

McCluskey and Eldridge letters NORTHERNIZED

by David Douglas Robertson, PhD
Consulting linguist, Spokane, WA, USA

*(Letter 1 of 2, from William McCluskey, a Coast Salish man, to his old friend
Hugh Eldridge)*

“LA CONNER, WASH., December 20, 1928.”

Naika floosh tilikum “SchulOkset”:

My good friend “SchulOkset”:

Naika dleit shem pi sik-tumtum, naika heilo aiyak k'ilapai-ts'um-peipa
I'm really ashamed and sad, (that) I haven't soon written an answer

kopa maika, pi tl'onas maika tumtum alta naika mitlait mesaachi-
to you, and maybe you'll be thinking that now I have bad

tumtum kopa maika. Kopa maika peipa, maika tiki kumtuks spos mitlait
feelings toward you. In your letter, you want to know if there are (still)

haiyoo chok-kalakala kopa okok ilahi, pi spos kakwa, maika aiyak chako
many waterfowl in this place, and if so, you'd soon come

yakwaa pi nesaika kanamokst p'oo kalakala.
here and we'd shoot birds together.

Na, “SchulOkset”, alta okok ilahi dleit tlahowyam, heilo kakwa-
Well, “SchulOkset”, nowadays this place is really pitiful, not like

ankati,¹ haiyoo floosh mukmuk; alta heilo mowich, kalakala, pish, pi
it used to be, (with) lots of good food; now there's no deer, birds, fish, or

1 03.27.2021 note: I'm introducing a new spelling rule, to distinguish between the various meanings of **kakwa**. When it's a preposition carrying the sense of 'like, as' (and is therefore unstressed), I'm writing it as a prefix followed by a dash, **kakwa-**. When it's a stressed word (a stative verb which means 'be(ing) like that / this way / etc. '), I write it as a separate word and I follow it with a comma, suggesting a slight pause that shows the word's separateness from what follows. I'll repeat this footnote after every **kakwa** in today's reading, to help you see the difference.

kanawei-ikta floosh kopa kanawei-ka ankati nesaika ilahi. Chhi-chako
anything good (to eat) anywhere that used to be our places. The newcomer

tk'op-tilikum tlaska dleit mamook-tlahowyam okok ilahi. Tlaska dleit
White people have really impoverished this place. They're experts

kumtuks kanawei-ikta mamook spos iskum ankati floosh mukmuk, pi
at every sort of trick to get the oldtime good foods, and

alta dleit chako-heilo kopa kanawei-ka ilahi. Alta haiyoo tk'op-tilikum
(so) now it's all gone from the whole area. Now lots of White folks

tlaska iskum ka ankati floosh ilahi, pi ka
have taken up where the old good places were, and where there were

kwanisum haiyoo kalakala, pi tlaska patlach² lawein (“oats”) pi leblei
always lots of birds, and they put out oats and wheat

(“wheat”) spos kalakala chako pi mukmuk; kakwa,³ tlaska mamook-
so the birds will come and eat it; this way, they

memaloos haiyoo kalakala; Bostun wawa tlaska neim “gun club.”
kill lots of birds; the (White) Americans call them a gun club.

Tlahowyam man kakwa-naika,⁴ weik-kansi naika mamook-memaloos iht
A poor man like me, I can never kill a single

2 **Patlach** ‘give’ can also mean ‘lay out, put out’ items for others – including bird! – to take.

3 03.27.2021 note: I’m introducing a new spelling rule, to distinguish between the various meanings of **kakwa**. When it’s a preposition carrying the sense of ‘like, as’ (and is therefore unstressed), I’m writing it as a prefix followed by a dash, **kakwa-**. When it’s a stressed word (a stative verb which means ‘be(ing) like that / this way / etc.’), I write it as a separate word and I follow it with a comma, suggesting a slight pause that shows the word’s separateness from what follows. I’ll repeat this footnote after every **kakwa** in today’s reading, to help you see the difference.

4 03.27.2021 note: I’m introducing a new spelling rule, to distinguish between the various meanings of **kakwa**. When it’s a preposition carrying the sense of ‘like, as’ (and is therefore unstressed), I’m writing it as a prefix followed by a dash, **kakwa-**. When it’s a stressed word (a stative verb which means ‘be(ing) like that / this way / etc.’), I write it as a separate word and I follow it with a comma, suggesting a slight pause that shows the word’s separateness from what follows. I’ll repeat this footnote after every **kakwa** in today’s reading, to help you see the difference.

kalakala kopa kanawei ikt kol, heilo naika chikamin spos kooli⁵
bird in all of a winter, I don't have the money to hang out

kanamokst “gun-club”.
with a gun-club.

