

Texts in Chinook Jargon collected by Melville Jacobs:

12. “SÁM₁ĒĒ”¹

Told by Thomas Paul, a WSÁNEĆ Coast Salish²

In “northern” dialect; spelling standardized
(but preserving a Vancouver Island accent)

by David Douglas Robertson, PhD³

1. **Yaka skookum men, ankati (okok SÁ₁MEĒ), heeeiilo-tlaksta**
He was a powerful man, long ago (that SÁ₁MEĒ), who noobody

tolo⁴, dileit hayas-kumteks-kooli.⁵ Pos⁶ yaka chako kopa inatai,⁷
*could defeat, a real expert traveler. Whenever he came (from) across
(the water),*

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- 1 Written by Melville Jacobs as “Sametl”, the lead character's name appears to be SÁM₁ĒĒ (which we would write as Se'mutl in our BC Chinook Wawa alphabet), considered to be an old-fashioned SENĆOŦEN (“Saanich”) Salish word for ‘foggy’. It's possible Mr. Paul felt there was no clear CW word for ‘fog’ – you'd use some phrase involving **smok** ‘smoke’ – and in any case the name SÁM₁ĒĒ would be the one normally used when WSÁNEĆ people told this tale. You might consider whether both ‘Fog(gy)’ and, as Dale McCreery points out, the tide are characters in this tale, and see if that helps you understand their actions...
- 2 For a serious analysis of this story's “acts, scenes, stanzas, and verses” structure, you can read my colleague Dell Hymes' study, “[Thomas Paul's 'Sametl': Verse Analysis of a \(Sanich\) Chinook Jargon Text](#)” (the link takes you to an earlier version than what Dell finally published.)
- 3 See end of story for a guide to “Spelling rules”.
- 4 **...heeeiilo-tlaksta tolo'** (literally ‘not-who win’) meaning ‘...who noobody could defeat’.
(A) I understand these words as a Relative Clause that describes SÁMEL, and Chinook Wawa R.C.'s don't have any word for ‘who’.
(B) Notice the strongly Indigenous Chinook Wawa feature of lengthening a word's vowel to suggest an intense or protracted action. Keep your eyes open for a further occurrence of this later in the story.
(C) **Tolo'** ‘to win, to beat/defeat’ here also shows you an example of the fact that Chinook Wawa usually does not use any word for ‘can/be able’, and instead assumes that the listener is sharp enough to catch the idea from the context of what's being said.
- 5 **Hayas-kumteks-kooli**, literally ‘much-know-travel’, is a typical sort of CW expression of someone's habitual inclination.
- 6 **Pos** can mean ‘if’ or ‘when’ in sentences like this one; I feel like ‘whenever’ is a good translation here, because the storyteller is talking about Fog(gy)'s habits.
- 7 **Chako kopa inatai** ‘come from across’, as opposed to **chako inatai** ‘come across’, gives a small but significant difference in perspective. There's at least one more occurrence of **kopa inatai** later in this story.

chako kopa iht vilij,⁸ yaka tiki fait, saliks.⁹

coming to some certain village, he wanted to fight, (and) was aggressive.

2. Pi tilikam tlaska chako-kanamokst:¹⁰ “Tloosh nesaika kooli kopa
And the people had a meeting: “We should travel to

yaka hous, okok men.¹¹ Pi atlki nesaika kakshit¹² yaka tilikam.” Pi
his home, that man. And we'll beat up his people.” And

tilikam yaka¹³ kooli lolo¹⁴ mokst kaniim, petl kopa tilikam.¹⁵
the people, they traveled taking two canoes, filled with people.

(ii) Pi tlaska kooli tletwa kopa inatai, pi weik-sayaa tl'ep-sho,¹⁶
(ii) And they traveled going over across, and almost reaching shore,

SÁ.MEŁ yaka mitlait. Kakwa kopit.¹⁷
SÁ.MEŁ was there. That's all (about that).

8 **Iht vilij** is literally 'one village', but it's very important to know that in CW 'one' normally means 'one certain; a particular'. Mr. Paul's word **vilij** is a recent borrowing from local English, which is typical of BC CW; ironically the older and vaguer Jargon word **ilihi** ('village', also generically 'place') remained in common use in Settlers' English with the meaning of an 'Indian reserve'.

9 **Saliks** means both 'angry' and 'fight'.

10 **Chako-kanamokst**, literally 'come-together' = 'meet'. Also note how Indigenous storytellers and fluent CW speakers typically don't bother using a verb like 'they said' in situations like this one, where it's kind of obvious that the next words are a quotation.

