

## LANGUAGE OF THE IROQUOIS

If the Indiana should be entirely banished from our borders, the memory of him cannot die, for, –

“Their names are on our waters,  
We cannot wash them out.”

The dialects of the *Six Nations* bore a strong resemblance to each other, though there were still differences which marked them as distinct. Those who understood one were able to converse in each of the others, and in council the representatives of each nation had no difficulty in interpreting what was said by all. The *Mohawk* and *Oneida* strongly resembled each other, and the *Seneca* and *Cayuga* were the same. The *Onondaga* “was considered by the *Iroquois* as the most finished and majestic,” while to our ears it is the most harsh, and the *Oneida* the most musical.

They use nineteen letters, having no labials or liquids, except occasionally is heard among the *Mohawks* the sound of L and among the *Tuscaroras* the sound of F. The *Senecas* and *Cayugas* talk all day without shutting their lips, and there are no oaths in their language. Before the Indian can be profane he must learn French or English, and his language is so constructed too, that evasion is almost impossible. Metaphors are in constant requisition in Indian speeches and conversation. If one comes in when the weather is very cold, he says, “It is a nose cutting morning.” If he wished to reflect upon a proposition before deciding, he says, “I will put the matter under my pillow, and let you know.” He says of an emaciated person, “He has dry bones.” A steamboat is called “The ship impelled by fire.” A horse is a “log carrier,” a cow a “cud chewer,” and a goat a “scented animal.”

In ancient times, when the hunters encamped in the woods, they kept warm by covering themselves with boughs of hemlock, and now if an Indian is about to repair his cabin, he says, “I will surround it with hemlock boughs,” meaning, I will make it warm and comfortable.\* When a chief has made a speech at the opening of a council, he finished with saying, “the doors are now open, you may proceed.” The messenger of the *Six Nations* to the *Senecas* was called “the man who carries the fire or smoke.” Meaning that he had charge of the council-fire and kept it bright.

The *Iroquois* called themselves the *real people*; and in speeches or conversation, if allusion was made to white people, they said “our younger brethren.” The President of the United States was called “The City Eater,” or “The town Destroyer,” on account of the destruction Washington’s armies caused wherever they went. They afterwards called him “Father of the Thirteen Fires.”

The *Iroquois* had the masculine, feminine, and neuter genders. The masculine and feminine were denoted sometimes by giving the same animal different names, and by prefixes. All inanimate objects were placed in the neuter gender. Instead of saying, “Direct *He-no* to come and give us rain,” they said “Direct that *He-no* come and give us rain.”

The following are specimens of names, with the Lord’s prayer and a hymn in *Seneca*:

O-hee-yuh,	<i>The beautiful river.</i>
Os-we-go,	<i>Flowing out.</i>
On-yit-hah,	<i>Bird of the strong wing.</i>
Ga-no-so-te,	<i>A house.</i>
O-on-do-te,	<i>A tree.</i>
O-ya,	<i>Fruit.</i>
Je-da-do,	<i>A bird.</i>
O-ya-han,	<i>Apples split open.</i>
Ga-no-geh,	<i>Oil in the water.</i>
Ga-osè-ha,	<i>Baby frame.</i>

### THE LORD’S PRAYER

Gwä-nee’, gä-o-yä’-geh che-de-oh’; sã-sa-no-do’-geh-teek; gä-o’  
ne-dwa na’ sa-nunk-tã; na-huk` ne-yä-weh’ na yo-an’-jä-geh ha’-  
ne-sã-ne-go’-dã ha ne-de-o’-dã na` gä-o-yä`geh. Dun-dã-gwä-e’-

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\*History of the Iroquois.

wä-sä-gwus na` ong-wi-wä-na-ark-seh` na´ da-yä-ke´-wä-sä-gwä-  
 seh na´ onk-ke-wä-na-´-ä-ge. Dä-ge-o´-na-geh´-wen-nis´-heh-da  
 na´ ong-wä-quä´. Sä-nuk´ na-huh´ heh´-squä-ä ha´ gä-yeh na´  
 wä-ate-keh´ na-wä´ na´ dä-gwä-yä-duh´-nuh-onk ha´ gä-yeh na´  
 wä-ate-heh´; na´ seh-eh´ na ese´ sä-wä na´ o-nuk-ta´ huh´ na´ gä-  
 hus-ta-seh´ kuk´ na´ da-gä-ä-sä-uh´. Na huh´-ne-yä-weh.\*

\*If an attempt should be made to give a literal translation of each word, or phrase, it  
 would render transposition necessary, and change the formation of the words in some  
 respects, as the following will exhibit:

Gwä-nee´, che-de-oh´ gä-o-yä´-geh, gä-sa-nuh´ ese´ sä-nuk-tä´  
 Our Father, which art in heaven hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom  
 gä-oh ese´ sne´-go-eh ne yä-weh´ yo an-jä´-geh ha´ ne-do-o´-deh  
 come thy will be done on earth as it is in  
 gä-yä-ke´-a-wä-sä-gwus-seh´ ho-yeh´his. Dä ge-oh´ ne´ na geh´  
 forgive our debtors. Give us this  
 wen-nis´-heh-deh e´ na-hä-do-wen-nis´-heh-geh o ä´-qua.  
 day our daily bread.  
 Hä-squä´-ah e sä-no´ ha wä-ate.keh´, na-gwä´ dä-gwä-yä-dan´-nake  
 Lead us not into temptation, but deliver from  
 ne´ wä-ate-keh´, na-seh´-eh nees´ o-nuk´-tä na-kuh´ na  
 us evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the  
 gä-hus-tes-heh, na-kuh´ da-gä-ä-sä-uh´.  
 Power and the glory.  
 Na-huh´-ne-yä-weh.  
 Amen

(Specimen of the Indian Hymn.)

GAA NAH 8. L. M.

O gwo nyoo´ goh´, a ga deääh´seek  
 Heh syah daa deh, lis´ ne Je sus;  
 Täh´äh; tah ah deh, o gwe nyoooh´,  
 Neh huh´ noo´ wak ni gooh´da aak.

Iis, säh äh, ji sa`yah daa gwäh´,  
 Na gat hwa is häh; aa´gä noh,  
 Gih shäh´, deh sa´yah da geh häh,  
 A yó däs´theth oh, naeh, ne neh.

Deh oi´wa yäs doh no´ga deääh,  
 Iis ne gäh sa dyä noh k´dah oh  
 He yoan jakeh, kuh, he goh heh;  
 Iis, kuh, des gäh´nya doh dyot gont.

Dei oi wah´gëh na ga deääh seek;  
 Täh äh, waeh, Nais, heh sa deääh oh,  
 Oi wa ne neä´gwat ni ya´wah oh,  
 Sgie´yah seeh heh, de ga yah sont.

Da gyah´da geh´ha aak´, dih´sho,  
 Ne´ dyòt gont neh ä ges´ nyet haak´,  
 He ni sah´sanno´nä ä gwat,  
 Kuh´ he ni sa daä oh.

