

BLACKFEET SYLLABARY

This system dates from the last two decades of the 19th century and is probably not of native American origin. The Blackfeet version is based on the Cree syllabary. Both systems have been spread by missionaries in Canada.

The syllabary is built on the square:

A	E
I	O

	Consonant alone or final:	Vowels following a consonant: A ʔ E ɛ I ɨ O (or U)
P	o	q p d b
T		l ɬ ɮ
K	>	ʃ ʒ ʒ
M	c	ʃ ʒ ʒ
N	c	ʃ ʒ ʒ
S	ʃ	ʃ ʒ ʒ
Y		ʃ ʒ ʒ
W		ʃ ʒ ʒ
/	I in diphthongs: AI, OI, UI	
\	O in the diphthong AU or AO	
"	the gutteral	
,	the aspirate	
.	sign of assibilation of preceding character (S between the consonant and vowel)	
<	Y between the consonant and vowel of the preceding character	
x	full stop or glottal stop	

GIVEN NAMES

Aníw	=	Annie
Ánik(a)	=	Alex
Akinis	=	Agnes
Asiw	=	Arthur
Ínaw	=	Eli
Kípa	=	Kipp
Máikiw	=	Mike, Maggy
Manía	=	Mary
Misáiaiw	=	Michel ("hard goose")
Mazeís(a)	=	Baptiste ("fine leggings")
Nísitówa	=	Isidore, Isidoro
Nániso(wa)	=	Nancy
Nuyi(w)	=	Louis
Pìta	=	Peter ("eagle")
Kinuk	=	Kenneth
Wini	=	William
Zak	=	Jack (Jacques?)
Záni, Zana	=	Johnny, Joan, Charlie
Záuzi(w)	=	George
Zo(wa)	=	Joe
Zon	=	Joan
Zóni(w)	=	Julia
Zími(wa), Zima, Zimí (voc.)	=	Jimmy, James

## MOONS OF THE YEAR

Treat these names with caution because none of them necessarily correspond exactly to their nearest English equivalents. This list is based principally on Uhlenbeck.

January	Sináúiskitaki-omáhkatoi-xiszikói-atosi-w (an.) (the month of the big holy day of face-licking, i.e. kissing. SINÁUI-SKI = to kiss, lick the face. This is reference to New Year's day.)
February	Sawúmizi-kisum (Traacherous moon) (an.)
March	Saiyáix-ozitautohpi (in.) (When the geese come).
April	Aniozítaixasximokohpi (in.) (When the green grass comes).
May	Anawozítaisaisuiópokskohpi (in.) (when the leaves come out.)
June	Anáwoziszínisz-ozitaiizpi (in.) (when strawberries are ripe).
July	Nípómáhkatoixiszikatosi (an.) (Summer big holy day month)
August	Ózitaiapiszihipizixinaix (in.) (When snakes go blind; an old, perhaps archaic name: NÁPISZI = to be blind.)
September	Anáwitaipohkiákiopi (in.) (haying or reaping season; may also refer to August.)
October	Anáwozítawapipizkohpi (in.) (when leaves dry up). This seems to be an old traders' term.
November	Státosi-w (an.) (cold month)
December	Stómáhkatoixiszikátósi-w (an.) (cold big holy day month-- a reference to Christmas).

Though the Blackfeet, as we already know, have names for all four seasons, the ethnologist Clark Wissler reports that they divide their year into two major seasons, winter and summer, with seven month to each. With 14 months or moons, the Blackfeet season will not easily coincide with the system much of the world uses. Each month, for the Blackfeet, begins with the dark of the moon, and each year begins in fall. The moons have numbers but may also have names, though every medicine man who keeps a winter count (calendar) may vary the names and the system too. Winter moons include Beginning Winter Moon, Wind Moon, Cold Moon, Two Big Holy Days Moon (Christmas and New Year), Changeable Moon, Uncertain Moon, Geese Moon. The moons of

