



Celebrating the International Year of Indigenous Languages

OCTOBER
2019

In this edition:

- » Languages matter
- » Everything is connected
- » MAD OZ
- » Language ownership
- » A key player in the translation process
- » Keeping language alive

To receive *Wycliffe Today* electronically, email info@wycliffe.org.au

WYCLIFFE TODAY

October 2019, Vol. 7 / No. 3

Published by:

Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia

70 Graham Road

Kangaroo Ground VIC 3097

ABN 22 004 705 953



www.wycliffe.org.au

www.facebook.com/wycliffeaustralia

Enquiries: Editor, *Wycliffe Today*

Ph: (03) 9712 2777

E: communications@wycliffe.org.au

Contributors: Max Sahl, Lyn Wake, Deb Fox, David Strickland, David Blackman, Alan Rogers, Jan Mountney, Alan and Faye Canavan, Robyn Peterson, Rachel Borneman, Kathy Dadd

Design: Peter Bergmeier

Print: Classic Press

Cover image: Peter Brook

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Missions Interlink

Member of Bible Agencies Australia

Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia

National Office

70 Graham Road

Kangaroo Ground VIC 3097

ABN 22 004 705 953

Ph: (03) 9712 2777

Fax: (03) 9712 2799

Email: info@wycliffe.org.au

www.wycliffe.org.au

Editorial from the CEO



This year is the International Year of Indigenous Languages. To celebrate the occasion, the Royal Australian Mint has released a commemorative 50



cent coin. The unique design incorporates translations for the word 'coin' from 14 of the many Indigenous languages in Australia.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (AIATSIS) makes these points about language:

Language is more than just a means to communicate, it ... plays a central role in a sense of identity. Language also carries meaning beyond the words themselves, and is an important platform within which much cultural knowledge and heritage is passed on.

*Speaking and learning traditional languages improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by providing a sense of belonging and empowerment. Educational outcomes improve when children are taught in their first language, especially in the early years. Interpreting and translating, language teaching and learning, and producing resources in Indigenous Australian languages provide significant economic, social and intrinsic benefits to individuals and communities.**

This has been the experience of Wycliffe Bible Translators worldwide. Language goes deep to the core of who a person is, whether it be in the highlands of PNG, the jungles of South America or the deserts of Western Australia. Identity, meaning, culture, heritage, belonging, wellbeing and empowerment are all interconnected with indigenous languages. This is why languages matter and this is why we translate God's Word into indigenous languages!

Max Sahl

* "Why is Language Important?" Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/indigenous-australian-languages> Accessed 31 July, 2019

Wycliffe World Day of Prayer

JOIN US! Tuesday, 12 November 2019

Meet at 9am then join us for morning tea

Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia

70 Graham Road, Kangaroo Ground VIC

To receive prayer points from Wycliffe Australia, email prayerwords@wycliffe.org.au.



Wycliffe
Bible Translators

NSW/ACT

Ph: (02) 8014 6487

E: nswro@wycliffe.org.au

QLD

Ph: (07) 3256 1803

E: qldro@wycliffe.org.au

TAS

Ph: 0455 476 292

E: tasro@wycliffe.org.au

VIC

Ph: (03) 9712 2720

E: vicro@wycliffe.org.au

WA

Ph: (08) 9243 0486

E: waro@wycliffe.org.au

SA

E: saro@wycliffe.org.au

Transformed by the Word Celebrating the language of friendship

Introducing a brand new devotional feature for *Wycliffe Today*. Lyn Wake will be sharing insights to help us to be transformed by God's Word:



Wycliffe Australia has a vision 'to see disciples of Jesus growing through the Scriptures available in a language that speaks to their hearts', just as John described in his vision of heaven:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.
Revelation 7:9 (NIV)

Every nation! Every tribe! Every diverse people group! Every one of those languages represented, all worshipping Jesus in unity before God's throne forever. While our minds cannot yet perceive what that wonderful fellowship will look like, we can begin to build and celebrate 'forever friendships' right now!

Recently, our *Ministry Adventure Discovery (MAD)* team spent time with Indigenous brothers and sisters in the Northern Territory. In this place where Australian culture and language can be 'worlds apart', the language of true friendship broke down barriers like nothing else could. The mutual love and respect of simply 'doing life together', spoke a language that all understood.

The willingness to learn from and honour each other as equals, does not come naturally – it is only made possible through the transformational gift of God's Word speaking to us in our own languages.

God offers us friendship with him, and with each other, through his son, Jesus. As we are transformed by the Word, we engage with each other on a whole new level of Jesus-centred friendship.

