

***The Inuit Language in Inuit Communities in Canada.* [Map]. Natascha Sontag. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2006. 24 X 36 in.\***

Reviewed by Mary S. Linn

It is rare that a linguist is asked to review a map. It is rarer still that one gets to read a map that not only provides the borders of a language family but is truly about the language and its speakers. *The Inuit Language in Inuit Communities in Canada* is a map of the Inuit language family territory, about the languages, in the languages.

*The Inuit Language in Inuit Communities in Canada* is visually bright, with a true green delineating Canada and light blues, pinks, and yellows overlaid for Inuit dialect territories. The title is off to the right side, and (following the spirit of the map) is in Inuit first (both Roman and syllabic), English, and also French. The map's projection does include Greenland in the east, most of Alaska and the northeastern tip of the Russian Federation to the west, and parts of all the Canadian provinces to the south. The Inuit territories are outlined and named with major dialect areas and subdialects within these. Communities are marked with a circle, the color of which is determined by the dialect. These community indicators may be split into halves or quarters and colored appropriately depending on how many dialects are found in that community. Community names are in Inuit prominently while the names in English are provided in a smaller, red font. The southernmost Inuit community in Québec includes the Cree name in Cree syllabics as well. The Inuit names are given in both the Roman alphabet and syllabics. Major migrations and relocations are shown with a white circle providing the origin, arrows indicating the route, and the year of the migration or relocation written along the route. The front includes the standard map legend providing a key to the symbols used and then an additional legend giving a key to the Inuit syllabics. The left lower corner includes a chart entitled "Language Retention by Community."

The back of the map provides additional notes on the conventions used to show dialects and migration routes, an overview of the Inuit dialects and subdialects, a history of the Roman and syllabic writing systems, and paragraphs on the relationship between syllabics, identity, and language retention. In addition to the prose, Natascha Sontag provides a bibliography and recommended websites on Inuit language and culture.

In the strict criteria of maps—a title, symbols, legend, labels, scale, and a compass—this map falls short. There is no compass rose or north arrow. It may seem obvious that north is at the top of the map but given that the map concerns Inuit language and history, it should not be a given that indigenous orientation to the landscape would necessarily demand that north be the top of the map. It appears that the projection is a Polar Orthographic Projection, with reductions to the far west (Greenland) and east (Alaska and Russia) portions of the map. Yet, nowhere is information on the projection provided. In addition, there are also no scale or latitude and longitude lines, so it is difficult to read the perspective across space. The territory covered by this map is vast, and providing a scale or lines would have not only made reading the map easier, but

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also given a better sense of the isolation of communities and feats of these communities' migrations.

The labeling, while overall well executed with its scope of languages and writing systems, has some shortcomings. Some communities have two Roman spellings. Sontag states "one follows the traditional or local form, the other the official form." However, it is never made clear which is the traditional and which is the official spelling. The Canadian provinces with no Inuit communities are not named, but the Kivalliq dialect extends into Manitoba, which is unfortunately not named. The color scheme, while visually attractive at first glance, proves hard to read. The blues, greens, and pinks are too close to distinguish from each other easily. When overlaid on the bright green of Canada, the melon used for Nunavik labels and the red of the English labels appear to be the same color. Some of these colors, especially the light blue, are lost completely on the olive green legend.

As a map of the Inuit languages, the map is informative and a much needed contribution to Inuit language study in particular and to indigenous language studies in general. It shows the expanse of Inuit speaking country in Canada and the rich internal variation of the language. Larger dialect groupings could easily be shown through an improved use of color. The Iñupiaq-Inuktitut sub-branch of the Eskimo family has four dialect branches, three of which are found in Canada. I would like to see a second edition of this map featuring the use of a color scheme that indicates the relationship of the dialects in each dialect branch. For example, the languages of Western Canadian Inuktitun could all be in the blues to greens and the dialects in the Eastern Canadian Inuktitut branch could be in the pinks to purples. A thoughtful use of color could give the reader an immediate sense of both internal groupings and the Inuit dialect continuum.

Unlike most static language family maps, this map overlays the historic dialect areas with the movement of speakers that has created modern bi-dialectal communities. Thus the map shows both the richness and history of the modern Inuit language communities. The chart of Language Retention by Community brings the reader up-to-date about the facts of Inuit language retention and loss, a problem faced by all modern indigenous languages communities that is hard to map. The chart with the map is striking for its ability to quickly and convincingly show several factors contributing to Inuit language loss: the percentage of Inuit to non-Inuit people and the use of Inuit language in the home. While these are Inuit specific numbers, they tell of a more global problem. In the back material, Sontag correlates the use of syllabics to Inuit identity and thus to language retention. The numbers in the retention chart underscore this phenomenon. The map's use of syllabics, the legend for the syllabics, and its history given on the back, helps initiate the non-Inuit, non-linguist into the systematic beauty of this unfamiliar script. This is a good first step into educating for understanding and tolerance of language diversity.

There are a few other minor problems: Why no Inuit grammars or dictionaries in the Further Readings and why thank Alaska Native Language Center so profusely but then not give their address in Recommended Websites? Yet overall, I would recommend this map as a study guide for Inuit and other indigenous North American language students. The University of Alaska Press bills *The Inuit Language in Inuit Communities in Canada* as a companion map to *Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska*, a map created by the Alaska Native Language Center. This is a true first step in fulfilling the need for indigenous language maps. I would like to see a

comprehensive map of the indigenous languages of Canada, then detailed maps like this one of each major language family of Canada (Algonquian, Iroquoian, Athabaskan) and the United States. This map could be the basis for an Eskimo-Aleut language family map to include the United States, Russia, and Greenland. In other words, Sontag has filled a large gap and has hopefully inspired other language researchers along with indigenous language centers and museum to produce local language maps.

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