Wendat among the Iroquois

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It is often said that the Wendat language disappeared over a century ago. Fortunately, great energy and skill are currently being directed at revitalization, and the language can now be heard again around the Wenda'ke community in Quebec. There are also indications that strains of the traditional language live on in some other unexpected places as well. Here we examine some tiny clues to this legacy that are so subtle could easily escape notice.

1. The Iroquoian family

North America is home to a rich variety of languages. Around three hundred distinct, mutually unintelligible languages are known to have been spoken here before the arrival of Europeans, and there were surely more. These languages show tremendous diversity, but some groups show some intriguing similarities. Careful comparisons of such languages can offer glimpses into the lives and histories of their speakers.

The Wendat language, also known as Huron, was documented primarily by French missionaries living among Wendat peoples in the 17th and 18th centuries. The earliest major resource is a dictionary compiled by the Recollect brother Gabriel Theodat Sagard, who lived among the Wendat on Georgian Bay, in present Ontario, during the year 1623-1624. The dictionary, which probably also contains material gathered by his Recollect colleague Father Joseph Le Caron, was published in 1632 after Sagard's return to France. Other resources can be found in the Jesuit Relations (Thwaites 1896-1901), particularly in the writings of Father Jean de Brébeuf, who served in the Wendat mission from 1626 to 1649, and Father Pierre Joseph Marie Chaumonot, who served from 1639 to 1691. There is also extensive documentation of Wyandot, descended from a mixture of Wendat, Petun or Tionontati, and Neutral, by Father Pierre Potier, who was at the Sandwich, Ontario mission from 1744 to 1781.

Sagard recorded the Wendat word for 'five' as *ouyche* (1632:96). His spelling suggests that it was pronounced *wiš* (where *š* represents the sound spelled *sh* in English *wish*). A number of other languages have intriguingly similar words for 'five'.

(1) Five[1]

Wendat	*ouyche*
Wyandot	*wiš*
Mohawk	*wisk*
Oneida	*wisk*
Onondaga	*hwiks*
Cayuga	*hwis*
Seneca	*wis*
Susquehannock	*wisk*
Nottoway	*wisk*
Tuscarora	*wisk*
Cherokee	*hi:ski*

Though these languages are now distributed over a wide area of eastern North America, careful comparisons of their vocabularies and grammars reveal many more, systematic similarities. The similarities are no accident; they are due to the fact that all of the languages have developed from a single parent language, termed Proto-Iroquoian. Words like those for 'five' are similar in each of the modern languages because they are descended from the same Proto-Iroquoian word. Words like these, all inherited from the same source, are called *cognates*. Languages are constantly undergoing changes in sounds, grammar, and meaning. So long as members of a speech community interact with each other, everyone's speech will change more or less in the same ways. If the community splits, however, and the two groups of speakers are no longer in contact, their languages will continue to change, but each in its own ways. The longer the groups are apart, the more their languages will diverge. As we can see by comparing the words in (1), for example, some of the Iroquoian languages have kept the original *k* in their words for 'five' while Wendat, Wyandot, and Seneca have lost it. Some have kept the original pronunciation of *s*, while Wendat and Wyandot have shifted it to *š*. Each of the Iroquoian languages has undergone a number of changes, some of them the same, but many of them different.

The history of development of the Iroquoian languages is sketched in Figure 1. The original Iroquoians apparently split into two groups: Southern Iroquoian and Northern Iroquoian. The language of the Southern Iroquoians ultimately developed into modern Cherokee. The Northern Iroquoian community underwent further changes. One group broke off which eventually developed into the Tuscarora and Nottoway. Those remaining are known as the Lake Iroquoians. After some time, another group broke off, which became the Wendat. Those remaining were the Iroquois proper, the ancestors of the modern Iroquois (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk), as some others we know less about, including Susquehannock, Neutral, Wenro, and Erie.
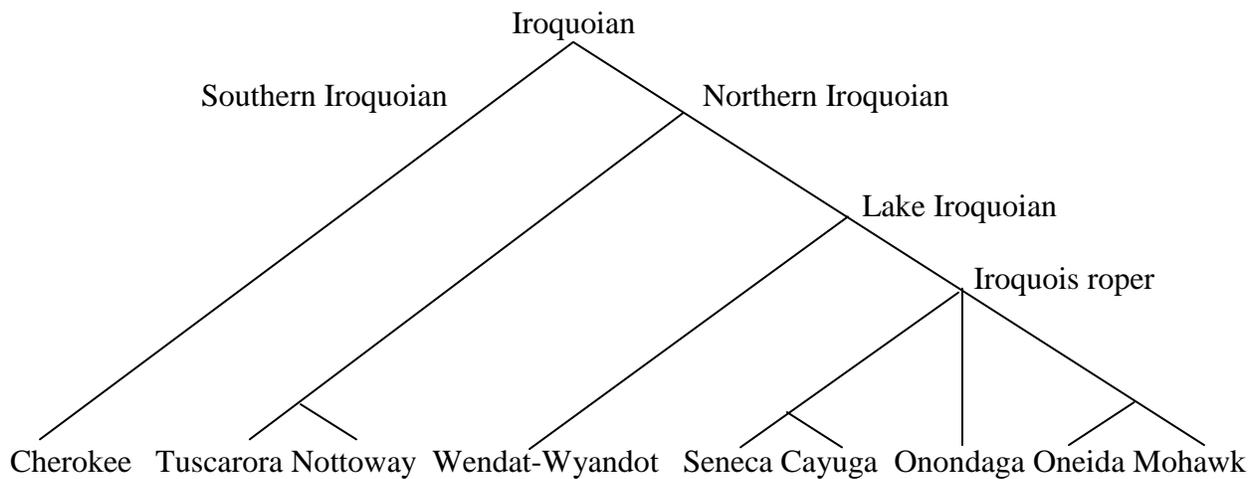

