



Myaamia Community Engagement

nipwaayoni

In his seminal work *“Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community”*, Robert Putnam (2000) highlights a growing detachment within U.S. communities. He warned that this detachment from friends, family, and civic and democratic structures was leading to social decline. Others observed that social decline was already at work with an accompanying uptick in concerns about familial, economic and mental health. In the decade that followed (post 9/11), an upsurge in engagement was noted, especially among youth. Consider the same notion of the decline in community engagement, but one that was initiated by a community’s forced removal and historical trauma.

Healing through Engagement

The Myaamia Tribe was forced to leave its homelands in 1846. This led to a steady decline in cultural practices to an eventual “dormancy or sleeping” period. Specifically, this detachment from the homelands and community dispersal resulted in a loss of language, limited cultural practice and trauma. Researchers have suggested that the impact of historical trauma among Native Americans consists of three things.¹ First is the domination and assault of the dominant culture on the masses. Second, the generation receiving the trauma exhibits biological, societal and psychological symptoms of the trauma. Finally, the recipients of the trauma transfer symptom responses to successive generations.^{2,3} Recovery from such trauma however, is aided by reclaiming and redefining ones culture and self. Such a reclamation or awakening occurred within the Myaamia community, leading to a purposeful revitalization and a growing resurgence in language use and community engagement. (Read more about this in: Shea et.al., 2019. Cultural revitalization as a restorative process to combat cultural trauma and promote living well. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, doi: 10.1037/cdp0000250)

As part of the Myaamia Center’s (MC) assessment of tribal revitalization, a closer look at community engagement was implemented. Tajfel⁴ views community identity as being tied to common interests and shared experiences. Further, one measure of the health of any community is its ability to connect, participate and support each other and its systems. This notion has been an integral part of numerous public health paradigms.⁵ Therefore, examining community engagement may provide the MC with a viable measure of revitalization impact. Over the past 5 years, MC researchers have used observational methodology to record

participation at major tribal events. The data are presented here.

Tribal Community Engagement: Event Attendance

YEAR EVENT	2015	2016	2017	2018
Annual Meeting			13 chief challenge 50 game day 157 tribal members & 49 guests at meeting	20 Chief challenge 171 tribal members & 50 guests at meeting
Ribbon Workshop	50 tribal members	35 tribal members		49 tribal members 84 total
Language Classes	22 tribal members	53 tribal members	54 tribal members Total 107	60 tribal members Total 76 (about 12 under age 13)
Winter Gathering		20 tribal members at storytelling	60 tribal members at storytelling 140 total	85-88 moccasin game 93 tribal members at storytelling
Myaamiaki Biennial Conference		135		149
Stomp Class			30 tribal members in attendance	43 tribal members in attendance
Lacrosse			56 played 52 watched	50 played 25 watched

Note: Myaamiaki Conference attendance in 2012 was 156; in 2014 was 170

End Notes

- ¹Maria Brave Heart, Josephine Chase, Jennifer Elkins, and Deborah B. Altschul, “Historical Trauma among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Concepts, Research, and Clinical Considerations,” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 43 no. 4 (2011): 282–290.
- ² Kathleen Brown-Rice. “Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma among Native Americans,” *The Professional Counselor: Research & Practice*, 3 no.3 (2013): 117-130;
- ³ Michelle Sotero, “A Conceptual Model of Historical Trauma: Implications for Public Health Practice and Research” *Journal of Health Disparities Research Practice*. 1, no.1 (2006):93-108
- ⁴Tajel, H. (2010). *Social identity and intergroup relations*. Cambridge University Press.
- ⁵<https://www.who.int/servicedeliverysafety/areas/qhc/community-engagement/en/>