11 **...kopa yaka hous, okok men**, literally 'to his house, that man' = 'to that man's house' in a typically inverted word order that supplies clarity when the speaker feels the usual **...kopa okok men yaka hous** doesn't put enough emphasis on the destination.

12 **Kakshit** can mean 'break', but also 'damage', 'beat (up)'.

13 **Yaka** (literally '(s)he') here is used in a way that the most fluent CW speakers do, as 'they'. This reflects the Indigenous heritage of CW, as quite a lot of tribal languages have essentially a single word for 'they/she/he'.

14 **Kooli lolo** (literally 'travel take') is the first of several paired-up verbs that the storyteller uses. As a rule you can understand these expressions as 'travel taking' etc. Linguists might see these as “serial verbs”, multiple verbs having just one expressed subject.

15 **Petl kopa tilikam** 'filled with people' seems slightly different in meaning from **petl tilikam** 'full of people'; would you agree?

16 **Tl'ep-sho** is literally 'get-shore', using **tl'ep** ('catch; find') in a very common sense of 'reach, arrive at'. Mr. Paul's word **sho** 'shore' is another typically BC-style borrowing from local English, taking the place of older/southern-dialect expressions like **polali-ilihi** (literally 'sand-place').

17 **Kakwa kopit**, literally 'like that only', is a typical ending phrase for a story. Here it signals the end of one section, and a shift to another scene or point of view.

3. **SÁ.MEŁ yaka nenich tenes-wolf,¹⁸ pi yaka tumtum pus¹⁹ yaka**
SÁ_MEŁ saw a wolf cub, and he thought he might

iskam okok tenes-wolf. Pi SÁ.MEŁ yaka kooli-hom,²⁰ yaka tletwa
take that wolf cub. And (so) SÁ_MEŁ, he traveled home, he went

kopa yaka hous, pi yaka mamuk-tloosh²¹ yaka hous, yaka
to his house, and he fixed up his house, he

mamook-skookum yaka hous. Wel', kopit kakwa.
fortified his house. Well, that's all (about that).

4. **Yaka iskam tenes kanim, kooli kopa yaka kanim, pi mitlait kopa**
He took a little canoe, traveled in his canoe, and sitting in

kanim, yaka isik. Kooli kopa Ke'ye,²² pi²³ yaka tl'ap kopa Ke'ye,
the canoe was his paddle. Traveling to Ke'ye, then he got to Ke'ye,

pi yaka nanich chuk pos yaka²⁴ kooli-kikwili.²⁵ Pi yaka mitlait weit
and he saw the water as It was receding. And he sat awaiting

okok taid²⁶, pos yaka tletwa-sahali,²⁷ okok taid. (ii) Wel', okok chuk
that tide, for It to rise, that tide. (ii) Well, that water

18 **Wolf** is another recent English loan, displacing older/southern CW **liloo**.

19 **Yaka tumtum pus...** can also be taken literally as 'he thought (about) whether'.

20 **Hom** is another recent English loan, more specific than the older/southern **hous**.

21 **Mamook-tloosh** is the usual expression for 'repair; improve'.

22 What Jacobs has as **Ke**'ye is a SENĆOŦEN Salish place name, and it's one that hasn't previously been documented. It's quite similar to the word **KÍYÁ.T** (which would be written **Keyee't** in our BC CW alphabet), meaning 'to take something out of a container'. Maybe that's a reference to the tidal action we see in the story.

23 **Kooli kopa Ke**'ye, **pi...** (literally 'traveling to **Ke**'ye, and...) makes use of **pi** to mean something more like 'and then'. This usage happens again later in this story.

24 **Yaka** '(s)he' as a reference to **chuk** is interesting. It seems to make the water/tide an animate character, just as Fog(gy) is a character. (This parallels Pacific Northwest storytelling practices.) So I'm translating it as 'It' with a capital I.

25 **Kooli-kikwili** is literally 'travel/move-down'.

26 **Taid** 'tide' is another recent English loan word. It fills a gap, as there weren't previously any very clear CW terms for this.

27 **Tletwa-sahali** is literally 'go-up'.

chhi-tletawa²⁸ alta, pi yaka kaniim yaka hal-out.²⁹ Pi SÁ.MEŁ
began moving now, and his canoe, he hauled it out. Then SÁ.MEŁ,

yaka jump,³⁰ pi yaka tletwa kopa inatai kaniim;³¹ wel', tenes-leili³²
he jumped, and he went all the way over the canoe (into the water);
well, in a while

yaka wuht tenes-hal. Yaka jump wuht kakwa; yaka wuht hal-out.
he again hauled it a ways. He jumped again like that; he hauled it out
again.

