Gekinoo’amaadiiwigamig Ojibwemowin Lesson 1: Maajitaadadaa (Let’s get started)

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Giishpin ganawendan gidinwewininaan, gigaganawenimig aadizookaan gaa-ganawendang Anishinaabemowin.

If you take care of the language, the spirit-keeper of the language will take care of you.

Tobasaanakwad Kinew
Ojibwemowin is a verb-based language.

Learning to conjugate verbs is the core of the Ojibwe language.

There are four types of verbs in Ojibwe:
- Verb Animate Intransitive (VAI)
- Verb Inanimate Intransitive (VII)
- Verb Transitive Animate (VTA)
- Verb Transitive Inanimate (VTI)

What are the differences?
Comparison of English verbs and Ojibwemowin verbs

- I see a deer.
- I see two deer.
- I see a car.
- I see two cars.

Notice that the verb “see” does not change.

- Ni-waabamaa waawaashkeshi.
- Ni-waabamaag niizh waawaashkeshiwag.
- Ni-waabandaan odaabaan.
- Ni-waabandaanan niizh odaabaanan.

Notice that there are two verbs: waabam and waabandan.
And, the verbs and objects are conjugated to reflect plurality.
Animate vs. Inanimate verbs

Animate verbs are used for things that are living.
Example: waawaashkeshi, waabizheshi, naabekwa, asin.

Inanimate verbs are used for things that are non-living according to the language.
Example: car, leaf, root, house, water.
Indigenous Perspectives of Animacy

Rock – asin – are considered living; therefore one would use animate verbs in talking about rocks.

Ingii-\textit{waabam}aag niizhwaaso-asiniig biinikamigaag.
I saw seven rocks lying on clean ground. (VTA verb)

Ingii-\textit{maawanjitoon} nibi. (VTI verb)
I collected water.

Many would argue that water is animate and gives life, but the language defines water as inanimate.

Of the four sacred elements, rock, wind, fire and water, only rock is animate.
Ojibwemowin Syntax

Syntax – the arrangement of words or phrases to create well-informed sentences in a language.

English syntax: noun > verb > direct object

Syntax is not as important in Ojibwe language, meaning there is no predetermined arrangement of words.

The speaker can choose how to communicate and the first word usually carries the emphasis of the communiqué.
Example of Ojibwe Syntax

English: I saw a wolf this morning.

Ojibwemowin:
- Ingii-\textit{waabam}aa ma’iingan zheb\textit{aa}.
- Ma’iingan ingii-\textit{waabam}aa zheb\textit{aa}.
- Zheb\textit{aa} ma’iingan ingii-\textit{waabam}aa.
Pronouns in Ojibwemowin

1st person – me, I, myself
2nd person – you, you all, you guys
3rd person – he, she, they, them

(Ojibwemowin has a 4th person that we will explore later)

Niin – me  we (niinawind, giinawind)
Giin – you  you all - giinawaa
Wiin – him/her  them/they - wiinawaa
Examples of pronoun usage

**Bakade** – He/she is hungry.
**Nimbakade** – I am hungry.
**Gibakade** – You are hungry.
**Bakadewag** – They are hungry.
**Nimbakadedmin** – We are hungry (excluding you).
**Gibakadedmin** – We are hungry (including you).