How can you begin to build and celebrate forever friendships with those who will be gathered around the throne of God with you?

Be transformed by the Word by reading John 15:1-17 and Revelation 7.

Everything is connected to language

by Dr Michel Kenmogne

Michel Kenmogne, Executive Director of SIL International, explains that language plays an important role in forming our identity and place in the world:



Our first language connects us to our identity in a way no other language can. My first language is Ghomálá', one of the 283 languages spoken in Cameroon. Words in Ghomálá' don't just convey a message to my brain. They evoke deep memories, touch my emotions, and remind me who I truly am.

Over the years, I have had the painful experience of needing to deny myself, and the language I spoke at home, in order to access education and to enjoy a better socioeconomic status. This is the tragedy faced by speakers of many lesser-known languages of the world.

As the cultures and languages of the world continue to be impoverished, the quality of human life will be endangered as well. That is because language is tied to our emotions, and our identities, and all social, political and economic aspects of our lives. Everything is connected to language.

It is my desire and hope that as a global community, we will use the opportunity of this International Year of Indigenous Languages so that this generation will be known as the one that intervened for languages so that the world's linguistic tapestry and cultural diversity was preserved.

Dr Michel Kenmogne
Executive Director SIL International

Source: SIL International's site International Year of Indigenous Languages.
For Michel's full article, go to <http://2019-iyil-sil.org/>.



Going MAD in the Outback

A team recently headed to Outback Australia to experience Ministry, Adventure and Discovery (MAD) as they connected with Aboriginal communities.

Here are some of their reflections:



Dave: MAD is an amazing cross-cultural experience with Aboriginal communities from Central and Coastal Australia. I love the way that everyone on the team gets to use their gifts for the encouragement of others. It makes a big impact on my life every time I lead it and shows me the value of Bible translation in others' lives.

Gary: MAD OZ was an opportunity to explore what God is doing in some of the Aboriginal communities of Central Australia with a bunch of "new" friends experiencing it with me. I was blessed to see God working in and through me, as well as my fellow travelers. I came away with a better understanding and greater appreciation for the ministries that go on out there, as well as the greater work that God does inside of us when we allow him to stretch us. It truly was a 'MAD' experience.

Sarah: It has been so encouraging to see Indigenous communities and meeting people who have a real faith. Yet my heart breaks that there is still such a need for discipleship, leadership and Bible resources to be available in Aboriginal languages. I have been so encouraged by the sacrifice and hard work of the translators who have been working in these communities to make this happen.

Mandy: I had the opportunity to learn about the work of Wycliffe and Bible translation. It was a pleasure to experience how Aboriginal people do community and interact with those who share God's Word and the love of our Lord Jesus. I loved all the teaching we received, especially learning about Bible engagement and Bible Storytelling. I found this to be a great tool for sharing the Word of God with all ages and audiences in any setting.

Tracy: Really heavy on my heart after my MAD experience is that we have so many English translations of the Bible while so many Indigenous communities do not have anything in their language. A couple of languages have some books and there is now a Kriol Bible but this does not speak to everyone. What can I do to help with translation?

April: Many Aboriginal people we met are open to the gospel but they are in need of effective discipleship in order to grow stronger in their faith. God's Word, access to it in our own languages and having an understanding of it is essential to growing in discipleship and knowing Christ.

Adele: God uses ordinary, broken people to do his work. We will not be perfect and we will make mistakes, but he chooses to use us anyway.

Training future gospel workers

Alan Rogers is a storyteller. As the Director of the Australia Timor Leste Group (formerly the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages or AuSIL), he connects with a range of different language groups in the Northern Territory and throughout the Top End.



Aside from meeting with translation teams, providing guidance and support, Alan has a passion for seeing Indigenous people connect with Jesus' story through God's Word. As many Aboriginal people are from cultures that pass on stories orally, Alan and his wife, Lucy, have been helping them to record Scripture and worship songs in their own languages. Over 650 albums have been created so far. Some of the albums Alan has recorded have some incredible stories behind them.

Something that Alan and his team are passionate about is encouraging the use of Indigenous language in churches to help raise a new generation of gospel workers. There are 21 different translation programs in progress throughout Australia with ATG and its partners. Alan says that the best way to move forward with these projects is to train Indigenous translators in biblical studies:

We need to have more Aboriginal people trained in how to look for parallels in a Bible passage to help make explicit that which is implied—otherwise, the people are just listening to a story. Nungalinga College currently has 15 Indigenous students studying the new Diploma in Translation this year. I think this course will be instrumental in training Bible translators who can connect with Scripture on a level that non-Indigenous people would not be able to.

