

Within the language, we can observe a strong sense of connectedness. *Iiyiyiuu-liyinuu ayimun*, just like many other Indigenous languages found across North America, is characterized by the lack of gender-based distinctions.

Instead of making strong distinctions between feminine and masculine, the *liyiyiuu-liyinu* language is divided by nouns that are considered animate or inanimate. In other words, it is the spirits that give life to the language that is spoken.

These pamphlets were made possible by the knowledge of our elders.

Being so specific, some of the words in *liyiyiuyu-liyinuuy ayimun* cannot be translated properly in other languages. Each word is an image and holds much symbolism in the way they are structured. This is why it is important to preserve our language: it is our way of seeing the world.

Those who still speak Indigenous languages must assure that the next generations learn it too. Speak to your children in *liiyiyuu-liyinu* *ayimun*. If they do not understand now, one day they will. It is best to teach them while they are still young. And for those who are still learning, each word spoken is a battle won against the dominance of Western culture—even if it is only one word a day.

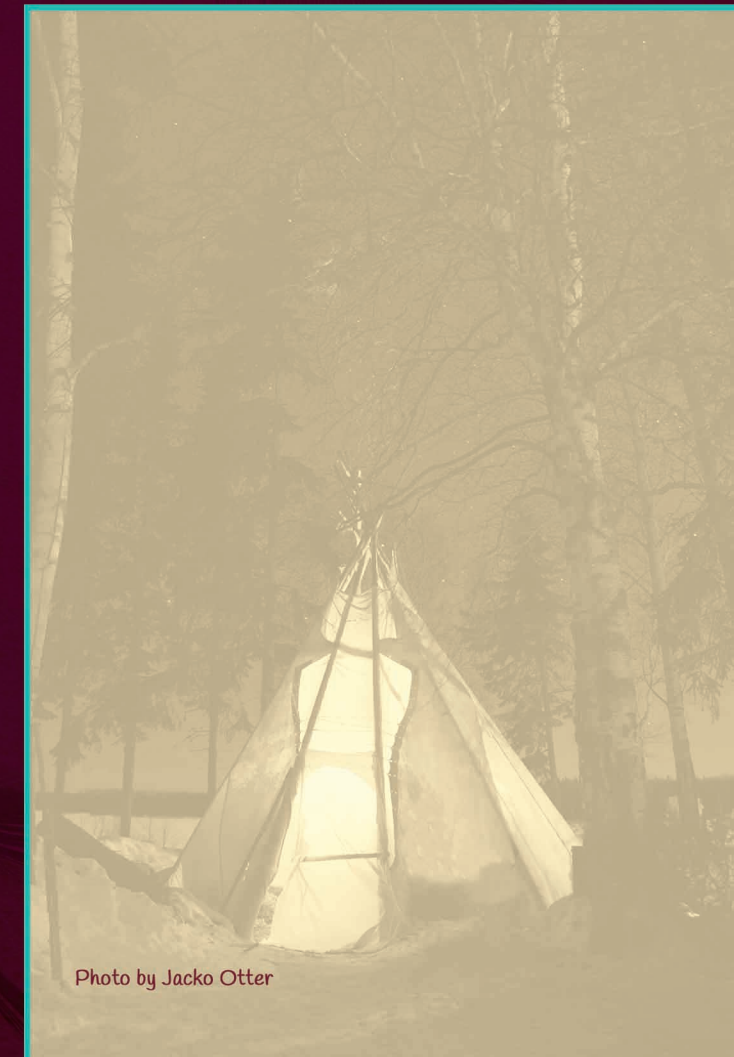


Photo by Jacko Otter

“Language is our unique relationship to the Creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values and fundamental notions of what is truth. Our Languages are the cornerstone of who we are as a People. Without our Languages our cultures cannot survive”.

