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In May, *Stuff* reported the death of Katherine Barber. You may not know her name, but she was a Canadian lexicographer, the editor of the *Oxford Canadian Dictionary*, and the person who traced *cabin*, *camp*, and *shack* as Canadian regional variants of what we, in New Zealand, would call a *bach* or a *crib*.

Lexicography, the writing of dictionaries, is something of a dying art: if you cannot make money from online dictionaries, you cannot pay lexicographers to update them.

New Zealand has had more than its fair share of world-famous lexicographers.

Eric H Partridge (1894-1979) was born near Gisborne, although his family then moved to Australia, and he studied at the University of Queensland. The major work for which he is internationally known is his *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, first published in London in 1937, with its eighth edition published in 1984.

He also wrote various other slang dictionaries, particularly dictionaries of forces slang, a book on punctuation, a dictionary of catch-phrases, and a book



It depends on where it is: Variously known as a crib, bach, cabin, chalet, camp or shack.

Steeped in words

Language Matters

called *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, whose title is self-explanatory.

Sidney J Baker (1912-1976) was one of the first recorders of New Zealandisms. Born in Wellington, he lived most of his life in Australia, but published his trail-blazing *New Zealand Slang* in Christchurch in 1941 before turning his attention to Australian usage, and his *The Australian Language* (1945) garnered considerable attention. He worked most of his life as a journalist, attached to various newspapers.

R.W. (Bob) Burchfield, CNZM, CBE (1923-2004) was born in Whanganui, studied at Victoria University in

Wellington, and won a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford, where he studied under such luminaries as C.T. Onions and J.R.R. Tolkien. He became the editor of the second *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, on which he worked from 1957 until 1986. He was credited with allowing many more words of what we now call "World English" into the OED. He also updated *Fowler's Modern English Usage*.

H.W. (Harry) Orsman (1928-2002), born in Havelock, taught English at Victoria University of Wellington. Although he had collected New Zealandisms all his life, and made contributions to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it was with the arrival of computers and the possibilities they provided for editing large amounts of text,

that he really came into his own, writing three dictionaries of New Zealand English, one with his wife (and contributing New Zealand words to others). Most notably he produced *The Dictionary of New Zealand English* (published by Oxford in 1997). He was also an editor of the *Dictionary of New Zealand Quotations*.

While these people have made recording the (English) language of New Zealand a large part of their careers, there are also many people who have made major contributions to dictionaries, without it being their major means of livelihood.

H.W. Williams's *Dictionary of the New Zealand Language* (that is, Māori), first published in 1844, is still in use today, now in its seventh edition. Bruce Biggs, Sir Āpirana Ngata and Patrick Ryan all contributed in major ways to the recording of Māori vocabulary. John Macalister has published a dictionary of Māori words used in English.

I.A. Gordon, Graeme Kennedy and Tony Deverson created New Zealand editions of international dictionaries. Kennedy was also the driving force behind, and the general editor of, the first *Dictionary of New Zealand Sign Language*. Dianne Bardsley has produced a string of dictionaries and thesauruses for use in New Zealand schools.

I doubt there's anything relevant in the water here, but we certainly have produced a notable set of people who have made words a large part of their lives.

Contact us

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Fiji Times

Fijians must unite to fight coronavirus

Views from around the world. These opinions are not necessarily shared by *Stuff* newspapers.

So our health infrastructure is "strained" as a result of the battle against the coronavirus pandemic. This is the harsh reality we face now, according to Health Ministry Permanent Secretary James Fong.

He was responding to queries about a video shared on social media by a woman who claimed to be a Covid-19-positive patient at an isolation facility in Suva. "There is a lot of strain on infrastructure right now," he said.

As we reported the woman claimed there was only one filthy toilet shared by both men and women. She also showed a corpse draped in a white sheet and claimed the deceased was left

Viewpoint

overnight in the same tent she was being kept in.

What we are going through now was expected. We cannot say we did not see this coming. The question now is why did we allow ourselves to be in such a frightening situation?

Our numbers are seriously high. It is frightening Fijians. It's a sad reflection of how we have handled the pandemic, and how some decisions we made during this second wave are probably coming back to haunt us.

With things appearing to be spiralling out of control, we must take the initiative and fight this as a nation. Let's unite please! Let's do the little things right, today!