

Noun Possession

Relationships between nouns described in English as ‘possession’ are communicated in Anishinaabemowin by means of prefixes and suffixes attached to nouns.

The prefixes and suffixes are attached to the **possessed noun**. The prefixes specify the person of the possessor, and the suffixes specify plural number of the possessor and of whatever is possessed.

The form of the person prefixes (e.g., **ni**, **ind**, **in**, or **im** for first person) is according to the rules specified on the person prefixes handout.

Possession of Singular Animate (zhiishiib ‘duck’)

(n)in zhiishiib im	‘my duck’	my	(n)in __ (im)
gi zhiishiib im	‘your duck’	your	gi __ (im)
o zhiishiib iman	‘her/his duck’	her/his	o __ (im)an
(n)in zhiishiib iminaan	‘our duck’	our (not your)	(n)in __ (im)inaan
gi zhiishiib iminaan	‘our duck’	our (yours too)	gi __ (im)inaan
gi zhiishiib imiwaa	‘your duck’	your (pl.)	gi __ (im)iwaa
o zhiishiib imiwaan	‘their duck’	their	o __ (im)iwaan

Possession of Singular Inanimate (jiimaan ‘boat’)

(n)in jiimaan	‘my boat’	my	(n)in __ (im)
gi jiimaan	‘your boat’	your	gi __ (im)
o jiimaan	‘her/his boat’	her/his	o __ (im)
(n)in jiimaan inaan	‘our boat’	our (not your)	(n)in __ (im)inaan
gi jiimaan inaan	‘our boat’	our (yours too)	gi __ (im)inaan
gi jiimaan iwaa	‘your boat’	your (pl.)	gi __ (im)iwaa
o jiimaan iwaa	‘their boat’	their	o __ (im)iwaa

Analysis of Elements

Prefixes

(n)in	first person possessor
gi	second person possessor
o	third person possessor

Suffixes

Plural Markers

inaan	first person plural possessor
iwaa	second, third person plural possessor

Out of Focus (4th person, obviative) Marker (only on animates)

an	out of focus (obviative) marker
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Possession Marker

im	possession marker
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Out of Focus (4th Person, Obviative) Suffix

The out of focus (4th person) marker appears on any animate third person possessed by a third person. Only one animate third person at any given time can be in focus, and the rule for possession is simple and inviolable: the possessor is more **grammatically** in focus than the possessed.

The Form of the out of focus suffix. The out of focus (obviative) suffix can always be readily determined by examining the plural of a noun. To create the out of focus suffix, simply change the final **g** of the plural to **n**. Examples follow

Item	English	Plural	Out of Focus Form
akik	'kettle'	akikoog	akikoon
asab	'net'	asabiig	asabiin
mitig	'tree'	mitigoog	mitigoon
inini	'man'	ininiwag	ininiwan
akiwenzii	'old man'	akiwenziiyag	akiwenziiyan
baaka'aakwenh	'chicken'	baaka'aakwenyag	baaka'aakwenyan
zhigaag	'skunk'	zhigaagwag	zhigaagwan

The Possession Marker

The possession marker is a special ending that is put on *many* (but not all!) nouns when they are possessed. In some dialects its use is optional, but in some dialects it is obligatorily added to all nouns which qualify for its addition.

The rules for when to add the possession marker are most easily stated by specifying which nouns don't take it, the assumption being that all other nouns do. The rules for Mille Lacs, Minnesota (based on Nichols 1980) are as follows:

1. **Dependent nouns** do not take the possession marker. So, for example:

nimishoomis	'my grandfather'
nimaamaa	'my mother'

2. **Nouns that end in n or m** do not take the possession marker. So, for example:

injiimaan	'my boat'	jiimaan	'boat'
indaagim	'my snowshoe'	aagim	'snowshoe'
nimakizin	'my shoe'	makizin	'shoe'

3. A set of somewhat **traditional terms** also do not take the marker:

akik	'kettle'	indakik	'my kettle'
anit	'fish spear'	indanit	'my fish spear'
abwi	'paddle'	indabwi	'my paddle'
asab	'net'	indasab	'my net'
asemaa	'tobacco'	indasemaa	'my tobacco'
makak	'box'	nimakak	'my box'
mashkimod	'bag'	nimashkimod	'my bag'
mitigwaab	'bow'	nimitigwaab	'my bow (archery)'
bikwak	'arrow'	imbikwak	'my arrow'

Note that even when the nouns of (2) and (3), above, are made **diminutive**, which makes them so they no longer end in m or n, they still do not take the possession marker, for example:

nimakizinens	'my little shoe'
injiimaanens	'my little boat'
indakikoons	'my little 'pail'
indabwiins	'my little paddle'

The Form of the Possession Marker

The possession marker has two basic forms, **im** and **om**. To determine which form is appropriate for a given noun, you need to consider the plural again. If the singular ends in a consonant and the plural shows a **w** after that consonant, as in

nigig	‘otter	nigig w ag	‘otters
zhigaag	‘skunk’	zhigaag w ag	‘skunks’
wazhashk	‘muskrat’	wazhashk w ag	‘muskrats’

or the plural suffix has a long **oo** in it, as in

waabooz	‘rabbit’	waabooz oo g	‘rabbits’
mooz	‘moose’	mooz oo g	‘moose (pl.)’
mitig	‘tree’	mitig oo g	‘trees’

then the possessive form will have **om**, as in

ninig om	‘my otter’	inzhigaag om	‘my skunk’
niwaabooz om	‘my rabbit’	nimooz om	‘my moose’

Otherwise, the form of the possessor suffix is most commonly **im**, as in the following examples.