- Towards Linguistic Justice for First Nations,
Assembly of First Nations: Principles for
Revitalization of First Nations Languages



Photo by Tania Sibi

Seeing The World Through liiyiyuu–liyinuu Eyes

Within Indigenous languages, we find a system of values that embodies the way we are. Most importantly, it determines how we relate to each other, describes the nature of our roles and shows our connection to the land that formed the dialects we still speak today. Preserving the strength of the liiyiyuu-liyinuu language is a way of ensuring that the wisdom of our ancestors and our way of being will not vanish and assuring the continuity of the liiyiyuu-liyinuu way of life.

In our languages such as liiyiyuu-liyinuu ayimun, we posses certain words that find no equivalent or translation in the dominant, settler languages, such as English or French. Indeed, we possess much more ways to describe our relations and our environment, thus demonstrating the importance of being inclusive and specific while describing these matters in our language.

liiyiyuu-liyinuu ayimun not only reflects who we are as people, but also the environment that has formed the generations of tradition we have inherited today.

Language as a Symbol of Resilience

Many methods of assimilation were directed toward our people throughout history. Attempting to take away our languages, along with the strong imposition of religion, is an example of the many ways the waamishtikushiiyu tried to erase an important part of our culture as iyiyiuu-liyinuu people.

The liiyiyuu-liyinuu ayimun remains one of the strongest and most spoken Indigenous languages to this day, which is unfortunately not the case for all First Nations people. Considered as one of the top three least likely to disappear, liiyiyuu-liyinuu ayimun remains a symbol of resistance in the face of western dominance.

However, we may still observe certain impacts of colonization within the liiyiyuu-liyinuu ayimun. For example, many of the inland communities are dealing with a loss of certain liiyiyuu-liyinuu words, shortened and slang-like versions of the dialect, as well as, the stronger use of English or French terms in a conversation. Regardless, the liiyiyuu-liyinuu ayimun remains current in use.



Photo by Jacko Otter

Syllabics

Like many of the First Nations people, the liiyiyuu-liyinuu culture was passed through the generations through a strong tradition of oral transmission. For this reason, they did not have a writing system until a Methodist missionary named James Evans introduced the syllabics system in the mid-1800s.

During the early years of the Indian Act, Indigenous people lost their status if they could write or read. This meant that they had assimilated the waamishtikushiiyu ways, therefore giving up their Indian Status.. To better evangelize the liiyiyuu-liyinuu Cree people without forcing them to lose their status, syllabics were used to teach hymns and prayers to the liiyiyuu-liyinuu without having to use the Roman alphabet.

The syllabics system is divided by the consonants. The direction of each glyph is then determined according to the vowel it is accompanied by. Thus, it is not like the Roman alphabet were currently use in languages such as English. It is based on sounds commonly found in the liiyiyuu-liyinuu language.

Although it wasn’t though in schools, the use of syllabics spread like wild fire from the East to the West coast of Canada. Even to this day, the liiyiyuu-liyinuu still use this system and have appropriated it to their culture.

Syllabics Chart - Eastern James Bay										Finals	
ᑭ		ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ			ᑭ	ᑭ
e		i	ii	u	uu	a	aa			u	h
ᑭ			ᑭ			ᑭ	ᑭ				
we			wii			wa	waa				
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	
pe	pe	pi	pil	pu	puu	pa	paa	pwaa	p		
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ		
te	twe	ti	tii	tu	tuu	ta	taa	twaa	t		
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ
ke	kwe	ki	kii	ku	kuu	ka	kaa	kwaa	k	kw	
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	
che	chwe	chi	chii	chu	chuu	cha	chaa	chwaa	ch		
ᑭ		ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ		
le		li	lii	lu	luu	la	laa	lwaa	l		
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ
me	mwe	mi	mii	mu	muu	ma	maa	mwaa	m	mu	
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ		
ne	nwe	ni	nii	nu	nuu	na	naa	nwaa	n		
ᑭ		ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ		
re		ri	rii	ru	ruu	ra	raa	rwaa	r		
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ		
se	swe	si	sii	su	suu	sa	saa	swaa	s		
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ		
she	shwe	shi	shii	shu	shuu	sha	shaa	shwaa	sh		
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ		
ye	ywe	yi	yii	yu	yuu	ya	yaa	ywaa	y		