Indirect Evidentials in the Cree/Montagnais/Naskapi of Quebec and Labrador

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INTRODUCTION

The dialects spoken at the eastern end of the Cree/Montagnais/Naskapi dialect continuum, in Quebec and Labrador, contain several types of verb morphology which do not appear in the more westerly dialects of the language and which indicate types of epistemic modality. One of these involves the use of two suffixes which function as evidentials, first described in detail in Drapeau (1984) for the dialect of Betsiamites, Quebec, and labelled by her the “indirect mode”. In this paper, we survey the distribution of these suffixes across different dialects, examine their functions in light of Willett’s (1988) survey of the grammaticization of evidentiality, and speculate as to the paths of semantic development they have undergone and their possible historical origins.

FORMS AND DISTRIBUTION

The first of these suffixes most commonly takes the form -tak. The second suffix most commonly takes the form [-ʃɑpɑn], phonemicized in Drapeau (1984) as /-shipan/; following her lead, we will refer to this form as -shipan (but see footnote 8 in our section on historical origins for further comments on the phonemicization of the first vowel). These two evidential suffixes are equivalent in meaning, differing only with respect to tense: -tak indicates present tense, -shipan past tense. Both suffixes are restricted to verbs in the independent order.¹

¹ They occur in the same positions as dubitative and preterit suffixes. They are added directly after the stem vowel in Al and II third persons and throughout the TA paradigm, and after fully inflected third person TI forms; a short vowel is lengthened before -shipan. In first and second person intransitive verbs, /a:/ is inserted between the fully inflected form and -tak or -shipan. Plural and obviative morphemes follow these suffixes.
The map in Figure 1 summarizes what we know about the distribution of these forms. They occur primarily in the Montagnais dialects of the eastern part of Quebec and Labrador. The two communities for which the most data are available are Sheshatshiu (formerly North West River) and Betsiamites. Our information about Sheshatshiu derives primarily from fieldwork conducted by Marguerite MacKenzie and José
the data discussed in the following sections are taken from interviews with eighteen speakers. All Sheshatshiu examples are taken from this corpus unless otherwise noted. Baraby (1984) also provides information about -tak and -shipan in Sheshatshiu. Drapeau (1984) gives an excellent and detailed account of the uses of these suffixes in Betsiamites. Cyr (1990) is our primary source of information about the Quebec Lower North Shore area. Our data on the Western Naskapi dialect as spoken in Kawawachikamach (Schefferville) and on the East Cree dialects spoken in Chisasibi (formerly Fort George) and Waskaganish (formerly Rupert House) come from fieldwork conducted by Marguerite MacKenzie.

In Sheshatshiu and the Lower North Shore, there also occurs a form -sha (showing up most commonly as -ha in the Lower North Shore, reflecting a variable rule in Montagnais by which [h] replaces [s] before vowels and word-finally). This appears to carry the same meaning as -shipan. In both dialects, only -shipan/-hipan appears in animate verbs marked as as third person plural or as obviative; -sha/-ha cannot appear in these contexts (Baraby 1984:153–4, Martin 1983:186). In our Sheshatshiu data, -sha is otherwise a rare alternative to -shipan. However, in the Lower North Shore, -ha entirely replaces -hipan in all contexts other than the two just specified, so that the two forms are in a suppletive relationship (Martin 1983:186, Cyr 1990:62).

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Baraby (1984:153) gives this form a long vowel (sha:). The vowel appears short in our data, and Martin (1983), Drapeau (1985) and Cyr (1990) all cite this vowel as short in the equivalent Lower North Shore form. In Sheshatshiu as in other Montagnais dialects, vowel length is neutralized in absolute final position, making it difficult to disambiguate vowel length. We assume here that the vowel is short.

Baraby (1984:153) reports that according to her consultant, -sha might indicate a slightly more remote past than -shipan, but that this difference is very tenuous.
We found no examples of -tak in our Sheshatshiu data, but this may be because in our interviews, speakers talked primarily about events taking place in the past. Examples of the use of -tak in Sheshatshiu are reported in Baraby (1984:152–3).

