

Title 6. Property and Land – Chapter 601
REAL PROPERTY
Tokáské Kayanláhsla Tsi? Ni’yohuntsya-té
The real/certain laws of the territory of the nation

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601.1. Purpose and Policy

601.1-1. *Purpose.* The purpose of this law is to provide regulations and procedures for the transfer, control and management of the territory within the Reservation and all Tribal land; to integrate these regulations and procedures with the real property laws and practices of other federal and state sovereigns which may hold jurisdiction within the Reservation; and to establish licensing and certification requirements for the Nation’s employees dealing with real property transactions.

601.1-2. *Policy.* It is the policy of the Nation to set out the responsibilities and expectations for persons purchasing and/or managing real property on behalf of the Nation and/or within the Reservation and to provide real property holder’s rights and responsibilities. In addition, it is the Nation’s policy that probated estates shall be settled expeditiously and without undue delay.

601.2. Adoption, Amendment, Repeal

601.2-1. This law was adopted by the Oneida Business Committee by resolution BC-5-29-96-A and amended by resolutions BC-3-01-06-D, BC-04-28-10-E, BC-02-25-15-C, BC-05-13-15-B and BC-02-08-17-A and BC-05-09-18-A.

601.2-2. This law may be amended or repealed by the Oneida Business Committee pursuant to the procedures set out in the Legislative Procedures Act.

601.2-3. Should a provision of this law or the application thereof to any person or circumstances be held as invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions of this law which are considered to have legal force without the invalid portions.

601.2-4. In the event of a conflict between a provision of this law and a provision of another law, the provisions of this law shall control. Provided that, the Land Ordinance is applicable only to valid land assignments existing as of January 1, 2016 and is hereby repealed upon the expiration of the last existing land assignment.

601.2-5. This law is adopted under authority of the Constitution of the Oneida Nation.

601.3. Definitions

601.3-1. This section shall govern the definitions of words and phrases used within this law. All words not defined herein shall be used in their ordinary and everyday sense, subject to 601.4-5.

(a) “Broker” means a person who acts as an agent and negotiates the sale, purchase or rental of real property on behalf of others for a fee.

(b) “Certified survey map” means a map which provides the legal description of real property and is officially filed and approved by the county, Tribal or municipal governments.

(c) “Comprehensive Housing Division” means the division within the Nation under the direction of the Comprehensive Housing Division Director which consists of all

residential services offered by the Nation, including but not limited to, all rental programs, the rent-to-own program, and the residential sales and mortgages programs.

(d) “Easement” means a real property right to cross or otherwise utilize the land of another for a specified purpose.

(e) “Estate” means a person’s interest in real property or other property.

(f) “Fiduciary” means a person required to act for the benefit of another person on all matters within the scope of their relationship and by such a relationship owes another duties of good faith, trust, confidence and candor. For the purposes of this law, both brokers and salespersons are “fiduciaries.”

(g) “Guardian ad litem” means a guardian appointed by the Judiciary on behalf of an incompetent or minor party.

(h) “Individual fee land” means real property held in fee status by an individual or group of individuals.

(i) “Individual trust land” means individual Tribal land held in trust by the United States of America for the benefit of a Tribal member.

(j) “Judiciary” means the judicial system that was established by Oneida General Tribal Council resolution GTC-01-07-13-B to administer the judicial authorities and responsibilities of the Nation.

(k) “Land Management” means the entity within the Nation responsible for maintaining the Oneida Nation Register of Deeds, entering into and administering agricultural and commercial leases on behalf of the Nation, processing trust transactions and land acquisition transactions, and for fulfilling other responsibilities as identified within this law.

(l) “Land use license” means an agreement entered into by the Nation providing a party the right to occupy and/or utilize a specified piece of Tribal land for a specific purpose and a specific duration, which may require the Nation to be compensated for such use.

(m) “Leasehold mortgage” means a mortgage, deed of trust, or other instrument that pledges a lessee’s leasehold interest as security for a debt or other obligation owed by the lessee to a lender or other mortgagee.

(n) “Nation” means the Oneida Nation.

(o) “Personal representative” means a person to whom authority to administer a decedent’s estate have been granted by Land Management or the Judiciary.

(p) “Probate” or “Administration” means any proceeding relating to a decedent’s estate, whether there is or is not a will.

(q) “Real property” means land and anything growing on, attached to, or erected on the land, excluding anything that may be severed without injury to the land.

(r) “Reservation” means all the property within the exterior boundaries of the Reservation of the Oneida Nation, as created pursuant to the 1838 Treaty with the Oneida 7 Stat. 566, and any lands added thereto pursuant to federal law.