Na, siks, tl'onas spos ankati⁶ Taiyi “SchulOkset” mitlait okok sun,
Say, friend, I reckon if old Chief SchulOkset was around today,

pi yaka nanich kanawei-ikta tloosh mukmuk chako-heilo, yaka dleit
and he saw every kind of good food running out, he'd be really

saliks kopa kanawei “chhi-chako”⁷ tk'op-tilikum, pi tl'onas⁸ yaka
mad at all the newcomer White folks, and I reckon he'd

mamook-heilo kanawei tlaska. [WE GOT THIS FAR ON 3.13.21]
put an end to all of them.

Ankati, okok haiyas Taiyi “SchulOkset” yaka dleit huloima kopa
In those days the great Chief SchulOkset was really different from

kanawei tilikum; spos yaka tl'ap-saliks-tumtum, yaka aiyak mamook-
every one; if he got mad, he'd instantly

memaloos dleit haiyoo tilikum. Heilo yaka iskum musket (“gun”) spos
kill a whole lot of people. He didn't pick up a gun to

memaloos tilikum, heilo optl'iki pi kalaitan (“bow and arrow”), heilo
kill people, not a bow and arrow, not

5 **Kooli kanamokst** (literally ‘run together.with’) is probably modeled on informal English ‘run with’, which in our later way of talking is ‘hang out with’. This phrase isn’t definitely English-inspired, though, because CW **kooli** already had an established sense of ‘run around, gallivant, hang around’, especially in the phrase **kultus kooli** (‘worthlessly run’), i.e. ‘get up to no good; generally raise hell’.

6 **Ankati** (‘long.ago; formerly’) can be an adjective, too, and then it’s equivalent to ‘former, old (that is, old-time / old-school)’.

7 I think this adjective **chhi-chako** comes, strangely enough, from English, which borrowed the CW expression (literally ‘just came here’) as a noun and adjective for ‘newcomer; greenhorn’ and spelled it as < **cheechako** >, etc. I’m unaware of this phrase having been used as an adjective in Jargon before English got hold of it!

8 It’s useful to know that **tl'onas** (literally ‘maybe’) is also used a lot to indicate a CW speaker’s supposition, as if to say ‘I reckon’.

opitsah (“knife”). **Kopit okok haiyas-mamook ston,**⁹ **ankati t'amaanawis**
a knife. Just that powerful rock, that an old-fashioned spirit power

patlach yaka spos mamook-memaloos tilikum. Nawiitka okok Taiyi
gave him to kill people. In fact that Chief

“SchulOkset” ankati yaka dleit skookum taiyi kopa kanawei taiyi,¹⁰ **dleit**
SchulOkset used to be the most powerful chief among all the chiefs, just

kakwa-“George Washington”¹¹ **tolo' iht haiyas ilahi, pi kakwa,**¹² **alta**
like how George Washington beat a certain powerful country, and so, now

nesaika kwanisum yootl-tumtum kopa okok ilahi.
we are always proud in this country.

Naika tumtum ilep-tloosh spos naika alta kopet-haiyoo-wawa kopa
I think it's best if now I stop gabbing in

okok peipa; naika heilo tiki spos maika tl'ap-sik-lateit kopa naika
this letter; I don't want for you to get a headache from my

haiyoo-wawa.
going on so.

Naika dleit yootl spos naika nanich maika chako yakwaa, pi
I'll be real happy if I see you come here and

9 **Haias-mamook** ('much-doing') is a unique expression that we haven't seen before. I don't think it's a misprint of **haias-makook** ('valuable'). Here, if we go by Eldridge's response letter below, McCluskey is calling a war club a 'much-doing / powerful stone'.

10 The expression **dleit skookum taiyi kopa kanawei taiyi** ('a really powerful chief among all chiefs') is an implied superlative, 'the most powerful chief'.

11 03.27.2021 note: I'm introducing a new spelling rule, to distinguish between the various meanings of **kakwa**. When it's a preposition carrying the sense of 'like, as' (and is therefore unstressed), I'm writing it as a prefix followed by a dash, **kakwa-**. When it's a stressed word (a stative verb which means 'be(ing) like that / this way / etc. '), I write it as a separate word and I follow it with a comma, suggesting a slight pause that shows the word's separateness from what follows. I'll repeat this footnote after every **kakwa** in today's reading, to help you see the difference.

