



## Story of the First Nations Version Project

Boozhoo Nijjii bimadazig, Terry Wildman nindishnakaz.

Hello my friends who share this life together with me. My name is Terry Wildman. I was born and raised in Michigan. My ancestry includes Ojibwe from Ontario Canada, Yaqui from Sonora Mexico, as well as English, German, and Spaniard. As a US Veteran, I completed 2 years of honorable service in the US Army at the end of the Vietnam era. I am married to Darlene Wildman and have 5 children, 8 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren. My wife and I currently live in Maricopa Arizona on the traditional lands of the Tohono O'odham and Pima.

Christian Ministry has been my life for over 40 years, with over 20 years pastoral service, 5 years missionary work among the Hopi, 10 years traveling in cross-cultural evangelism with Native Americans, and over 5 years in Bible Translation in partnership with [OneBook of Canada](#). My education has been eclectic and informal, combined with some formal collage classes. I have been serving with [Native InterVarsity](#) as the Director of Spiritual Growth and Leadership Development since June of 2020.

The seeds for the First Nations Version were planted in me nearly 20 years ago while living on the Hopi Indian Reservation and serving as a Pastor with the American Baptist Sunlight Mission on Second Mesa. I found a Hopi New Testament translation in storage at the church building but soon learned that almost no one could read from it. Not much later I discovered this was true across North America for all the tribes. While the missionaries were translating the Bible into Native languages, the government with the help of church organizations was stripping our Native peoples of their languages through the boarding schools. Adults were not taught to read in their language, and in the boarding schools, children were forbidden to even speak their languages.

After much research on the internet and with different mission organizations I soon discovered that there was no English translation done specifically for Native people. I began to experiment with rewording portions of Scripture and using that in small groups and in jail ministry with Hopis and Navajos. The response was surprising and encouraging. The men and women began to interact more with Scripture, asking meaningful questions and relating more to what they were reading.

Since my wife and I were recording artists with 2 music CDs at that time, I decided to record a spoken-word CD, retelling the Biblical story in a Native way, as a condensed story from Creation to

Christ. We called it *The Great Story From the Sacred Book*. We submitted it to the Native American Music Awards in 2008 and won the award for Best Spoken Word.

After that, my wife and I began traveling. We shared reworded portions of Scripture at Tribal Centers, Native Churches, Powwows, and more. The response was overwhelmingly positive. The CD became one of our best online sellers. As we shared these reworded Scripture portions we kept getting requests for more. One Native Elder told us, "You say it in English the way we think it in our language." Many kept wanting to know which Bible we were reading from.

Finally, in November 2012 my wife and I attended a meeting on the Torres Martinez Reservation in Southern California to explore reconciliation. Several organizations were involved. I was asked to share some of my Scripture rewordings. I also asked for prayer regarding the need for this kind of translation. After prayer and much encouragement from others, I finally became convinced that I was the one called to do this translation. I put out a request to our supporters and soon a significant sum came in that would cover me working on it for 6 months.

Beginning with the Christmas story, we soon published a hardcover children's book [Birth of the Chosen One](#) to raise awareness of the project. Then in 2014, we published [When the Great Spirit Walked Among Us](#), a harmony of the Gospels told in the style of the FNV. Finally, in January of 2015, I settled in to begin the verse-by-verse translation of the New Testament with Matthew. Early in my efforts, on April 1st, 2015 we received an email from Wayne Johnson, then CEO of [OneBook Canada](#), a Bible Translation Organization. He had discovered our FNV Project website from a Google search. After several phone conversations and a meeting together, Rain Ministries, our nonprofit, entered into a partnership in June of 2015 with OneBook to produce the First Nations Version New Testament.

I was encouraged to form a translation council to help guide the process. We formed a council of 12 from different tribal heritages and geographic regions, both elders, and young people, men and women. In September and October of that year leaders from OneBook and Wycliffe Associates gathered our council together for a week in Orlando Florida and then 3 weeks in Calgary Canada. These gatherings helped us determine the method of translation and establish over 180 key terms used in the New Testament.

It was decided that since I (Terry Wildman) had been developing the translation style for several years, I would do all the initial translation, and then other First Nations volunteers would review and make suggestions. More detailed info can be found on our website [FirstNationsVersion.com](#).

In the first 2 years of this project, Rain Ministries produced 2 paperback books, [Gospel of Luke and Ephesians](#) and [Walking the Good Road: The Gospels, Acts, and Ephesians](#). Several ministries have adopted and adapted the use of these for their Native Departments: Foursquare

Native Ministries, Lutheran Indian Ministries, Montana Indian Ministries, Native Intersity, and Cru Nations. The response has been greater than we expected.

The FNV New Testament has been published by InterVarsity Press and was released on August 31st 2021.

As of July 1st 2022 IV Press agreed to publish the First Nations Version of Psalms and Proverbs. We anticipate a 2 year time frame and have formed a new translation council to launch the project. It was formally launched with an in-person gathering of the council at IV Press facility near Chicago August 15-18 2022.

More info about the Psalms and Proverbs Project here:

<https://firstnationsversion.com/about/fnv-psalms-proverbs/>

As far as we know, this is the first English translation done by Natives for Natives. Our prayer is that it will open Native hearts to Creator Sets Free (Jesus) and that it will be a gift from our Native people to the dominant culture in the U.S. and to the body of Christ in English-speaking nations worldwide.

Miigwech Bizindowiyeg (thank you for listening)