"Girls Hunting Groundhogs":
A Text in Golden Lake Algonquin

GEORGE F. AUBIN
Assumption College

1. Introduction

Golden Lake Algonquin, an Algonquian language spoken on the Golden Lake Reserve in southeastern Ontario, is one of a number of related dialects known collectively as Algonquin, a group of dialects that are in turn part of a still larger complex referred to as Ojibwa. From all indications, Golden Lake Algonquin is a dying language: it is spoken solely by an ever-diminishing number of elderly speakers, and only on very rare occasions even by them. The everyday language of the reserve is English, which is used to the virtual exclusion of Golden Lake Algonquin, although one will sometimes hear Algonquin speakers from Maniwaki, a reserve which maintains close ties with Golden Lake.

The text in Golden Lake Algonquin that is the subject of this paper was collected in September of 1985 during my eighth and most recent visit to Golden Lake. Unlike the texts I reported on in an earlier paper (Aubin 1987), this text is totally spontaneous and represents a more conversational type of speech than that of the earlier texts. Not surprisingly, since the local dialect has fallen so completely into disuse, even individuals who were once fluent have occasional difficulties speaking it. Such is the case of my consultant, Mrs. Sara Lavalley, a woman now 90 years of age. In order to give some indication of these disfluencies, I have included in square brackets in the following text the false starts, hesitations, and pauses of my consultant.

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Following the recording of the text, I made a somewhat broad phonetic transcription of it. I then went over the entire text word by word with my consultant, incorporating her comments, additions, and emendations into a more or less final version of the text along with her suggested free translation into English. Because of this, I am confident that what I present here is substantially accurate, although some problems remain, as will be clear from my comments following the text.

I have adopted the following format for the presentation of the text. I present the text sentence by sentence, with the Golden Lake original first. Following this, I give a word-by-word translation into English with a slant line corresponding to the word divisions in the Algonquin text. Finally, there is a translation into idiomatic English, largely along the lines suggested by my consultant. Numbers in parentheses in the Algonquin text refer to the grammatical commentary following the presentation of the text.

2. Text

A. binawigo ēndāyāng (1) [ikwē-] ikwēšinšiwiyāng (2), nīgē ako i-gi-ižiṇāžōgonān (3) [. . . uh . . .] nōpimēng ji-awi-anda-wābamangij (4) [akakojis . . .] akakojis ēndāj (5) [. . .] ēndāwāj (6).

long ago/(where) we live/(when) we be little girls/my mother/used to/ we past-be sent by her/in bush/future-go-look for-we see (him)/groundhog/(where) he live/(where) they live/

'Long ago at home, when we were girls, my mother used to send us in the bush to go look for the groundhog's house.'

B. gispin mikāngwā (7), nigī-igonān (8) [ji-] ji-ižāyāng (9) akikong nibi ji-iži-widoyāng (10) akikong.

if/one find them/we past-be told by her/ future-we go/with pail/water/future-in a certain direction-we carry/with pail/

'If we found them, she told us to go with pails of water, to take them there.'

C. daš [nigi-] nigī-žiṇānānān (11) ēndaži abij (12) akakojis.

then/we past-pour them/there/(where) he live/groundhog/

'We did. We poured them there where he lived, the groundhog.'

D. gi-bi-[zagi-] zagi-jīkozi (13) indas (14).

he past-come-(be) forced out/then/

'He came out of the water then.'


he past-future-go out/future-NEG-he die/there/in water/

'He wanted to go out so he won't die there in the water.'

F. [m-] mī daš [mi-] mitig gi-ābajitōyāng (18) ji-nisang (19).

and then/stick/past-we use (it)/future-we kill him/
We got a stick. We used it to kill it.'

G. nigí-nisánán (20), daš gi-giwêwinangij (21).
we past-kill him/then/past-we take him home/
'We killed it, then we took it home.'

H. [nigiwe- nigí- nigí- ... uh] ningênän daš [ogí-] ogí-binižân (22); [ogí-] ogi-
ikonamawan (23) onagožin.
our mother/then/she past-clean him/she past-remove from him/ his intestines/
'Our mother then cleaned it; she took out the guts.'

I. mî daš (24) gä-iži (25) iškodêng, [ogí-] ogi-ižiwinân (26); gakina (27) gi-
iškwâde (28); [uh ...] gi-iškwâdeni (29); [. . . 'fur' ...] ogi-iškwâzân (30); mî
daš gä-iži (31) gakina ogi-gâkâskawan (32); [. . . uh gân ogi- o- gâ-] ogi-[ ... ba-] bakwajizinîn (33) wiýas.
and/then/past-in a certain direction/to fire/she past-took him/everything/it
past-burn/it past-burn/she past-burn it up/and/then/past-in a certain way/all/
she past-scrape him/NEG/she past-cut (it)/meat/
'She then went to the fire; she took it; everything burned; it burned on him;
it burned him; then she went all over, she scraped it; she didn't cut the meat.'

J. ogi-gâkâskâzân (34) gakina (35) wëwënind (36); ogi-gizísibanân (37); [ogí-]
ogi- [a-] asân (38) daš nibing gabê-dibig.
she past-scrape him/all/properly/she past-wash him/she past-place him/
then/in water/all-night/
'She scraped it good all over; she washed it; she placed it in the water all
night.'

