Nichols 57, spelled **gizhe-manidoo**, “God (especially in Christian usage).” In her article reprinted in *North Dakota Quarterly* (see note to the first epigraph above), Erdrich says on p. 214, “What the Ojibwe call the Gizhe Mandidoo [is] the great and kind spirit residing in all that lives.” Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it means “the kind-hearted god.” *LRM* 100, 315.

H

hihn - too bad. *Birchbark* 242, spelled **hiyn**, “exclamation of sympathy or chagrin, meaning ‘that's too bad.’” Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it is “an expression of regret.” *LRM* 133, 323.
howah - okay. *Birchbark* 242, “a sound of approval.” *LRM* 97, 292.

I

idash - and, but. Kegg 243. Nichols 64. *LRM* 95.

igo - very, especially. Nichols 64, “*emphatic word.*” LRM 321.

ii’iih - yes. *Birchbark* 241, spelled **ayah**, “yes.” Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it is “an expression like ‘and so’ or ‘well . . .’” LRM 94.

i’in - for emphasis, a sort of exclamation mark (?). Nichols 65, spelled **inaa**, “*emphatic particle.*” LRM 81.

ikwe(wag), ikwey(wug) - woman (women). Kegg 243. Nichols 64. *BP* 6, LRM 96.

ikwe-inini - a woman-man (perhaps suggesting a gay person or hermaphrodite). LRM 153.

ina, inah - indicates a question. Nichols 64, “*yes-no question word.*” *AW* 109, LRM 241.

indah - I am from. From private correspondence with Erdrich. *AW* 109.

indis - my umbilical cord, belly button. Nichols 66. *AW* 86, 101, LRM 261.

ingitizima - my father, mother. Nichols 67, spelled **ingitizim**, “my parent.” LRM 247.

in’gozis - my son. Nichols 67, spelled **ingozis**. LRM 133.

inini(wag) - man (men). Kegg 245. Nichols 68. LRM 96.

ishkodewaaboo - liquor, fire water. Nichols 69 (cf. Nichols 68, **ishkode** “fire”). LRM 107, 322.

ishkonigan - leftovers, desolate lands, reservation. Nichols 69, spelled **ishkwanjigan**, “leftover food.” Erdrich in private correspondence thanks Jim Clark for the word. *AW* 239, LRM 360.

ishte - how nice! *Birchbark* 242, “exclamation meaning how good, nice, pleasant.” *AW* 138, LRM 165.

ishkwaa anokii wug - Friday or Saturday (lit., after work day). *AW* 104.

izah, izhah, izhadaa - let’s go. Nichols 71, spelled **izhaa**, “go to a certain place.” *AW* 109, LRM 206, 252.

J

jeesekeewinini - medicine man, tent-shaker. Johnston 25, “a medicine man who communes with incorporeal

beings to determine the cause of afflictions, physical or mental, may prescribe remedies, usually a member of the Midewewin, and one who has reached the third degree or order.” Nichols 74, spelled **jiisakiwinini**, “seer who uses a shaking tent.” *Tr* 188.

jibay - ghost or spirit. Nichols 73, spelled **jiibay**. See also **odjib**, below. LRM 187.

K

Kanatawakechin - Mirage. *Tr* 220.

kaween onjidah - it’s not for nothing. Nichols 52, spelled **gaawiin**, “no, not negative,” and 109, **onjida**, “on purpose.” LRM 80.

kinnikinnick - bark-based tobacco. *Birchbark* 242, “type of smoking mixture made of the inner bark of dogwood or red willow, sometimes mixed with regular tobacco.” *BP* 28, *AW* 57.

kitchi - abundantly, grandly. Johnston 125, 131. Nichols 53, spelled **gichi**, “big, great, very.” LRM 96.

Kokoko, Ko ko ko - owl. Johnston 14, spelled **kookookoo(k)**. *Tr* 67, 206, *BP* 196.

