

Sources

The entries in this dictionary are based on several sources and a long history. A WPA sponsored writers project in the late 1930's collected over 800 texts in the Oneida language. These texts were written by about a dozen Oneidas - Andrew Beechtree, Dennison Hill, LaFront King, Guy Elm, Ida Blackhawk, John Skenandore, Lewis Webster, Oscar Archiquette, Stadler King, Tillie Baird, David Skenandore, Walter Skenandore, and Alex Metoxen - based on interviews with a large number of speakers in the Wisconsin Oneida community. Floyd Lounsbury, who had worked with this project, had the individual words in these texts filed and sorted on small slips of paper. In the early 1970's with the help of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities Cliff Abbott worked those slips into a preliminary dictionary. Since this work was done on textual materials without access to native speakers, there were two major shortcomings: citation forms were often normalized predictions rather than actual attestations; and there was no control over the variability in the quality of the original transcribers. Over the following decade field work in Wisconsin with native speakers - Dorothy Tallakson, Melinda Doxtator, Lawrence John, Melissa Cornelius, Amos Christjohn, Maria Hinton, Mary Jourdan, Flora Skenandore, Rebecca Ninham, Lloyd Schuyler, Mamie Ryan, Bob Brown, Ruth Baird, Absalom Cooper, Sarah Skenandore, Cynthia Farmer, Leona Doxtator, Vera House - allowed most of these shortcomings to be remedied and at the same time substantially supplement the base vocabulary. By the middle 1980's all this work had been pumped into a custom designed database at the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay. Another decade of intermittent field work further expanded these materials. In 1994 Maria Hinton lobbied for a printed dictionary in place of various computer runs. With the help of a language preservation grant from the National Park Service the materials were transferred to a commercial database with more flexibility (FoxPro), a new format was devised, and the forms were again reviewed by native speakers, principally Maria Hinton and Amos Christjohn. This was the basis of the 1996 print version of An Oneida Dictionary. For this Web version the database has been further revised (it is now an Access database) and expanded with corrections of errors found in the print version. Maria Hinton is in the process of providing sound files for each of the words.