

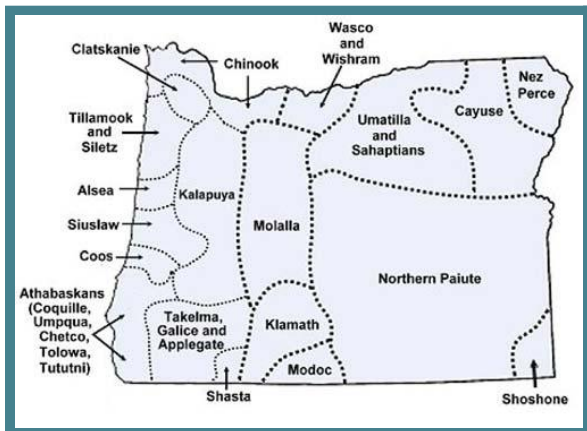
The History of Chinuk Wawa

Chinuk Wawa, the Tribal language for The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, is a **hybrid language** indigenous to the Pacific Northwest. It is a blend between the Chinookan language, Native languages spoken along the Columbia River, Native languages from the lower Columbia, and European languages from **traders**. Chinuk Wawa arose at the mouth of the Columbia River to The Dalles and began as a **Pidgin** – a contact language used for communication that is not the first language of any of its speakers. Over years it developed into a **Creole** - a Pidgin language that has become the first language of a community, although it was never the only first language of a community as most communities and speakers were at least bilingual.



As the common language of the Northwest, Chinuk Wawa served as the language of communication between speakers of different regional languages – tribal and non-tribal. It was found in all areas west of the Rockies, from Northern California to Alaska, and was also found as the language of exchange and trade at Celilo Falls and at other sites along the Columbia River.

Chinuk Wawa is composed primarily of 4 languages and words from many other languages: 55% Old Chinook, 7% Nuu-chaa-nulth, 10% English, 10% French, 18% Other.



In present-day Oregon at the time European Americans first arrived, 18-25 languages of roughly 13 different families were spoken. (Gross 2007; D. Hymes 2007)

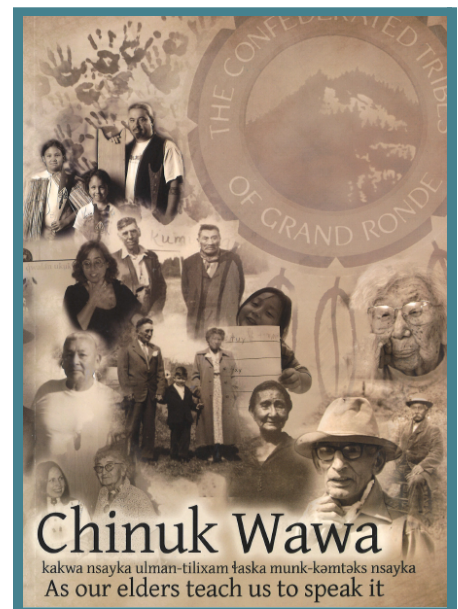
The map to the left shows where the different languages of Oregon were spoken before contact with white settlers.



In 1856 the Grand Ronde Reservation was formed. The events surrounding the founding of the Grand Ronde Reservation are the key in understanding the long survival of Chinuk Wawa. The Reservation became home to many different Native groups and peoples during the removal and relocation of Tribes in the winter and spring of

1856. Native peoples were forced to create a new community and way of life. Communication was necessary to perform everyday tasks, as well as to build and foster relationships with peoples from other tribes, bands, and outside communities.

During **termination**, many Grand Ronde tribal members moved away to find work and support their families. During this time, the number of Chinuk Wawa speakers continued to decline. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a few of the Grand Ronde elders conducted community Chinuk Wawa classes in efforts to keep the language alive. Around that same time, a scholar came to the Grand Ronde Reservation and recorded elders speaking the Chinuk Wawa language. In 1997, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde hired a language specialist who organized a program to revive Chinuk Wawa by teaching community classes and teaching more people to speak the language. He worked with the scholar who had previously recorded the language, to create curriculum and lessons for these community classes. In 2000, they helped start a preschool immersion class at Grand Ronde where students could learn preschool



content in Chinuk Wawa. An immersion class for Kindergarten began in 2004 and a 1st Grade Immersion Class was added in 2012. Now, there is even a High School Chinuk Wawa Language course at the local high school where students can earn college credit for learning Chinuk Wawa.

The **revitalization** of the Chinuk Wawa language has been a long, but successful process. Today, tribal members and non-tribal members can learn this language through the use of YouTube videos/classes, a published Chinuk Wawa dictionary, an app, and community classes. Keeping this language alive helps to keep the Native American culture alive.