Figure 1: Modern Iroquoian Languages

Figures like these, termed family trees, are only schematic. Separations between groups were not necessarily as sharp as portrayed. There may not have been uninterrupted transmission of each language from one generation of speakers to the next. Neighboring languages may have influenced any of the languages here at any point. The tree does indicate comparative degrees of

relationship among the languages. Cherokee, for example, is only very distantly related to all the other languages. Tuscarora and Nottoway are closely related to each other and are quite similar: they shared most of their history, diverging relatively recently. Seneca and Cayuga are also closely related to each other, as are Oneida and Mohawk. The order in which the languages are listed from left to right in Figure 1 roughly reflects their geographical locations at the time of contact with Europeans. The Cherokee were in the Southeast, in what is now western Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. The Tuscarora were in eastern North Carolina. The Nottoway were in Virginia. The Wendat were in southern Ontario, and the Five Nations Iroquois were distributed across what is now New York State, with the Seneca at the western edge, the Onondaga in the center, and the Mohawk at the eastern edge.

Comparison of vocabulary in related languages can sometimes provide us with glimpses of the lives of speakers in earlier times. Sagard lists the Wendat word *ouhatta* 'érable' ('sugar maple'), for example (1632:113). His spelling suggests that it was pronounced something like *wahta*. We find similar words in other Lake Iroquoian languages.

(2) 'sugar maple'
  Wendat   *ouhatta*
  Wyandot   *wahta'*
  Mohawk   *wáhta'*
  Oneida   *wáhta'*
  Onondaga   *ohwáhta'*
  Cayuga   *ohwáhta'*
  Seneca   *wahta'*

The fact that this word exists in all of the Lake Iroquoian languages suggests that it was already present in their common ancestor, Proto-Lake-Iroquoian (the lowest point in Figure 1 where lines from those languages intersect). The word could be older, but to know that for certain, we would need to find a cognate in Tuscarora or Nottoway, which would push it back to Proto-Northern-Iroquoian, or in Cherokee, which would push it back still further to Proto-Iroquoian. The presence of this word in Proto-Lake Iroquoian suggests more: the speakers of this language apparently lived in or near an area where sugar maples grew.

Sagard also lists the Wendat word *orritey* 'tourterelle' ('dove, passenger pigeon') (1632:16). Other Northern Iroquoian languages show similar words.

(3) 'dove, pigeon'
  Wendat   *orritey*
  Mohawk   *orí:te'*
  Oneida   *olí:te'*
  Tuscarora   *urí:'ne'*

This set shows several things of interest. First, it indicates that this word was present in Proto-Northern-Iroquoian. It also suggests that wherever the speakers of this language were living, there were doves.

This set illustrates some other pertinent facts about Iroquoian languages. Most Iroquoian words have internal structure. All of these terms for 'dove' contain a Neuter prefix *o-* or *u-* and a noun suffix *-'*. (The apostrophe is used here to represent glottal stop.) The part of the word that

actually means 'dove', the noun root, is just *-rite-*. When we compare words in related languages, it is important to compare the meaningful pieces individually.

This cognate set shows something further. The words are similar, but not exactly alike. Where the other languages have *r*, Oneida has *l*. This correspondence can be seen throughout the language. It is what is known as a regular sound correspondence. There are many other regular sound correspondences among the Iroquoian languages. Where the Five Nations Iroquois languages show *o*, for example, as in the Neuter prefix *o-* in 'dove', Tuscarora, Wyandot, and some dialects of Wendat show *u*. And where the other languages show *t*, Tuscarora shows *'n* (but only before a vowel). Such differences are important. If we find a set of words like those for 'dove', where Tuscarora shows *'n* but the other languages show *t*, we know that that word was already part of the Tuscarora language at the time speakers shifted their pronunciation from *t* to *'n*. It was not simply borrowed more recently from one of the other languages. Knowing about regular sound correspondences and sound changes allows us to reconstruct the forms of words in the parent language. The word for 'dove' was probably **orí:te'*.

