

Lesson 2:4:

Core concept: **HYPOTHETICALS**.

There's one tiny word in Chinook Jargon, **poos**, that turns a sentence into something that you consider as "it hasn't definitely happened".

Position matters. The overall rule is, **poos** goes right before the situation that you're turning into a HYPOTHETICAL.

But, depending on where **poos** is used in the sentence, you'll be able to take its meaning in different ways.

"If/when..."

Poos at the very start of a sentence means "*if*" or "*when*". Unlike English, which has those 2 separate words, Northern Chinook Jargon takes an Indigenous approach. It considers "if" and "when" to both be the same thing: stuff that hasn't definitely happened. So it's up to you to be paying attention and understanding which idea is meant:

Poos heilo haiyoo chikamin Ø...
HYPOTHETICAL not much money it
"If it's not much money..."
-- Johnny Peter, Clinton, BC

Poos naika wawa kopa naika tilihum...
HYPOTHETICAL I talk to my people...
"When I talk to my people..."
-- William Celestin, Salmon Arm, BC

("When" in questions is different, being expressed as **kah-sun**; that's literally "where-day".)

"Whether...or..."

And if you pair up these **poos**-first expressions, you get "*whether...or...*":

...**poos** Chinook, **poos** Whait-man wawa, Chaina-man wawa,
HYPOTHETICAL Chinook, **HYPOTHETICAL** White-man talk, Chinese-man talk,

poos Sawash wawa...
HYPOTHETICAL Native talk...

"...**whether** it was Chinook, **or** White folks' talk, Chinese, **or** an Indigenous language..."
-- Hyacinthe, Neskonlith, BC

Alta naika chako-kumtuks poos dleit masaika wawa, poos heilo.
now I come-know HYPOTHETICAL truly you.folks talk, HYPOTHETICAL not
 “Now I’m finding out **whether** you guys were telling the truth **or** not!”
 -- Kamloops Wawa #23[a]

Request/command/wish

When the word **tloosh** (“good”) starts a sentence, and is immediately followed with **poos**, this expression **Tloosh-poos** makes a *request / command / wish*:

Tloosh-poos masaika nanich ikta naika wawa.
good-HYPOTHETICAL you.folks read what I say
 “Please read what I’m saying.”
 -- Chief Narcisse, Shuswap, BC, talking to the other chiefs

Tloosh-poos naika heilo mamook-taiyi masaika.
good-HYPOTHETICAL I not respect you.folks
 “I **should** not be respecting you guys.”
 -- Chief Leon, Neskonlith, BC

(Tloosh-poos has the same command/request meaning as starting a sentence with just tloosh, by the way. The second example above could be re-worded as Tloosh naika heilo mamook-taiyi masaika.)

There’s also the negative command form, **weik-tloosh-poos**:

Weik-tloosh-poos naika chako-sik-tumtum kopa maika.
not-good-HYPOTHETICAL I get-hurting-heart towards you
 “I **shouldn’t** be getting mad at you.”
 -- Chief Johnny Chillihitzia, Nicola Lake, BC

Purpose

When **poos** comes later in a sentence, it can introduce the hypothetical *purpose* of a verb (“so that…”); we learned this in the previous lesson:

Maika wawa kopa naika tilihum poos tlaska help kopa naika.
you say to my people HYPOTHETICAL they be.helpful to me.
 “You told my people **to** help me out.” (you said *for* them to help me)
 -- William Celestin, Salmon Arm, BC

Naika heilo tikki poos maika mamook.
I not want HYPOTHETICAL you work
 “I don’t want you **to** be working.” (I don’t want *for* you to work)
 -- Annie Edward, Enderby, BC

(The idea) that...

When it's not showing a purpose, **poos** introduces “*(the idea) that*” something might hypothetically happen, vs. silent Ø “(the fact) that” something did really happen. Of course, this sense of “that” is found following a verb of perception (like “being afraid that...” or “hearing/thinking that...”), or of saying:

Naika k'wash poos maika sik-tumtum kopa naika.

I afraid HYPOTHETICAL you hurting-heart towards me

“I’m afraid you might be upset with me.”

-- Annie Edward, Enderby, BC

Tlaska k'wolaan poos naika tl'ap haiyoo tala kopa okok pleis.

they hear HYPOTHETICAL I get much money at that place

“Folks heard I might have gotten lots of money at that place.”

-- Patrick Felix, Neskonlith, BC

As if/seems like

Also, there's an idiom that puts together **kakwa** (“to be like; to be that way”) with **poos** (“if”); this phrase **kakwa-poos** means “seem like; look like; feel like”, or “as if...”:

Kakwa-poos yaka neim kopa anmaloop.

like-HYPOTHETICAL his name on envelope

“It looks like his name is on the envelope.”