(iii) Yaka wuht hal-out. Yaka jump wuht, pi yaka dileit yaka
(iii) He again hauled it out. He jumped again, and he actually

tl'ep³³ yaka kanim. Pi yaka iskam yaka yootlkut stik,³⁴ yaka
reached (landed in) his canoe. And he got his long pole, he

mamuk-mitwhit stik, yaka³⁵ mitlait, ok³⁶ stik. (iv) Pi SÁ.MEŁ yaka
stood the pole up, It stayed, the pole did. (iv) And SÁ.MEŁ, he

iskam lop, yaka mamook-k'ow kopa stik kakwa. Pi yaka kooli
got a rope, he tied it to the pole like that. And he traveled

28 **Chhi-tletawa** is literally 'newly-go' or 'just.now-go'.

29 **Hal-out** is a newer English borrowing; **hal** is a very old CW word for 'pull; drag', but previously you'd have to say **hal-tlahani**, literally 'haul out'. Also notice here, we have the fluent CW speaker's "silent it" for an inanimate direct object. (That is, **yaka** is not normally used for 'it', just for '(s)he'.) You can find several more examples of "silent it" in this story.

30 **Jump** is a classic BC CW word, replacing older **sopena**.

31 **Kopa inatai kaniim** 'to the.other.side.of the.canoe'.

32 **Tenes-leili** is literally 'little-long.time'.

33 **Yaka dileit yaka tl'ep** is an example of how some fluent CW speakers repeat a subject pronoun to make a scene especially vivid.

34 **Yootlkut stik** is the 'pole' that canoeists traditionally carry for pushing against the current/upstream.

35 Here **yaka** '(s)he' is again used as if an object (the pole) is an animate character.

36 **Ok** is a long-known variant of **okok** 'this/that/these/those'. It often has a sense like a definite article, 'the'.

tletawa kopa sho, pi yaka weit pos taid chako, mitlaait,
going to shore, and he waited for the tide to come, sitting there,

tl'onees-kata-leili,³⁷ chuk yaka chako-petl alta.
who-knows-how-long, (and) the water, It filled up then.

5. Wel', SÁ.MEŁ yaka kooli tletawa kopa wolf,³⁸ ka yaka
Well, SÁ.MEŁ he traveled going to the wolf's place, where he

mitlait, ok wolf.Pi yaka tl'ep pi yaka mitwhit, pi yaka nenich mokst
lived, the wolf. And he arrived and he stood (there), and he saw two

tenees-wolf, pi yaka tletawa, yaka wak slo,³⁹ pi yaka iskam mokst
wolf cubs, and he went, he walked slow, and he got the two

tenees-wolf, pi yaka iskam(,) pi⁴⁰ iht kopa lait, pi iht kopa left.⁴¹
wolf cubs, and he took both one in the right (hand), and one in the left.

(ii) Wel', yaka kooli alta, skookum kooli. Pos yaka tl'ep kopa biich,⁴²
Well, he traveled now, hustling away. When he got to the beach,

now⁴³ yaka jump, yaka tl'ep kopa yaka kaniim. Yaka mesh okok lop,
(well) now he jumped, he got into his canoe. He cast off that rope,

37 **Tl'onees-kata-leili** is literally 'maybe-how-long.time'. The structure **tl'onas** + a question word is the usual CW way of expressing 'who knows what', 'goodness knows where', etc.

38 **Kopa wolf** 'to the wolf's place/house'. CW often uses its preposition **kopa** like Canadian French *chez* 'the place of/house of'.

39 **Wak slo** is of course another recent English borrowing. Older/southern CW might say **tlatawa tlawaa** 'go slowly'.

40 The first **pi** 'and' here is unexpected; just possibly it's a mis-recording by Jacobs, who pointed out that he got Thomas Paul's CW stories under less than ideal conditions.

41 **Lait** (or **rait**)...**left** are frequently used BC CW words from English, replacing older/southern terms.

42 **Biich** for 'beech' is another new borrowing from English, like **sho**.

43 **Now** for 'now' is also a new loan from English. It's interesting that BC CW only uses this word in a very particular way, as a sort of discourse connector 'and then' – not in the sense of 'at this present time'. This is completely in line with the strong pattern of borrowing newer words from English to express more specific, limited meanings than older CW words have. (Older/southern CW **alta** = 'now, at this present time' as well as 'and then'.)

pi yaka isik,⁴⁴ skookum isik, kooli kopa yaka hom.
and he paddled, paddled hard, traveling to his home.

