

TITLE Bringing myaamia kiilhswaakana ‘Lunar Calendars’ into the Digital Age
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This paper discusses the ongoing evolution of myaamia kiilhswaakani ‘the myaamia lunar calendar’. The calendar system was reclaimed from documentation and first published in 2009. Now, over 7,000 printed calendars are mailed to Tribal citizens annually with supporting resources available online and open to the public. We discuss the calendar language attested in the primary sources, the revitalization of the contemporary myaamia kiilhswaakani, and potential future directions as new resources are developed.

Miami-Illinois is an academic cover term for a group of closely-related languages that today are spoken by Miami (myaamia) and Peoria (peewaalia) people. After falling into disuse, it was attested only through documentary records that went on to serve as the foundation for a community language reclamation effort beginning in the 1990s. The documentary record of Miami-Illinois is typically divided into two broad eras: an older layer, composed by French-speaking Jesuit missionaries living among the Illinois Confederacy in the late 17th and early 18th centuries; and a more recent layer, beginning in the 19th century, composed largely by Anglophone researchers (Costa 2003).

Using the lunar cycle to measure the years is common across the globe and has been well-documented for other Algonquian languages, but details vary. Because the documentation is so diverse, there are both core similarities and important differences in the attested lunar calendars; language recorded by Pinet indicates that speakers were likely aware of this (kotakinki iilakimakinci kiilihsooki ‘we (exclusive) count the months differently’, Miami Tribe of Oklahoma 2024a). For example, the records are clear that the month begins with saakiwa ‘sprouting’, when the moon’s light returns; in other cases, such as when to place the beginning of the year, the sources disagree. We describe the different sets of month names and discuss other calendar-related vocabulary attested across the corpus.

Work on the calendar included not just researching language from historical sources but also reconnecting with the lunar cycle itself and Myaamia Ecological Knowledge more broadly. Today, myaamia kiilhswaakani connects the lunar calendar system with the Gregorian solar calendar to make it useful for contemporary myaamia people (Miami Tribe of Oklahoma 2024b). As the tribal community continues developing new technology to make resources more available to the myaamia community, we are always examining new ways to adapt the calendar for use within these systems.

REFERENCES

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