In the more northern dialects, /a/ is replaced by /i/ in non-initial position, giving -tik and -shipin. In Chisasibi, only -tik appears; to indicate past tense evidentiality, this dialect adds the past tense preverb ci:- to a verb suffixed with -tik. Neither evidential suffix is used in the dialects of the more southwesterly part of Quebec, including East Cree as spoken at Waskaganish and Atikamekw Cree (Boo Stime, personal communication). No dialects west of Quebec contain these forms. Figure 1 provides an overview of the regional distribution of these forms.

EVIDENTIALITY

Evidentials can be defined as morphemes which indicate the kind of evidence the speaker has for the claim that s/he is making in his/her statement. They can indicate either direct evidence or indirect evidence; -tak and -shipan indicate indirect evidence, the more commonly marked of the two cross-linguistically. Indirect evidence markers signal that the speaker was not a direct witness of the event described, but instead bases his or her claim on some other type of evidence. Willett (1988), in a cross-linguistic survey of the grammaticization of evidentiality, observes that languages tend to distinguish two main types of indirect evidence: verbal reports and inference, labelled by him “Reported” evidence and “Inferring” evidence. Reported evidence can be divided into three subtypes: second-hand, third-hand, and folklore; each of these may be marked by a specific evidential morpheme in languages (second-hand more frequently than third-hand, and third-hand more frequently than folklore). Willett divides inferring evidence into two major subtypes. On the one hand, the speaker can infer that something is or was the case on the basis of the observable results of that event or state; on the other, s/he can infer that something is or was the case by means of abstract reasoning. The former is significantly more likely to be marked by a separate evidential morpheme in languages than the latter (Willett 1988:62–3; see Table 1).
Table 1. Types of indirect evidence (Willett 1988:57)

1. Reported evidence:  
   A. Second-hand (“someone told me”)  
   B. Third-hand (“it is said”, “people say”)  
   C. Folklore  

2. Inferring evidence:  
   A. Results  
   B. Reasoning — subtypes include logic, past experience, intuition  

INFERRING EVIDENCE

-tak and -shipan are much more strongly associated with Inferring evidence than with Reported evidence in Cree/Montagnais/Naskapi. For example, in both Sheshatshiu and Betsiamites, the two dialects for which the most information is available, they can be used to signal inference from an observable or tangible result of the action or state of affairs described. Examples 1 and 2 are from Sheshatshiu. In 1, -shipan indicates that the speaker infers that a fire must have already been made, on the grounds that she remembers it being warm when they arrived; in 2, -tak indicates that the speaker infers that the addressee is closing the door, on the grounds that s/he can hear the sound of the door closing. These examples also illustrate the association of -shipan with past tense and -tak with present tense.

1. \[\text{sha:sh ci:-kutaweshipan, cishiteshinu tekushinu:ci:hc}\]  
   already he.made.a.fire-shipan it.is.warm when.we.arrived  
   ‘He must have already made a fire, it was warm when we arrived.’

2. \[\text{tšopeta:tn tšetšojejna:tok stogwēn}\]  
   I.hear.you you.close.it-tak door  
   ‘I hear you, you must be closing the door.’ (Baraby 1984:153)

Drapeau provides similar examples from Betsiamites. For instance, in 3, the speaker infers that a moose must have walked by on the grounds that s/he can see moose tracks; this is marked by -shipan:

3. \[\text{pimūteshipan ute mūsh}\]  
   it.walk-shipan here moose  
   ‘A moose must have walked by here.’ (Drapeau 1984:31)

-tak and -shipan can also indicate inference via reasoning, Willett’s second major type of Inferring evidence, at least in Sheshatshiu (we have
insufficient information on this subject with respect to other dialects). For example, in 4 -shipan signals that the speaker infers that his father must have seen his grandfather, on the grounds that he (the father) makes frequent trips to Sept-Iles (where the grandfather lives). This inference involves straightforward logical deduction; it is not based on an observable result. A similar example involving -tak is provided in 5.

(4) nimishum, ehe wa:pameshipan, ekute ante eshpanit
   my.grandfather yes he.saw.him-shipan that’s.where there he.goes
   na:ntam, nete Wa:sha:hc ante ishpaniw
   always there Sept-Iles there he.goes
   ‘My grandfather, yes he [my father] must have seen him, that’s where he always goes, he always goes there to Sept-Iles.’

