



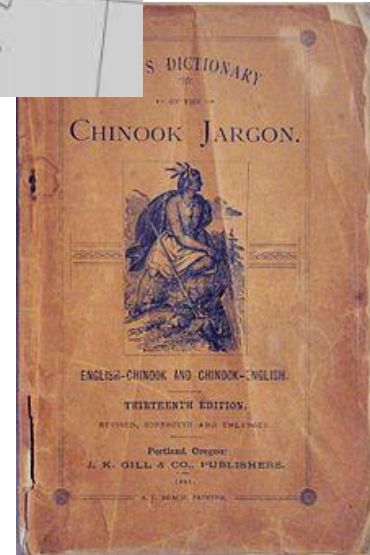
Chinuk Wawa

SPA 233 | Lydia and Ares



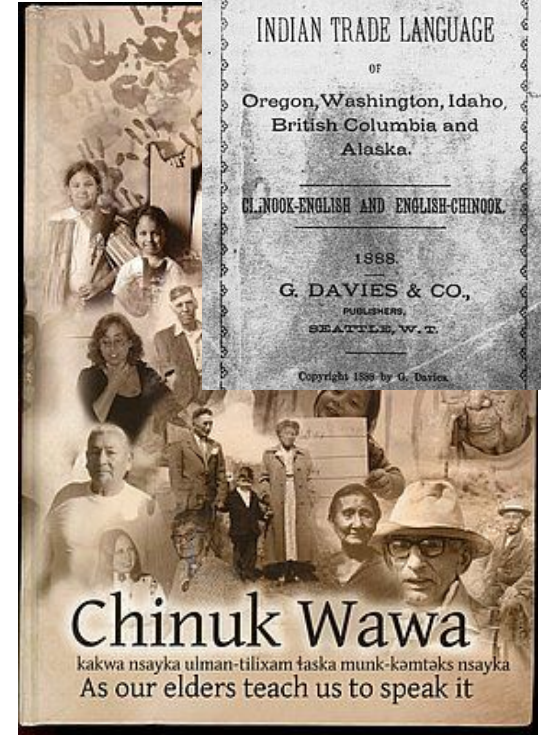
History

- Began as a trade pidgin used in communication between European (British/French) settlers and Northwest Coast Indians
 - Chinook languages perceived as extremely difficult to learn
 - Called “Chinook Jargon” - Silver and Miller
 - Reached its peak in the 1830s (approx. 100,000), far fewer speakers by 1900
 - English and Plains Sign Language
 - Smallpox and boarding schools
 - Some written literature, composed primarily by missionaries
- 1857: Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde (8 different languages, 25 dialects) used it as a lingua franca on the Grand Ronde reservation



Linguistic Characteristics

- Jargon → Pidgin → Creole
- Major lexifier: Coastal Chinuk
- Other contributing languages: English, Nuuchahnulth, French
- SVO word order
- Some phonemes dropped from European languages (e.g. merci → masi); many 'unusual' chinuk phonemes remain (such as glottalized consonants)
- No plural marker (plural is not expressed overtly)
- No tense or aspect markers
- No definite or indefinite articles
- Relatively small word inventory



Phonetics

Crystal Starr Szczepanski,
Cultural Education &
Language Specialist -
Confederated Tribes of
Grand Ronde



Goodnight Grand Ronde - language in action



Current Language Use

APiCS:

309	Proportion of native speakers	<input type="radio"/> Virtually none
310	Ongoing creolization of pidgins	<input type="radio"/> Absent
311	Increasing use	<input type="radio"/> Not at all
312	Language abandonment	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Widespread
313	Size of speaker community	<input type="radio"/> Less than 100 speakers or extinct

1 native speaker of Grand Ronde variety (2009); maybe 1000 people with L2 knowledge (via oral or written means)

Silver and Miller:

Died out after WWII, some resurgence in the 1960s with “enthusiasts” who learned the language from written texts or remaining native speakers

Many blogs and websites from the region call the language “died out,” “virtually dead,” or “near-forgotten”

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

“One of nine federally recognized tribes in the State of Oregon. As a western Oregon Treaty Tribe, we are a sovereign tribal community known as a caring people, dedicated to the principles of honesty and integrity.”

- Includes over 30 tribes and bands
- Over 5,400 enrolled tribal members
- Strong commitment to education and preserving tribal history, culture, and language
- Chinuk Wawa lessons for children grades k-5; bilingual immersion program for grades k-3

