

# The Blackfoot Language

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## THE BLACKFOOT LANGUAGE.

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The Blackfoot Language is spoken by the Indians belonging to the Blackfoot Confederacy, consisting of the tribes known as Bloods, Piegans and Blackfeet. These tribes are resident in Montana, United States, and Alberta, Canada. They possess no written characters, and consequently have not any native literature. Their knowledge of important events is transmitted by means of oral tradition, and their records of deeds are expressed by picture-writing.

The language is a rich deep guttural, difficult at first to be pronounced or understood, owing to the rapid utterances of the Indians. Students of Indian languages are very apt to make mistakes in the early stages of their studies, from the fact that many of the Indians conversing with them use "broken speech." At once they conclude that the language is very easily acquired, but if they will continue their studies faithfully they will soon learn that they have a hard task before them, which can only be mastered by intelligent and enthusiastic labour. Some time will elapse before the sounds peculiar to the language become familiar to the ear, but gradually these will separate themselves and become easily

~~distinguished~~ distinguished.

~~striking~~ ~~peculiarity~~ ~~peculiarity~~ is the dropping of the first and last syllables ~~words.~~ Familiarity with the language will enable the student to ~~detect~~ this whenever it is done. Take such an example as *nītukskūm*, which means *one*. Sometimes it is expressed in full, but I have oftentimes heard it as follows: *nītuks*, *nītukska*, *tukskūm* and *tukska*. The prevalence of the guttural induces this dropping of syllables. The first and last syllables are at times expressed in such a low tone that they become inaudible to our ears.

The Blackfoot, like many other Indian languages, possesses the property of agglutination, and hence assumes the verbal form of expression. Indian languages are languages of verbs, and the Blackfoot is no exception to the general rule. He who would master an Indian language must give his days and nights to the study of the verb.

Dialectic changes are rapidly taking place amongst the tribes, resulting from separation. Differences of pronunciation and different words

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