(5) (the coat has been suspended over the hot stove for a long time)
   pa:stetak stɔgwuf
   it.is.dry-tak coat
   ‘The coat must be dry.’ (Baraby 1984:153)

REPORTED EVIDENCE

When we turn to Reported evidence, however, -tak and -shipan are used in only limited ways. Verbal report is usually marked not by these suffixes but by the presence of a verb of speaking, meaning, for example, ‘someone said’, ‘s/he said’; what was said is presented as direct discourse. This was observed in Drapeau (1984) with respect to Betsiamites Montagnais and is the case in all dialects for which we have relevant data. Example 6, from Sheshatshiu, is an illustration involving a second-hand report.

(6) ...tipa:cimu:pan peyakwa:w Ma:ni...
   she.told.about.it once Mary there in.the.bush there
   awen sha:wenic”, [n]ite:w.
   someone he.was.hungry she.says
   ‘Mary talked about it once... “...Someone was hungry, there in the bush”, she says.’

Third-hand reports normally make use of direct discourse plus an indefinite subject form such as ita:ka:nu ‘it is said about him/her’, as illustrated in 7.
(7) *ekwan ne kwe nipinici: ita:kanu*
that's.the.one that then he.is.dead it.is.said
‘He died, it is said.’

Folklore, Willett’s third type of Reported evidence, never makes use of
-tak and -shipan; ordinary indicative forms are used, with perhaps just
the first few lines in direct discourse format with *ita:ka:nu* or a similar
form (Drapeau 1984:34).

However, it is not the case that -tak and -shipan can never appear in
contexts involving Reported evidence. Cyr (1990), for instance, gives the
Lower North Shore example in 8, providing as background context that
the speaker has just been told by someone: “Have you heard the news?
The king has arrived.” The speaker reports this using -ha (the Lower
North Shore equivalent of -shipan in this sentence):

(8) *tukuhiniha tshiheutshimau*
he.arrive-/*ha* king
‘The king has arrived.’ (Cyr 1990:163)

Cyr speculates that -ha may have been used here instead of direct
discourse because the statement represents “hot news”. It may be
relevant that there is an element of surprise present in “hot news”;
Anderson (1986:278, 284) notes in a typological survey of evidential
meanings that indirect evidentials are sometimes used to indicate surprise
at an unexpected state of affairs.5

Drapeau (1984:31) also provides one example of the use of -shipan
involving hearsay in Betsiamites. We are unaware of any unambiguous
examples of this type of use in Sheshatshiu. However, in our corpus,
-shipan can be used to indicate unspecified indirect evidence which could
include hearsay; we leave further discussion of this to the next section.

Drapeau reports, in addition, two contexts in which -tak and -shipan
can be used in Betsiamites which involve specifically Reported evidence.
First, -tak or -shipan appears when the speaker has learned the informa-
tion in question from a source such as a newspaper, television, or radio,

5 Similarly, the morpheme -ehe in Fox, which also derives from Proto-
Algonquian *(e)sap*an, as do -shipan/-sha (as we will argue in a later section),
includes among its possible meanings both indirect evidentiality and “surprise
(counter to previous expectations)” (Dahlstrom 1994).
(9) (the speaker has read this in the newspaper)
lāshipitolatak pakâkuânat
they.are.on.sale-tak chickens
‘It appears that chickens are on sale.’ (Drapeau 1984:30)

(10) (the speaker has heard this on the radio)
ishkuâteshipan nite Rageneau
there.is.a.fire-shipan there Rageneau
‘There appears to have been a fire at Rageneau.’ (Drapeau 1984:31)

We found no examples of this type in our Sheshatshiu corpus, however, and when asked about such examples, Sheshatshiu speakers claimed that they were not acceptable.