L

M

maaj - leave, go. Nichols 80, spelled **maajaa**. *AW* 224.

magizha - maybe, perhaps. Nichols 80, spelled **maagizhaa**. *AW* 171, 213.

majii - bad. Kegg 249 and Nichols 75, spelled **magi**. LRM 133.

majigoode - dress. Nichols 75. LRM 242.

makade-mashkikiwaaboo - black liquid medicine, coffee. Kegg 249. Nichols 75, 78. LRM 108.

makak, makuk - birchbark box or basket. Nichols 75. *Birchbark* 243, “a container of birchbark folded and often stitched together with basswood fiber. Ojibwa people use these containers today, especially for traditional feasts.” *AW* 18, 19, 135, 198, LRM 104.

makizin(an) - footwear, moccasin(s). Kegg 249. Nichols 76. *Birchbark* 242,

- spelled **makazin**, "footwear usually made of tanned moosehide or deer-skin, often trimmed with beads and/or fur." *AW* 171, *LRM* 152, 187, 242, 251, 264, 268, 287, 294.
- manidominenz** - bead, "little spirit seed." Nichols 77, spelled **manidoominens**. *AW* 91.
- manidoo(g), manitou(s), manito(s)** - spirit(s), god(s). Kegg 250. Johnston 25, "a god or spirit, an incorporeal being, used as a verb means to be godlike, spiritual, incorporeal, and medicinal." *Birchbark* 243, "spirits, beings who inhabit the Ojibwa world and often communicate in dreams." Nichols 77. *LM* 77, *Tr* 139, *AW* 136, *LRM* 315, 360.
- manidoovens** - little spirits. Nichols 77, spelled **manidoons**, "bug or insect." *LRM* 315.
- manitiminin** - have sexual intercourse. *LRM* 96.
- manitou-geezis** - January, the strong spirit sun. Johnston 22. Nichols 77, spelled **manidoo-giizis**. *Tr* 96.
- manitou-geezisohns** - December, the little spirit sun. Johnston 22. Nichols 77, spelled **manidoo-giizisoons**. *Tr* 1.
- manomin, manoomin** - wild rice. Nichols 77. *AW* 138, *LRM* 187.
- manominike-giizis** - September, the wild rice sun. Johnston 22, spelled **minomini-geezis**. Nichols 78, spelled **manoominike-giizis** "the month of ricing: September, August." *LRM* 242.
- mashkiig** - swamp, slough. Baraga 223, spelled **mashkig**, "swamp, marsh." *LRM* 201, 359.
- mashkimood, mashkimodenz** - bag or sack. Nichols 78, spelled **mashkimod**. *AW* 133, 219.
- Matchimanito** - the bad spirit, the name of the large lake on a fictional Ojibwe reservation. Nichols 75 **maji**, "bad," and 77, **manidoo**, "god, spirit, manitou." *LM* 234, 236, etc., *Tr* 8, etc., *LRM* 97, 242, etc.
- matchimindemoyenh** - evil old woman, witch. *LRM* 104.
- mazhiwe, mazhiweyt** - have intercourse. Nichols 79. *LRM* 95, 96.
- meen-geezis** - July, the blueberry sun. Johnston 22. *Tr* 62.
- megwitch, miigwetch** - thank you. Johnston 132, spelled **meegwaetch**. Nichols 89, spelled **miigwech**. *Birchbark* 242, spelled **megwetch**. *LM* 313, *AW* 120, *LRM* 167, 174, 320.
- mekadewikonayewinini** - priest. Nichols 83. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it means "black-robe man." *LRM* 133.
- Michif** - mixed blood. *LRM* 96.
- Midassbaupayikway** - Ten Stripe Woman. *AW* 35.
- mii'e** - see **mi'iw**, below. *LRM* 95.
- miigjs** - shells. Nichols 89. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that "these are extremely sacred items." *LRM* 156, 301.
- miigwetch** - see above, **megwetch**.
- miishishin** - give it to me. Nichols 89, spelled **miizh**, "give to." *LRM* 323.
- mi'iw** - that's it, that's enough. Baraga 235. *LRM* 175.
- mindemoya** - old woman. Kegg 253, spelled **mindimooyenh**. Nichols 85. *BP* 126, *LRM* 286, etc.
- miniquen** - drink it all. Nichols 85, spelled **minikwe**, "drink." *LRM* 305.
- mino** - good, nice. Nichols 85. *LRM* 206.
- minomini-geezis** - September, the wild rice sun. Johnston 22. *Tr* 206.
- minopogwad** - tastes good. Nichols 86, spelled **minopogwad**. *LRM* 292.
- minwendam** - be happy, glad. Kegg 254. Nichols 87. *LRM* 81.
- mi'sago'i** - that's all, story is over. Kegg 18, 46, 60, etc., spelled **mii sa go i'iw**, "That's it." *LRM* 85, 96, 361.
- Mishimin Odaynang** - Apple Town (Minneapolis). Nichols 87, **mishiimin**, apple, and 112, spelled **oode-na**, town. See also **Gakahbekong** above. *AW* 198.
- mishkeegamin** - cranberry. Nichols 162, **maskiigimin**, "lowbush cranberry." *Tr* 176.
- miskomini-geezis** - August, the raspberry