By carefully comparing vocabulary across the modern Iroquoian languages, we can in fact reconstruct much of the vocabulary of Proto-Iroquois proper, Proto-Lake-Iroquoian, Proto-Northern-Iroquoian, and even Proto-Iroquoian. And with the reconstruction of vocabulary, we can gain some sense of the worlds in which the speakers of those languages lived: the plants and animals they knew, the surrounding terrain, the tools they used, the activities they pursued. (Further discussion of the reconstruction of earlier stages of Iroquoian language and culture can be found in Mithun 1984.)

Some of the original Iroquoian languages are no longer spoken. So far as is known, Susquehannock, Neutral, Wenro, and Erie were last spoken in the 17th or 18th centuries. Wendat is generally said to have disappeared over a century ago. There is, however, more to this story. For this we turn our attention to the Five Nations Iroquois languages.

2. Mohawk

Among the many cognates shared by the Iroquois languages is a verb root meaning 'be fast'.

(4) 'it is fast'
Mohawk	*yo-hsnó:r-e'*
Oneida	*yo-shno:l-é:*
Onondaga	*o-snó:w-e'*
Cayuga	*o-hsnó:w-e'*
Seneca	*o-sno:w-e'*

On the basis of these verbs, it is possible to reconstruct the Proto-Iroquois verb root *-(a)hsnor-* 'be fast'. These verbs all begin with the Neuter prefix **yo-* 'it' and end with the Stative suffix **-e'*. But there is a form of this verb in Mohawk that seems to be an exception.

(5) Mohawk   *s-astó:r-on*   'Walk fast!'

The *t* in this verb is a surprise. No other Iroquois languages show this *t*. We would expect all forms of this verb in Mohawk to have *n*. In fact we have evidence that in the early 17th century, this very Mohawk verb did have *n*. In 1634-1634 a Dutchman, Harmen Meyndertsz van den

Bogaert, travelled through Mohawk country in eastern New York. Among the Mohawk words he recorded on that trip was this verb.

(6) Van den Bogaert 1635
    Mohawk   *s-asnor-on*   'Hurry up!'

For some reason, this form changed between that time and the present.

    If we look beyond the Five Nations Iroquois languages, we find a clue. Sagard (1632:41) recorded the 1623 Wendat equivalent of this word with *t*.

(7) Wendat   *s-astur-a*   'Haste-toy' ('Hurry up')

The Wendat form is actually not surprising. Among the sound changes in Wendat is the regular shift of Proto-Northern-Iroquoian **sn* to *st*. The effect of the change can be seen throughout the language: where other Iroquois languages have *sn*, Wendat and Wyandot regularly show *st*. This does not explain its appearance in Mohawk, however. Mohawk and Wendat are not particularly close relatives.

    History provides an explanation. There is ample evidence that a substantial number of Wendat came to live among the Mohawk in the mid 17th century. In 1649, the Huron [Wendat] Confederacy, located in what became Ontario, was decimated by the Iroquois. Wendat survivors fled in various directions. Some went east to the St. Lawrence Valley in Quebec. In his history of the Wendat, Trigger describes the desire of the Mohawk to bring Wendat survivors into their community.

> The emphasis that the Mohawk placed on capturing Huron [Wendat] prisoners reflected their longterm ambition to incorporate all of the Huron who had come to Quebec into their own society. (Trigger 1976:805).

And there were in fact many Wendat people living among the Mohawk. It was reported in the Jesuit Relations (Thwaites 1896-1901) that In July of 1652, the Wendat entered into discussions with a Mohawk war party at Three Rivers.

> The Huron were anxious for news about their relatives who were living among the Mohawk and who made up part of the Mohawk force. (Thwaites 38:55 in Trigger 1976:806).

In 1653, another Mohawk war party learned that the Onondaga were preparing to enter into peace talks with the French.

> [The Mohawk] delegated several men, led by the headman Andioura, to accompany the Onondaga to Quebec. Andioura met secretly with the Huron headmen from the Île d'Orléans and offered them presents to induce their followers to leave the island and settle among the Mohawk. Later, Atsina, a Huron headman living at Three Rivers, gave the Mohawk three presents to signify that the Huron accepted this proposal. (Thwaites 1896-1901:41.19 in Trigger 1976:806)

Raids continued in the St. Lawrence Valley over the next several years, but many Wendat people, especially people of the Bear Nation, ultimately did join the Mohawk.