Second, Drapeau (1984:34) notes that in Betsiamites, -shipan is sometimes used in narratives of the tipacimîwin genre (i.e., accounts of life experience, as opposed to legends) which describe events that the speaker has heard about from someone else; it is associated here specifically with backgrounded information (see the next section for further comments), while dubitative forms are used to indicate foregrounded information. This contrasts with the more usual pattern for second-hand narratives in which the narrative is couched in direct discourse format. Drapeau suggests that some relevant factors determining which format is used are whether the narrator knows the people in the story personally or not, whether the story deals with things that happened long ago or recently, and whether the narrative is second-hand or third-hand; that is, factors involving how “close” the story is to the speaker. She does not specify whether she considers the format using -shipan to be more strongly associated with closeness to or distance from the speaker; her example narrative suggests distance. This would follow, since indirect evidentials tend to have the effect of distancing the speaker from the event described (Aksu-Koç and Slobin 1986:164). We are unable to comment on whether a similar phenomenon occurs in the Sheshatshiu dialect, since our corpus contains primarily narratives describing events either personally experienced by the speaker or experienced by someone relatively close to the speaker.6

6 Drapeau (1996), published subsequent to the writing of this paper, provides an example of a second-hand narrative in which evidentials indicate backgrounded information.
All this suggests that -tak and -shipan were originally Inferring evidentials, but that their range of use has expanded so that they are now also appropriate in some Reported evidence contexts, particularly in the Betsiamites dialect. In addition, there is evidence that these suffixes are now frequently used simply to signal indirect evidence of unspecified type, where this could include Reported evidence. To this we now turn.

UNSPECIFIED INDIRECT EVIDENCE

In the Sheshatshiu corpus, -shipan is often used to indicate unspecified indirect evidence which could include hearsay. For example, in 11, the most likely source of the information provided is that the speaker has heard others speak of it, but it is also possible that inference of some type could be involved. In effect, -shipan simply indicates here that the speaker does not speak from first-hand knowledge.

(11) (Q. Did Manitesh have a lot of children?)
   A. ehe, mihcetini:shipani: utawa:ssi:ma ciya:
     yes they.were.many-shipan his.children eh
     'Yes, it seems he had a lot of children, eh?'

A particularly common use of -shipan in which it indicates unspecified indirect evidence is that illustrated in 12. Here, -shipan signals that the speaker was not aware of the event described at the time that it happened, but came to know of it only later through some undefined means which could include inference from observable results, inference via reasoning, or verbal report.

     bird it.flew.around-shipan there inside our.place
     'It turned out that a bird had flown around in our tent.'

This use is very frequent in the Sheshatshiu corpus, is described by Drapeau (1984) for Betsiamites, and is also cited by Cyr for the Lower North Shore; as well, it occurs in at least the East Cree dialect of Chisasibi. Examples 13 and 14 are from Betsiamites and the Lower North Shore respectively.

(13) miluekâsh ninipânâshipan
    long.time I.sleept-shipan
    'It turned out that I had slept a long time.' (Drapeau 1984:30)
It was noted in the previous section that -shipan can indicate backgrounded information in second-hand narratives in Betsiamites. Drapeau reports that it can also be used to signal backgrounding in first-hand narratives, and suggests that since backgrounded information typically involves events or states of affairs holding true prior to the foregrounded events of the narrative, this use of -shipan is the basically same as that illustrated in 12–14, in which -shipan indicates that the speaker became aware of the event or state only after the fact. This may help to elucidate, if not entirely explain, the use of -shipan in second-hand narratives. We have not, however, found any significant association between -shipan and backgrounding in Sheshatshiu narratives (first-hand or second-hand), so this may constitute another respect in which -shipan is used in a wider range of contexts in Betsiamites than in Sheshatshiu.

-tak AND -shipan AS DISTANCING DEVICES

An interesting further ramification of the use of -tak and -shipan is that speakers can use these suffixes when they are distanced in some way from the event or state of affairs described, even though their knowledge of it may come from first-hand evidence; in such cases, speakers are presenting themselves as if they were not direct witnesses, as if their knowledge was indirect rather than direct. It was noted earlier that indirect evidentials tend cross-linguistically to have the effect of distancing the speaker from the event described (Aksu-Koç and Slobin 1986:164); in Cree/Montagnais/Naskapi, this connection is further exploited in that indirect evidentials can be used to signal a distanced stance.