12 03.27.2021 note: I'm introducing a new spelling rule, to distinguish between the various meanings of **kakwa**. When it's a preposition carrying the sense of 'like, as' (and is therefore unstressed), I'm writing it as a prefix followed by a dash, **kakwa-**. When it's a stressed word (a stative verb which means 'be(ing) like that / this way / etc. '), I write it as a separate word and I follow it with a comma, suggesting a slight pause that shows the word's separateness from what follows. I'll repeat this footnote after every **kakwa** in today's reading, to help you see the difference.

nesaika haiyoo-wawa kopa kanawei-ikta dleit ankati. Naika tenas-k'was
we'll chat about everything that's real old-time. I'm leery

spos¹³ naika wawa “Tloosh maika chako pi p'oo kalakala”, pi tl'onas
about maybe saying “Come and shoot some birds”, because there might

heilo-iht kalakala maika nanich yakwaa.
not be a single bird that you'd see here.

Tlahowya, “Schul Okset”, naika tiki spos maika haiyoo hihi kopa
Goodbye, “SchulOkset”, I hope you'll have lots of fun at

Ilep-Haiyas Sundei pi dleit yootl-tumtum kopa “Chhi-Kol” Sundei.¹⁴
Christmas and be real happy at New Year's.

13 **Naika tenas-k'was spos naika wawa...** is slightly unusual in having that second **naika**. In CW as in English, when a subordinate clause's subject is the same as in the main clause, it doesn't need to be said. **Naika tenas-k'was spos wawa...** would be expected, meaning 'I'm leery of saying...' The wording as we have it here is not wrong, but it has a little different interpretation, 'I'm leery about maybe saying... / I'm leery that I might say...'

14 The wording here is meant to translate the English 'Merry Christmas and a happy New Year', which was already a customary greeting long before 1929. McCluskey uses **Sundei** to mean a 'holiday', as is typical in CW. 'Christmas' here is the 'biggest holiday', **Ilep-Haiyas Sundei**.

(Letter 2 of 2, from Hugh Eldridge)

“BELLINGHAM, WASH., January 4, 1929.

William McCluskey,
Swinomish Reservation,
La Conner, Wash.”

Na, “Willie”, tenas-ankati, naika iskum maika ts'um-peipa, pi leili
Say, Willie, a while ago, I received your letter, and I spent a long time

naika mamook kopa ts'um, pi alta naika dleit iskum¹⁵ maika tumtum, pi
working on the writing, and now I really pick up your ideas, and

naika kumtuks, dleit maika wawa. Nawiitka, “Willie”, alta chako-dleit-
I understand, you really talk straight. It's true, Willie, now it's gotten really

tlahowyam kanawei okok ilahi; heilo stik-kalakala, weik-saiyaa heilo
pitiful(,) this whole place; (there's) no forest birds, almost no

chok-kalakala, kopit tenas-haiyoo mowich; pi ankati, spos naika tenas-
waterfowl, just a few deer; but in the old times, when I was a

man, o, haiyoo kanawei-ikta. Maika kumtuks, ankati, spos okok
boy, oh, (there was) lots of everything. You know, back then, when this

Bostun-ilahi “chako-iht-tak'amonuk,”¹⁶ naika k'ilapai kopa Stach'aas¹⁷
country of America turned 100, I went back to Olympia

kanamokst “Captain Roeder” pi mokst yaka tenaas kopa tenas-haiyas
along with Captain Roeder and two of his kids in a good-sized

15 **Iskum** always carries a sense of intentionally getting/taking, so in this letter we see it as ‘receiving’ a letter from the mail carrier, ‘taking in’ someone’s ideas, etc.

16 Like several other expressions in quotation marks in today’s reading, this one is modeled on an informal English expression.