- sun. Johnston 22. *Tr* 10.
- miskwa** - red. Nichols 87, spelled **miskwaa**. *AW* 113
- miskwa wabic** - copper. Nichols 87, spelled **miskwaabik**. *AW* 113.
- Missepeshu, Misshepeshu** - the great lynx (refers to the lake or water monster in Matchimanito Lake). Johnston 24, spelled **mishi-bizheu**, “the great lynx—the enemy of Nanabush,” and 31, spelled **mishibizheu(k)**, “lion(s), the great lynx.” *LM* 236. *Tr* 8, 175, etc.
- Mizi zipi** - Big River, Mississippi River. Nichols 54, spelled **gichi-ziibi**. *AW* 96.
- mogate** - go, leave. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it is “a Wahpetonian ‘load’ term once used primarily by drunk teenagers rousing themselves to leave for another party.” Used in the phrase, “Let’s mogate” in *AW* 96.
- mooz** - moose. Johnston 16, spelled **moozo**. Nichols 90. *AW* 171, *LRM* 283.
- Moskatikinaugun** - Red Cradle. *Tr* 220.
- N**
- naazh** - go and get, take. Keeg 257. Nichols 95. *LRM* 51.
- Nadouissieux** - Sioux or Dakota Indians. *Tr* 1.
- Nanabozho** - trickster namesake of Nanapush. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it is “a variation of Wenebosho.” *LM* 236, etc.
- Nanakawepenesick** - Different Thumbs. *LM* 74.
- n’dawnis** - my daughter. Johnston 29, spelled **daun(iss)**. The prefix **n’** or **ni-** or **in-** usually indicates first-person pronoun or first-person possessive. *LM* 69, 83, *AW* 85, *LRM* 206, 252, *MBSC* 385.
- neej** - two. Johnston 19, spelled **neezh**, Nichols 101, spelled **niizh**. *AW* 73.
- neewin** - four. Johnston 19 and Nichols 101, spelled **niwin**. *AW* 183.
- neshke** - look, behold. Kegg 256, spelled **nashke**. Nichols 93, also spelled **nashke**. *Birchbark* 243, spelled **neshkey**. *LRM* 51, 95, 162, 244.
- nibaan** - you sleep. Nichols 95, spelled **nibaa**, “sleep,” **nibaagan**, “bed.” *LRM* 206.
- nibi** - water. Kegg 258. Nichols 96. *AW* 92, 124, *LRM* 104.
- niiji** - my friend. Nichols 100, spelled **niijii**. *LRM* 289.
- niin** - I, me. Kegg 260. Nichols 100. *LRM* 98.
- niminwendam** - I am happy, I like the way I feel. Kegg, 258, where **ni**, indicates first person, and 254, where **minwendam** means “be glad, be happy.” *LRM* 133.
- nimishoomis** - my grandfather. Nichols 96. *LRM* 303.
- ninaandawenimaa** - I wish for. Nichols 92, spelled **nandawendan**, “want, desire.” *LRM* 95.
- nindebisinii** - I have eaten plenty. Nichols 44, spelled **debisinii**, “eat enough, be full (after eating).” *LRM* 292.
- nindinawemaganidok** - all my relatives, or everything that has existed in time. *LRM* epigraph and 360–61 (where it is spelled **nindinawemagonidok**).
- ninimoshe** - my sweetheart, my love, my cousin. Baraga 298. Nichols 100, spelled **niinimoshenh**. *AW* 22, 30, 229.
- niswey** - three. Johnston 19, spelled **nisswih**, Nichols 99, spelled **niswi**. *AW* 99.
- niwiiw** - my wife. Nichols 99. *LRM* 112, 292.
- n’gah** - my girl, my mother. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it is “an old word for mother.” *LRM* 104.
- n’gushi** - I’m sorry. *LM* 102, 266.
- n’gwunajiw** - my love (?). *BP* 104.
- n’kawnis** - my brother. Johnston 29, spelled **kawniss**. *LM* 263.
- n’mama** - my mother. *LRM* 187.
- n’missae** - my oldest sister. Johnston 29, spelled **missaehn**. *BP* 5.
- n’tawnis** - my brother-in-law. Johnston 29, spelled **neetawiss**. Nichols 101, spelled **niitaa**, “my (male’s) brother-in-law.” *LRM* 112.
- neenawind** - we, us. Johnston 121. *Tr* 138.
- nimanendam** - I am sad. Nichols 82,