First, literal physical distance can be involved. -tak and -shipan can be used to indicate something seen at a distance, as illustrated in 15 and 16, from Betsiamites and Sheshatshiu respectively.

(15) tetakat ãtshukuat nite tãukam
they.are.there-tak seals there out.in.the.water
‘There are seals out there in the water.’ (Drapeau 1984:30)
INDIRECT EVIDENTIALS IN CREE/MONTAGNAIS/NASKAPI

(16) mi:tšušapənt na:pewt
    they.eat-shipan men
    ‘Some men are eating [over there].’ (Baraby 1984:153)

It is important to note that in such utterances, it is not necessarily the case that the speaker cannot clearly distinguish the objects or people in question. For example, Drapeau points out that 15 is appropriate even when the speaker can clearly see the seals in the water. She suggests that because of the distance involved, the speaker counts as not a direct participant in the scene described, a notion related to that discussed here.

The same phenomenon is involved in examples like the following from Chisasibi; this would be uttered when the speaker was looking at his or her image in a mirror or a pool of water or on television. It would not be used if the speaker was simply looking down at his or her own body.

(17) niwa:pisina:tik
     L'am.white-tik
    ‘I look white [in a mirror, on television, etc.].’

Here, as in 15–16, the speaker is making a statement for which s/he has first-hand evidence. S/he uses -tik, however, to distance himself or herself from the situation described; by speaking as if the information was learned only at second-hand, s/he signals that s/he is in some way separate from the “I” of the utterance.

A related way in which speakers can use these suffixes is illustrated in the following example from Betsiamites:

(18) tshika-nâtschi-aiamiatək nikiaui utâkussilit
     she.will-go.to-pray-tak my.mother this.evening
    ‘My mother is going to go and pray this evening.’ (Drapeau 1984:30)

Drapeau reports that in this case, the speaker had learned this information through having overheard his mother tell it to someone else. If she had addressed him directly, -tak would subsequently have been inappropriate, as he would have counted as a direct witness of his mother’s intentions;

Baraby gives an unexpected gloss of present rather than past tense for this sentence with -shipan. It has past tense reference in all the examples in our Sheshatshiu data; however, our data do not include any sentences with a “seen at a distance” reading. We are unable to suggest an explanation for this apparent anomaly.
it was because the information was merely overheard that -tak was appropriate. In the most obvious sense, the speaker’s knowledge of his mother’s intentions remains first-hand even when the information is only overheard. However, by speaking as if his knowledge were only indirect, he signals that he is in some sense distanced from the situation in which the information was originally disclosed, that he did not learn that information in the “normal” way.

This use of these suffixes as distancing devices may also explain the occasional example such as 19 which shows up in our Sheshatshiu corpus.

(19) (Q. What did Sister [a nun] say to you?)
A. ...“ce-cishkutama:shuyin” nit-itikushipan
   you.go.to.school she.told.me-shipan
   ‘I think she told me to go to school.’

Here, the speaker is describing an incident in which she was a direct participant and of which she should have first-hand knowledge. However, she is not certain that she remembers accurately what Sister said. In using -shipan, the speaker appears to be choosing to describe the incident as if she had only indirect evidence for it; she is choosing to present herself as distanced from it, as not a direct witness. This may be one stylistic option for dealing with situations in which one’s memory is uncertain.

THE FUNCTIONS OF -tak AND -shipan: SUMMARY

This survey of the uses of -tak and -shipan confirms Drapeau’s (1984:29–30) observation that these suffixes are true indirect evidentials, rather than simply morphemes which signal doubt or uncertainty. In 12–14, for example, involving a meaning paraphraseable in English as “it turned out that...”, the speaker confidently asserts that the event took place; there is no suggestion of any doubt. Similarly, in 15–17, the information would be understood by a hearer as asserted; the presence of -tak or -shipan serves only to indicate that the speaker is distanced in some way from the event or state of affairs described. -tak and -shipan focus, rather, on the provenance of the speaker’s information. (There is another type of morphological marking in Cree/Montagnais/Naskapi which does have as its primary function the indication of doubt or
uncertainty: the use of dubitative suffixes. The relationship between the role played by *-tak* and *-shipan* and the role played by the dubitative is richly deserving of further discussion, but this is beyond the scope of this paper.)