(s) “Restricted fee status” means an interest in real property which includes a provision in the deed or will that, upon the happening or failure to happen of a certain event, the title of the purchaser or devisee shall be limited, enlarged, changed or terminated.

(t) “Rule” means a set of requirements, including fee schedules, enacted by the Comprehensive Housing Division, Land Management, Oneida Planning Department and/or the Oneida Land Commission in accordance with the Administrative Rulemaking law, based on authority delegated in this law in order to implement, interpret and/or enforce this law.

- (u) “TAAMS” (Trust Asset and Accounting Management System) means the Bureau of Indian Affairs system for maintaining and tracking land title documents and all legal documents relating to land transactions.
- (v) “Title status report” means a report issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs after a title examination which shows the proper legal description of a tract of Tribal land; current ownership, including any applicable conditions, exceptions, restrictions or encumbrances on records; and whether the land is in unrestricted, restricted, trust, or other status as indicated by the records in a Land Titles and Records Office.
- (w) “Tribal fee land” means land held in fee status by the Nation.
- (x) “Tribal land” means Tribal fee land and Tribal trust land.
- (y) “Tribal member” means an individual who is an enrolled member of the Nation.
- (z) “Tribal trust land” means the surface estate of land or any interest therein held by the United States in trust for the Nation; land held by the Nation subject to federal restrictions against alienation or encumbrance; land reserved for federal purposes; and/or land held by the United States in trust for the Nation under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act, 25 U.S.C §477, et. seq.

601.4. General Provisions

601.4-1. *Applicable Real Property.* The provisions of this law extend to all Tribal member’s individual fee land and Tribal member’s individual trust land within the Reservation boundaries and all Tribal land.

601.4-2. *Tribal Land Base.* Land Management shall administer all transactions which add real property to the Tribal land base under the provisions of this law.

601.4-3. *Sale of Tribal Land Prohibited.* The sale of Tribal land is specifically prohibited by this law, unless the intent of the transaction is the consolidation or partition of Tribal trust land and/or individual trust land.

601.4-4. *New Land Assignments Prohibited.* The Nation may not acknowledge any new land assignments. Further, in order to be eligible for a Tribal loan issued against a real property interest held as a land assignment, the land assignment shall first be converted to a residential lease.

601.4-5. *Wisconsin Probate Code and its Related Chapters.* In instances where the Nation lacks definition, procedure, or legal precedent in a probate matter, the Nation shall use Wisconsin’s Probate Code and its related chapters for guidance.

601.4-6. *Wisconsin Real Property Law.* The Nation shall follow all applicable portions of the Wisconsin Real Property law when acquiring individual fee land.

601.4-7. *No Waiver of Sovereign Immunity.* Nothing in this law may be construed as a waiver of the Nation’s sovereign immunity.

601.5. Holding of Ownership

601.5-1. Interests in real property by more than one (1) person may be held in the following ways:

- (a) *Joint Tenancy with the Right of Survivorship.* Pursuant to this ownership mechanism each owner has an equal, undivided interest in the real property. When an owner dies, his/her share is divided among the remaining owners; the last living owner owns the entire property.

- (1) Real property owned by married persons is held under this mechanism unless they have executed a valid marital property agreement specifically stating that the real property in question is held as tenants in common.

(b) *Tenancy in Common*. Pursuant to this ownership mechanism each owner has a percentage of divided interest in the real property. When an owner dies, his/her interest is divided among his/her devisees or heirs.

(1) Real property owned by more than one (1) person, other than married persons, is owned under this mechanism unless a deed or transfer document specifically states the real property is held as joint tenants with rights of survivorship.

601.6. Legal Descriptions

601.6-1. The legal description for any real property transferred under this law shall be derived from a certified survey map or survey completed by a registered land surveyor according to currently accepted minimum industry standards for property surveys. If the plat of survey changes the legal description of the certified survey map for the same piece of property, the certified survey map's legal description shall be used on transfer documents along with the survey description, which shall be designated as "Also Known As ..." Section, township, range and fourth principal meridian shall be included in all legal descriptions.

601.6-2. Every land survey shall be made in accordance with the county register of deeds' records for fee land, and in accordance with the Oneida Nation Register of Deeds' records for Tribal trust lands and individual trust lands. The surveyor shall acquire data necessary to retrace record title boundaries such as deeds, maps, certificates of title, title status reports, Tribal leases, Tribal home purchase agreements, center line and other boundary line locations.

601.6-3. Legal descriptions defining land boundaries shall be complete, providing unequivocal identification of line or boundaries.

