

There was a time... presents:

A Primer on the Chinook Jargon

By John Salicco

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Historical Background

This primer is not in any way intended to be a complete grammar. There are several grammars and dictionaries available for those who wish to delve into this subject more deeply. What I am trying to provide is a basic understanding of the Jargon with enough vocabulary and grammar to provide the living history portrayer enough material to converse at a basic level.

One of the main reasons I formed *There was a time...* was related to my interest in cultural and heritage preservation. The Chinook Jargon is a fascinating example of how various, quite dissimilar cultures, found a common ground in the area of communication. Chinook Jargon is an important part of our culture, not just because it explains where all those peculiar sounding Northwest place names come from, but because it illustrates a cultural synthesis. It shows how diverse peoples with common interests find a way to make do.

The Chinook Jargon was a combination of Native American tongues, French, English and perhaps some Russian, that became the lingua franca of the North West during the fur trade. At its peak, it was spoken all through the northern Rockies and clear down into California.

The first thing you should be aware of is that Chinook Jargon (often referred to simply as “the Jargon”) is not Native Chinook. Chinook is another language spoken by the Chinook tribe. There are Chinook words in the Jargon as there are Nisqually words, Chehalis, Wasco, Yakima, Cree, Chippewa and several other tribal words. The Jargon has its obscure roots in Native tribal trade pre-dating European influence. As soon as the first ships from the west and first traders from the east contacted these tribes, European words began to enter the tribal languages. This was natural since the Native American had no specific word for the various iron accoutrements, glass beads, European cloth, eyeglasses, clocks (the whole concept of measuring time in minutes or hours) and countless other foreign items.

Following the decline of the fur trade the Jargon became more localized in the northwest and by the 1850s, most of the settlers in Oregon and Washington knew at least some Chinook Jargon, so they could converse with the Native Americans in the area. They not only traded with the native peoples, they often employed them and had to have a way to communicate.

After the civil war, it died out among the whites, but really began taking on a life of its own among the Native Americans. Many of the smaller populated surviving tribes were losing their native tongue and dialects with fewer and fewer of their own *Tillicum* (tribe) to speak with. Chinook Jargon filled the vacuum as a common language in and between the reservation peoples. Among themselves, *Tillicum* came to mean all northwest native peoples. Among whites all natives became *Siwash*. Be careful not to offend present day native Americans with this. Though *Siwash* began as a generic word roughly equivalent to “Indian”, it took on a derogatory tone in the 20th century.

It became so ubiquitous on the reservations that by the early twentieth century there were several Native Americans whose only tongue was Chinook Jargon. Though, from the standpoint of the Native American, the Jargon was corrupted by European influence, this language was at least closer to the old ways than was straight English. Therefore, not just for convenience, but for cultural reasons the Jargon persists to this day. There is now a movement among some Native Americans to purge the Jargon of its European rooted words and substitute surviving Native American words wherever possible. Their intent is to rebuild an essentially Native American tongue to preserve their culture for future generations.

One thing that the Jargon does preserve is the old Native American *way* of speaking. By *way*, I mean method, syntax and grammar. The Jargon is a language of inferred ideas depending upon context. It doesn't use tense and definitive parts of speech like modern tongues of the industrialized world. Most words have several different meanings depending upon context. The Jargon's grammatical structure is most often compared to modern sign language. The Jargon relies upon inflection of voice and visual gestures. It is a spoken, not a written language.

The Chinook Jargon I use in this article is now called *Ahnkutie* (pronounced – on-koo-tie), the old tongue or language. The word literally means “old” or “ancient” (it can also mean “before” or “long ago” or “elder” among other meanings depending upon its context, but more on usage later).

There only are about 350 words to the Chinook Jargon trade language that can be authentically traced to the early 19th Century and many of these words are English or French. Many linguists suggest that there are only about 150 authentic pre-contact words in the Jargon. In truth you only need about 30 or 40 words to speak and be understood in Chinook at a basic level. Gesturing will take care of the rest. If you're trying to spice up a 1st person portrayal, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, Chinook Jargon is a great tool to have at your disposal.

