

In the verbal forms we find the same thing. Let us take for instance the verb "to break." In the place of the single English term the Déné language, Father Morice tells us, possesses no less than 110 discriminating substitutes not one of which could be indifferently used for the other. They are expressive first of the object or agent employed in the action, as the fist or the feet; a stick or a whip, &c.; secondly of the manner in which the object has been affected, whether it has been broken in one place or in many, in the middle or otherwise, purposely or by accident, violently or by gentle pressure, &c.; and thirdly of the form and character of the object itself, whether it is round or square, small or large, soft or hard, &c. Again in the locomotive verb "to go," if we were to place under this term the words which are used in Déné to signify the action of going we should have a collection of totally different words according as the locomotion took place on two or four legs, by running or hopping, creeping like a snake or leaping like a frog, swimming, skating, laughing, weeping, in a canoe, up the stream or down the stream, and a host of other modifications. And if we were to chose the verb "to put" and seek the Déné equivalent Father Morice affirms that the paradigm of this single verb alone would contain over 3,000 verbs all of which differ in meaning as well as in material structure;¹ and according to the Rev. T. Hurlbut the no less astounding number of verbal forms than 17 millions may be found in the paradigm of a single Algonkin verb.²

Many of the early collectors of native words, upon whose work we have frequently to rely in our investigations were wholly unaware of the true character of the Indian verb and set down against the English but one form as its equivalent. It will easily be seen how misleading vocabularies of this kind can be. Another pitfall for the unwary collector is the unsuspected existence of a great number of synonymous terms with which some at least of our Indian languages abound, any one of which may, with almost equal propriety, be employed by the native speaker and thus recorded by the collector, to the exclusion of all others. Time and again I have noticed instances of this kind in going over the ground of earlier investigators, some of which have caused me no little embarrassment and trouble in my own studies.

To this wealth of synonymous expression is due also much of the dialectical difference we find in the speech of related tribes. Much, for instance, of the lexicographical dissimilarity in the Kwakiutl and Salish arises from this cause. Since the separation of the Kwakiutl from the Salish, the former have in numberless instances given the preference to one of these synonymous terms, the latter to another. Like ourselves these stocks have two common forms, for instance, by which they indicate thirst

¹ Vide "Déné Languages," Transactions of Canadian Institute. Vol. I., Part II. p. 181. 1891.

² Quoted by Whitney in his "Life and Growth of Languages," p. 60