

## **1. Description**

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

\* Algic, Algonquian, plains, Blackfoot

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

\*639-3:bla

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

\*47.002759, -108.352072

\* Since the Blackfeet were a nomadic people, their exact location is difficult to pin down. Most recently in their past, before reservations, they lived in the lands north of the of the Yellowstone River and east of the rocky mountains. Before they lived on the plains, there lived farther north, near Lesser Slave Lake in Alberta, Canada. It is said that the Chipeweyans drove the Blackfeet southwest out of the timber, but this is not known absolutely. (Grinnell)

1.4 Brief history:

\*Before the horse, when the Blackfoot people had only dogs to pull their belongings, also known as the dog days, they traveled relatively slowly and did not engage in warfare. However, after acquiring horses, the horse became central to their society. Horses were used for moving and trading with others. The Blackfeet hunted Buffalo, following the herds across the vast plains. Once the buffalo were gone, however, their way of life suffered greatly. Today, many Blackfoot Indians live on reserves. (Ewers, 1958)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

\*The Blackfoot Indians received the horse from European traders (Ewers 1958) which led to prominent warfare between them and neighboring peoples.

1.6 Ecology

\* The Blackfoot people lived on the plains of Alberta and Montana, in the grasslands. They depended on the herds of buffalo that roamed these plains.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

\*Due to the nature of their lifestyle, average village sizes were hard to estimate. The Blackfeet would break into smaller bands to go hunting and join into larger bands at several times in the year. (Grinnell)

\*Before contact, it is said they had more than 8,000 lodges, 40,000 people. (Grinnell)

## **2. Economy**

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

\*Indian bread-root –High levels of calcium, magnesium and iron and contains protein total sugars, potassium and phosphorus. (Kaldy, Johnston and Wilson)

\*Squaw root – High in starch and phosphorus and contains total fats and sugars, potassium, calcium, magnesium and protein and iron. (Kaldy et al)

\*Jerusalem artichoke –High in fat, total sugar and potassium (Kaldy et al)

TABLE 1. CHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF SQUAW-ROOT, JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE, AND INDIAN BREAD-ROOT.

	Squaw-root	Jerusalem artichoke	Indian bread-root
Dry matter (% of fresh wt)	37.14	24.12	43.02
Total protein (% of dry wt)	6.35	6.53	4.22
Total fat (% of dry wt)	1.61	7.33	3.68
Total sugar (% of dry wt)	16.19	51.65	5.60
Starch (% of dry wt)	69.36	26.26	69.84
Fiber (% of dry wt)	5.25	5.28	16.03
Vitamin A (I.U. in fresh wt)	122	37	28
Vitamin C (mg/100 g in fresh wt)	11.22	0.82	0.38
P (% of dry wt)	0.26	0.12	0.05
K (% of dry wt)	1.29	1.44	0.28
Ca (% of dry wt)	0.06	0.39	0.51
Mg (% of dry wt)	0.05	0.11	0.14
Fe (% of dry wt)	0.0032	0.0033	0.0039

## 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- \* Buffalo (Kaldy et al)

## 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- \* Bows and Arrows (Ewers, 1970)

## 2.4 Food storage:

\*Meat from the thickest part of the animal was dried in large sheets for times when fresh meat was not abundant. The back fat of the animal was also dried and later eaten with the meat like butter on bread. Berries were dried to be eaten later. (Grinnell)

## 2.5 Sexual division of production:

\*Women manufacture much of the clothing and do the cooking. Men provide all of the meat and manufacture their own weapons. (Grinnell)

## 2.6 Land tenure:

\*Historically, the Blackfeet never claimed to own land. They followed the buffalo herds. (Grinnell)

## 2.7 Ceramics:

\* Historically, the blackfeet made cooking pots by various means. Pots were either made from a sticky, white clay or from sand and mud. The clay pots were molded by hand and then left to dry by the fire. Clay pots were often used for boiling. The sand/mud pots were made with buffalo skin. The sand/mud was mixed with water to form a plaster and then was used to line the inside of the skin and was then dried in the sun. After it was dry, the skin would be cut away and sometimes a handle was added. However, after contact with Europeans and access to metals, most Blackfeet stopped making such pots and traded for the more durable metal ones. (Ewers, 1945)

