

Variations

Whispering

Many Oneida words have two pronunciations depending on where they occur in the sentence. In a context with other words immediately following, a nonwhispered form is used, but before a pause a form with the last syllable whispered is often used. Sometimes the whispering is the only difference between the two forms and sometimes the difference involves an h, an added e, or changes in intonation.

Regular Sound Variation

Many Oneida roots and stems do not have an invariant form but one that changes when the environment of attached roots, prefixes, and suffixes changes. Suffixes affect where the accent goes and that in turn affects vowel length, presence or absence of glottal stops and h's, and glottal stops becoming h's. When two parts of a word are put together, boundary sounds may be lost or added or changed. These variations are describable by a complex set of rules. The rules are given in the grammar but their effects are provided within each entry. Citation forms that are full words can be compared to the base forms given in the grammatical breakdown. Citation forms that are not full words, i.e. roots and stems, are normalized base forms whose alternate forms can be seen in the full words given within their entries.

Speaker Variation

There is, of course, variability among speakers and there is an attempt to reflect at least some of it in this dictionary. Each entry, right after the identification of the part of speech, contains a code.

OK means the entry has been confirmed by multiple sources and even if a particular speaker prefers alternative forms, the given forms are acknowledged as acceptable.

? means sources disagree.

i means the given forms are accepted and confirmed but the entry is incomplete.

No coding at all means the entry has received only minimal review and confirmation has not been extensive.

While these codings may represent real variation within the language, they may also just indicate that field work has not been comprehensive enough or clever enough to determine the actual lexical knowledge of speakers.

In addition to the above codings, some entries are labeled "ceremonial" at the end of the entry. These have been taken from language used exclusively in or about the Longhouse tradition. These terms tend to be more recent borrowings from the Canadian dialect of Oneida and less familiar to long term Wisconsin residents.