- spelled **maanendam**, “feel bad, feel depressed,” with the **ni-** prefix designating the first person. *LRM* 293.
- nokomis** - my grandmother. Nichols 102, spelled **nookomis**. *LRM* 245.
- O**
- odaemin** - strawberry. Nichols 104, spelled **ode'im**. *AW* 135.
- odjib** - made of smoke, ghostly, without a body. See also **jibay**, above. *Tr* 35.
- ogichida** - soldier, ceremonial chief. Nichols 105, spelled **ogichidaa**. *AW* 130.
- ogitchidaa-ikwe** - strong woman, “soldier woman,” ceremonial headwoman. Kegg, 262, where **ogichidaa** means “ritual attendant in a ceremony,” and 243, where **ikwe** means “woman.” *LRM* 166.
- ojiid** - his or her rectum. Nichols 68, spelled **injiid**, “my rectum.” Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it “can also refer to the entire rear end.” *LRM* 291.
- Ojibwemowin** - the Ojibwe language. Nichols 105. *LRM* 51, 164, 258, 284, 290.
- Ojimaakwe** - Boss Woman. Nichols 108. *Tr* 7, 220, *BP* 23.
- Omakakayakeeng** - frog land, Finland (Germany?). See Nichols 106, where **omakakii** is translated as frog, and *Birchbark* 5, where the protagonist’s name **Omakayas** is translated as Little Frog. *AW* 132.
- Omakakayininiwug** - frog people, Finlanders (Germans?). *AW* 132.
- Ombaashi** - He Is Lifted By Wind. *Tr* 7, 220.
- ombe** - come here. Nichols 8, spelled **ambe**, “come on!, let’s go!, attention!” Erdrich notes in private correspondence that **ombe**, **omaa** means “come, or come here.” *LRM* 252.
- Omiimii** - Dove. *Tr* 45, 220.
- onaubin-geezis**, **onaabani-giizis** - March, crust on the snow month. Johnston 22. *Tr* 32, *LRM* 61.
- onji** - go (?). Kegg 264, “from a certain place, for a certain reason.” Nichols 109. *LRM* 95.
- opwagaansz** - cigarette (pipe). Kegg 264, spelled **opwaagan**, “pipe for smoking.” Nichols 110, spelled **opwagaans**, “cigarette.” *LRM* 51.
- oshkay** - new, young. Nichols 110, spelled **oshkay’ii** and **oshki**. *AW* 13, 171.
- owah** - Oh! *Birchbark* 244, “exclamation of alarm or surprise, like ‘Oh!’” *AW* 77, 130, 133, 171, 209.
- Ozhawashkwamashkodeykway** - Blue Prairie Woman. *AW* 12, 102.
- ozhibi’igan(an)** - note(s). Nichols 111, spelled **ozhibii’iganan**. *LRM* 357.
- P**
- pagetinamahgeh** - let them, allow them to. Nichols 23, spelled **bagidinamawaad**. *LRM* 96.
- pahtahneynahwug** - many. Nichols 211, spelled **baataylinowag**. *LRM* 95.
- pakuks** - skeletons of babies. *Birchbark* 244, “skeletons of children that fly through the air.” *AW* 12, 13.
- patakizoo** - have erections. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that it is “the plural command form of ‘stand it up.’” She adds that “‘patakizoo’ was of course meant for Ojibwe speakers. I had lots of help with it.” *LRM* 95, 96.
- pauguk beboon** - skeleton winter. *Tr* 165.
- payaetonookaedaed-geezis** - the wood louse sun (in November?). Not in Johnston’s list of months on p. 22, but there is reference to the armistice that ended World War I in that chapter of *Tracks*, and that took place November 11, 1918. On p. 23 Johnston defines **payaetonookaedaed** as wood louse. *Tr* 131.
- peendigaen**, **piindigen** - welcome, come in. Kegg 230, spelled **biindige**, “enter, go inside, come inside.” Nichols 37, also spelled **biindige**. *BP* 28, 139, *LRM* 183.
- pikwayzhigun** - bread (sliced), bannock. Johnston 26, spelled **piquaezhigun**. Nichols 25, spelled **bakwezhigan**. *AW* 56.

