

PRIORITIES

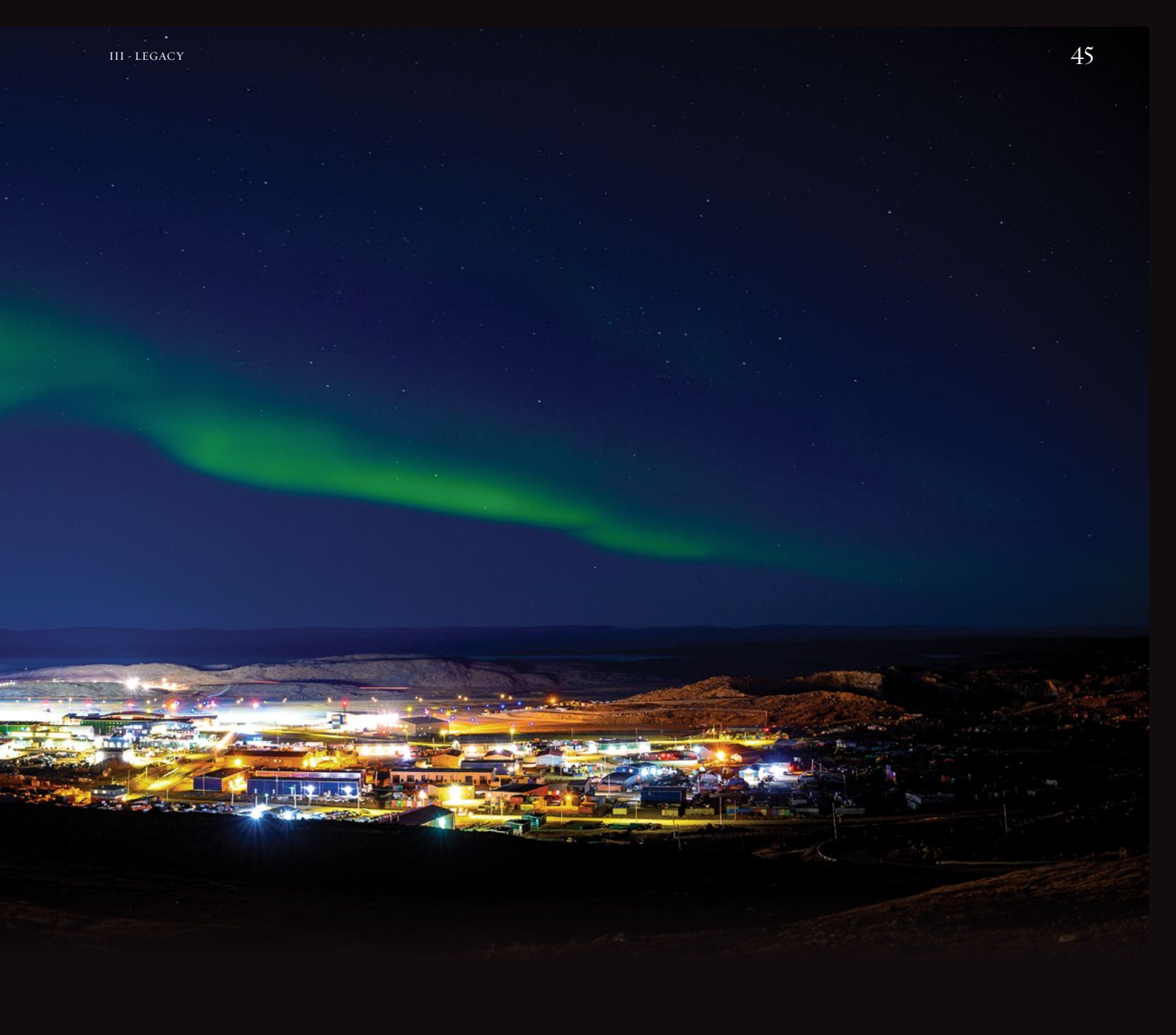
EVERY

TRIBE

AND

TONGUE

BY HENRY VANDERSPEK AND JEFF GREEN



## Visiting the Dedicated Bible Translators Serving Canada's Indigenous Communities

Over 1.6 million people in Canada are from indigenous groups, 63% of whom are Christians. Being able to access the Bible in their native languages is very important to the spiritual and cultural life of these communities, and Canadian Bible Society (CBS) is committed to serving this need. In October 2021, we commissioned Toronto-based photojournalist Henry VanderSpek to visit two of the indigenous language translation projects that are supported by Canadian Bible Society. He was accompanied by Jeff Green, senior translation manager at CBS. The journey took them to the Mohawk community in Kanesatake, near Montreal, and then to the Inuit community in Iqaluit, the capital of the remote northern Nunavut territory.