601.6-4. All surveys prepared for the Nation shall comply with survey requirements outlined in the Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter A-E7 and indicate setbacks, building locations and encroachments, as applicable.

601.6-5. Legal descriptions shall be used on transfer documents formalizing a purchase, real estate sale, lease, foreclosure, probate transfer, trust acquisition and Tribal resolutions.

601.6-6. When real estate is listed, noticed and/or advertised as available for sale, rent or lease to Tribal members, the address is an adequate legal description of the real property.

601.7. Title Transfer

601.7-1. *Trust Acquisition*. Land Management shall use title companies duly registered with the Department of Interior and approved by the Land Management to update abstracts or provide title insurance on real property scheduled for trust acquisition.

(a) Title companies shall follow general guidelines provided by the federal government in terms of form, content, period of search, destroyed or lost records and abstracter's certificate.

(b) When researching land title for real property within the Reservation which is being considered for trust acquisition, Land Management shall request the title company to search the title back to the original allottee, in order to ensure that patents or Indian deeds were legally issued.

(c) Any valid liens or encumbrances shown by the commitment for title insurance shall be eliminated before the title is transferred into trust.

(d) After land is in trust both a title search of county records and a title status report requested by Land Management from the Bureau of Indian Affairs shall verify all valid encumbrances, if any, on the title. For the purposes of this section, a valid encumbrance is one that has been preapproved, in writing, by Land Management based on a standard operating procedure that is effective upon approval by the Oneida Land Commission.

(e) Land Management applications to convert Tribal fee land into Tribal trust land require an Oneida Land Commission resolution approving the conversion.

601.7-2. *Deeds.* A deed is the formal document used by the Land Management to transfer title from one (1) party to another.

(a) A valid deed shall:

- (1) Be in writing;
- (2) Identify the grantor (seller) and grantee (buyer);
- (3) Provide the legal description of the real property;
- (4) Identify the interest conveyed, as well as any conditions, reservations, exceptions, or rights of way attached to the interest;
- (5) Be signed by or on behalf of each of the grantors (sellers);
- (6) Be signed by or on behalf of each spouse of each of the grantors (sellers), if applicable; and
- (7) Be delivered to the grantee (buyer).

(b) In addition to the requirements listed in section 601.7-2(a), a deed prepared for trust acquisition shall include:

- (1) The federal authority for trust acquisition;
- (2) Any exceptions or exclusions from the State of Wisconsin's fees or other transfer requirements;
- (3) The approximate acreage of the real property being transferred to trust; and
- (4) The authority and signature of the appropriate Department of Interior official who accepts the real property into trust.

(c) A deed transferring fee simple title shall be recorded in the appropriate register of deeds office, provided that, once the real property is in trust, the title shall be recorded with the Oneida Nation Register of Deeds and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Land Titles and Records Office.

601.7-3. *Involuntary Transfer of Title.* All involuntary transfers of title require a hearing and order from the Judiciary, and may occur in the following ways:

(a) *Eminent Domain.* Eminent domain is the right of the Nation's government to acquire Tribal member individual fee land within the Reservation for public uses without the consent of private owners.

(1) For the purposes of this section, public uses include, but are not limited to, environmental protection, streets, highways, sanitary sewers, public utility/sites, waste treatment facilities and public housing.

(2) Prior to exercising eminent domain, the Nation shall first attempt to negotiate an agreeable taking by making an offer to purchase based on an appraisal of the real property. The appraisal amount may be based on an appraisal provided by the Nation. In the event the property owner objects to the Nation's appraisal, they may obtain an independent appraisal at their own cost. For the purposes of this section, an appraisal means process for estimating a piece of real property's value.

(3) The Nation's exercise of eminent domain may be appealed to the Judiciary.

(b) *Foreclosure.* Foreclosures may occur subject to the Mortgage and Foreclosure law when a Tribal member ceases payment on a leasehold mortgage.

(c) *Tribal Land Consolidation.* Section 207 of the Indian Land Consolidation Act (Pub.L. No. 97-459, 96 Stat. 2515, and amended on October 30, 1984 by Pub.L. No. 98-608, 98 Stat. 3171) is incorporated into this law, which provides a mechanism for real property within the Reservation to escheat, or pass, to the Nation.

(1) Pursuant to section 207 of the Indian Land Consolidation Act, an ownership interest in real property escheats, or passes, to the Nation under the following circumstances, provided that the Nation shall provide just compensation for the interest:

(A) The real property is within the Reservation boundaries;

(B) The decedent's ownership in the given parcel of land is two percent (2%) or less of the total acreage; and

(C) The interest is incapable of earning one hundred dollars (\$100) in any one (1) of the five (5) years immediately following the decedent's death.

