



Indigenous Publishing for Bible Engagement

Overview

As the main publisher of Indigenous language Bibles, Bible Society Australia (BSA) prints, reprints and distributes Scriptures across Australia, ensuring communities' access to the Bible. BSA also develops culturally relevant Scripture resources to enable the non-literate, children, youth, prisoners and those in hospital engage with God's word. In doing so, BSA's goal is to convey the hope and love found in Jesus, helping Christians mature in their faith and understanding of God.

The Need

All Australian Indigenous languages are considered to be at risk (vulnerable or endangered), meaning that safeguarding these languages is crucial for the preservation of cultural heritage, human rights protection, and safeguarding the future.

Although Australia boasts a 99% literacy rate, an estimated 40% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults exhibit minimal English literacy, with numbers rising to 70% in remote areas. Although over half identify as Christians, lack of Bibles in native languages and low literacy rates make understanding translations difficult. Culturally appropriate Scripture resources and Bible study materials are necessary to protect language diversity, strengthen Christian foundations, and aid with literacy development amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.



54%

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders identify as Christians

45-65%

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are functionally non-literate

1864

Bible Society published the Ngarrindjeri Scriptures

2007

the first full Indigenous Bible was published in Kriol

"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 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 55:10-11, NIV

Goals

BSA aims to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders by publishing Indigenous language Bibles as soon as translations are complete.

In 2024, BSA will publish Judges and Esther in Pitjantjatjara as standalone volumes, which will be the Anangu community's first opportunity to read these narratives in their language.

Moreover, work will continue on the Pitjantjatjara Children's Art Bible, an initiative inspired by the late translator, Nami Kulyuru. This illustrated Bible currently has 53 finalised paintings ready for design layout in 2024, with plans for a release later in the year.

Another 2024 goal involves creating English and local Literacy Programs to enhance literacy rates in Indigenous communities, facilitating more engagement with Scriptures.

To this end, work continues on the development of two Bible Engagement series: God's Words for Life and God's Words from the Bible, available in various languages (including Plain English, Kriol, Pitjantjatjara, Yumplatok). They include stories from the Scriptures, along with a set of Scripture Picture cards that can be utilised to foster literacy development.

In 2024, updates will also be made to our aboriginalbibles.com website and the Australian Bibles App, aiming to expand access to these resources.

Impact

The 2023, dedication of the Murrinhpatha Mini Bible in Australia demonstrates the significant impact translating and publishing Indigenous language Bibles for local communities can have, as God's word acts as a powerful tool for growth and healing.

The Murrinhpatha language is spoken by over 2,500 people in Wadeye, and is one of Australia's fastest-growing Indigenous languages. The development and dedication of the Murrinhpatha Mini Bible by Bishop Charles Gauci in Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in 2023 was a significant event, drawing hundreds from the community and serving as a symbol of unity and healing amidst longstanding tension and recent violence.

The Bible was presented to families of translators who had worked tirelessly on the translation project, exemplifying the commitment and labour being fuelled by love for their community and God's word.

Testimonies

"It was [Nami's] dream to produce a children's Bible that told the same Bible stories she had heard from her parents around the campfire as a child — only, these stories would be told through Anangu-style paintings, paintings that illustrate the entirety of the story. The desire to see Nami's legacy honoured, and her grandchildren receive God's word through the Children's Art Bible, spurred on the translators and artists."

— Dave Barnett, Translation Facilitator for the Pitjantjatjara Old Testament

Prayer Needs

- Pray for God's healing and restoration for Australia's first nations people, that as communities Open The Bible in their heart language they will be transformed and will know God's love for them.
- Pray that communities will have the strength and conviction to share God's love with others.