



## The Sustain Oneida Summit: Participant Responses

By: The Oneida Trust and Enrollment Committee

*This series of articles is designed to inform Oneida citizens about enrollment issues. The total number of Oneida enrolled members is expected to decline within the next 10 years. The goal of these articles is to generate community conversations about citizenship and belonging so that we may explore our options.*

This article will provide a recap of participants' reactions to the Sustain Oneida Summit which was held Saturday September 7, 2013. Participant responses were collected during the Summit's small group discussions and World Café table topics. The Sustain Oneida team has recently reviewed the data that has come out of the Summit. After reading every response for each question, the data was organized into the most frequently occurring themes, which we will share here.

During the morning, participants gathered into small groups to discuss questions centered around what it means to be Oneida. A facilitator captured each small group's responses on a flipchart which were later shared with the larger group. In true Oneida fashion, the small groups shared stories, and there was a good amount of laughter and joking around the room. Many Oneida pride themselves on their sense of humor and this approach helped participant's discuss what were sometimes challenging questions. The most common responses to each small group discussion question are summarized by topic below:

<b>Why is it important to be Oneida?</b>	"Pride," "culture," "identity," language" and "family"
<b>Share a story or experience about when you felt the most Oneida.</b>	"Longhouse", "language", "singing", "teaching history" and "traditional games"
<b>What does being Oneida mean to you?</b>	"Pride/honor," "family/relatives", "responsibilities", "grateful/thankful", and "identity"

The afternoon was organized around a “World Café” style discussion with stations set up around the room with different topics relevant to the concept of belonging. Elders were paired up with youth so that the generations could come together to discuss their ideas. At each station, participants captured what their answers “looked” like on large sheets of paper. The artwork was then hung up on the wall and discussed. The most common responses to the World Café poster questions are summarized by topic below:

<b>What do you value most about Oneida?</b>	“Culture,” “food,” sovereignty” and “home”
<b>How are we connected?</b>	“Historical places,” “events,” and “food”
<b>Think of an example when you were overwhelmed with a sense of belonging. Describe what you experienced, saw, felt, shared...</b>	“Great Law Recital,” “indigenous games,” “songs/dancing,” and “meetings”
<b>How would you promote yourself as an Oneida citizen?</b>	“Engaging in community,” “practicing language,” “and “education”
<b>How is Oneida unique?</b>	“Language,” “clans,” “history,” “sovereign nation,” and “traditions”
<b>How do we empower Oneida youth?</b>	“Listening,” “leading by example,” “connectivity,” “and cultural activities”
<b>Who and what determines belonging in a group in Oneida?</b>	“Family,” “religion,” “ancestry,” and “values”
<b>Imagine a time when you felt a sense of Oneida community. What did it “look” like? How did you feel?</b>	“Gatherings,” “traditions,” “language,” “and “Oneida Pow wow”

At the end of the Summit, participants provided feedback on questionnaire cards. Several people stated how surprised they were at how peaceful and civil the conversations were given how divisive the topic of belonging, blood and identity can be. People noted their appreciation at having a safe and friendly the environment to begin these conversations.

The Sustain Oneida team is grateful to the community for attending the event and sharing their stories and comments. The information that came out of this Summit will be used for a variety of planning measures such as creating future agendas; continuing the discussions about Oneida citizenship and belonging; and identifying where to go from here.

Yaw^ko to all who attended the Sustain Oneida Summit and we hope to see you again at future events!

For more information about Sustain Oneida please visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/OneidaTrust>

<https://oneida-nsn.gov/bcc/TrustEnrollmentCommittee/>

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