> [On 29 May 1657] the Attignawantantan [Bear] promised to join the Mohawk. The next morning Atsina, the headman of the Attignwantan, announced his people's willingness to follow the Mohawk, regardless of the consequences . . . The Mohawk promised to treat the Attignawantan as relatives . . . On 21 August some more

Attignawantan [Bear] left Quebec with these Mohawk, while the final group, led by Father Le Moyne, followed them a few days later. (Trigger 1976: 812)

The seemingly small detail of pronunciation, the sound *t* in the Mohawk word *sastó:ron* 'Walk fast!' in place of an expected *n*, is a legacy brought into Mohawk language by the Wendat who took up residence with them in the 17th century, one which persists to this day in modern Mohawk.

3. Onondaga

Most verbs in Iroquoian languages end in aspect suffixes, endings that describe the temporal nature of events and states. Commands have no aspect endings. But in all of the Northern Iroquoian languages, other verbs contain one of three basic aspects: the Habitual, which describes a recurring action or activity, the Punctual, which presents an event as a single, undifferentiated whole, and the Stative, which describes an ongoing situation. Examples of these aspects can be seen in the Mohawk verbs for hiding in (8).

(8) Verb endings: Mohawk
    Command   *satáhseht*   'Hide!'
    Habitual   *satahséht-ha'*   'You hide (all the time)'
    Punctual   *wahsatáhsete-e'*   'You hid'
    Stative   *satahséht-on*   'You are hiding'

The same aspects occur in all of the Northern Iroquoian languages. Stative forms of the verb 'hide' in the various languages can be compared in (9).

(9) Statives: 'One is hiding'
    Mohawk   *iontahséht-on*
    Oneida   *yutahséht-ų*
    Onondaga   *ǫtahséht-i*
    Cayuga   *ǫtáhseht-ǫ*
    Seneca   *ǫtáhseht-ǫ*

For the most part, these Stative endings are the same. The vowel spelled *on* in Mohawk is the same as that spelled *u* in Oneida: it is a nasalized [ų], as in English *noon*. The vowels spelled *ǫ* in Cayuga and Seneca are almost the same, similar to the vowel in English *own* or *on*. This is a regular correspondence: where Mohawk and Oneida have *ų,* Cayuga and Seneca regularly have *ǫ*. On the basis of the Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, and Seneca forms, we can reconstruct the Proto-Five-Nations-Iroquois Stative ending for this verb as *-ǫ*.
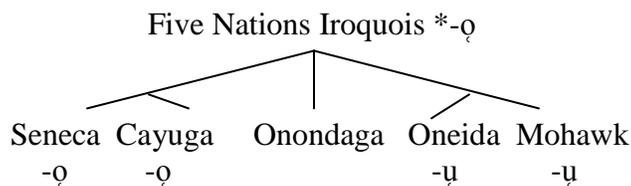
Five Nations Iroquois *-ǫ

Seneca Cayuga   Onondaga   Oneida Mohawk
  -ǫ   -ǫ   -ų   -ų

Figure 2: The Iroquois Stative *-ǫ

The Tuscarora Stative form of this verb has the corresponding nasal vowel ą, suggesting that this Stative marker goes all the way back to Proto-Northern-Iroquoian.

Northern-Iroquoian *-ǫ

Lake Iroquoian

Five Nations Iroquois *-ǫ

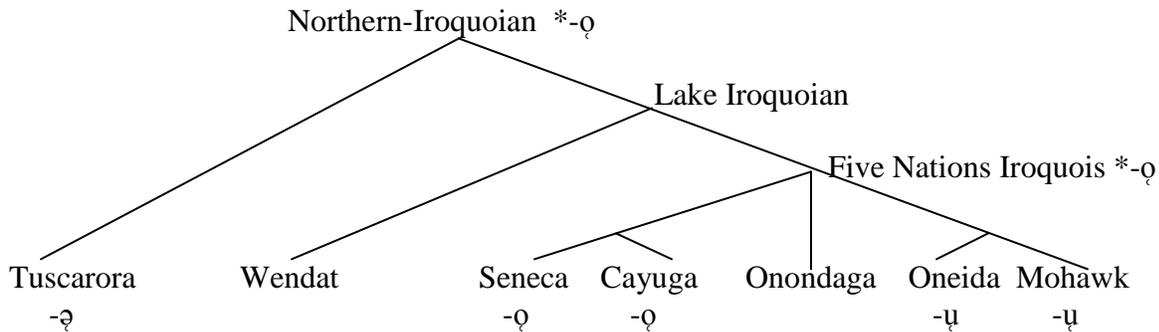| Tuscarora | Wendat | Seneca | Cayuga | Onondaga | Oneida | Mohawk |
| -ą | | -ǫ | -ǫ | | -ų | -ų |

Figure 3: The Northern Iroquoian Stative *-ǫ

But the Onondaga ending *-i* is a surprise. It is a completely different form, not cognate with the others. Sagard lists the word *ontaceti* for 'hide' (1632:128), apparently the Stative verb 'one is hiding'.