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6. Pos yaka tl'ep kopa hous, yaka lolo okok mokst tenees-wolf.
When he got to the house, he carried those two wolf cubs.

Kooli in⁴⁵ kopa yaka hous, chi yaka tl'ep kopa insaid, yaka
Walking in to his house, as soon as he got into the inside, he

mamook-ihpooi lapot; alta hayees-wolf⁴⁶ chako kopa yaka hous.
shut the door; then the big wolf came to his house.

Pi wolf yaka saliks, yaka mukmuk kopa⁴⁷ hous.
And the wolf was angry, he chewed on the house.

7. Wel', SÁ_MEE yaka tumtum pos⁴⁸ yaka iskam sida-baak;⁴⁹ yaka
Well, SÁ_MEE had the idea to get some cedar bark; he

deleeeiit tloosh mamook-tloosh okok sida-baak. Pi SÁ_MEE yaka
prepared that cedar bark reeeaaally well. And SÁ_MEE

mamook-k'ow yaka lema, okok tenees-wolf, yawa-lema⁵⁰ pi yawa,
tied its hands, that (one) wolf cub, that hand there and there,

44 Notice that **isik** here, unlike its first occurrence above as a noun, is now functioning as a verb 'to paddle'.

45 **In** is one of a few English words here that we rarely see brought into other people's Chinook Wawa. It may be that Thomas Paul was politely accommodating his listener, a White researcher. We often hear from old sources that CW speakers would incorporate any and all words & strategies (including hand gestures!) that they felt would help their listener to understand them.

46 **Hayees-wolf** is written here with a dash in order to suggest a parallel with **tenees-wolf** 'wolf cub(s)'.

47 **Mukmuk kopa hous** could mean literally 'eat in the house', but Wolf is attacking the house...So this appears to be an expression that's parallel to English 'eating on' something, 'chewing on' it.

48 **Tumtum pos** 'think to; have the idea of; think that he might'.

49 **Sida-baak** is another new borrowing from English, replacing older/southern CW words for 'cedar' and 'bark'.

50 **Yawa-lema** is Thomas Paul's unique expression for the 'there-hand', that is, 'that hand there'.

left and rait. (ii) Yaka k'ow wuht, pi yaka legz, mokst⁵¹ legz,
left and right. He tied some more, plus its legs, both legs,

mamook-k'ow kopa sida-baak. Pi yaka mamook-k'ow kopa yaka
tying with cedar bark. And he tied (them) to its chest on the crossways,

chest⁵² kopa kros-vey,⁵³ pi wuht yaka mamook-kros-vey.
and he did some more crossways.

Yaka kopit iht. (iii) Yaka iskam iht,⁵⁴ yaka wuht mamook kakwa;
It was just one (of them). (iii) He took the other one, he again did like that;

pos yaka kopit mamook kakwa, pi yaka lolo kopa tlahani; iskam
when he was done doing like that, then he carried (them) outside; taking

okok mokst tenes-wolf, yaka lolo⁵⁵ kopa tlahani. Kopit.
those two wolf cubs, he carried (them) outside. That's all (for that).

8. Wolf yaka iskam yaka tenes, kopit;⁵⁶ wolf yaka lolo hom yaka
Wolf took his children at last; Wolf carried home his

tenes. Wolf yaka dileit tilikam⁵⁷ kopa SÁ.MEŁ. Wolf sum taims⁵⁸
children. Wolf was really a friend to SÁ.MEŁ. Wolf sometimes

51 **Mokst legz:** note that **mokst** 'two' can also mean 'both (of)'. **Legz** is another new borrowing from English (the sound "z" is a sign of that); it replaces older/southern CW **tiyaa'wit** 'leg' or **lipii/lipyee** 'foot, leg'.

52 **Chest** is a new loan from English; there don't seem to have been any well-known words for this body part in previous CW. (If memory serves, I've seen this word also in the Kamloops area. -- DDR)

53 **Kros-vey** is a new word from English, but **kros** is definitely known elsewhere in BC Chinook Wawa. Note that the Christian 'cross' is a different word, known in all CW dialects as **lakloaa/lakwiin**.

54 Recall that **iht** 'one' usually means 'the other one' or 'the one particular one'.

55 **Yaka lolo**, literally 'he carried', is an unusual use of the CW "silent it/them" strategy to refer to animate objects (wolf cubs).