Background for Pronunciation

Once European traders established a presence in the Northwest, they began to write the language down as *they* heard it. The purpose was for commercial facility not for cultural preservation. The documentation of the trade language also influenced the way that it was spoken from that point forward.

Since the Jargon is a spoken, not written language, there is no correct spelling. When written in English, the best that can be achieved is a phonetic approximation. There are many sounds that do not exist in English. The Native Americans had a guttural sound that many documenters of the time represented with “gh”. Other writers ignored the guttural representation and went with whatever they heard as the closest equivalent.

Here are a couple of examples: Present day Tacoma uses the “hard c” pronunciation. You will also find Tahoma on maps using the letter “h” in the middle of the word. In old writings you can find *Taghoma*, with the guttural “gh” in the middle of the word. In the Chinook

Jargon word *tighe* (to like) you will find some writers representing the word as “*ticky*”. Others write it as *tigge*. From what we can tell, it was probably pronounced in several ways. It would depend upon the native language of the speaker. So you would hear the Jargon spoken with several accents; French, English, Yankee, Salish, Klikitat, Nisqually etc.

Since this article is written in English, my native tongue, I will use English approximations. All agree that the pronunciation of the Jargon has changed significantly over the years. The only native spoken Chinook that I have heard is from 20th century speakers from the Pacific Northwest. There were no audio recording machines in the early 19th century, so we have to rely primarily on the written records for our phonetic approximations. Remember also that even English has a different pronunciation today than it did back then. This is attested to by the various regional English accents across Britain, America and Australia. So what was written to be an English phonetic equivalent in the 19th century, may vary from how we now pronounce the same words.

There are some conventions that Chinook transcribers appear to adhere to.

The vowel “a” is pronounced like “ah” or the “aw” in saw.

The vowel “e” is all over the place. Sometime long; sometimes short; sometimes silent.

The vowel “i” is sometimes pronounced like “eye”, but usually like *isik*, *stick* and *pil*, it’s pronounced like the “i” in “is”.

The vowel “o” is usually pronounced like the “o” in “Coke”

The vowel “u” is usually pronounced like the “u” in “up”.

There are exceptions to each rule. That’s what makes them rules.

Chinook Jargon

Personal Pronouns

I = <i>Nika</i>	We = <i>Nesika</i>
You = <i>Mika</i>	You (pl) = <i>Mesika</i>
He, She, it = <i>Yaka</i>	They = <i>Klaska</i>

In all the above pronouns, the “i” is pronounced like the “i” in “like”. Sometimes you’ll see *nika* and *mika* written as *naika* and *maika*.

Some vocabulary so we can construct some examples of usage.

Fire = <i>pia</i> (rhymes with eye-ah)	Travel = <i>klahtawa</i>
Money, silver = <i>chickamin</i>	Water = <i>chuck</i>
Color red = <i>pil</i>	Blood = <i>pilchuk</i>
Tent = <i>sail house</i> (house of sail cloth)	Man = <i>man</i>
Woman = <i>klootchman</i>	Horse = <i>kuitan</i>
Dog = <i>kamooks</i>	People = <i>Tillicum</i> (rhymes with hill-a-come)

Wagon = *chikchik*

Road/ Path = *wayhut*

skookum = powerful, strong, important, sacred, holy

The Possessive

The Jargon word *kopa* is one way to turn the above words into the possessive form;

ex. *Kopa nika* = mine

Kopa mika = yours

Kopa Klaska = theirs etc.

The personal pronouns placed before a noun, denote possession.

Yaka klootchman = his wife; *mika bot* = your boat; *nesika tillicum* = our people

Kopa also can mean “on top of” or “with”.

Klahtawa kopa kuitan = ride horseback

Klahtawa kopa bot = travel by boat; *kopa chichik* = by wagon etc.

Klahtawa kopa yaka klootchman = travel with his wife.

For example:

Okoke sailhouse yawa? Kopa nika.

Literal translation:

“That tent there? Mine.”

