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From Online Dictionary to Living Online Dictionary: The Innu dictionary in 2020

The Innu online dictionary (dictionnaire.innu-aimu.ca) was made public in 2012. With over 27 000 entries it is one of the largest Indigenous/Algonquian language dictionaries. It is available online, in print and as an app on both iOS and Android. Since 2012, at the request of its Indigenous users, a commenting function was made available via each entry in the online version. In this presentation we report on the challenges and success of this process, on how the various comments submitted were addressed over the years, and what they tell us about the dictionary user needs. We especially summarize the work of the 2020 “COVID” editorial team, funded and supported by the (Innu in Quebec) Institut Tshakapesh. The team met online twice a week for 3 months, including Innu speakers/elders from various dialects. We discuss the type of questions asked and how they connect with issues of unresolved orthography standardisation, dialectal differences, semantic or cultural changes, generational differences, neologisms, and improved language documentation. We also discuss how such a process provides opportunities for engaging speakers and learners, training a new generation of editorial team members, getting a pulse on current language resource needs and deciding where and how to offer these, either in the dictionary itself or in integrated, complementary Web resources, such as Frequently Asked Questions web pages, Grammar and Orthography pages, Lessons, or a Terminology Forum, etc. Our goal is to show how such a process and approach can inspire other Algonquian Language communities of speakers and learners interested in building such “living” resources.