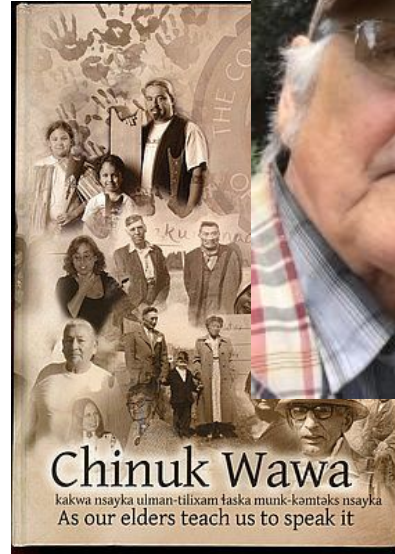


Revitalization

- 1997: preschool and kindergarten Chinuk Wawa immersion program
- Henry Zenk - edited and compiled new dictionary: Chinuk Wawa As Our Elders Teach Us to Speak It
- Free class offered by the Grand Ronde Tribal Office in Portland - Wednesdays 5:30 to 8pm
- Lane Community College (Eugene, Oregon) - class offered

The Pledge

By coming to any of the classes listed on this website, you must make a pledge to help us revitalize this language. We are not looking for people to come and learn this language and then take it elsewhere. We are building a vibrant language community. When you enroll for these classes, you are making the pledge to become not just a speaker of Chinuk Wawa, but a teacher as well. Welcome to the community and thank you for your support!





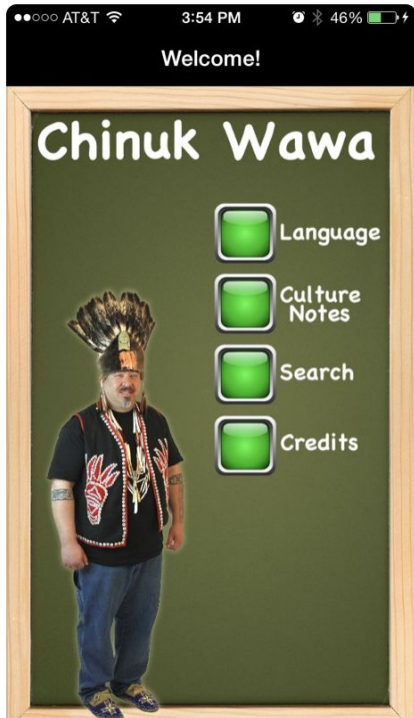
Chinuk Wawa 4+

The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon

★★★★★ 4.6, 11 Ratings

Free

Screenshots [iPhone](#) [iPad](#)



Language and Identity

“When we hear our children speak in our native languages, we hear the voices of our ancestors”

-Crystal Starr Szczepanski

- Language as a means of healing and reconnection
- Revitalizing both cultural and language practices simultaneously



Non-Indigenous Speakers?



Dustin Brumitt 1 week ago

This warms my heart. I've been learning on my free time through the app.

👍 1 🗨️ REPLY



tappoandpippa 7 months ago (edited)

Chinuk Wawa is taught at Grand Ronde, Wilamina High School, Portland Grand Ronde, Lane Community College in Eugene for college credit and for community members. Please find a class near you! Who takes Chinuk Wawa? Not only tribal members and those with native ancestry, but people who are interested in History, Folklore, Traditional Crafts and Ethnobotany, etc. Chinuk Wawa was spoken not only by regional PNW tribes, but then also by early French-speaking trappers and early English-speaking settlers. So, there is certainly a historical precedent for you to learn Chinuk Wawa. It is also the way to learn the history, culture, and stories of the PNW tribes.

Show less

👍 9 🗨️ REPLY

“Anybody that’s living here in Pacific Northwest should know something about Chinuk Wawa because it’s an important part of your roots. This language, this knowledge, has a right to live in this place. To flourish in this place.”

-Tony Johnson, fluent speaker of Chinuk Wawa and Chairman of the Chinook Indian Nation

Local Slang and Place Names

Vellupilai: “Chinuk Wawa has acquired a sense of ‘cool’ in the Pacific Northwest of USA” (2013)

“Some Chinook Wawa still exists in place names and slang, but the meanings are so deeply buried in Pacific Northwest culture that the words come with more of a feeling than a definition, and most residents can’t say which language the terms evolved from.”

-BBC Travel Writer Diane Selkirk (2018)

- **Tolo** – a formal dance in which the girls invite their date, similar to homecoming dance (from “to win”)
- **Skookum**- strong/powerful/well-built; great/impressive/solid/“cool” (from “to be able” and “strong” or “reliable”)
 - Used in many different place names in the Pacific NW, especially for mountains and rivers
- **Mucky-muck**- a powerful person who is often pompous/arrogant (from “high muck-a-muck”)
- **Cultus**- bad, worthless
- **Masi**- thank you
- **Tyee**- leader, chief, boss
- **Potlatch**- potluck dinner/gift-giving to friends (from the word for an eating and gift-giving ceremony among tribes)
- **Alki** (in West Seattle)- a derivative of aski, which means “future”
- **Tukwila** (near Seattle) - hazelnut

Discussion

- ❖ Why do you think that so many recently updated websites and academic sources list Chinuk Wawa as a dead or dormant language despite the active revitalization efforts?
- ❖ Do you think that the future looks bright for Chinuk Wawa? Are the current efforts enough to revitalize it?
- ❖ What language ideologies impact people's motivations to learn Chinuk Wawa?