Another way to say it: *Okoke, yawa* (pointing in direction of tent) *nika sailhouse*. If it is obvious that you are pointing to the tent, you can omit the word *sailhouse*. So the abbreviated communication becomes, *Okoke. Nika*. Literally you said, “That. Mine.”

Modal Verbs

The modal verb “to be” is implied and rarely expressed.

Example:

Yukwa = here; *Nika yukwa* = I (am) here

Yawa = there; *Mesika yahwa* = you (are) there

Kamooks memaloose = Literally, “The dog dead.” The verb “is” is implied.

To be, to have = *Mitlite* (or no word) Rhymes with “pit-light”;

Mitlite = have; but to say that you “have to do something”, in other words “must” do something is communicated by *mamook skookum haul*.

Nika mamook skookum klahtawa = I must go

Usage example:

Nika, klone kuitan = I have 3 horses, or *Nika mitlite klone kuitan*. Unlike English, the word “have” can be implied. *Nika mitlite klone kuitan* can also mean I’m staying with the 3 horses.

Mitlite has a lot of meanings. It can mean , to stand, to stay or remain, to live.

Nika mitlite yukwa = I stay here; *Mesika wake mitlite yukwa* = you (pl) do not live here

Just a note: I'm tending to use English word order. I could have correctly stated the above as: *Wake mitlite yukwa, mesika.*, starting the sentence with the negative for emphasis. This could also communicate, "you must not stay here" or "you do not belong here".

Comparatives

Good = *Kloshe*; very good = *hyas kloshe*; best = *delate kloshe*

Bad = *Wake kloshe* or *halo kloshe* (*Wake* = not; *halo* = without)

Evil or wicked = *mesachee*

Bad can also be *cultus*, which literally translates as worthless.

Action Verbs

Mamook is a useful verb. It's often used in conjunction with nouns to create a verb. For example: *Bloom* = broom (The Natives had difficulty pronouncing the letter "r" so they would substitute the letter "l".); *Mamook bloom* = sweep

Heehee = laugh, something funny, amusing; *Mamook heehee* = to tell a joke, amuse, to have fun. *Mamook piah* or *mamook piah muckamauck* = to cook

Klawap = hole; *Mamook klawap* = to dig (literally "make hole")

Lalam = arm (Literal) (Also an oar when used in context with a boat— oars are the boat's arms); *Mamook lalam* = to row (depending upon context, this could also mean to make an oar.) *Yaka mamook lalam, yaka bot.* = He rows his boat.

Isick = canoe paddle (noun); *Mamook isick* = to paddle (the verb) (or to make a paddle, once again depending upon context.) If a man now near a canoe is shaving down a long piece of wood into a flat surface and the speaker says, "Yaka mamook isik", he's obviously not paddling anywhere. He's making a paddle. On the other hand, if he's in a dug-out on the water with a paddle in hand... you get the idea.

With Jargon, word order isn't critical. In the above example, the speaker could have said, "Mamook isick yaka". Inflection and context shade the meaning.

In the imperative, *mamook* can be left out. ex. Paddle! = *Isik!*

Some Vocabulary

The Numbers

1 = *ikt*

2 = *moxt* (rhymes with fox't)

3 = *klone*

6 = *tahgum*

7 = *sinamoxt*

8 = *stokekin* (rhymes with boat-kin)

11 = *tatum pe ikt*

12 = *tatum pe moxt*

20 = *moxt tatum*

4 = *lahkit*
5 = *kwinnum*

9 = *kwaist*
10 = *tatum*

100 = *ikt takamanuk*
or *tatum tatum*

Size, Distance and Time.

Hyas = great; *tenas* = small, little, not many, few.

Tenas can compound with other words for a completely different concept. *Yaka tenas* = his son; *Soghalie* or *sahali* = up above; *Soghalie Tyee* = Man Above, Great Spirit or God
Soghalie Tyee, yaka tenas = Jesus Christ (literally, God his *tenas* or son.)