pukwe - hand-woven reed mats. *LRM* 103, 104.

Q

R

S

sa - an intensifier. Kegg 265, “emphatic.” Nichols 112. *LRM* 98.

saaa - sound of disapproval or contempt, a kind of hiss. *LRM* 97.

Sanawashonekek - Lying Down Grass. *Tr* 220.

shabwii’ing - get through, survive. Nichols 124, spelled **zhaabsii**, “go through, pass through, survive.” *LRM* 95.

shkendeban - erect penis. *LRM* 293.

’skimood - bag. See **mashkimood**, above. *AW* 134.

skwaybee, shkwebii - tipsy, drunk. *AW* 126, *LRM* 111, 312.

T

tahnee - there will be. *LRM* 95.

tikinagan(an), tikinagun - cradle board(s). *Birchbark* 244, “a cradle board made of lightweight wood, with a footrest on one end and a bow-shaped frame at the other. A baby is wrapped snugly into the tikinagun with cloth, blankets, and skins. The tikinagun can be carried on the mother’s back, leaned against a tree or a wall, or safely hung from a tree branch.” *AW* 3, 58, *LRM* 184, 261.

U

V

W

waabooyaan(an) - blanket(s). Kegg 266. Nichols 115. *LRM* 164.

Waubanikway - Dawn Woman. Nichols 114, spelled **waaban**, “dawn.” *AW* 142.

we’ew(ug) - wife (wives). *AW* 134, 228.

weh’ehn - namesake. *AW* 172.

Wenabojo - trickster creator. Nichols 118, spelled **Wenabozho**, “character viewed as culture hero and trickster, also Nenabozho.” *AW* 81.

weyass - meat. Johnston 26, spelled **weeyauss**. Nichols 121, spelled

wiiyass. *AW* 14, 138.

wiinag(ag) - penis(es). Nichols 100, spelled **niinag**, “my penis.” *LRM* 93, 96, 153.

wiisaakodewinini(wag) - half-breed(s), “half-burnt wood,” person(s) of mixed ancestry, Métis. Nichols 120. *Birchbark* 244, spelled **wisikodewinini**, “‘half-burnt wood,’ a descriptive word for mixed-blood (part white) Anishabeg.” *LRM* 63, 96.

wiiw - wife. See **we’ew(ug)**, above, and Nichols 99, spelled **niwiiw**, my wife. *LRM* 285.

wika-iganan - house, building. Nichols 116, spelled **waakaa’igan**. *LRM* 187.

windigo(og) - starvation winter beast. Johnston 24, spelled **weendigo**, “the glutton—the spirit of excess and paradoxically of moderation, excess in any form leads to self-destruction.” Nichols 120, spelled **wiindigoo**, “winter cannibal monster.” *Birchbark* 244, “a giant monster of Ojibwa teachings, often made of ice and associated with the starvation and danger of deep winter.” *LM* 75, 318, *BP* 155, 224, 273, *AW* 35, 55, 57, 109, etc., *LRM* 93, 284, etc.

Wshkob - Sweet, Sweet One. *LRM* 64, 231.