(2) A decedent's heirs may appeal a land consolidation under this section to the Judiciary.

(3) Land consolidation is subject to the probate requirements, as included in this law and accompanying rules.

(d) *Transferring Interests Inherited by Non-Tribal Members.* If the owner of an interest of real property which is held in trust or restricted fee status located within the Reservation devises such interest to a non-Tribal member, the Nation may acquire the interest by paying the fair market value of the interest determined as of the date of the decedent's death. Such transfer is effective upon receipt of an order transferring inherited interests from the Judiciary pursuant to section 205 of the Indian Land Consolidation Act.

(1) An order transferring inherited interests may not be granted if:

(A) While the decedent's estate is pending, the non-Indian devisee denounces his or her interest in favor of a Tribal member person;

(B) The interest is part of a family farm that is devised to a member of the immediate family of the decedent, provided that such a restriction shall be recorded as part of the deed relating to the interest involved; or

(C) The devisee agrees in writing that the Nation may acquire the interest for fair market value only if the interest is offered for sale to a person or entity that is not a member of the immediate family of the owner of the interest.

(e) *Easements for Landlocked Properties.* Land Management and the Oneida Land Commission shall jointly develop rules regarding requests for easements for landlocked properties.

601.7-4. Land Management shall work with the Oneida Law Office in order to pursue an involuntary transfer of title.

601.8. Probate

601.8-1. Land Management shall process and administer probate estates and, where necessary, shall refer probate estates to the Oneida Judiciary for formal administration. Land Management and the Oneida Land Commission shall jointly create any rules necessary to administer probate estates. Land Management shall:

(a) Process applications for probate administration;

(b) Receive proof of heirship demonstrating a party is entitled to receive an intestate decedent's property pursuant to applicable laws and rules;

(c) Receive consent to serve forms and in undisputed matters, issue domiciliary letters;

(d) Require and receive affidavits of service;

(e) Receive waiver and consent to probate administration forms and any related affidavits;

- (f) Issue notice to creditors of the probate's administration, receive creditor claims for consideration and settlement, and issue discharge of creditors when appropriate;
- (g) Receive and process all estate inventories;
- (h) Receive and process, when possible, land transactions in accordance with this law and receive proof of recording documents;
- (i) Receive estate receipts;
- (j) In undisputed matters, receive and process statement of personal representative to close estate and issue discharge of personal representative; and
- (k) Refer disputed matters to the Judiciary, transfer probate and related documents, and participate in the Judiciary's proceedings as necessary.

601.8-2. The Judiciary shall hear and administer disputed probate estates or matters requiring appointment of a guardian ad litem and shall have all the above powers conferred upon Land Management in such cases. In addition, the Judiciary shall hear and administer probate estates in which Land Management seeks appointment as a personal representative.

601.9. Leasing of Real Property

601.9-1. In accordance with the Leasing law, Land Management shall administer and process all leasing of Tribal land for agricultural and commercial purposes and the Comprehensive Housing Division shall administer and process all leasing of Tribal land for residential purposes. The Leasing law definition of Tribal land does not include Tribal fee land; however, pursuant to this law, the responsible parties designated herein shall administer and process leases of both Tribal fee land and Tribal trust land in accordance with the Leasing law.

601.10. Records

601.10-1. *Purpose.* Land Management shall oversee the administration of the Oneida Nation Register of Deeds which shall accept and record documents related to real property located within the Reservation, as well as documents related to all Tribal fee land, regardless of where it is located.

601.10-2. *Types of Records.* The Oneida Nation Register of Deeds may only accept documents that provide evidence of activities affecting real property title, preserve the record of a title document and give constructive notice of changes to a title document. Further, such documents shall be originals, signed duplicates or certified copies. The following documents may be accepted by the Oneida Nation Register of Deeds.

- (a) Deeds;
- (b) Probate orders;
- (c) Mortgages and other valid liens;
- (d) Easements, covenants, and restrictions;
- (e) Certified survey maps and plats of survey;
- (f) Patents;
- (g) Declarations of involuntary transfer or taking;
- (h) Satisfactions;
- (i) Leases made pursuant to the Leasing law;
- (j) Home ownership agreements made pursuant to the Landlord-Tenant law;
- (k) Marriage agreements; and
- (l) Correction of title defects.

601.10-3. *Accessibility.* The Oneida Nation Register of Deeds shall provide open access to land records and title documents.

