

The Road to Warm Springs

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Transcript: Ministry Moment from The Very Rev. Jonas Allooloo
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*More information including a video of this Ministry Moment at
www.anglican.ca/roadtowarmsprings*

My name, as you know, is Jonas Allooloo. I know many of you, especially the indigenous people here. I've been around with you for some time.

My ministry started when I was a student at ATTS, The Arthur Turner Training School, in Pangnirtung, the Northwest Territories—used to be the Northwest Territories—now it's Nunavut Territory. Way back in 1972 I went to school there, graduated 1975. Ordained deacon in 1975. I was priested in the following year in '76.

We don't consider ourselves First Nations People because we are different language, different people. We don't have treaty. We pay taxes. All Canadian taxes. So, when we were ordained, a few years later, there was a need for bible translation. Which happened, my ministry for most of those years. In 1978, we were called to be translating the Bible. The Canadian Bible Society, we had a few workshops to start us off. Our initial workshop was with Dr. Nida, Dr. Eugene Nida from the United Bible Societies, who is considered to be the father of modern bible translations.

We stated there. We traveled to many different communities in Nunavut. If you don't know where Nunavut is you can Google it!

There was four of us chosen, out of a few clergy, non-indigenous people who speak the language. There were 15-20 of us in the workshop. Dr. Nida chose four of us because we are indigenous, and we know our people, we know our language, and we think like Inuit, so he chose us. Other people were thinking they would be chosen too, but he didn't.

Inuktitut, Eskimo language, is all through the circle-polar Arctic. All the way to Russia, Greenland, Alaska, but broken up into many, many different dialects. When I went to Greenland in 1980, Nuuk Greenland, when I went to speak to Inuit over there, I had to use an English

translator. Same if I go to Alaska, I would use an English translator. The language is the same but it is different dialects. We hardly understand each other.

Anyway, the bible was translated in Greenland over 250 years ago—maybe more—by the Lutheran Church. We borrowed that translation for the Eastern Arctic, and transcribed it to syllabics. When the missionaries came up to our area they borrowed our translation and transcribed it to syllabics. It was not our dialect, it was different. But God somehow used it to bring people to His kingdom through that bible.

But in 1978, the Bishop at that time, Bishop John Sperry, wanted us to do a new translation, so we started the workshop with Dr. Eugene Nida, from the United Bible Societies. We had—we travelled to many eastern Arctic parishes as we were translating the New Testament. The reason we went to different places in the Eastern Arctic so we could hear what their dialect sounds like, so we can translate for them too.

Most of the Eastern Arctic dialects use syllabics, much like the Cree. Maybe Ojibway. We did that, we produced the New Testament in 1991. Started in '78 to 1991, we produced the New Testament. From there, the Bible Society said “why don't you do selected bible for the Old Testament.” We thought “Maybe we could do the whole thing.”

So we started the Old Testament in 19—about 2000 we started to translating the Old Testament. Four of us. One of us had to drop out because he became a bishop. Bishop Andrew. He became a diocesan so he was too busy—we dropped him! And so, we practically from then on, we practically lived in Kitchener Ontario, translating the bible. Twice a year we go there and just concentrate. The reason for that is that we are parish clergy. If we tried to do translation back in our parishes it would have taken longer, because we are busy doing parish work. So they took us away from parish and concentrate on doing translation down south here.

After going through all of that we finished the Bible—in 2012 it was printed.

[Applause]

Our people in the Eastern Arctic are overjoyed to have a complete bible in their own language. That's been our ministry for those people over the years.

So two years ago the Canadian Bible Society asked me to do a Children's Bible. And so I have been working on the Children's Bible. I produced it last year and it's in print now, and its available at the Canadian Bible Society. Inuktitut Eastern Arctic Children's Bible.

[Applause]

And this year in May, May 5th, I was selected to receive a new degree, Honorary Doctorate for Translations, in St. Chad's College. This year, May 5th.

[Applause]

We're continuing to revise that Bible. Bishop Andrew and myself are working on it. We hope to do it in short time so we can have a revised Inuktitut Bible which will be available to anyone. But now it is digitized, you can download it on your phones, your Android, iPad, whatever. It's available. You just have to go to the Canadian Bible Society app and go to the translations and you can see EAIB which stands for Eastern Arctic Inuktitut Bible then you can download.

Thank-you.