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RESEARCHERS LOOK INTO "SKAHNSIN" ENGLISH
Public Forums Focus on How Wisconsinites Talk

Do you celebrate your *golden birthday* by going canoeing on the *flowage* and playing *sheepshead* by the campfire? Do you eat *squeaky cheese, lefse,* or *kringle*? Would you ever *borrow* someone some money? Is *bakery* a building or is it a sweet pastry? Does *sorry* rhyme with *glory* or with *starry*? Do you tell your children not to *budge* in line? *Anymore*, do you hear these kinds of differences in normal conversation? If so, linguists want to talk with you!

There's a popular notion that "the media" and the mobility of the American population have "homogenized" American English. But Joan Houston Hall, Chief Editor of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, says that "there are still thousands of differences in the language from one part of the country to another." She and a team of University of Wisconsin researchers will be asking for input and talking about their work at three forums around the state on our distinct forms of Wisconsin English—its own vocabulary, pronunciations, idioms, and ethnic influences—and they want to learn more about it from audience participants.

Six specialists, sponsored by the Wisconsin Humanities Council, will host multimedia public discussions in Milwaukee, Eau Claire, and Madison to explore how Wisconsinites talk, how our regional English came to be so distinctive, and how it is changing dramatically even today. Those who attend will have a chance to answer short questionnaires and comment on the speech in different cities in and around Wisconsin. Public forum details:

- 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, March 22, at the Public Library (Central) in Milwaukee.
- 7-8:30 p.m. Monday, March 27, at the Plaza Hotel & Suites Conference Center in Eau Claire.
- 10 a.m.–noon Saturday, April 1, Union South (227 N. Randall Avenue), in Madison.

Erica Benson, a presenter who researches dialect differences at UW–Eau Claire's English department, says that her work shows "how perceptions of Wisconsin English differ among people living in the state and those living in other states." The researchers look forward to learning more about this and other phenomena related to our regional language.

Other presenters include: Greg Iverson (Foreign Languages & Linguistics, UW–Milwaukee), who specializes in sounds and language change; Jennifer Delahanty (German, UW–Madison), who is studying German influences on Wisconsin English; Tom Purnell (Linguistics, UW–Madison), who investigates sounds, ethnicity, and dialect; and Joe Salmons (Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures, UW–Madison), a specialist in sounds, and language and immigration.

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