17 **Stach'aas** is the Indigenous (Salish) name of the location of Olympia, Washington state’s capital city. Later we will see reference to the **taiyi-tilikom** (‘chief-people’) or ‘politicians; leaders’ in that city.

bot, pi kanawei iht polakli nesaika mitlait kopa “Swinomish Slough”, pi
boat, and for a whole night we were at Swinomish Slough, but

weik-kata nesaika sliip;¹⁸ okok taiyi¹⁹ chok-kalakala haiyoo-wawa
we couldn't sleep; those fancy water birds kept saying

“quack quack quack”, pi okok giis²⁰ wawa “honk honk”, pi tenas alta,
“quack quack quack”, and those geese said “honk honk”, and after a while,

tl'onas-ikta mamook-k'was okok kalakala pi yaka²¹ tlatawa. O, dleit
something or other scared those birds and they left. Oh, it was really

kakwa-spos²² haiyas-musket p'oo; tl'onas-kansih haiyas tak'amonuk
as if a cannon went off; gosh knows how many thousands

kalakala mitlait; pi spos chako weik-saiyaa kol-ilahi, haiyoo kamooks-
of birds there were; and when it got to be almost winter, lots of dog

samun, haiyoo “coho”, haiyoo taiyi-samun haiyoo-jump²³ kopa salt-chok.
salmon, lots of coho, (and) lots of tye salmon were jumping in the saltwater.

Spos yaka tl'ap okok tenas chok pi okok river,²⁴ yaka tlatawa-sahali kopa
When they reached those creeks and those rivers, they'd go up while

mash eggs,²⁵ pi okok stik-kalakala kooli kanawei-ka kakwa-chiken.²⁶
leaving eggs, and those forest birds ran all around like chickens.

18 Here is confirmation that the northern dialect of CW prefers saying **sliip** instead of **moosum** (which has sexual connotations for fluent speakers).

19 **Taiyi**, as an adjective in CW, has a very long history (in fact back to Lewis & Clark's stay on the lower Columbia River) in use to express 'high-quality' or 'fancy'.

20 **Giis** is not an old CW word, but is taken from locally spoken English as is typical in the development of northern CW.

21 Beginning at this point in his letter, Eldridge uses **yaka** (which is fundamentally 'she/he') as a plural animate pronoun 'they'. This Indigenous-influenced grammatical habit is unique to fluent Jargon speakers.

22 03.27.2021 note: I'm introducing a new spelling rule, to distinguish between the various meanings of **kakwa**. When it's a preposition carrying the sense of 'like, as' (and is therefore unstressed), I'm writing it as a prefix followed by a dash, **kakwa-**. When it's a stressed word (a stative verb which means 'be(ing) like that / this way / etc. '), I write it as a separate word and I follow it with a comma, suggesting a slight pause that shows the word's separateness from what follows. I'll repeat this footnote after every **kakwa** in today's reading, to help you see the difference.

23 **Jump** is another distinctly northern-dialect CW word; it replaced the older southern **sopena**.

24 **River** of course is another recent English loan into northern CW. We also know it in BC.

25 **Egs** is also a typical northern word, recently taken in from spoken English.

Tl'onas-ka yaka tlatawa alta; naika tumtum yaka tlatawa tl'ap okok
Gosh knows where they've gone now; I figure they've gone to find those

huloimun²⁷ stik-kalakala (“passenger pigeon”) pi okok haiyas moosmoos
other forest birds, the passenger pigeons, and those big cattle

ankati kooli kopa kah heilo stik mitlait (“buffalo”). “Nawiitka siyaam”,²⁸
that used to wander over where there are no trees, the buffalo. Yes sir,

spos ankati “Schul Okset” k'ilapai kopa okok ilahi, naika tumtum yaka
if old SchulOkset came back to this place, I think he'd

dleit saliks pi naika tumtum yaka ilep tlatawa kopa Stach'aas pi yaka
be really mad and I reckon he'd first go to Olympia and he'd

wawa kopa kanawei taiyi, “Ikta-mamook heilo maika²⁹ tloosh-nanich
say to each of the leaders, “Why haven't you taken care of

kanawei okok tloosh mukmuk ankati mitlait kopa okok ilahi;
all that good food that used to be in the place;

chako-dleit-tlahowya, kanawei okok “dleit-Bostun”,³⁰ pi wuht haiyoo
they've gotten really pitiful, all of the Real Americans and also many

tk'op-tilikum. Haiyas-tloosh spos maika mamook-tumtum pi mamook-
White people. You really ought to do some thinking and

26 03.27.2021 note: I'm introducing a new spelling rule, to distinguish between the various meanings of **kakwa**. When it's a preposition carrying the sense of 'like, as' (and is therefore unstressed), I'm writing it as a prefix followed by a dash, **kakwa-**. When it's a stressed word (a stative verb which means 'be(ing) like that / this way / etc. '), I write it as a separate word and I follow it with a comma, suggesting a slight pause that shows the word's separateness from what follows. I'll repeat this footnote after every **kakwa** in today's reading, to help you see the difference.