Hyas ahnkutie = a long time ago; *tenas ahnkutie* = not long ago

Hyu = many; *kopet* = stop; *kopet hiyu* = enough

Hyu is also a way to make plural. *Hyu muckamuck* = plenty to eat. *Hyu Tillicum* = a crowd

Siah = far; *siah-siah* = very far; *halo siah* or *wake siah* = not far; *tenas siah* = a little way

Elip = first or before; *delate* = best, straight – the superlative

Kimtah = behind, after; *Delate kimtah* = last

Tahlkie = yesterday; *oko ke sun* = today; *tomolla* = tomorrow
tintin, dingding: hour

Sun = day

Sunday or *week* = Sunday or week

ikt sun = Monday

mokst sun = Tuesday

klone sun = Wednesday

lakit sun = Thursday

kwinnum sun = Friday

taghum sun = Saturday

Moon = moon and also the word month; *ikt moon* = monthly

Ikt cole = year (literally, “one cold”)

Alki = soon

Alta = now

Interrogatives

Klaska = who; *kahta* = how; *ikta?* = who, what or why? *Ikta mika tighe?* = What do you want?

Note: *ikta* is “why” or “what”, but *iktas* = things

Kah? = Where? *Halo kah* = nowhere; *konaway kah* = everywhere

Klosh = good; *elip klosh* = better; *delate klosh* or *delate elip klosh* = the best.

Giving and Receiving

Here are some words used to communicate acquiring things:

Iskum = get or obtain; *makook* = to buy; *mamook huihui*= make trade

Kapswala= to rob or steal. *Kapswala klahtawa*= to sneak away; *kapswala moosum* = commit adultery (literally, “to steal a sleep”).

Here are some words to get rid of things:

Mahsh= to leave, throw away, turn out, sell; *mahsh chuck kopa boat*= bail water from the boat; *mahsh tenas*= to have a baby

Mahsh makook = sell ; *potlatch*= give. The same word as for the ritual potlatch.

Nationalities

Though native speakers would refer to individual tribal names, they refer to themselves as the “people”. *Tillicum* is probably the best translation. In the usual sense, *tillicum* referred to people of the particular tribe of the speaker. After the reservation period, it meant any fellow North West Native American. If it was used with a stranger or outsider it would be *yaka tillicum* (literally, “his people”). The same words could also be used in the context of “he’s one of us”= *yaka tillicum*. It implies community, trust or friendship regardless of bloodline.

English = Kingchauchman; American = Bostonman; French = Pasiooks

Huihui man = trader

General Vocabulary

The majority of the following word definitions are taken from George C. Shaw’s, The Chinook Jargon and How to Use It, Seattle, 1909. In this version, I have only provided English to Chinook vocabulary. In a future revision, I’ll add a Chinook to English equivalent.

A

abroad: *klahanie*

accompany: *klahtawa kunamokst*

accurate: *delate*

again: *weght*

agree: *tumtum kunamokst*

almost: *wake siah*

although: *keschi*

and: *pe*

apron: *kisu*

axe: *lahash*

B

bag: *lesac*

basket: *opekwan*

bear: *itchwoot*

bed: *bed*

berries: *ollalie*

black: *klale*

blue (light): *spooch*

bowl: *ooskan*

beef: *itwillie*
bell: *tintin*
belt: *lasanjel*

box: *lakassett*
brother: *ow, kahpo*
bullet: *lebal, kahlitan*

C

canoe: *Canim*
capsize: *killipie*
cart: *chic chic*
cedar: *kalakwahtie stick, canim stick*
chain: *lashen*
chair: *lashase*
cheat (v) *lahlah, mamook pelton*

child: *tenas*
clerk: *tsum man*
close: *mamook ikpooie*
cook: *mamook piah kopa muckamuck*
cork: *ikpooie*
country: *illahee*
crazy: *pelton*

D

dance: *tanse*
danger: *mesachie mitkite*
dead: *yaka wind chako halo, memeloose*
deaf: *ikpooie kwolan, halo kwolan*
debate: *pight wawa*
decay: *chako cultus, chako rotten*
dear: *mowitch*

demon: *mesachie tahmanous*
drawers: *keewullie sakoleks*
dream: *moosum nanitch*
drum: *pompom*
drunk: *pahtlum*
duck: *kwehkweh*
dust: *klimin illahee*