601.10-4. *Trust Land.* All documents pertaining to Tribal trust land and individual trust land shall be recorded with the Oneida Nation Register of Deeds and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Land Titles and Records Office.

601.10-5. *Tribal Seal.* The Nation's Secretary shall provide Land Management with the Nation's seal to be used to authenticate documents which are certified by the Oneida Nation Register of Deeds.

601.11. Real Estate Education Requirements and Certifications

601.11-1. *Wisconsin Real Estate Education and Exam Required.* All persons engaging in the acquisition of Tribal fee land on behalf of the Nation, specifically those performing real estate closings, shall pass the Wisconsin Real Estate License Exam. Such persons are not required to obtain a Wisconsin Real Estate License, but shall fulfill the pre-license education requirement, pass the licensing exam and fulfill a minimum of twelve (12) hours or four (4) courses of continuing education requirements as required of Wisconsin real estate licensees. The Land Management director shall select which continuing education courses are required and the Oneida Law Office shall provide the director with a recommendation. In addition to Wisconsin's minimum education requirements as applied to the Nation's real estate employees in this law, Land Management shall require such employees to attend real estate training specific to the Nation's goals and unique positions as the Oneida Law Office shall offer on an as-needed basis.

(a) While Wisconsin real estate law allows persons engaged in the sale of real estate to earn a commission, persons acquiring Tribal fee land on behalf of the Nation are regular employees of the Nation and, therefore, shall waive any commission for which they might otherwise be eligible.

(b) It is critical to the Oneida Nation's goal to reacquire property within the original Reservation boundaries to have employees educated and experienced in executing real estate transactions. Accordingly, Land Management shall employ a minimum of one (1) employee whose primary focus is real estate acquisitions and shall ensure that a minimum of two (2) employees are educated and trained as backups to the primary.

601.11-2. *TAAMS Certification Required.* All persons responsible for encoding leasing information shall obtain a TAAMS certification, which includes, but is not limited to, the following positions:

- (a) Residential and Commercial Leasing Specialists;
- (b) Land Title and Trust Manager; and
- (c) Title Examiner.

601.11-3. *Fiduciary Responsibility.* All persons engaged in the buying or selling of Tribal land shall, at all times, act as a fiduciary to the Nation. Further, all such persons shall comply with all applicable Tribal and federal laws.

601.12. Organization

601.12-1. *Comprehensive Housing Division.* The Comprehensive Housing Division shall oversee all residential transactions within the Reservation and shall process and administer such transactions using the applicable of the Landlord-Tenant law, the Mortgage and Foreclosure law, the Leasing law and/or the Eviction and Termination law; including any corresponding rules. In addition, the Oneida Land Commission and the Comprehensive Housing Division shall exercise joint rulemaking authority to provide process requirements, including but not limited to advertising, notice, prequalification, and selection, that apply in all circumstances when the Nation is selling a residential property.

601.12-2. *Oneida Land Commission.* The Oneida Land Commission is comprised of seven (7) elected Tribal members and shall:

- (a) Interpret the provisions of this law and create policy to guide Land Management in implementing the same;
- (b) Approve or deny all easements and land use licenses;
- (c) Review and adopt Land Management's standard operating procedures for entering into agriculture and commercial leases pursuant to the Leasing law;
- (d) Approve or deny all acquisition of Tribal land;
- (e) Allocate and assign land uses to all Tribal land, except those uses governed by the Public Use of Tribal Land law, based on the Land Use Technical Unit rules which the Oneida Planning Department shall develop in collaboration with affected Oneida divisions and departments and the Oneida Land Commission; and
- (f) Name all buildings, roads, parks and the like on Tribal land.

601.12-3. *Land Management.* Land Management shall implement this law in accordance with the policy directives provided by the Oneida Land Commission. Land Management shall:

- (a) Forward requests for easements and land use licenses to the Oneida Land Commission based on the easement and land use license rules jointly developed by Land Management and the Oneida Land Commission;
- (b) Administer and oversee the Oneida Nation Register of Deeds;
- (c) Enter into and administer agricultural and commercial leases pursuant to the Leasing law and the Eviction and Termination law and any corresponding rules;
- (d) Prepare title reports and process trust transactions; and
- (e) Process land acquisition transactions as approved by the Oneida Land Commission.

End.

Adopted-BC-05-29-96-A
Amended-BC-03-01-06-D
Amended-BC-04-28-10-E
Amended-BC-02-25-15-C
Amended-BC-05-13-15-B
Amended-BC-02-08-17-A
Emergency Amendment-BC-06-14-17-A
Amended-BC-05-09-18-A