

Typing in Innu-aimun (for non-Innu Speakers)

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The Innu dictionary may be consulted online at www.innu-aimun.ca/dictionary and may be downloaded as an app for mobile devices.

Introduction

Because the Innu language is so different from English, it is very difficult for non-speakers to type accurately in Innu-aimun. Even when the print from which they are typing is clear and legible, it can be difficult for typists whose hands have become accustomed to typing the letter sequences characteristic of English to type letter that occur consecutively in Innu but not in English.

Furthermore, a large part of the time, the handwriting from which the typist has to work is NOT clear or legible, and so another difficulty for the typists is the task of discerning letters from each other, where capitals are used, what punctuation is being used, and so on. As a result of these difficulties, many books, articles, official documents, and other materials that have been typed in Innu-aimun by someone who does not speak the language end up with a considerable number of mistakes and typos.

However, many of these mistakes could easily have been avoided if the typist had received even a small amount of training in the spelling system of the Innu language. With basic knowledge of how the Innu spelling system works, typists would know, for example, that the sequence of letters ‘ths’ never occurs in Innu-aimun and would be able to do a “Search and Replace” with the correct sequence: ‘tsh’, fixing all occurrences of this common typing mistake in a given document with one computer operation. Similarly, basic knowledge of Innu rules of capitalization, hyphenating, and so on would allow typists to avoid these types of errors.

This document, therefore, offers a list of the basic rules of Innu spelling, along with some general tips for avoiding typos in Innu-aimun if you are not a speaker of the language.

The Innu Alphabet

Innu-aimun has 13 letters and the digraphs (two-letter combinations) should never be hyphenated:

a e h i k m n p sh ss t tsh u

There are 9 consonants:

h k m n p sh ss t tsh

and 4 vowels:

a e i u

Innu-aimun also has 4 consonants with “little raised u’s”:

k^u m^u sh^u t^u

Typing the superscript ‘u’:

1. Press **Control,Shift,+**
2. Type ‘u’
3. Press **Control,Shift,-** to remove the superscript and continue typing normally.

Alternatively, type ‘w’ and the typesetter will make the change at the last minute. This is often a more accurate way, as the superscript formatting does not always carry over from a Word or pdf document.

Important: There are **NO** words in Innu-aimun with the following letters:

b c d f g j l o q r s v w x y z

Rules of Capitalization and Hyphenation

Innu follows the French rules of capitalization, which are slightly different from English. The use of capital letters in Innu is slightly different from that of English and French.

Capital letters (ka mishat kapapeikushtesht) are used:

- at the beginning of the sentence, as in English.
- in proper nouns that designate people (e.g. Shapatish)
- in proper nouns that name characters in legends (e.g. Mishapush, Utshekatak^u)
- in place names (e.g. Meshikamat, Uashau)
- in the names of organizations (e.g. Kanikanitet)

When the proper noun is a **compound word**, use two capital letters:

- in the names of people (e.g. An-Pinamen, Mishta-Napeu)
- in the names of organizations (e.g. Innu-Nikamu, Nutshimiu-Atusseun)
- personal names are written in two words, with a hyphen, only if the second member of the compound is itself used as a stand-alone name. For instance Shapatish and Manipet are written without a hyphen.

Only one capital letter is used in the following compounds:

- the names of characters in legends (e.g. Mishta-atim^u, Mishta-utshekatak^u)
- the names of places (e.g. Mishta-shipu, Pakut-shipu)

A **small letter** (ka apishashit kapapeikushtesht) is used:

- in the names of ethnic groups (e.g. akaneshau, innu, pakut-shipiunnuat)
- in the names of days and months (e.g. pishimuss, mashten-atushkan)

Hyphenation should generally be avoided. When a hyphen is used to split a word that runs onto another line, the following letter sequences should never be broken up: 'tsh', 'sh', 'ss'.

More tips

- 'h' only occurs between vowels, unless in 'sh' or 'tsh'
- you will never have the sequences: ths, 'hst', 'tch'
- 'ss' never occurs at the beginning of a word
- you will never have the sequences: 'nt', 'tn', 'mp', 'pm'; they will be 'nit', 'nat', 'tin', 'mip', 'map', 'pim', 'pam'.

If we have the time, we are more than happy to look over any documents that you have typed. You can contact Dr. Marguerite MacKenzie at (709) 864-8134/3391, mmackenz@mun.ca or Laurel Anne Hasler at lhasler@mun.ca.