

The Road to Warm Springs

The National Consultation on Indigenous Anglican Self-Determination
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Interim Transcript: Ministry Moment from Ruby Sandy-Robinson and
the Rt. Rev. Bruce Myers
Diocese of Quebec

*More information including a video of this Ministry Moment at
www.anglican.ca/roadtowarmsprings*

Ruby Sandy-Robinson:

Naskapi welcome

Good afternoon. I'd like to thank the people of this Territory for their warm welcome, into their territory as a place of rest and a place of shelter. We will be presenting our Bible Project. It was our Elders vision and the communities. I would like us to take a moment of one minute's silence to remember the late Joseph Guanish who was the leader for more than thirty years and who was the major role-player in the translation of the bible in our language, the Naskapi language.

Today marks 10 years of our New Testament, since we made a dedication and launching, and tomorrow will be a special service followed by a feast. I'd also like to remember during the one minute silence the late Charlotte Guanish, who was laid rest today. And Joe was a major teacher in the translation along with Silas Nabinicaboo and Elders.

And at this moment I would like to thank the Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Canadian Bible Society, The Anglican Healing Fund, Esther. So we will take a moment before we begin. A moment of silence.

Narrator:

[music]

Our language is part of the Algonquian family of the native North American languages. All across Canada and even into the United States there are communities who speak dialects somewhat related to ours.

For example our closest neighbours to the east are the Mushuau Innu. Even though they write their language differently from us, they can understand us, and we can understand them to a very large degree. Some of our Naskapi language radio programs have been shared with them. It is hoped that we can help them have their own translation of the Bible starting from our work.

Of course, it is the translation work in Southern James Bay Cree and Moose Cree that has been a big help toward us having the Bible in our own language. Southern James Bay Cree is also being used to help the Northern Dialect at Hudson's Bay to have their own New Testament. Like never before, we can use communication and computer technology to help each other across these language boundaries.

There is now translation work going on in Plains Cree, and it is hoped that Swampy Cree, Woods Cree, and Woodland Cree in Alberta can all progress simultaneously with some of the procedures that we developed for Naskapi.

Indeed, Bill has already been asked to help with the process of adapting the Quebec Micmac translation to the dialects spoken in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in Atlantic Canada. And he has also been providing training and assistance to the Chilcotin translation team in Central British Columbia.

At the 2004 Wycliffe field conference, Bill was assigned to be the translation adaptation coordinator for North America. The experience that the Naskapi project has gained can benefit dozens of other related languages across Canada.

At the same time, Bill and our Naskapi translation team are working to prepare the Old Testament Lessons for publication.

It may seem like a lot of work for such a relatively small group. But we are inspired by Bishop John Horden's words: *"I shall give myself no rest until the whole of God's Word is in their hands."*

All across North America, languages like ours are endangered, and sometimes become extinct. A way of life also begins to disappear.

Efforts to maintain languages that have not yet been lost are extremely important.

Traditional skills such as how to make fish hooks from local materials, oh how to travel in the northern wilderness; these skills were once traditionally passed on to our children from generation to generation.

Making canoes, hunting caribou, and producing everything our community once need from local materials; these skills helped our culture to survive and are passed on in our Naskapi language.

Our work in language preservation will also ensure that the *way of life* that gives a Naskapi person our *identity* will not be lost.

For example, one purpose of the Naskapi Lexicon is to record the technical terms we used to talk about our material culture and activities.

Our work in Bible Translation not only provides our community with the words of God's Book, but also helps to raise the literacy level.

Bible reading in church, on the radio, in school and at home will help keep our Naskapi language strong.

While we realize that a culture in books is not the same as a *way of life*, by helping our own people to document and preserve our own language, we can gain some of the tools necessary to keep our own culture and language *strong*.

By working to provide a Bible translation in our own words, in the *language of our hearts*, we open the door to a relationship with our Creator, which can prepare us for when we will all meet Him.

[music]

Bishop Bruce Myers:

Good afternoon, bon après-midi, wachiya.

It is an honour to be invited by Ruby to stand with her as she presents something of this wonderful story of today, the 10th anniversary of the launch of the New Testament in the Naskapi language. Kyle, her grandson, who you heard reading was a little younger when he read that. I confirmed him just this past June. It was a privilege to do so.

As some of you will know I moved back to Québec in the last year or so. As so I have been reminded since moving back how important and meaningful language is. And when the video talked about the *language of the heart*. I am living a lot of my life in my second language again, in French. And have become more and more conscious of how precious it is to be able to think and pray and worship in your mother tongue, which gives expression to things that you can't in a second, or third, or fourth language. I have been even more appreciative of the importance of the work of the Naskapi Translation Project, that is allowing the people of the Naskapi First Nation to worship God in their mother tongue and to pass on that language to successive generations.

I have had the privilege to visit Kawawachikamach twice since becoming the Bishop and my most recent visit was in June with Bishop Mark who joined me. And it was a very good visit. And I had a chance to see the translation team at work. There was a reference to the work on the Old Testament carrying on. Genies has been published already, the book of beginnings.

The team I was visiting was hard at work on the Book of Exodus, and they were really struggling with a particular passage. I asked "what are you guys working on?" and they were on

Exodus 28, which is the chapter that describes the vestments of the High Priest of ancient Israel. And it has things like ephod, and breastplate, and tunic, and sash, and turban. They were like “We don’t have equivalence of these in Naskapi.”

It was a reminder of just how hard some of this work is to find equivalencies and how dedicated these folks are, and how generous the Anglican Healing Fund has been in supporting this work. And thank-you to the wider church in your ongoing support of bringing God’s word to the Naskapi in their mother tongue.