E

each: *ikt ikt*
ear: *kwolan*
early: *tenas sun*
earth: *illahee*
east: *kah sun yaka chako*
egg: *lesap, hen ollalie*
elder: *elip*

elder brother: *kahpo*
elk: *mooluk*
empty: *halo ikta mitlite*
endless *kwanesum*
evening: *tenas polaklie*
explore: *klahtawa pe nanitch*
eye: *seahost*

F

fall, fall down: *mamook whim*
false, falsehood: *kliminiwhit, tseepie*
farm: *illahee*
feather: *kalakala yaka tupso*
fence: *kullagh, kulahan*
fever: *waum sick*

file: *laleem*
flea: *inapoo, chotub*
flies: *tenas kalakala, lemosh*
flint: *kilitsut*
flour: *klimin sapolil*
frog: *schwa-kuk, wakik*

fight: *mamook soleks, pight*

full: *pahtl*

G

gamble: *mamook gamble, mamook itlokum*

game: *heehee*

get: *iskum*

ghost: *tahmanous, skookum*

go: *klahtawa*

God: *Saghalie Tyee*

gold: *pil chikamin*

grow: *chako hyas*

gun: *musket, suhkwalal*

gunpowder: *pollalie*

H

hair: *tupso, tupso kopa latet, yakso*

hair brush: *tupso bloom*

ham: *dly cosho*

hammer: *lemahto*

hand (in a game): *itlokum*

hand: *le mah*

harrow: *mamook comb illahee*

hare: *kwetshoddie*

harlot: *mesachie klootchman*

hat: *seahpo*

hawk: *shakshak*

hazel-nuts: *tukwilla*

head: *le tet*

heavy: *til*

I

ice: *cole chuck*

if: *spose*

Indian: *siwash*

Indian medicine: *kelale*

infant: *chee tenas*

ink: *klale chuk kopa mamook tsum*

inshore: *mahtwillie*

inside: *keekwulee*

interpret: *mamook coolee kopa huloima lalang*

iron: *chikamin*

island: *tenas illahee*

it: *yaka*

itch: *tlihtlih*

ivy: *stick kahkawa lope*

J

jail: *skookum house*

jest, joke: *cultus wawa, mamook heehee*

job: *mamook*

journey: *cooley*

joy: *youtl tumtum*

judge: *tyee kopa court*

jug: *stone la booti*

juice: *ollalie chuk*

jump: *sopena*

K

kamass root: *la kamass*
kettle: *ketling*
key: *le kleh*
kick: *mamook kokshut*
kill: *mamook memaloose*

kiss: *bebe*
knife: *opitsah*
knock: *koko, mamook kokshut*
know: *kumtuks*

L

land otter: *inamooks*
language: *la lang*
lard: *cosho glease*
lead: *kalitan*
learn: *iskum kumtuks*
leg: *teawhit*
lice: *inpoo*

lie: *wawa kliminiwhit*
lightning: *soghalie piah*
like (adj.) *kahkwa*
like (v.) *tighe*
long: *youtlcut*
long ago: *ahnkutie*
lumber: *la plash*

M

mad (angry): *solleks*
magic: *tamahnous*
maple: *isick stick*
mare: *klootchman kuitan*
marriage: *malieh*
mast: *ship stick*
mat: *kliskwiss*

meadow: *tupso illahee*
merchant: *makook man*
measure: *tahnim, mamook measure*
milk: *totoosh*
mill: *moola*
mule: *le mel, le mool*
music: *sing*

N

nails: *le kloo*
naked: *halo ikta mitlite*
near: *wake siah*
neck: *le cou*
new: *chee* (newcomer= *cheechako*)
news: *chee wawa*
niece: *ats, kahpo-yaka tenas klootchman*

no, not: *halo, wake*
noise: *lahtlah*
noon: *sitcum sun*
north: *kah cole chako*
nose: *emeets*
nothing: *halo ikta*
nowhere: *halo kah*

