



# Cree Initiative CANADA



## Quick facts:

**Potential population impacted:** 100,000 people

**Number of languages:** At least five related Cree languages

**Geographic area:** Canada

**Timeline:** 2012-2024



## Focus:

- Bible translation
- Training



## Goals:

- Continue Bible translation and Scripture engagement in the Western Swampy Cree, Oji-Cree, James Bay Cree and Naskapi communities
- Host Scripture engagement workshops and on-site mother-tongue translation training
- Help determine the capacity to begin translation in more Cree languages
- Each local committee in these cluster language groups will continue to determine their own Bible translation and language development priorities

## Snapshot:

The Cree live in dozens of widely scattered, isolated communities stretching from Alberta to Labrador. Many Cree speakers are eager to preserve their mother tongue and read the Scriptures in their own language. The vision is to provide all Cree languages with the resources needed to develop the Scripture materials they desire.

Your support will help train and support mother-tongue speakers. These minority language speakers currently have almost no literature in their mother tongues. Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada, emphasized the importance of this initiative during a meeting with our partners:

“Scripture thrives on translation. The gospel is the only message that, the more it is translated, the more we have. The more we translate it, the more we know about the gospel. It is the incarnation of the Word of God into our lives and communities. **I don’t think there is anything you can do today that is as critical as the work of Bible translation for the First Nations communities. . . . We are on a trajectory of hope; we are on a trajectory of justice; we are on a trajectory of salvation.**”

## The Challenges:

**Many of these communities can only be accessed via air; others can be accessed by road, but the season is very short.** Therefore, one of the Cree Initiative’s biggest financial needs is for travel, to get translators from these isolated regions together for training and mutual encouragement, and for consultants to come alongside the local teams in their work situations for appropriate and timely support.

These northern settlements have **high living expenses and few opportunities for employment.** While communities in Quebec are able to fund their staff, financial support in anglo-phone provinces is needed in order for translation to progress.

**Scripture portions that are available in some languages were translated many years ago and are not well understood today.** Since languages change with time, older translations make a text sound archaic and are more difficult to understand. Scripture translations should reflect the way the language is currently used.

**The Canadian government is part of a tragic history of abuse of First Nations people.** Reconciliation is needed. Some of the translators involved attended residential schools. They were banned from using their own language and experienced abuse. In the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Christians among them are being given opportunities to work through past wounds and build alliances with other Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

### The Plan:

**Equip mother-tongue Cree speakers as they translate the Scriptures.** A “cluster” strategy is being used, where work in one Cree language is leveraged for work in other Cree languages.

Wycliffe staff living and working in local communities facilitate workshops and mentor local translators. As these community-based, local teams gain skills and confidence in linguistics and translation, Wycliffe staff will gradually move on to serve other languages that need the initial support of trained specialists to get similar projects off the ground.

**Speakers in interested communities are serving as translators and planning and designing their projects.**

To accomplish the Cree Nation’s vision, **Wycliffe Canada is partnering with other organizations** such as local schools, band offices, churches, etc.

### The Impact:

**Using the mother tongue language helps keep the culture alive.** Translating Scripture does more than help Cree people encounter God. Zipporah, a Bible translator for the Oji-Cree language, says, “It is my belief as a language teacher that the language amongst our children brings a sense of identity, a sense of belonging, a sense of security and comfort...We don’t feel whole without our language.”

Even people of Cree heritage, who may not live in these isolated communities and are fluent in English, benefit from reading in their mother tongue. One Cree woman reported that reading Scripture materials in her own language made her feel “complete somehow” even though she was able to read the Bible in English.

Mark MacDonald explains: “The development of an indigenous theology needs indigenous language . . . it’s critical for the spiritual well-being of those people to be able to use the Scriptures in their own language.”

**God’s Word is understood.** Since 2015, with a strong community translation committee behind them, the Oji-Cree team has translated thousands of verses into Oji-Cree for their church’s Bible readings each Sunday. “People say it makes it so much clearer to understand the message and what God is saying. It becomes so real,” says Bishop Lydia Mamakwa.



**Your prayer and financial support can help reconcile past wounds and translate the Word of God for Cree communities.**



**...so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.**

Isaiah 55:11 (NIV)

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