## 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

\*Women divided the food up amongst everyone. The men were each given three to four pounds of meat, the children as much as they liked and the women ate what was left. (Grinnell)

## 2.9 Food taboos:

- \*Turtles, frogs and lizards are considered evil and are never eaten. (Grinnell)

\* Dogs, though considered a delicacy by other tribes, are never eaten by the Blackfoot people because they are viewed as true friends. (Grinnell)

## 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

\*No, however they did occasionally lash some sticks or logs together to transport their items across a river. But they never traveled on them. (Grinnell)

## 3. Anthropometry

### 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

- \* Males- 67.5 in. (Ewers, 1970)

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

\*N/A

#### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

\*N/A

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

\*N/A

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

\*N/A

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

\*N/A

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

\*Most girls are married when they are in their middle teens, though a few married before the age of 12. Few men married before the age of 21. (Ewers)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

\*N/A

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

\*Due to the shortage of men from hunting accidents and warfare, polygamy was common. Men with more than one wife usually married sisters. (Ewers 1958)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

\*None mentioned specifically but gifts are exchanged by the families of the bride and groom. (Ewers, 1958)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

\*When a man knows he is going to die, he will call his family together and tell them how he wants to divide up his belongings. If he does not do this, as soon as he dies, his possessions are raided. (Ewers, 1958)-

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

\*Not discussed in the literature.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

\*Not discussed in the literature.

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

\*Not discussed in the literature.

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

\*Not discussed in the literature

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

\*Not indicated in the literature

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

\*Young men sometimes accosted young women they found alone. They would brag if they managed to have an affair with a married woman (Ewers, 1958)

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

\*Not discussed

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

\*No. Some women's noses were even clipped if they had affairs. (Ewers, 1958)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

\*No evidence in the literature.

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

\*Not discussed in the literature.

- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females  
\*N/A
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades  
\*No evidence in the literature
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)  
\*No evidence in the literature.
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?  
\*A man avoids his mother-in-law and if he does happen to encounter her, she may demand a payment which he is obliged to pay. Women are equally opposed to encountering their son-in-laws. (Grinnell)
- 4.24 Joking relationships?  
\*None specifically mentioned, although children are taught to take teasing gracefully. (Ewers, 1958)
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations  
\*Not discussed in the literature.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules  
\*Not discussed in the literature.
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?  
\*The marriage ceremony was arranged by a close friend or relative of the boy with the girl's father or elder brother. Marriages were solemnized by the exchange of gifts between the families. (Ewers, 1958)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?  
\*Many Blackfeet change their name every season. Whenever a Blackfoot man counts a new *coup* he is entitled to a new name. (A *coup* is a blow, to strike an enemy) (Grinnell)
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)  
\*Not indicated by evidence in the literature, thought the Blackfeet did tend to move from band to band as it suited them. (Ewers, 1958)  
\*After contact was made with the traders, women didn't mind, and sometimes preferred, to marry the traders because they were kinder to their wives. (Ewers, 1958)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?  
\*Daughters are often promised to well-off men before the girls are of a marriageable age by their fathers. (Ewers, 1958)
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:  
\*No evidence in the literature.

### **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:  
\*Though male births outnumbered female ones, the number of adult females was greater than the number of men at a ratio of 5 to 3. (Ewers, 1958) Exact numbers of death due to warfare weren't documented.
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:  
\*No numbers given, though young men were told that it was better to die in battle than from old age (Ewers, 1958)
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:  
\*Out-group killing was often the result of raids. (Ewers, 1958)
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):  
\*The Blackfeet frequently went to war with neighboring tribes but they got along well with white traders. (Ewers, 1958)
- 4.18 Cannibalism?  
\*None indicated in the literature.

## **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

### 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

\*Due to frequent movement and the ebb and flow of food abundance, the size of Blackfoot groups changed often. (Grinnell)

### 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

\*When Buffalo roamed the plains, the Blackfeet followed them, moving as often or as little as the herds. (Grinnell)

### 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

\*The Blackfeet live in bands usually and have chiefs. (Ewers, 1958)

\* After contact with Europeans, wealth was based on how many horses you had. (Ewers, 1958)

### 5.4 Post marital residence:

\*After marriage, women generally lived in a lodge with their husband or with his family. (Ewers, 1958)

### 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

\*No mention of defined borders or active defense. The Blackfeet were primarily nomadic, so they didn't have a real territory (Ewers, 1958)

### 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

### 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

\*No joking relationships mentioned.

