

Ojibwe nominal inflection such as plural, diminutive, pejorative, and obviate marking is not always predictable from the stem alone. For instance, the stems *amikw* 'beaver' and *akikw* 'kettle' have phonologically identical endings, but *amikw* pluralizes as *amikwag* and *akikw* pluralizes as *akikoog* (Ojibwe People's Dictionary, 2021). To account for these unpredictable surface forms, most analyses have required between five and seven classes of noun stems: each with its own morphophonemic behaviors (Valentine 2001, Nichols 1980, Nichols 2011).

In this paper, we revisit these noun classes and explicitly reduce them to a set of principled phonological rules. All of the traditional noun classes, except for two small irregular classes, can be derived from Nichol's (1980) phonological rules, with three minimal changes: (i) we change rule P-30 (*Y-contraction*) to generalize to all short vowels rather than just /a/, (ii) we change rule P-19 (*W-lengthening*) to apply *before* rule P-18 (*special W-loss*), and (iii) we add a new rule that inserts a /w/ between a long vowel and /i/ to resolve vowel hiatus (*W-insertion*). This analysis leads to two new assumptions about Ojibwe morphology: (i) the pejorative suffix is underlyingly *-ish* rather than *-sh*, and (ii) class 2a (*anishinaabe*-type) nouns do not have an underlying /w/.

This leaves two irregular classes: *aa*-augment stems and *kw*-final animal name stems. The class of *aa*-augment stems includes nouns that sometimes require a special *-aa-* infix, and are thus already irregular under previous analyses. The class of *kw*-final animal names includes about 20-30 nouns with an underlying /w/ in which rule P-6 (*WA-contraction*) does not apply. This *kw*-final animal-name class cannot be explained phonologically because two stems that end with the same root do not necessarily fall into the same class.

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