-- Peter Cole, Fountain, BC

Poos heilo naika wawa kakwa, kakwa-poos help naika tanas kopa mesaachi.

if not I say so, like-HYPOTHETICAL help my child with doing.bad

“If I don't say this, it's as if (I'm) helping my child do bad things.”

-- Francois Shilpahan, Tappen Siding, BC

Question words

There's one more use of **poos-**, which is unique to our Northern Dialect. You can combine **poos-** plus a question word, and it means basically the same as that question word alone:

Naika heilo kumtuks poos-kata yaka mamook Ø.

I not know HYPOTHETICAL-how they do it

“I don't know how they'll do it.”

-- Johnny Peter, Clinton, BC

Poos-ikta maika tumtum kopa naika?

HYPOTHETICAL-*what you think about me*
“What do you think about me?”
-- Charlie Frye, North Bend, BC

Every single one of these uses of **poos** are considered HYPOTHETICAL situations.

Farther along in these lessons, sometimes you’ll see **poos** noted as “POTENTIAL”. We mean the same thing as HYPOTHETICAL when we do that.

Exercises 2:4

Now, use what we’ve discussed about the different uses of **poos**, to translate these sentences:

- 1 **Poos naika heilo mamook, weik-kata yaka tl’ap tanas mukmuk.**
if I not work, unable he get bit.of food
-- Charlie Frye, North Bend, BC
- 2 **Heilo naika k’wash poos yaka tl’ap sik-tumtum kopa naika.**
not I afraid HYPOTHETICAL he wind.up upset with me
-- Annie Edward, Enderby, BC
- 3 **Poos-ikta maika tumtum kopa naika?**
HYPOTHETICAL-what you think about me
-- Charlie Frye, North Bend, BC
- 4 **Tloosh maika aiyak k’ilapai kopa okok peipa poos naika kumtuks maika wawa.**
please you soon respond to this letter HYPOTHETICAL I know your words
-- Billy Clark (Towtah), Spuzzum, BC
- 5 **Tloosh-poos maika patlach Ø kopa nesaika.**
good-HYPOTHETICAL you send it to us
-- Johnny Peter, Clinton, BC
- 6 **Nanich, kakwa-poos haiyas-tlahowyum.**
look, seems very-pitiful
-- Johnny Wilson (Tuamah), Williams Lake, BC
- 7 **Kata tilihūm kopa Kamloops: poos kanawei tloosh, poos tlaska sik?**
how people in Kamloops HYPOTHETICAL all OK, HYPOTHETICAL they sick
-- Charlie Chapman, Spuzzum, BC
- 8 **Naika haiyas-tomtōm poos maika mamook kanawei st’iwi’etl kopa iht book.**
I very-hope HYPOTHETICAL you put all prayer in one book
-- William Waspulawh, Canoe Creek, BC

- 9 **Poos** **maika tumtum patlach Ø kopa lipleit...**
HYPOTHETICAL you plan give it to priest...
- poos** **maika tumtum Ø chako ilep kopa lipleit...**
HYPOTHETICAL you think it come earlier than priest...
 -- Johnny Peter, Clinton, BC
- 10 **Tloosh-poos** **maika mamook-kumtuks kopa Looi Lehlehkin, taiyi kopa Kamloops.**
good-HYPOTHETICAL you make-known to Louis Clexlixqen, chief at Kamloops.
 -- William Waspulawh, Canoe Creek, BC
- 11 **Kakwa-poos** **maika mash okok ilahi.**
like-HYPOTHETICAL you leave this area
 -- Anonymous, unknown place, BC
- 12 **Tloosh maika mamook-kumtuks nesaika poos-kah-sun maika chako.**
good you make-know us HYPOTHETICAL-when you come.here
 -- George Sargent, Clinton, BC
- 13 **Maika wawa poos** **maika mash iht Chinook shanti-book.**
you say HYPOTHETICAL you send one Chinook song-book
 -- Peter Cole, Barkerville, BC
- 14 **Poos** **naika aiyak kopitt-mamook, atlki naika aiyak mash chikamin.**
HYPOTHETICAL I soon done-working, “gonna” I soon send money
 -- John Jackson, Barkerville, BC

Tips for Southern speakers 2:4

Good news! Most uses of **poos** are essentially the same as things that are understood in the Southern Dialect, with ***pus***.

*Just remember that in the North, we don't have the word ***q'á'nchi*** for “when”. (That word only means “how much/how many” in the North.)*

But, in the Southern Dialect, you can't combine **poos-** with a question word, the way we do in the North. (That sequence has a very different, and more literal, meaning in the South.)

And, you'll hardly ever find **poos... (poos...)** used in the South for sets of alternative possibilities like our “whether...or...”.