summer are Beginning Summer Moon, Frog Moon, Thunder Moon, Big Holy Day Moon (4th of July?), Berry Moon, Chokecherry Moon and Numer 7 (?). The days of each moon are considered to be 26 by some people and 30 by others. The source is Clark Wissler: "The Social Life of the Blackfeet Indians," Anthropological Papers, American Museum of Natural History, Vol. VII, pt. 1, 1911, pp. 44-5. Walter McClintock, The Old North Trail, pp. 486-7, gives another "Calendar of Moons": "After the First Snowfall" (November); "Time of the First Chinook" (last of December and early January); then the midwinter period: "When the Buffalo Calves Are Black"; "When the Heavy Snow Comes"; "When the Jackrabbit Whistles at Night". McClintock seems to equate these last three with January, and it is not clear how these names may overlap or describe the same period. But he quotes the people as heralding the approach of spring with the expression "The Home Days are Coming." Would this apply to February? For early spring he gives "The Time for Sore Eyes (Snow-Blindness)" or March, and "When the Ice Breaks Up in the Rivers" for April. Spring itself is called by several names: "When the Geese Come", "When the Leaves are Budding", "When the Buffalo Plant Is In Flower", "When the Buffalo Calves are Yellow," "When the Grass Becomes Green." Late spring or June is called "Time of High Water." Early summer or late June and early July is the "Moon of Flowers", while July and August are called "Home Days". Early fall or September is called "When the Leaves are Yellow," and the "Time of the First Frost." Late autumn is "After the Leaves Fall Off" (October) and "When the Geese Fly South" (late October or early November). There are 19 or 20 different names here.

Exercises: Fill in the schema, using a different verb for each line except for the irregular forms at the bottom. This will show you can handle imperatives!

Positive

Negative

- intrans. stem
- trans. an. stem
- trans. in. stem
- trans. an. stem  
(centri-petals)
- miscellaneous irregulars
- "please"
- "again"

Choose partners and make conversations suggested by the following questions and answers, filling in whichever is missing.

- A - The verb IKI: (answers negative)
- 1- (Za/Ahsa) kitáikiíhpa? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2- Kizikíhpa? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3- 'Kaiwaz (ikíwaz, áikiíwaz) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4- \_\_\_\_\_? Mátaikiíwexaw.
  - 5- \_\_\_\_\_? Nimátáikiíhpinana.
  - 6- Kitaxikiíhpa? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 7- \_\_\_\_\_? Nimataxikiíhpinana.
  - 8- \_\_\_\_\_? Mátaxikiíwaz.
  - 9- Nitáikiíhpa? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 10- Nitáikiíhpinana? \_\_\_\_\_

B - Identifying Relations and Possessions:

- 1- Oma omahkínaw kin'naz?  
A, \_\_\_\_\_. Sa, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2- Oma kipitáki kitohkímanaz?  
A, \_\_\_\_\_. Sa, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3- \_\_\_\_\_?  
A, nixista. Sa, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4- Taká otasaz? Kotasaz?  
A, \_\_\_\_\_. Sa, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5- \_\_\_\_\_?  
A, nitakaw. Sa, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6- Oma nínaw kixokowaz?  
A, \_\_\_\_\_. Sa, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 7- \_\_\_\_\_?  
A, \_\_\_\_\_. Sa, nimátokosaz.
- 8- Taka okosaz?  
(Black Eagle's) . Sa, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 9- Oma sahkumapi kokosaz?  
A, \_\_\_\_\_. Sa, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 10- Oma akikoan kisisaz?  
A, \_\_\_\_\_. Sa, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 11- Taka omi imitai?  
\_\_\_\_\_. (not mine) . \_\_\_\_\_ (mine) .

12- Oma manikapi kiskánaz?

A, \_\_\_\_\_ . Sa, \_\_\_\_\_ .

13- Omixi akíkoaix kitúnowáwaix?

A, \_\_\_\_\_ . Sa, \_\_\_\_\_ .

14- \_\_\_\_\_ ?

A, omixi sahkumapix nokosinanix.

Sa, \_\_\_\_\_ .

C - Zá anistápsiwaz? (What's he/she like?)

1- Zak (Jack), zá anistapsiwaz? Ahsapsiwaz?

A, \_\_\_\_\_ . Sa, \_\_\_\_\_ .

2- Napikoanaz? Nizítapíkoanaz?

A, \_\_\_\_\_ . Sa, \_\_\_\_\_ .

3- Oma akikoan spaiyakiwa. Kutaispaiyipuyiwaz?

A, \_\_\_\_\_ . Sa, \_\_\_\_\_ .

4- \_\_\_\_\_ ?

A, \_\_\_\_\_ . Sa, mázaiápikoaipuyíwaz.

5- Oma Asinaikoan apatohsitapiwaz?

A, \_\_\_\_\_ . Sa, \_\_\_\_\_ .

6- \_\_\_\_\_ ?

A, \_\_\_\_\_ . Sa, mátasinaikoanaz. Suyapikoan.

7- Kuzinokáumitáúakimawaz?

A, \_\_\_\_\_ . Sa, \_\_\_\_\_ .

8- Za anistapaupiwaz?

\_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_ .