The evidence suggests that *-tak* and *-shipan* originally marked Inferring evidence, but that they have undergone generalization; they now more commonly function as markers of indirect evidence in general, where this could include Reported evidence. However, they remain dispreferred in contexts involving purely Reported evidence. An extended use is that of signalling that the speaker is distanced in some way from the event or state of affairs described.

There is insufficient evidence to determine precisely how much difference there is across dialects in the range of use of these two suffixes. They appear to be more readily able to encode Reported evidence in the Betsiamites dialect than in other dialects, and they may in general occur in a wider variety of contexts in Betsiamites. The East Cree of Chisasibi, the most westerly dialect using evidentials, also manifests the most limited use of these: only one evidential is present (*-tik*), and this appears to have more restricted functions than in other dialects (it seems to be primarily used in the “became aware of the event only after the fact” context exemplified in 12–14 — a particularly common usage across dialects — and the “distanced” context exemplified in 15–17). It is most likely that use of *-tik* has spread to Chisasibi from the more eastern dialects.

**HISTORICAL ORIGINS**

Let us now turn to the question of the historical origins of these forms. Of particular interest is the *-shipan* form and its alternative *-sha*. These suffixes most likely derive from two Proto-Algonquian forms *(e)sapan* and *(e)san* (see Goddard 1979, 1995, and Proulx 1990).

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8 Proto-Algonquian *s* becomes *[s]* in the Cree/Montagnais/Naskapi of the eastern and southern Quebec-Labrador area. In phonemicizing *-shipan* with the vowel /i/ in the first syllable, we have adopted the precedent set by Martin (1983) and Drapeau (1985); however, we are uncertain as to why these writers chose to represent this vowel as /i/, since phonetically the vowels in both syllables are schwas. We see no reason why this suffix is not more correctly phonemicized as *-shapan*, the expected form if this morpheme derives from *(e)sapan.*
According to Goddard and Proulx, these two forms appear to have had the same function; there is no evidence for a contrast in meaning between them. It is possible that *(e)sapan derives from a combination of *(e)san with the preterit suffix *(e)-pan; this would explain the past tense meaning of *(e)-shipan. However, we might then expect a tense contrast between the meanings of *(e)-shipan and *(e)-sha, and there is no such contrast. In other Algonquian languages in which reflexes of both forms occur, there is likewise typically no difference in meaning between the two forms, e.g., Malecite (Goddard 1979:89, 111), Micmac (Proulx 1990:105, Inglis 1995) and Menomini (Proulx 1990:105). In Fox, the reflexes of these two forms have different meanings, but it is the reflex of *(e)san (-ehe) rather than *(e)sapan (-ehapa(n)) which indicates past tense (Goddard 1995, Dahlstrom 1994, 1995). In addition, if *(e)sapan derives from *(e)san plus *(e)-pan, there is no obvious explanation for the deletion of the final /n/ of *(e)san within that form, since /n/ normally deletes only word-finally in Proto-Algonquian (Goddard, personal communication).

While there is a fair amount of variation in the meanings of the modern reflexes of *(e)san/*(e)sapan in different Algonquian languages, in a significant subset of languages it has a “present perfective” meaning, implying an action or state which took place in the past but is relevant to the present (Goddard 1979:89). Such forms are also known as “perfects” or “anteriors”. It has been noted by various writers (e.g., Comrie 1976, Anderson 1986, Willett 1988, Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994) that past tense inferring evidentials frequently derive historically from morphemes with exactly this meaning. Such a development has taken place, for example, in Latvian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Georgian, the Tibetan languages, a number of Uralic languages, Inuktitut, Tucano, and Chinese Pidgin Russian (Comrie 1976:110, Willett 1988:79, Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:95). It seems most likely that perfects develop into past tense inferring evidentials via a “resultative” stage (Bybee et al. 1994:96). With perfects, there can develop over time an increasing emphasis on the result of the past action, i.e., on the way in which that action is relevant to the present. This resulting state exists because of the past action. This semantic development provides a meaning very close to an evidential meaning involving an inference from
observable results; in the evidential meaning, one makes an inference about what event must have taken place in the past on the basis of the observable results of that event which one can see in the present.