(10) Wendat   *ontacet-i̲*

But Onondaga is no more closely related to Wendat than any of the other Five Nations languages.

Again an answer comes from history. There is evidence that a substantial number of Wendats came to live among the Onondaga in the 17th century. In his history of the Wendat, Trigger describes events that occurred in 1650 at Gahoendoe, the final Wendat stronghold on an island in Georgian Bay.

> Although over 100 Huron were reported to have been taken prisoner, the Onondaga's main objective appears to have been to persuade the rest of the Huron to live with them. When they captured the warrior Etienne Annatoha, they sent him back to the Huron to tell them that the Onondaga had brought rich presents inviting them to join them and become a single people. (Thwaites 1896-1901:36.123, cited in Trigger 1986-7:787)

This initiative was not as successful as the Onondaga had hoped, but the Jesuit Relations indicate that a substantial number of Wendats, particularly those of the Rock Nation, did eventually take up residence among the Onondaga.

> When the Jesuits began their mission work among the Onondaga in 1656, they found it useful to establish separate congregations or prayer groups to serve the Huron, Neutral, and Onondaga. Many Huron who were living among the Onondaga were Arendarhonon [Rock] who had been captured before the destruction of Teanaostaiae and Taenhatentaron. Others had come of their own accord after the dispersal of the Huron, in order to live with their relatives. (Thwaites 1896-1901:44.41, cited in Trigger 1987:827)

Echoes of the voices of these Wendat arrivals can still be heard pervasively in modern Onondaga, in the common Stative ending *-i*.

4. Cayuga

All of the Iroquoian languages contain a prefix *-at-*, which serves as a Reflexive or Middle marker, often adding the meaning 'self'. The verb 'Sit down', for example, is literally *s-at-yę* 'you-self-set'.

(11) 'Sit down!'

Mohawk	*sátien*
Oneida	*sáti*
Onondaga	*satyę́*
Cayuga	*satyę́:*
Seneca	*satyę:*

An interesting dialect difference can be heard, however, among Cayuga speakers at Ohsweken, Ontario. Where some speakers say *satyę́:*, others say *sakyę́:*. This is a regular difference that runs through the whole language. Everywhere some Cayuga speakers say *ty,* the other speakers say *ky*. A comparison of all of the Northern Iroquoian languages indicates that the original Proto-Northern-Iroquoian form of the Middle prefix was *-at-
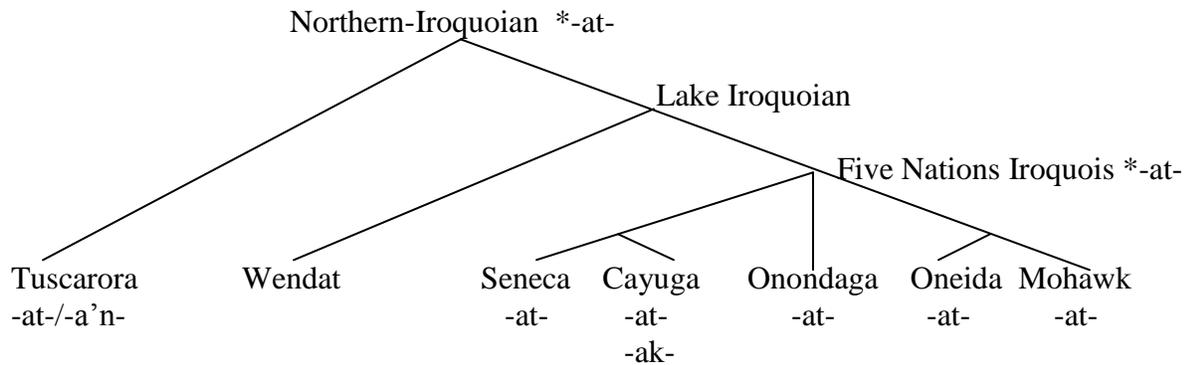
Figure 4: The Northern Iroquoian Middle *-at-

Where could this Cayuga dialect pronunciation *-ak-* before *y* have come from? In fact the 17th century Wendat sources show both forms as well. The glide pronounced *y* in English is spelled *i* in Wendat.

(12) Wendat

Chaumonot	*at̲ien*	
Sagard	*sak̲iein*	'assieds-toy' ('Sit down')

Modern Wyandot, the descendant of some Huron dialects and other neighboring languages, also shows the shift of *t* to *k* before *y*. But why should this Wendat innovation show up in Cayuga, which is no more closely related to Wendat or Wyandot than any of the other Five Nations languages?