56 This use of **kopit** to apparently mean 'finally; at last' is somewhat unusual.

57 **Tilikam** has a number of common senses including 'person', 'relative', or 'friend'. Melville Jacobs's published version of this story assigns an English translation of 'relative' here, but 'friend' seems to fit with the picture presented in the rest of the story. What do you think?

58 **Sum taims** is a pretty common expression in BC Chinook Wawa. The **sum** part is a new loan from local English, but **taim** was already a well-known word in older/southern CW.

yaka patlach mawich kopa SÁ.MEŁ; tloosh tilikam alta.⁵⁹
gave deer(meat) to SÁ.MEŁ; (they) were good friends now.

Yaka kopit.⁶⁰
That finishes it.

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59 **Tloosh tilikam alta** 'they were good friends now' – when you're saying that something or someone “is” something, you don't necessarily have to say 'they', if it's obvious from the context.

60 **Yaka kopit** is an unusual use of **yaka** '(s)he'! Possibly Mr. Paul was thinking something like 'that finishes it', where 'that' is an active subject (therefore humanlike; therefore also having a “silent it” object).

Spelling rules:

Stress:

- Assumed to be almost always on the first syllable.
- Any stress coming later in a word is indicated by a 2-vowel spelling (examples *tanaas*, *sayaa*, *la-miyai*).

Words from Canadian/Métis French: Spelled as close to the French original as possible without deviating from common Chinook Jargon pronunciations. You may be surprised how much certain words differ from their Canadian French source! (Examples *lamiyai* 'old lady' from French 'la vieille', *ninamoo* 'turnip' from French 'le navot'.)

Indigenous sounds: most Chinuk Wawa words are from Pacific NW Native languages, so you'll need to know their proper pronunciations.

- The “slurpy L” is spelled *tl* (examples *tlaska*, *patlach*). NOTE: Many BC Indigenous/elder speakers vary here between saying a simple slurpy-L & having a slight “t” (or even “k”) sound before it.
- Apostrophe ('):
 - After a vowel = glottal stop [ʔ] (examples *tiyaa'wit*, *k'o'*).
 - With a consonant, forms a “popping” sound (examples *k'ow*, *tl'onas*).
- Underlined consonants are made in the back of the mouth (examples *kata*, *tlahani*).
- The combination *wh* is like the careful/older pronunciation “HW” at the start of English “what”, “why”, “which”, etc. -- not a plain “W” sound (examples *mitwhit*, *tlwhap*).

Vowels:

- Single vowels *a*, *e*, *i*, *o* are said generally as in French / English (examples *aha*, *dlet*, *hihi*, *O!*), but *u* is reserved for the schwa sound as in English “sun” and “chuck”. NOTE: In BC Indigenous/elders' speech, stressed *a* is frequently /æ/ as in English “ash” (examples: *yaka*, *hayaas*).
- Two-vowel spellings (diphthongs) are *ai* as in English “eye” / French “taille”, *ei* as in English “hey” / French “vieille”, *oo* as in English “boo”, *ou* or *ow* as in English “house”, “how”. NOTE: In BC Indigenous/elders' speech, *e* & *ei* are often said as *i* (examples: *dlet* ~ *dliit*, *leili* ~ *lili*), and *o* is often pronounced as *oo* (examples: *spos* ~ *spoos* ~ *poos*, *tl'onas* ~ *tl'oonas*).
- Wherever you see a *y* or a *w*, those are not vowels but consonants, as in English “yes”, French “yeux”, and English “we”.
- *Don't read this :)* I try to avoid most 3-vowel & 4-vowel sequences (thus **haiioo*, **mouich*, etc.), as they are confusing to English-readers & would lead French-readers to strange pronunciations.

Consonants: generally said as in English, except for the rules above.

Hyphens are used when two or more words combine to form an idiomatic meaning (examples *kakwa-spos*, *tanaas-yaka-tanaas*).

Traditional Chinook Jargon spellings have influenced my choices. Many learners are familiar with these, from the classic dictionaries, from BC place names, and from BC English words like *skookum* & *saltchuck*. I'm trying to write CJ that's both recognizable (which traditional spellings should be honoured for), and easy to pronounce well (which they're not wonderful at). Part of my strategy is to change similar-looking traditional spellings, so they're more distinct from each other. Examples –

- Traditional <*nesika*> 'we, us, our' versus <*mesika*> 'you (plural), your' have been confusing English-readers for 150 years. So I spell these *nesaika* & *masaika*.
- The traditional <*wake*> 'not; no!' versus <*weght*> 'also; again; some more' also have a long history of mix-ups, even though they've never sounded similar! So I spell these *weik* & *wuht*, to reduce confusion.