It is a reasonable hypothesis, then, that -shipan and -sha derive from Proto-Algonquian *-(e)san/*-(e)sapan, and that their evidential function has developed out of an earlier perfect meaning. This explains why -shipan and -sha are associated more strongly with inference than with reported evidence, since development from a perfect leads to an inferential meaning rather than a reported evidence meaning. ( Reported evidentials more usually derive either from verbs of speaking or from forms expressing logical expectation or necessity [Willett 1988:79, Anderson 1986:289].) However, as has happened with evidentials derived from perfects in other languages (e.g., Turkish), and as normally happens when grammatical morphemes move along such “universal paths” of development (Bybee et al. 1994:14), -shipan and -sha have generalized in use so that they now more typically serve to indicate indirect evidence of unspecified type. It is worthy of note that the modern reflex of *-(e)san/*-(e)sapan in Micmac can also function as an evidential, marking events of which the speaker disclaims personal knowledge, according to Inglis (1995), and that the reflex of *-(e)san in Fox (-ehe) can likewise indicate indirect evidentiality in some contexts (Dahlstrom 1994). In addition, in a number of Algonquian languages which contain reflexes of *-(e)san/*-(e)sapan, the modern morpheme indicates either doubt or some form of irrealis (Goddard 1979, 1995, Dahlstrom 1994, 1995); these uses are related to the evidential use, since indirect evidentiality normally implies that the speaker cannot wholly vouch for the truth of the statement being made.

In Algonquian languages, the reflexes of *-(e)san/*-(e)sapan may also display other types of meaning. In some languages, e.g., Fox (Dahlstrom 1994, 1995) and Malecite (Szabo 1981), a modern reflex can indicate simple past. This is unsurprising if *-(e)san/*-(e)sapan was originally a perfect, since as noted in Bybee et al. (1994:81–87), the development of perfects into simple pasts is also common cross-linguistically. A rather different type of meaning shows up in the reflex -(e)sa in Menomini, which “places an event, often with exclamatory coloring, in the present, in contrast with the past or with expectation” (Bloomfield
However, this form is associated with emphasis and surprise; Anderson (1986:284) points out that forms expressing surprise at a present event can be derived from “current-relevance perfects”. The reason for this probably has to do with the development of perfects into resultatives mentioned earlier (Bybee et al. [1994:67] note that emphatic meaning can be associated with resultatives). Fox -ehapa(n), which "states a definite conclusion reached by the speaker", has a similar emphatic sense (Goddard 1995).

One remaining mystery with respect to -shipan is that of why it is restricted to verbs of the independent order in Montagnais/Naskapi, since this is not usually the case with reflexes of *-(e)san/*-(e)sapan in other languages; Fox -ehapan, however, has the same restriction (Goddard 1995).

There also remains the question of the etymology of the other evidential suffix in Cree/Montagnais/Naskapi, the present tense form -tak. We are unaware of cognates of this form in other Algonquian languages, and we are at present unable to speculate as to its origins. Also mysterious is the question of how -tak has come to fall into step so closely with -shipan, indicating the same range of functions.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have surveyed the distribution and the semantic functions of two evidential suffixes, -tak and -shipan, which appear in the Cree/Montagnais/Naskapi of Quebec and Labrador. We have proposed that in their earliest evidential meaning, they signalled inference on the part of the speaker, but that they have now generalized in use so that they more typically indicate unspecified indirect evidence. We have also suggested that -shipan derives from Proto-Algonquian *-(e)sapan and that its evidential meaning has developed out of an earlier perfect meaning.

These evidential morphemes represent only one of several respects in which the dialects at the eastern end of the Cree/Montagnais/Naskapi continuum make finer morphological distinctions with respect to epistemic modality than is the case in the central and western dialects. Further investigation is certainly called for into these insufficiently examined aspects of the semantics of Algonquian.
REFERENCES


Inglis, Stephanie. 1995. The historical development in Mi’kmaq of Proto-Algonquian *(e)pan and *(e)san. MS.