Item	English	Plural	Possessed Form ‘my...’
zhiishiib	‘duck’	zhiishiibag	inzhiishiib im
gwiiwizens	‘boy’	gwiiwizensag	ingwiiwizens im
bizhiw	‘lynx’	bizhiwag	imbizhiw im

There are, however, several other subclasses of nouns that show variability in the form of the possession marker. It is beyond the goals of our introductory course to explain them all (though all can be explained!), but a few examples are presented here.

Item	English	Plural	Possessed Form, ‘my...’
baaka’aakwenh	‘chicken’	baaka’aakwenyag	imbaaka’aakwenyim
inini	‘man’	ininiwag	indininiim
makwa	‘bear’	makwag	nimakom
oodena	‘town’	oodenawan	indoodenaam
bigiw	‘pitch’	bigiwan	imbigiim, imbigiwim
aki	‘earth, land’	akiin	indakiim
asin	‘stone, rock’	asiniig	indasiniim

Note that the out of focus marker (**an**) comes after the possessor marker:

ozhiishiibim an	‘his/her duck’	zhiishiib	‘duck’
odasiniim an	‘his/her stone’	asin	‘stone, rock’

The Plural Possessor Suffixes

The plural possessor suffixes **naan** and **waa** are attached to a stem ending in a consonant by means of a connective vowel, which may be **i** or **o** (or in exceptional cases, other vowels). The rules for determining which vowel to use are the same as those outlined for the possession marker. Here are some examples using the first person plural suffix, **naan**.

Item	English	Plural	Possessed Form, ‘our...’
akik	‘kettle’	akikoog	indakik o naan
makak	‘box’	makakoon	nimakak o naan
nibaagan	‘bed’	nibaaganan	ninibaagan i naan
opwaagan	‘pipe’	opwaaganag	indoopwaagan i naan
giigoonh	‘fish’	giigoonyag	ingiigoonyim i naan

The Plural Possessed Suffixes

Forms showing plural *possessed* items are as follows. Note that I have chosen two words that sound identical but differ only on the basis of their gender, i.e., whether they are animate or inanimate, in order to highlight the differences between animates and inanimates.

Animate, mitig ‘tree’ (simple plural, mitigoog)

my	nimitigom ag	‘my trees’	ni	___ (im)ag
your	gimitigom ag	‘your trees’	gi	___ (im)ag
her/his	omitigom an	‘her/his trees’	o	___ (im)an
our (not your)	nimitigomina anig	‘our trees’	ni	___ (im)inaanig
our (yours too)	gimitigomina anig	‘our trees’	gi	___ (im)inaanig
your (pl.)	gimitigomiwa ag	‘your trees’	gi	___ (im)iwaag
their	omitigomiwa an	‘their trees’	o	___ (im)iwaan

Inanimate, mitig ‘stick’ (simple plural, mitigoon)

my	nimitigom an	‘my sticks’	ni	__ (im)an
your	gimitigom an	‘your sticks’	gi	__ (im)an
her/his	omitigom an	‘her/his sticks’	o	__ (im)an
our (not your)	nimitigomina anin	‘our sticks’	ni	__ (im)inaanin
our (yours too)	gimitigomina anin	‘our sticks’	gi	__ (im)inaanin
your (pl.)	gimitigomiwa an	‘your sticks’	gi	__ (im)iwaan
their	omitigomiwa an	‘their sticks’	o	__ (im)iwaan

Template for Possession

Basically, we can outline the full system quite simply, as follows:

Person Prefix	Stem	Possession Marker	Possessor Plural	Possessed Plural
(n) in	—	im/om	inaan/onaan	ig
gi			iwaa/owaa	in
o				

Additional Examples

There is, of course, more to the picture than I have presented here. But this will do for starters. Here are some more examples showing various quirks.

zhigaag ‘skunk’

inzhigaagom	inzhigaagomag
gizhigaagom	gizhigaagomag
ozhigaagoman	
inzhigaagominaan	inzhigaagominaanig
gizhigaagominaan	gizhigaagominaanig
gizhigaagomiwaa	gizhigaagomiwaag
ozhigaagomiwaan	

bizhiki ‘cow’

imbizhikiim	imbizhikiimag
gibizhikiim	gibizhikiimag
obizhikiiman	
imbizhikiiminaan	imbizhikiiminaanig
gibizhikiiminaan	gibizhikiiminaanig
gibizhikiimiwaa	gibizhikiimiwaag
obizhikiimiwaan	

opin ‘potato’

indoopin	indoopiniig
gidoopin	gidoopiniig
odoopiniin	
indoopiniinaan	indoopiniinaanig
gidoopiniinaan	gidoopiniinaanig
gidoopiniiwaa	gidoopiniiwaaag
odoopiniimaan	