Greg Anderson, Anglican Bishop of the Northern Territory, agrees that 'the best clergy we have here are people who used to be Bible translators'. The full revised Kriol Bible (2019) involved Indigenous people with a heart for keeping their language, culture and faith alive for future generations. Alan shares, 'If we can inspire a new generation of translators, we can achieve similar results in other languages.'

GIVE

To help train more Aboriginal translators, go to wycliffe.org.au/projects/training-indigenous-translators-nt-australia/

Australian Aboriginal Languages Quiz

1. It is estimated that approximately how many languages were spoken in Australia and the Torres Strait Islands prior to English and European settlement?
(A) 1 (B) 50 (C) 70 (D) 100 (E) 250 (F) 400
2. Keeping Indigenous languages alive is important as it affects the following:
(A) Cultural identity
(B) Sense of wellbeing
(C) Community and family connections
(D) Understanding of Scripture
(E) All of the above
3. Which of the following English language structures do not appear in the majority of Aboriginal languages? (Multiple answers apply)
(A) Abstract nouns (i.e. intangible concepts such as happiness or fear)
(B) Direct quotes
(C) Passive voice
(D) Metaphors
4. Which of the following Ngaanyatjarra words means father?
(A) Mama (B) Kuurku (C) Wangka

1-E: Historically, researchers have estimated that 250 distinct language groups existed in Australia. It is now believed there may have been 400 different languages, including individual dialects, spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. <https://aboriginalbibles.org.au/>

2-F: Speaking and learning Indigenous languages empowers the speakers to pass on their cultural heritage and connection to their community. This in turn increases the sense of wellbeing and belonging. Studies have also shown that educational opportunities improve when children are taught in their first language. <https://aiais.gov.au/explore/articles/indigenous-australian-languages>

3-A and C: <https://www.clc.org.au/articles/info/aboriginal-languages/>

4-A: In many Aboriginal languages, mama is actually the word for father! Mama Kuurku Wangka = Father God's Word https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/dhrg/digital-humanities/features/mama_and_papa_in_indigenous_australia

ANSWERS

Language ownership *'fills up the soul'*

by Kathy Dadd

Matjarra is an Aboriginal translator passionate about translating the New Testament into her clan's own Yolngu language - Liyagawumirr. She wants Scripture available in her own language because it is not always appropriate to use another clan's language, especially at sacred events like funerals. Matjarra shares why this project is so important:

English is not our first language. We have a lot of people who don't know how to read the Bible or don't understand it in an English context. When I became a Christian, I saw that need so I wanted to become a translator. This is for our new generation growing up, and for everyone in the community. We're doing this Bible translating so they can read in our own language, so they can understand more about God.

Another Aboriginal translator was checking the book of Mark when she experienced firsthand the transformative effect of God speaking through his Word in her own language:

Yesterday, we read those words of the Bible in my language, and they filled up my soul. I wasn't even hungry for any food for the rest of the day!

I used to think that if the Bible was available in a language that someone understands, then they had access to God's Word - but it's not quite that simple. In the Yolngu area in Arnhem Land, for example, there is a network of related languages. Although they are not all mutually intelligible, most people can speak the largest language. However, that doesn't mean it's appropriate to use that language on all occasions. It's not everyone's language to use, it belongs to a particular clan. So even though the New Testament is available in the largest Yolngu language, that doesn't mean everyone has full access to it.



TRANSLATORS (FROM LEFT): MATJARRA, NALMAKARRA AND KATHY



KATHY WORKING WITH TRANSLATORS

A key player in the TRANSLATION PROCESS

Seraphina Presley is an Anmatyerr woman with a passion to make the Bible available in her language for her people.

Despite suffering from some health issues and caring for her ill husband, Seraphina is committed to seeing the Word of God living and active in people's hearts and minds.

Seraphina sometimes works as a teacher at the school in her hometown of Ti Tree and has been the main translator on the project. David and Ming Fang Strickland are facilitating in Central Australia. They are now 60 per cent through the fourth draft of Genesis, with Luke's Gospel recently completed.

A number of Seraphina's paintings featured in the 2017 Christian Book of the Year *Our Mob, God's Story*. Her piece *Translation Process* depicts the steps involved in getting Scripture translated into Indigenous languages, from discussion to recording and editing, checking and sharing the published Scripture.

Answers to a 'utopian' prayer

David and Ming Fang Strickland have been concerned about Anmatyerr translation projects, which seemed to be getting stalled. They have been praying for another Indigenous translator to help them with the work. At a recent pastors' course in Arlparra (also known as Utopia) a number of Anmatyerr men were present. One man in particular, Ricky, expressed a strong desire to learn to read and get trained as a church leader!