# Iqaluit



“The capital of the Nunavut territory, Iqaluit is on Baffin Island. It’s a nice little city with around 10,000 people and modern in a lot of ways for the Arctic. People were very welcoming. They were going through a water crisis while we were there that continued for quite a while – so Jeff brought eight litres of water for us each. The Indigenous people, the Inuit, are not a majority in Iqaluit – however the name of the town signifies “place of fish” in the Inuktitut language.” – Henry





### Inuktitut

Inuktitut is spoken primarily in Nunavut and in Nunavik (northern Quebec) by the Inuit people. The entire Bible was completed in 2012, and now CBS is helping the Church revise the 2012 publication. The New Testament was completed in January 2021 and the aim is for 50% of the Old Testament to be completed by 2026.



### Mohawk

The first-ever Bible Society translation was the Gospel of John in Mohawk in 1804. Just over 75 years later, in 1880, a translation of the four gospels by Sosé Onasakenrat was published. Today, Sosé's great-grandson, Harvey Gabriel, is part of a CBS project to finish the first complete Bible in Mohawk by Summer 2023.



### Inupiaq

Inupiaq is the collective term for the Inuit dialects spoken in Alaska and immediately adjacent parts of Northern Canada. Considered a threatened language with the majority of speakers above the age of 40, there are roughly 2,600 speakers. The New Testament in Inupiaq is already completed. The Psalms and Pentateuch will be published in spring 2022, and the Old Testament is due to be completed by the end of 2026.

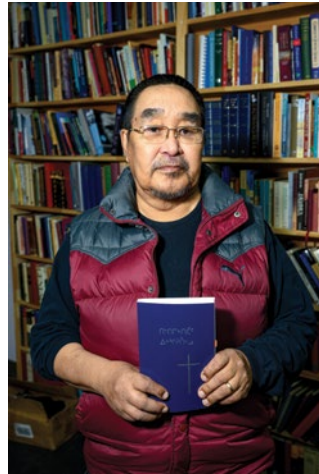


### Inuinnaqtun

Inuinnaqtun is one of Nunavut's official languages. So far, volunteers have translated the Mission: Literacy stories, which were published by CBS in 2020. Volunteers are also doing a fresh translation of some other books and completed the Gospel of Mark in early 2021. Furthermore, CBS has helped volunteers to update the language and spelling in their translation of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. This was completed in Spring 2021.



“We met Joanasie Akumalik, a warden at St. Jude’s Cathedral, who is one of the beneficiaries of the Inuktitut Bible translation work. When we visited the church, he was at the front, speaking and reading scripture. Joanasie also works as a city councillor for Iqaluit and ran for local government.” – Henry



“Jonas Allooloo is the former dean of St. Jude’s Cathedral and a key translator of the first Bible in Inuktitut. He’s been translating Scripture into Inuktitut since 1978.” – Jeff

“St. Jude’s Cathedral in Iqaluit is built like an igloo. It’s a significant church in the community and was dedicated by Queen Elizabeth II in 1970. The most amazing element is the cross made of Narwhal tusks. There were Scripture cards, too, in both Inuktitut and English plus stitched artwork with the Lord’s Prayer in Inuktitut and multiple other languages. There was also a shield with an igloo on it and wonderful art on the wall. It’s great to see how they’ve incorporated the local art and symbols into the church.” – Henry





Jeff

Henry

“One night, we headed out to a ridge on the upper level of Iqaluit and saw the Northern Lights which were spectacular. They were almost like a river, but pieces of a river flowing back and forth in different directions on top of us. The Northern Lights change so quickly, suddenly they’ve moved and formed a different pattern.” – Henry

# Kanesatake



“Kanesatake is just an hour’s drive from Montreal. It’s a Mohawk settlement on the shore of the Lake of Two Mountains in southwestern Quebec with a population of around 1,400. With the history of Residential Schools and the current focus on truth and reconciliation, reclamation of Indigenous languages is key to healing and restoration. Bible translation is a key component of bringing languages back. We are pleased to be working in partnership with the Indigenous communities to make that happen.” – Jeff





“We met Harvey Gabriel outside Kanesatake United Church. His great grandfather was Chief Sose Onasakenrat, (otherwise known as Joseph Swan), who was training to be a Catholic priest and translated the four gospels into Mohawk in 1880. Harvey is particularly gifted in Mohawk with a heart to preserve the language and pass it on. He is widely regarded in the community as a language expert and is continuing his great grandfather’s legacy with a goal to have a full Bible in Mohawk by 2023. He’s already translated parts of the Bible and launched a Kanesata’ké:ha dictionary, translating Mohawk into English.” – Henry





“Harvey has passed on the language to his daughter Cheryl and granddaughter Taylor who are also involved in the project. They review the translation and edit it to modernize the spelling, such as adding accent marks that were not in use when Harvey learned to write his language. It’s a unique situation since many families lost the opportunity to hold onto the Mohawk language.” – Jeff



“There had been an election recently in Kanesatake which meant there was a new Mohawk council. We had a meeting with the new Local Grand Chief, Victor Akwirente Bonspille, and Chief on Council, Teiawenniseráhte Jeremy Tomlinson. They spoke enthusiastically about the Bible translation project. Jeremy impressed me! For such a young person to have a good grasp of the Mohawk language is very encouraging. It’s so significant for cultural survival to have the language carried on through Scripture.” – Jeff