X

Y

Z

Zeziikaikwe - Unexpected. *Tr* 220.

zhaawanong - to the south. Nichols 125. *LRM* 243.

zhaginash - Englishman, English language. Nichols 124, spelled **zhaaganaash**. *AW* 139.

zhaaganaash-akiing - Canadian, or the land where English is spoken. *LRM* 83.

zhaaganaashimowin - the English language. *LRM* 169.

zhaaganaash, zhaginash(iwug) - Englishman (-men), white man (men). Nichols 124. *BP* 6, 58, 140, *LRM* 64, 83.

zhooniya - money. Nichols 128, spelled **zhooniyaa**. *LRM* 167.

FULL SENTENCES IN OJIBWE

Here are several sentences or combinations of sentences from *The Antelope Wife* and *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. Most of the individual words also appear in the glossary above. The sentences are arranged alphabetically by the spelling of the first word in the sentence.

Aaniin ezhichigeyan, n'mama? - Lulu asks her mother Fleur, "Where are you going, mother?" *LRM* 187.

Aaniindi gi-izhamin ina? - Lulu asks her mother Fleur, "Where will we go?" *LRM* 241.

Ando miniquen! - Father Damien tells the drunken Mashkiigikwe, while giving her some money, "Go look for a drink." *LRM* 305.

Daga, daga, n'dawnis, ombe. Gizhawenimin. Izhadaa. - Fleur begs her daughter Lulu to accept her as her mother, saying, "Please, please, my daughter, come on. I love you. Let's go." *LRM* 252.

Daga naazh opwaagaanz! - Father Damien says to Father Jude, "Please get me a cigarette!" *LRM* 51.

Dahgo chimookoman makazin! - The guests complain about the tough moose meat by saying, "Just like a white man's shoe!" *AW* 171.

Gakinago giigaa kitchi manitiminin. Ininiwag, dagasaa patakizoog! Ikweywug, pagetnamahgehgh! Ahau, anishinabedok, patakizoog! Ahua! Manitadaa! - The strong older woman says to the Ojibwe survivors, "All of us will have big intercourse. You men, get those erections up! You women, allow them to do what needs to be done. Okay, men, erections! Okay, let's all have sex!" *LRM* 96.

Gigaa minwendam i'in? - Father Damien says to Fleur, "Can I make you feel good?" *LRM* 81.

Hihn! Daga, miishishin! - Sophie Morrissey says to Marie Kashpaw, "Hey, please, give it [bottle] to me!" *LRM* 323.

Indah be izah inah? - Cally calls her grandmother and asks, "Shall I come over?" *AW* 109.

Izhah, mino nibaan, n'dawnis. - Father Damien says to Mary Kashpaw, "Go get a good sleep, my daughter." *LRM* 206.

Magizha gaytay mooz. - A guest complains about the meal by saying, "Maybe it was an old moose." *AW* 171.

Magizha oshkay. - Another guest says of the same moose, "Maybe it was a young one." *AW* 171.

Mekadewikonayewinini majii ayaan'na? Hihn! Niminwendam gegahwabamayaan, in'gozis. - Lulu teasingly asks Father Damien, "Will the old priest be here? Too bad. I like to see you, my son." *LRM* 133.

Mii'e etaa i'we gay onji shabwii'ing, gakina awiyaa ninaandawenimaa chi mazhiweyt. Neshke idash tahnee pahthahneynahwug gey ani bimautiziwaad. - The older woman says to the surviving tribal members, "That's the way to get through this. I want you all to have lots of sex. Then many will live on." *LRM* 95.

NOTES

1. I must immediately acknowledge the kind assistance of two women who generously helped with this project. First, I am grateful to Marlene Robinson Stately, whose Ojibwe name is *Anangokwe* or "Star Woman," for her help in translating some of the Ojibwe words, phrases, and sentences in this document. She is a Native first

speaker enrolled with the Minnesota Chippewa tribe's Leech Lake band of Ojibwe. Second, I am grateful to Louise Erdrich herself for kindly looking over two drafts of this article and for correcting, in private correspondence, some of my errors and misunderstandings. She acknowledges the help of her friend and teacher, Jim Clark (Naawi-giisis [*Center of the Day*]), a native speaker of Ojibwe, and asks to express here her gratitude to Marlene Stately.

