

Recent changes in the Cheyenne Language

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Our languages don't stand still – they change with the times. New words are coined and languages adapt with new generations of speakers.

This presentation discusses recent and ongoing changes in the Cheyenne language, based primarily on the experience of a first language Northern Cheyenne speaker as well as work with other speakers and language documentation. We will give examples of and provide discussion about some of the changes that we have seen taking place in Cheyenne over the past several decades, including:

- New word coining initiatives
 - for example **aseéestsestótse** 'telephone (literally thing to talk away to the distance)'
 - Sports terminology, for example basketball terms
 - Vocabulary changes with technology change, like when Cheyennes changed from wagons to vehicles
- Combining Cheyenne with English
 - **Náto'sétahoo'e bike** 'I'm going for a bike ride"
 - **Amó'a'óváhtsestótse** 'bicycle'
- Turn taking/waiting time in conversation
- Whispered/voiceless syllables not always pronounced,
 - for example **máhtamáhááhe** 'old woman' is often pronounced **tamáhááhe**
- Word order changes, including more English-like SVO order
- Evidential/mode system, frequently found in stories and texts, not often used anymore
- Glottal stop vs h, for example **hé'tóhe** 'this' vs **hé'tó'e**
- Obviation marking is often not found on nouns anymore, but still found on verbs
- Cheyenne humor based on subtle language differences