\*Special friendships existed between boys who close in age in the same band growing up. They were very close friends and would take great risks for the other. (Ewers, 1958)

### 5.8 Village and house organization:

\*N/A

### 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

\*The medicine lodge. (Ewers, 1958)

### 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

\*The Blackfeet slept in their tipis, on skins of buffalo. (Ewers, 1958)

### 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

\*Bands (Grinnell)

### 5.12 Trade:

\*The Blackfeet traded with fur traders for things like metal cookware and pots as well as horses, tobacco and blankets (Ewers, 1958)

### 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

\*Some people had greater wealth (i.e horses) or respect. (Ewers, 1958)

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

### 6 Time allocation to RCR:

\*N/A

### 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

\*The medicine man or woman (Ewers, 1958)

### 6.2 Stimulants:

\*None mentioned in the literature

### 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

\*The sun dance. (Ewers, 1958)

### 6.4 Other rituals:

### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

\*Napi, the old man, was the creator of the world. In the beginning, the world was water. One day, the Old Man sent animals to dive below the surface and discover what lay beneath. First the duck, then the otter, then the badger. Finally, the Old Man sent down the muskrat, who remained under water for so long that Old Man thought he'd drowned. Then the muskrat returned and brought with him a small ball of mud, which began to increase in size until it was the world. Napi traveled the world, creating

everything, like mountains and lakes and making all of the animals and plants. Then he made himself a wife, who helped him to design everything. He had first say and she agreed as long as she had the second say. From there, they created everything as it is. (Ewers, 1958)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

\*N/A

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

\*Some women, such as the medicine woman played an important role in the sun dance

6.8 Missionary effect:

\*N/A

6.9 RCR revival:

\*N/A

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

\* It is believed that when a Blackfoot Indian dies, his spirit travels to the great hummock between Red Deer River and the South Saskatchewan and then ascends into the air and travels southward. In the south he finds a country well-stocked with horses, buffalo and women and they live there happily for eternity. (Ewers, 1958)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

\*None mentioned in the literature.

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

\*Yes. A man will never say his name if he can avoid it. He believes that saying his name would make him unfortunate in all his undertakings. (Grinnell)

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

\*The Blackfoot religion is animism. (Ewers, 1958)

## **7. Adornment**

7.1 Body paint:

\*Young men paint their faces in several colors but older men only use one, usually red, for their war paint. (Ewers, 1958)

7.2 Piercings:

\*Ear-rings were worn by all. (Grinnell)

7.3 Haircut:

\*Males and females keep their hair long. Females only cut their hair when mourning the death of their husband.(Grinnell)

\*Men took much better care of their hair, spending time brushing, braiding and decorating it.

They wore it in two or, more rarely, four braids. Sometimes the hair over the forehead was cut off square and brushed straight forehead. More often, it was worn in a large top-knot. (Grinnell)

7.4 Scarification:

\*Women scar their calves after the death of their husband in mourning. Men sometimes scar the backs of their legs for the death of a son but never for a daughter or wife. (Grinnell)

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

\*Earrings and necklaces, made from shells, claws and teeth of animals and wood. (Grinnell)

\* Eagle feathers were used to decorate mens' headdresses. (Grinnell)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

\*Men had ceremonial headdresses that were very decorative. (Ewers, 1958)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

\*Women seldom wore head-coverings but men often wore headdresses or hats made of animal skins in the winter (Grinnell)

7.8 Missionary effect:

\*N/A

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

\*N/A

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system:

\*Not discussed in the literature.

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

\*Sometimes men would marry sisters. (Ewers, 1958)

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

\*Not discussed in the literature.

## **9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

\* The cultural practice of scalping was related to “counting *coups*” or counting strikes or blows dealt in battle. Scalping someone and bringing their scalp back from war was a way to verify the *coup* (Grinnell)

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