Again, history provides an answer. Remarks by the Jesuits in the years following the breakup of the Wendat Confederacy indicate that there were Wendat people living among the Cayuga.

The Huron who lived among the Cayuga showed a similar shift in sentiment as the Iroquois' policies toward the French changed. When the Jesuits first visited the Cayuga, . . . they were received with joy by the Huron who lived there. (Thwaites 1896-1901:47:185-187, cited inTrigger 1976: 835)

Interestingly, the same dialect difference can be heard in modern Mohawk. Mohawk speakers at Ahkwesáhsne systematically shift original *t* to *k* before *y* (spelled *i*), where all other Mohawk speakers still use *t*: Ahkwesáhsne *sákien* versus *sátien* 'Sit down!' The source of this dialect variant in Mohawk is presumably the same as in Cayuga: the absorption of a substantial population of Wendat speakers during the 17th century. In fact the use *k* before *y* was recorded by missionaries living with the Bear Nation, and, as seen above, we know that a substantial group of Bear people did join the Mohawk.

5. Seneca
The Seneca language has undergone a number of changes since the 17th century. One subtle one can be seen in the word for 'arm'. Noun roots for body parts never occur as words on their own. In the words in (13), the root for 'arm' is preceded by a prefix meaning 'my' and followed by a suffix meaning 'place': 'my arm place'.

(13) 'arm'
Mohawk	*ke-nentsh-à:ke*
Oneida	*k-nʌtsh-á:ke*
Onondaga	*k-nętsh-á'ke*
Cayuga	*kh-nętsh-á'ke*
Seneca	*kh-nęsh-á'ke*

Most of the differences among these words are expected, the results of regular changes in the languages. If we look just at the root, we see a regular vowel correspondence. The vowel spelled *en* in Mohawk is the same as that spelled *ʌ* in Oneida. These Mohawk and Oneida vowels correspond regularly to the vowels spelled *ę* in Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and even Tuscarora. But a closer look shows that the Seneca form is missing the *t*. Because all of the other languages show the *t,* we can reconstruct the root for 'arm' as *-nętsh- all the way back to Proto-Northern-Iroquoian.
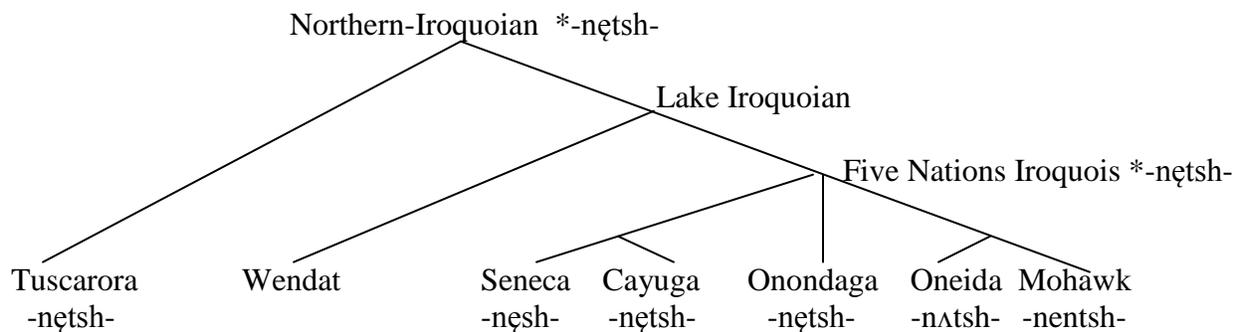

Figure 5: Proto-Northern-Iroquoian 'arm'

So why is Seneca missing the *t*? It could have lost it spontaneously on its own. Speakers often simplify clusters of three consonants, like the -tsh- here, to two. But we find the same simplification Wendat. The Wendat cognate *-nęsh-* means 'upper arm' or 'shoulder'. (The spelling *ch* represents the first sound in English *ship*.)

(14) Wendat
    Sagard 1632:86   *et-neinchi-a*
    HF65:119 in Steckley 2007   *ˌa-nnens-a*

A number of other idiosyncratic developments in Seneca match forms in Wendat. All Iroquoian verbs contain a pronominal prefix identifying the main participant or participants in the event described. The verbs for 'Sit down!' above, for example, all begin with the prefix *s-* 'you'. Another prefix is the feminine plural agent 'they' used for talking about three or more female persons. In Mohawk the prefix is *konti-*, as in the verb *konti-ià:tare'* '<u>they</u> (F) are in it, they are members'. Other Iroquois languages show cognate forms.

