

# HOOSIER WOMEN AT WORK

## STUDIES IN INDIANA WOMEN'S HISTORY

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### The Impact of Land Cession Treaties on Miami Women's Labor and Practice of Survivance

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When the state of Indiana was established in 1816 the vast majority of the state was controlled by American Indians. Over the next thirty years, nearly all of that territory was ceded to the U.S. government through treaties that slowly restricted what land was available to American Indians in the state. These land restrictions significantly disrupted the seasonal and daily labor of American Indians – including how women took care of their families and who was living in their homes on a daily basis. This presentation will look specifically at the impact of land cession treaties on Miami women's labor and practices of survivance.

To understand the significance of particular places to Miami labor practices, I will draw on Myaamia language place names, which often articulate what resources were available in that place and its significance to Miami society. Overlapping an understanding of Myaamia place-names with land-treaties reveals how Miami labor practices were transformed through the treaty period. As the location of strategic resources were ceded, the Miami were forced to shift from the internal production of goods to increased trade relations out of necessity.

Further complicating the changes in Miami labor practices in this time period was the shift from a kinship system to a family system writ into law through U.S. real estate policies that correlated land to western family structures. Thus, as Miami were making sense of how to live on isolated land bases, cut off from traditional resources, they were also forced to align themselves to land deeds through western family structures. This significantly changed the make-up of Miami households, family compounds, and shared labor in the home.

Focusing on how the expansion of the state of Indiana impacted Miami women's labor highlights the fact that categories like "Hoosier Women" were made possible through the dismantling of American Indian cultures of labor and land that preceded the state.

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