

Dakota Language Roman Catholic Catechism

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c.1920

Title Statement

Dakota Language Roman Catholic Catechism Dakota Language Roman Catholic Catechism MSS 16778

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Publication Statement

Publisher: Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library
P.O. Box 400110
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4110
URL: <https://small.library.virginia.edu/>

2023-04-03

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-03-05 17:44:03 +0000.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16778

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1516

Unit Date

c.1920

Mixed Materials

BW 53 (box)

Container

1 (folder)

Language

Dakota

Extent

.03 Cubic Feet 1 letter-size folder

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased from Back of Beyond Books by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 23 March 2022.

Preferred Citation

MSS 16778, Dakota Language Roman Catholic Catechism, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

Biographical / Historical

Roman Catholic Catechism, translated in the Dakota language around 1920. MSS 16778. It is not known who translated this document. Earlier Christian documents were translated by certain missionaries who were trying to use the Dakota language to convert indigenous people, into Christianity by identifying similar religious concepts. They soon learned that the Dakota beliefs would not translate to English and Christianity. Instead, these translations have helped to preserve the Dakota language.

Dakota people have tribal lands that cover areas from present day Minnesota, to South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, and into Canada. They form the Oceti Šakowij (the Seven Council Fires which are divisions of the Sioux). Unfortunately, most missionaries and boarding schools shamed the Dakota people to stop speaking their language, to the extent of trying to erase their culture and almost making the Dakota language extinct. These translations give us an opportunity to explore the Dakota and celebrate their culture.

Early missionaries, interpreters, and linguists, Gideon Pond (1810-1878) (Matohota-grizzly bear), his brother, Samuel Pond (1808-1891), (Wanmididuta- the red eagle), Dr. Thomas S. Williamson (1800-1879), Stephen Return Riggs (1812-1883), Joseph Renville (1779-1846-a son of a Dakota woman), and Samuel Dutton Himnan (1839-1890), lived with the Dakota people and studied their oral language (1). In 1834, the missionaries began recording and deciphering words phonetically and created an alphabet. (2) Dr Williamson, his sister Jane, and his associates printed the Holy Bible in Dakota, called Dakota Wowapi Wakan.

After a few years they produced several reading books, a catechism, a monthly Dakota newspaper, the Book of Genesis, the Gospel of Mark, and by 1865, the New Testament. Their Christian work included studying the Dakota language to identify the meanings of God, religion, and power. The linguists found that these words might seem to have the same meaning on a superficial level, but on closer study, it became clear that the meanings of these words in Dakota were more complex and had different meanings (1).

Content Description

This collection contains a small (14 x 22 cm) typescript book titled Dakota Language Roman Catholic Catechism circa 1920. The book is constructed in two parts: part one titled Woonspekiye Wakan gusina, The Small Catechism, consisting of about seventy-three pages, and part two, Waceghiya-Prayers, consisting of about forty-three pages.

The book is primarily written in the Dakota language with occasional titles in English. This catechism or summary of doctrine, of the Roman Catholic Church in the Dakota language was created by an unknown translator around 1920. Dakota is a Siouan language that is considered critically endangered. The book is bound with pale gray boards quarter bound with orange cloth and a yellow title label is pasted on the cover.

Keywords

Dakota language

Catholic Church -- Catechisms

Siouan languages