(15) Feminine plural agent 'they'
    Mohawk   *konti-*
    Oneida   *kųti-*
    Onondaga   *kųti-*

But the Seneca counterpart is a surprise.

(16) Seneca   *wati-*   'they' (F)

This prefix can be seen in the cognate Seneca verb *watí-ya'ta:'* 'they are in it'. But there is no regular sound shift of *kǫ > wa. (The element *-ti-* is the plural.)
    Again we find the same form in Wendat.

(17) Wendat   *wati-*

But Seneca is not related to Wendat any more closely than any of the other Five Nations languages.
    Again history provides an explanation. After their defeat, a large group of Wendat, many from the Deer Nation, established a community in Seneca territory.

> The largest number of Huron who were incorporated as a group were the Tahontaenrat [Deer]. Many members of this tribe may have perished in the war between the Iroquois and the Neutral, but the Tahontaenrat managed to hold together in a way that no other Huron tribe or major village did. The town of Gandougarae, which they founded, was inhabited by Tahontaenrat and other refugee groups. The latter included Hurom from other tribes, Neutral who had been allies of the Tahontaenrat, and another group known as the Onnontioga (Thwaites 1896-1901:54:81 cited in Trigger 1987:828)

> The Jesuits noted with astonishment the apparent friendship and good feeling between the people of Gandougarae and the Seneca, in spite of their former hostility. (Thwaites 1896-1901: 44.21 cited in Trigger 1987:828)

The community was sizable and maintained its own identity for some time, but eventually merged with the Seneca.

> The arrangement whereby the Tahontaenrat were allowed to retain their own customs and live separately from the Seneca, but as their dependents, was more realistic than any attempt to force the total integration of so many aliens. In time, intermarriages probably forged links between the Seneca and the people of Gandougarae, and it may have been in this way that the Tahontaenrat [Deer] eventually merged with the Seneca. [Trigger 1987:828]

As this substantial group of Wendat intermarried with the Seneca, raised children, and ultimately merged with them, they would of course have brought elements of their language along.

6. More widespread effects

Not surprisingly, some features of the Wendat language affected more than one of the Five Nations languages. Some involve pronominal prefixes, which occur on every verb.

The Masculine singular agent prefix 'he' can be reconstructed to Proto-Northern-Iroquoian as *hra-. At the beginning of words, the *h* is not pronounced.

(18) Pronominal prefixes

Mohawk	*ke-rákwahs*	'I choose'
	se-rákwahs	'you choose'
	<u>*ra*</u>-*rákwahs*	'<u>he</u> chooses'
Oneida	<u>*la*</u>-*lákwas*	'<u>he</u> chooses'
Tuscarora	<u>*ra*</u>-*rá:kwahs*	'<u>he</u> chooses'

But Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca show a different form: *ha*.

(19) Masculine prefix

Onondaga	<u>*ha*</u>-*ǽ:kwas*	'<u>he</u> chooses'
Cayuga	<u>*ha*</u>-*rákwahs*	'<u>he</u> chooses'
Seneca	<u>*hæ*</u>-*:kwas*	'<u>he</u> chooses'[2]

This shift echoes one found in Wendat. Chaumonot lists this same verb as <u>*ha*</u>-*ra8as*, probably pronounced *ha-ráwas.* The shift from *ra-* to *ha-* might seem like a small thing, but a moment's reflection shows that a change in the pronunciation of a form as frequent as the pronoun 'he' would have pervasive effects in everyday speech.[2]

A similar, pervasive effect can be seen in other pronominal prefixes on verbs, the Neuter patient *yo- 'it' and the Indefinite agent *ye-/*yǫ 'one'. In all of the languages, these are the forms that occur inside of words. But in Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca, the *y* has been dropped from the beginnings of words. This can be seen by comparing the verbs for 'it is hot' in (20). In Mohawk, Oneida, and Tuscarora, the full for appears at the beginning of the word. In Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca, the *y* has been dropped.

(20) Neuter prefix *yo- 'it is hot'
    Mohawk   *yo-'taríhen*
    Oneida   *yo-'talíhʌ*
    Tuscarora   *yu-'naríhę:*

    Onondaga   *o-'táihęh*
    Cayuga   *o-'táihę:'*
    Seneca   *o-'táię:h*

This loss of *y* mirrors the situation in Wendat. Sagard gives the Wendat cognate as *Otarixaté* 'il fait chaud' ('it is hot') (1632:131).

The Indefinite agent prefix *yǫ- 'one' was seen earlier in the verb 'one is hiding'.

(9) Statives: 'One is hiding'
    Mohawk   *yon-tahséhton*
    Oneida   *yu-tahséhtu*
    Tuscarora   *yę-hθéhtha'* ('one hides it')

    Onondaga   *ǫ-tahséhti*
    Cayuga   *ǫ-táhsehtǫ*
    Seneca   *ǫ-táhsehtǫ*

The Wendat form given by Sagard is *on-tacetį* (1632:128).