K. gi wâbang indaš (39) ogi-gîzizwân (40).
past/tomorrow/then/she past-cook him/
'The next day she cooked it.'

L. mî goj [e2- a'pingoj pig-] ipogwazi (41) [. . . uh . . .] gôkôš-wiýasíng.
and/EMPH/it tastes/(like) pig-meat/
'It tastes like pig.'

M. mî goj ëta [ëgona-akay-amangij ... ningod- ... 'one' ningodên ... ] ningodên
(42) [-ën ji-] ji-awi-amangij (43) [ënso midâsobëbo- . . .] ëndaso (44) [ënso
midâsogê-] midâsogédag (45).
and/EMPH/only/once/future-go-we eat (him)/every/ten days/
'That's all we had to eat once every ten days.'

3. Commentary

A. (1) ëndâyâng: Al 1p Conjunct Neutral (Changed).
(2) ikwešinìwiýâng: Al 1p Conjunct Neutral.
(3) ogi-ižinâzôgonân: TA 3s-1p Inverse Independent Neutral.
(4) wâbamangij: TA 1p-3s Conjunct Neutral.
(5) ëndâj: Al 3s Conjunct Neutral (Changed).
(6) ëndâwâj: Al 3p Conjunct Neutral (Changed).
B. (7) mikângwâ: TA Indefinite Subject-3p Conjunct Neutral.
   (8) nigî-igonân: TA 3s-1p Inverse Independent Neutral.
   (9) ižâyâng: AI 1p Conjunct Neutral.
   (10) widöyâng: TI 1p-3 Conjunct Neutral. In the TI Conjunct, Golden Lake
does not distinguish between a singular and a plural object; see also
number 18.
   (12) abij: AI 3s Conjunct Neutral.
D. (13) zâgijikîzi: AI 3s Independent Neutral.
   (14) indas: This form sometimes occurs as indâš, as in sentence K.
E. (15) zâgařam: AI 3s Independent Neutral.
   (16) niboj: AI 3s Conjunct Neutral.
   (17) indâži: This form is sometimes shortened to azi.
F. (18) âbajîtöyâng: TI 1p-3 Conjunct Neutral. See number 10.
   (19) nisang: TA 1p-3s Conjunct Neutral. The expected form here is nisangîj.
   In my data, Golden Lake does not usually distinguish between inclu­sive and exclusive first person plural forms. The form given here is an
inclusional form that seems to have an exclusive meaning; compare with
numbers 4, 21, and 42.
G. (20) nigî-nisânân: TA 1p-3s Independent Neutral.
   (21) giwëwinangij: TA 1p-3s Conjunct Neutral.
H. (22) ogî-biîtî: TA 3s-3’ Independent Neutral.
   (23) ogî-ikonamawan: TA 3s-3’ Independent Neutral. This is an example of
a so-called double object verb.
I. (24) mî daš: This form is sometimes shortened to mis.
   (25) ižî: The first part of this sentence does not contain a verb. John Nichols
   (p.c.) has suggested that the phrase mî daš gâ-ižî has become a unit for
   some speakers, with the verb optional. See also number 31.
   (26) ižiwinân: TA 3s-3’ Independent Neutral.
   (27) gakîna: There are two examples of this form in this sentence. In both
cases, for reasons that are unclear, the form was pronounced [kilâgî],
with the expected initial devoicing but with an unexplained intervocalic
[1] and [g]. Both of these pronunciations were later changed to gakîna
by my consultant.
   (28) iskwâdë: II 3s Independent Neutral.
   (29) iskwâdënën: II 3’s Independent Neutral. There was some hesitation on
   the part of my consultant in the selection of the verb form here. After
first using a non-obviative form (number 28), she then corrected it to an
obviative form (number 29).
(30) ogi-iškwázän: TI 3s-3' Independent Neutral. There was a great deal of hesitation on the part of my consultant in the selection of the verb form here. After a pause, she said fur in English, then paused again before using the Algonquin form given here.

(31) mî daš gâ-iţi: See number 25.

(32) ogi-gâkâškawân: TA 3s-3' Independent Neutral.

(33) ogi-bakwajizinînî: TI 3s-3' Independent Neutral. The detailed analysis of this form is unclear.

J. (34) ogi-gâkâškaʔan: TA 3s-3' Independent Neutral.

(35) gakina: This form is pronounced [kina] here. It is not clear why its pronunciation varies from [kakina], with the expected initial devoicing, to [kilagi] to [kina]; see also number 27.

(36) wêwênind: This form might be wêwêni'n.

(37) ogi-gîzisibanân: TA 3s-3' Independent Neutral. This form might be gîzisibanân.

(38) ogi-asân: TA 3s-3' Independent Neutral.

K. (39) indâš: This form sometimes occurs as indas, as in sentence D.

(40) ogi-gîzizwân: TA 3s-3' Independent Neutral. This form might be gîzizwân.

L. (41) ipogwazi: AI 3s Independent Neutral.

M. (42) ningodên: My consultant had difficulty with this form. After a false start and a pause, she said one in English, then said the Algonquin form, paused again, then repeated the Algonquin form, saying the last syllable twice.

(43) amangij: TA 1p-3s Conjunct Neutral.

(44) ēndaso: This form is sometimes shortened to [enso].

(45) midâsogêdag: The detailed analysis of this form is unclear.

REFERENCE

Aubin, George F.