O

oak: *kul stick*
oar: *la lahm*

onion: *unjun, ulalach, lesioio*
opposite to: *enati*

oats: *la wen, la ween*
ocean: *hyas salt chuk*
odor: *hummm*
oil cloth: *snass sail*
onion (wild): *kalaka*

other : *huloima*
overcome: *tolo*
owl: *Waugh, kwel kwel*
ox: *man moos moos, moos moos*
oyster: *chetlo, klogh-klogh*

P

pack (n.): *ikt kow*
pack (v.): *lolo*
pain: *addedah, anah*
pants: *sakolleks*
part: *sitcom*
pelt: *skin*
perhaps: *klonas*

pine: *la gome stick*
pity: *mamook klahowya*
please: *spose klonas klosk*
plow (n.): *le shalloo, klugh*
pond: *memeloos chuk*
potato: *wappatoo, lapatak*
promise: *delate wawa*

Q

quail: *kulakala*
quarrel: *soleks wawa*
quick, quickly: *hyak*
quiet: *kwan*

quilt: *tsum paseesie*
quill: *kalakala yaka tupso, tepeh*
quiver (n.): *stick kalitan lesac*
quorum: *elip sitcum*

R

race: *hyak coolee*
rain: *snass*
rattle: *shugh*
rattle snake: *shugh opoots*
raven: *kaka*
rear: *kimtah*
recognize: *kumtuks*

repeat: *weght wawa*
reply: *kilapie wawa*
ribbon: *leloba*
rifle: *calipeen*
river: *cooley chuk*
robin: *pil koaten*
rum: *lum*

S

saddle: *la sell*
sash: *la sanjel*
saw: *la gwin, la scie, la see*
scythe: *youtlkut opitsah*
save: *iskum*
scissors: *le seezo*
seduce: *kapswala*

shingle: *lebahdo*
shiny: *towagh*
sing: *shantie*
sister: *kahpo* (if elder than speaker - *elip ats*)
sleep: *moosum*
Spark: *tenas piah*
Snow: *cole snass*

see: *nanitch*
serpent: *oluk*
sharpen: *mamook tsish*

Squirrel: *skwiskwis*
Soft: *klimmin*
Summer: *waum illahee*

T

table: *la tahb*
tail: *opoots*
tale or story: *yiem, ehkahnam*
teat: *tatoosh*
teeth: *la tah*
thank you: *mashie*
there: *yahwa*

tie: *mamook kow*
tobacco: *bacca, kinoos*
trail: *wayhut*
trousers: *sakolleks*
trunk: *la cassett*
turnip: *lenawo, lamoow*
twine: *tenas lope*

U

udder: *tatoosh*
ugly: *wake toketie, cultus*
under: *keekwulee*

unhappy: *sick tumtum*
urinate: *mash chuk*
usual: *kakwa kwanesum*

V

vacant: *halo*
vermin: *inapoo*
victory: *tolo*

violin: *tintin*
violent: *skookum*

W

wagon: *tsiktsik, chikchik*
wall: *skookum kulaghan*
warm: *waum*
warrior: *sogers, pight tillicums*
watch: *kloshe nanitch*
water: *chuk* The sea: *salt chuk*
weary: *til*

weed: *cultus tupso*
well (n.): *tlwop*
west: *kah sun klatawa*
wet: *pahtl chuk*
wheat: *sapolil, le whet, le bley*
when: *kansi, kunjih*
whole: *konaway, lowullo, lolo*