7. Conclusion
Many unexpected idiosyncrasies to be found among the individual Iroquois languages may seem at first minute, hardly worth noticing. Such details can be pervasive, however, and they can make a significant difference to speakers, whether they are conscious of them or not. Consider, for example, the English heard today on the streets of Windsor, Ontario and that heard in Brooklyn, New York. English speakers may or may not be able to pinpoint the source of the differences, but most would notice them as soon as someone uttered a single sentence. The details described here are similarly significant. We have seen only a small sample; there are many more. (Some additional ones are described in Mithun 1985.)

What is intriguing is that even now, three centuries after the fact, we can discover where these tiny details in the modern Five Nations languages came from. During the mid 17th century, Wendat people came to be a significant presence in all of the Five Nations Iroquois communities.

Five hundred to 1000 Tahontaenrat [Deer] joined the Seneca in 1651, and about 400 Huron later left Quebec to join the Mohawk and Onondaga. While no figures are available concerning the number of Huron who joined the Iroquois between 1648 and 1650, several thousand must eventually have been incorporated into Iroquois society in addition to the many hundreds who had been taken prisoner previously. It is difficult to estimate the accuracy of Jacques Bruyas's statement that in 1688 two-thirds of the Oneida were naturalized Huron or Algonkin (Thwaites 1896-1901: 51.123) or to assess the Jesuits' affirmation that a similar number of aliens lived in the principal Mohawk town of Gandagaron (Thwaites 1896-1901:51.187). There is, however, nothing intrinsically improbable in their estimate that over a thousand Huron who had been baptized in the Huron country were living among the Iroquois (Thwaites 1896-1901:41.133, cited in Trigger 1987:826)

Many of the Wendat survivors would have been women, people who play an especially important role in passing on their language to children.

The Wendat language is now seeing new life in the impressive revitalization work taking place in Quebec and Oklahoma. But it also lives on in the daily speech of its sister languages.

Notes

[1]The words cited here come from the following sources. Unless otherwise noted, Wendat is from Sagard 1632, Brébeuf 1830, Chaumonot [1831] 1920, Potier 1920, and Steckley 2007a, 2007b; the Wyandot from Barbeau 1960 and Kopris 2001; the Mohawk from speakers Charlotte Bush, Josephine Horne, Ruth Isaac, Kaia'titahkhe' Jacobs, Skawennati Montour, Hattie Nelson, Kanerahtenhawi Hilda Nicholas, Watshennine Sawyer, and Rokwaho Dan Thompson; the Oneida from speakers Richard Chrisjohn, Mercy Doxtater and Winnie Jacobs and from Michelson and Doxtater 2002; the Onondaga from speakers Reginald Henry, Audrey Shenendoah, and Jim Skye and from Shea 1860, Zeisberger 1887, and Woodbury 2003; the Cayuga from speakers Reginald Henry, Jim Skye, and Pete Skye; the Seneca from speakers Alberta Austin, Sandy Dowdy, Fidelia Jimmerson, Ham Jimmerson, Ruth John, and Myrtle Peterson, and from Chafe ms; the Tuscarora from speakers Elton Greene and Howard Hill and Rudes 1999; and the Cherokee from Feeling 1975 and Montgomery-Anderson 2010.

Several of the languages have been written in a variety of orthographies. These are cited here in the transcriptions cited that are the most similar, to facilitate comparison.

[2]Onondaga and Seneca later lost all instances of *r, but this change occurred later. First just the Masculine prefix shifted from *ra- to ha-, then all remaining instances of *ra shifted to *ræ-, and only then did the remaining instances of *r disappear. We can see that the Masculine prefix contained no *r at the time when the vowel *a was fronted to æ.

The transfer of the Masculine agent prefix is actually slightly more interesting. In Wendat, the form of the prefix at the beginning of a word is *ha-* before consonants and *a*, but *r-* or *hr-* before the vowels *e, ę, o,* and *ǫ*. (The *a* combines with a following *i* to yield *ę,* and disappears before a following *a*.) When the Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca adopted the Wendat Masculine prefix, they generalized the form *ha-* to all contexts. Such overgeneralization is a common phenomenon in contact situations. Mohawk and Oneida show traces of a distribution similar to that in Wendat. At the beginning of words, the form is *ra-* in Mohawk and *la-* in Oneida; the vowel *a* combines with a following *i* to yield *ren-/lʌ-*. Before other vowels, the *a* is lost. Word-internally, however, the form is *ha-*, except before the vowels cognate with *e, ę, o, ǫ*, where it is *hr-* in Mohawk and *hl-* in Oneida.

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