He already has strong English reading skills, and is re-engaging with his grandmother's language in the Mt Allan community. Perry is an older Anmatyerr man who has a strong calling from God to serve the people at Mount Allan.

A third man, Ken, is an Anmatyerr man living in Alice Springs, who is very articulate in English. David has started meeting regularly with Ken. They are able to discuss the Anmatyerr language in a way that is not normally possible, gaining fresh insights into the language and the meaning of words. This is helping David as he writes a grammar report for the language. All these developments are encouraging signs that God is stirring up new life in the Anmatyerr language group, which may lead to fresh excitement in the translation work.

David shares:

I felt like I was treading water with not much translation happening. But I'm encouraged that new things have started to happen, and there seems to be hope for the future.



DAVID AND MING FANG STRICKLAND DISPLAY SERAPHINA'S PAINTING TO THE TEAM VISITING THEM FROM THE MAD OZ TOUR.

Reaching a new generation

The Bwana-Bwana people were hungry for God's Word in their language, as Alan and Faye Canavan discovered during their 30 years in the Milne Bay province of Papua New Guinea. When the New Testament was finalised, one of the local translators, Fred, had tears in his eyes when he held his own copy of the translated Scripture. Bibles in the Bwana-Bwana language were so popular that they sold out in the first couple of days following the dedication.

Yet engaging with younger generations in the Bwana-Bwana language was a challenge. To help younger people engage with God's Word, Alan created a reading competition for those in grades five to eight. Within two short weeks, their reading skills 'improved astronomically!'

The team also knew that there needed to be a new way to get teenagers and adults excited about Scripture in their heart language. Then an opportunity opened up to work with Faith Comes by Hearing to record Scripture in Bwana-Bwana and upload it to CDs, USBs and Micro SD cards that could be played on mobile phones. Alan shares:

After 30 years of work, a book of often around 1200 pages suddenly fitted into something the size of a fingernail ... with room to spare! In a region where internet connection can be difficult to come by at times, having something that can easily be shared among friends has proven to be a great way to get the Bible into the hearts and minds of a new generation.

'Why do we need another version of the English Bible?'

This is the question Dave Glasgow and his team often encounter as they work on the Plain English Version of the Bible. Dave explains:

The PEV allows Indigenous communities to read God's Word in a format they can understand. Australian Indigenous languages have no passive voice and very few abstract nouns. They are also some of the most linguistically diverse languages in the world – especially compared to English. People may speak English as a learned language but they still think in terms of their mother tongue. There may be some features they share in common with the learned language, but those that differ can cause significant misunderstandings. We are modifying their learned language along the lines of Indigenous thought, culture, grammar and semantic patterns.

The PEV is a great tool for Scripture engagement and comprehension in simple English. It is also incredibly strategic in bolstering and expediting the work of individual Indigenous translation projects. Dave says:

When I first joined AuSIL to work with the Burarra language, I learned about the structure of the language, which helped when I came to start work on the PEV. Now I know of at least three translation projects using the PEV as the main tool to help with their own front translation.

MORE

For more information about the PEV, go to: aboriginalbibles.org.au/english-plain/.

For a full list of Scripture resources in Aboriginal languages, go to aboriginalbibles.org.au/.



Friendship is the foundation

Rachel Borneman has been serving with Wycliffe Bible Translators in the Northern Territory since 2009 and is currently serving in partnership with Scripture Union NT. She is also the Missions Interlink Coordinator for the region. Rachel explains what ministry among Indigenous communities involves:

I have relationships with the Indigenous people, so I'm not just another whitefella. They show me love and respect and call out my relationship term through the skin system. I carry on these relationships in all areas of life and worship. My Indigenous nannas look out for me. At times, I have a Kriol Bible story ready to share or a memory verse rap as part of fellowship. When I take people on journeys, Christian music is listened to along the way. We have recorded Christian raps that the kids and youth love.

It helps to hear from them about what they want to do, and when to do it, rather than doing something according to my schedule. There are always constant needs for food, power, transport – things that are basic but necessary.

Being family means providing when I can. A lot of my time goes into these things but it also opens up conversations about God and how we can improve Scripture engagement in the community.

To help people engage with Scripture, you need to ensure that the friendship is there first.

MORE

Check the videos out at youtube.com/user/AboriginalBibles/videos

Joseph Rap: youtu.be/DSZjReg8LOY

Why is Rachel referred to as the 'White Cockatoo'? Find out at wycliffe.org.au/stories/white-cockatoo