Y

yankee: Boston man

yesternight: *tahlkie polaklie*

year: ikt cole
yellow: kawkawak
yes: nowitka, aha

young: tenas
younger: elip tenas
youngest: elip tenas kopa konaway

Sample Phrases

Go start the fire. Now. = *Mamook piah alta.*
Pitch the tent = *Mamook sail house*
Hello stranger. = *Klahowya chee chako.*
Have you come a long way? = *Klahtawa siah, mika?*
Yes. A very long way. = *Aha. Siah-siah klahtawa.*
Where is your wife? = *Ikta mika klootchman?*
She has gone to relieve herself (make a stool) = *Yaka mamook mesachie*
She has gone to see her mother = *Klahtawa nanitch yaka naha.*
Where is your husband? = *Kah yaka man?*
He has gone hunting? = *Yaka mamook hunt.*
Would you like to trade this for that? = *Tighe mamook potlatch okoke kopa okoke?*
This is good trade. = *Okoke kloshe huihui.*
I will go to buy beads from the store = *Klahtawa makook house, mamook huihui kopa hiyu kamosuk.* (Note: In this usage, *hiyu* made the noun “*kamosuk*” plural)
They sell many fine things = *Klaska mahsh makook hiyu iktas kloshe.*
It's broken = *Yaka kokshut.*
That is worthless. = *Okoke cultus.*
Throw it away. = *Mash yaka.*
How much for the gun? = *Katah kopa musket?* Or *Kahta kopa poohstick?*
And for powder and ball? = *Pe kopa pollalie pe leball?*
How many beaver pelts for the red blanket? = *kahta eenaskin kopa pil paseesie?*
How much for the white coat? *Kahta kopa tkope capo?*
I've eaten enough. = *Nika muckamuck kopet hiyu.*
I would like some more. = *Nika tighe elip hiyu.* Or, *nika tighe weght.*
I will get some food. = *Nika klahtawa iskum muckamauck.*
There is my friend. = *Yahwa nika sihks.*
You speak Chinook well. = *Mesika mamook Chinook wawa kloshe.*

A Conversation:

You are a beautiful woman. = *Nesika toketie klootchman.*
Would you marry me? = *Spose nika malieh kopa nika?*
You must ask my father. = *Mika mamook wawa kopa nika papa.*
I want to marry your daughter. How much do you want for her? = *Nika tighe malieh kopa mika tenas klootchman. Kahta nika tighe kopa yaka?*
She is very dear to me. = *Yaka delate kloshe kopa nika.*
I am poor. My wife is dead. = *Nika klahowya. Nika klotchman yaka wind chako halo.*
Who will cook for me? = *Klaksta mamook piah muckamauck kopa nika?*
With many horses, you can buy another wife. = *Kopa hiyu kuitan, spose mika makook*

huloima klootchman.

How many horses do you have? = *Kahta kuitan mitlite mika?*

I will give you two horses for your daughter. = *Nika potlatch moxt kuitan kopa mika tenas klootchman.*

I want five horses. = *Nika tighe kwinum kuitan.*

How about 3 horses and a gun.= *Spose nika potlatch mika klone kuitan pe ikt pooh stick.*

With powder and ball? = *Kopa pollalie pe leball?*

Certainly. = *Nowitka.*

This is a good trade. I give you my daughter. = *Okoke kloshe huihui. Nika potlatch mika nika tenas klootchman.*

Very good. Come with me, wife. = *Delate kloshe. Newah kopa nika, klootchman.*

A Chinook Transcription

Here is a sample of a transcription from a native speaker in the early 20th century.

The following story example is from "The Origin of Death." Coquille Thompson of the Siletz Reservation told this story to Melville Jacobs in 1935.

Klaska mitlite tenas siah klaska house. Well ikt tilikum yahka mitlite ikt tenas man, yahka okoke siah mitlite ikt tenas man. Well, ikt man yahka tenas okoke chahko sick. Well, tenas klonass mokst san yahka sick, alta yahka memloost tenas man. Well, okoke man skookum sick tumtum. Yahka cly. Well, yahka mahsh kopa illahie, yahka mamook [ipsoot] okoke illahie. Well, kelapi kopa house, yahka sick tumtum.

They dwelt some distance apart in their (respective) houses. Well, that person had a son, (and) that one yonder (also) had a son. Well, the son of that man became ill, well, the youngster was sick perhaps two days, and then the young man died. Well, that man was extremely sick at heart. He cried. Well, he put him in the ground, he had the ground covered over. Well then, he went back home, he was sick at heart.

With the above samples you should have more than enough to conduct basic communications in the jargon. Since server addresses change from time to time and I do not have the resources to monitor for bad or out-of-date links, I have not included web links to Jargon sites. Any search engine on your web however, should lead you to additional Chinook Jargon dictionaries and resources at their current web addresses. Kloshe wawa!