

## John Cherokee



1. Well, this is a story of John Cherokee  
Alabama John Cherokee  
He was an Indian man from Miramashi  
Alabama John Cherokee

### Chorus

- Waayy haay oh Alabama John Cherokee
2. Now John Cherokee was an Indian man  
They made him a slave down in Alabam'
  3. Well, they put him aboard a whaling ship  
And again and again he gave them the slip
  4. Well, they caught him again and they chained him tight  
And they put him in the hold without any light
  5. He had nothing to eat and nothing to drink  
Until his bones began to clink
  6. Gave him nothing to eat and nothing to drink  
Until he dropped dead at the Captain's feet
  7. And now his ghost, it can be seen  
Sitting on the main deck, all slimy and green
  8. At the break of dawn he goes below  
And that is when the rooster crows

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This is a halyard chantey. The type of rhythm and the lyrical content indicate that slaves in the West Indies or in the Gulf states originally sang this song. In fact, when John Cherokee is referred to as an "Indian man" it probably means he was from the West Indies. Sailors might have learned the song from freed slaves who joined the ship's crew or from black waterfront workers in the Southern states. It depicts the brutal treatment that many men faced at the hands of the captains and mates.