2. Louise Erdrich, "Two Languages in Mind, Just One in the Heart," was originally published in the *New York Times*, 22 May 2000, E 1–2, but is conveniently reprinted in *North Dakota Quarterly* (American Indian Issue) 67 (Fall 2000): 213–16. My first epigraph is taken from p. 216.

3. We are in the mind of the dying Father Damien in Erdrich's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 348. Hereafter cited as *LRM*.

4. From "Louise Erdrich," an interview with Mark Anthony Rolo published in the April 2002 issue of *The Progressive*, 40. The full interview runs pages 36–40.

5. Louise Erdrich, private correspondence in the fall of 2003.

6. From Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (New York: HarperPerennial, new and expanded edition, 1993), 73. Hereafter cited as *LM*.

7. From Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988), 26. Hereafter cited as *Tr*.

8. Earl Shorris in "The Last Word: Can the World's Small Languages Be Saved," *Harper's Magazine*, August 2000, speaks about the slow but inexorable death of most native languages: "210 of the original 300 or more languages once spoken in the United States and Canada remain in use or memory; 175 are spoken in the United States, including Alaska, and of these all but 20, perhaps fewer, cannot survive much longer" (35–36). I might note here that, although in earlier books Erdrich used the spelling "Chippewa," "Ojibway," or "Ojibwa," in her more recent writings she uses the spelling "Ojibwe," which I have adopted here.

9. I take this word from Basil Johnston's *Ojibway Language Lexicon for Beginners*, published in 1978 in Ottawa, Canada, "under the authority of the Hon. J. Hugh Faulkner, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada." This lexicon is out of print and not readily available.

10. Erdrich, "Two Languages in Mind," 216, 214.

11. From "The American Indian Fiction Writers: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, the Third World, and First Nation Sovereignty," first published in Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays: A Tribal Voice* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996). I quote from page 24 of the essay, reprinted in *Nothing But the Truth*, eds. John L. Purdy and James Ruppert (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001).

12. Louise Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club* (New York: HarperCollins 2003), hereafter cited as *MBSC*.

13. Louise Erdrich, *The Bingo Palace* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 233. Hereafter cited as *BP*.

14. Louise Erdrich, *Tales of Burning Love* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 102. Hereafter cited as *TBL*.

15. John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm, *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 39. This book is a revision and

expansion of the authors' *Ojibwewi-Ikidowinan: An Ojibwe Word Resource Book*, published in 1979.

16. Louise Erdrich, *The Antelope Wife* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), 109. Hereafter cited as *AW*. For a stimulating discussion of Erdrich's "strange" use of Ojibwe in *The Antelope Wife*, see David Treuer, "Reading Culture," in *Studies in American Indian Literatures (SAIL)* 14 (2002): esp. 52–55.

17. Erdrich notes in private correspondence that "I wanted the work to wash over a reader and to me it is fine if a reader understands in a general way. Also, I thought it might spur readers to look into Ojibwemowan."

18. Coming home is as important in the novels by Native Americans as leaving home is in novels by whites. Although for many white protagonists, their ability to break ties with their familial past and strike out confidently on their own is a sign of their growth, for many Indian protagonists, who have lost touch with their family or reservation community, a sign of growth is that they return to the homeplace.

19. In the glossary I make no effort to show how the words, phrases, or sentences would have been pronounced. Readers interested in the basics of Ojibwe pronunciation might want to gain access to a course in Ojibwe that consists of four cassettes and two booklets. The booklet *Everyday Ojibwe* covers commands and common expressions, while *Ojibwe Word Lists* includes separate lesson units on time, weather, feelings, household items, actions, food, clothing, and other topics of daily living. The four tapes (spoken by Rick Gresczyk [Gayakognaabo] and Margaret Sayers [Awasilizhikok] and the two undated booklets are available from Eagle Works, Box 580564, Minneapolis, MN 55458-0564. As this article goes to press, the U.S. Congress is debating the merits of Senate Bill 575, the Native American Languages Act of 2003, designed to ensure that at least some Indian languages will survive by being taught and used as instructional languages in schools.