27 **Huloiman** is a uniquely northern coastal pronunciation of the usual older **huloima** 'different; strange'.

28 **Siyaam** is a Coast Salish word for 'upper-class/respected person', but Eldridge here is using it to express an American English slang expression, 'yessir(ee)!'

29 The fact that Eldridge uses the singular 'you' **maika** here is why I translated **kanawi taiyi** as a singular 'each of the leaders' rather than a plural 'all of the leaders'.

30 **“Dleit-Bastun”** is a direct translation of the English phrase 'the real Americans'.

ts'um³¹ kopa haiyas book, dleit wawa: Tloosh kanawei-flaksta kopet-
write it in the big book, straight talk: Everyone should stop

mamook³² okok haiyas-whi'lum³³ kopa salt-chok (“purse seine”) pi
using those big ropes in the saltwater (purse seines) and

mamook-heilo okok samun; weik-tloosh spos tlaska “gun club” patlach
wiping out those salmon; it’s bad for their gun clubs to put out

haiyoo lawein (“oats”) pi leblei (“wheat”) kopa chok-kalakala pi
a lot of oats and wheat for the waterfowl and

mamook-memaloos weik-saiyaa kanawei. Spos heilo kakwa,³⁴ ALTA³⁵
to kill almost all of them. If things weren’t like this, now there would (still) be

mitlait tenas-haiyoo kalakala kopa kanawei-ka ankati yaka iskum
some birds in all the places where they used to get

mukmuk, pi kanawei tilikum iskum iht-iht spos yaka tl'ap kopa ka
food, and every person would get a few when they get to where

mitlait tloosh ilahi; pi spos taiyi-tilikum heilo mamook dleit, tl'onas
there’s a good place; and if the government folks didn’t do right, I reckon

HAIYAK “Schul Okset” iskum yaka t’amaanawas-klub pi dleit
SchulOkset would pick his spirit club right up and really

mamook-heilo kanawei okok taiyi pi kanawei tk’op-tilikum mamook-
wipe out all those leaders and all those White people who

31 Do you suppose there’s a “silent it” in the CW phrasing here?

32 **Mamook** can mean ‘to use’ in many expressions; it doesn’t always mean ‘make’ or ‘do’.

33 **Whi’lum** is a Coast Salish-origin CW word for ‘thread, rope, etc.’ The modifier **haiyas** ‘big’ here tells us that it means ‘rope’. This phrase is Eldridge’s invention, as far as we can tell, to express ‘net’, for which there’s no commonly known CW word aside from **net** (which we do know in northern CW).

34 03.27.2021 note: I’m introducing a new spelling rule, to distinguish between the various meanings of **kakwa**. When it’s a preposition carrying the sense of ‘like, as’ (and is therefore unstressed), I’m writing it as a prefix followed by a dash, **kakwa-**. When it’s a stressed word (a stative verb which means ‘be(ing) like that / this way / etc.’), I write it as a separate word and I follow it with a comma, suggesting a slight pause that shows the word’s separateness from what follows. I’ll repeat this footnote after every **kakwa** in today’s reading, to help you see the difference.

35 I’m capitalize **ALTA** to get readers to stress it, reinforcing a sense of contrast. There’s no wording in CW to clearly label a counter-to-fact situation; tone of voice is our best tool for that.

heilo okok pish pi okok chok-kalakala.
destroy those fish and those waterfowl.

[WE GOT THIS FAR 03.27.2021]

Na, “Willie”, tloosh maika wawa kopa kanawei Swinomish-tilikum,
Well, Willie, please tell all the Swinomish people

naika tumtum dleit-tloosh kopa yaka, pi yootl naika tumtum spos okok
that I think fondly of them, and my heart will be happy if this

“Chhi-Wam”³⁶ haiyas-tloosh kopa maika pi kanawei maika tilikum; pi
New Year is very good to you and all your people; and

spos maika chako kopa okok ilahi, tloosh maika chako nanich naika.
if you come to this place, you should visit me.

Tlahowya, Tilikum,
Goodbye, Friend,
“HUGH ELDRIDGE.”

³⁶ It’s ironic, and maybe it’s intentional humor, that Eldridge calls the New Year **Chhi-Wam**, while McCluskey called it the **Chhi-Kol**.