

Ohiatonhseratokénti: The Holy Bible in Mohawk

The complete translation of the Bible into the Mohawk language is now available through the devotion, knowledge, and artistry of Harvey Satewas Gabriel. Fostered by generations of women in the Gabriel family and the communities of Kanesatake and Kahnawake, this translation was also made possible through the support of the Kanesatake United Church, the Kanesatake Mohawk Council, Anglican Diocese of Montreal, the New York Conference of The United Church of Christ, the United Church of Canada, and the Canadian Bible Society.

The following written resources were part of the Mohawk Bible Dedication Service held at Kanesatake United Church on September 9, 2023. The video clip is Harvey Satewas Gabriel's personal greeting to you. We encourage you to share these prayers and video with your community of faith as you celebrate this historic achievement and acknowledge your desire to live in right relations.

Order of Service at Kanesatake, September 9 [Historical information]

1. Words of Welcome, Elder Harvey Satewas Gabriel
2. Opening Hymn *Of Him Who Brings Salvation*, in Mohawk
3. Opening Prayer, Rev. Jan Jorgensen
4. Brief History of the Translation – Samantha Pepin
5. Choir
6. Prayer of Dedication: Rev. Rosemary Lambie, assisted by Rev. Jan Jorgensen and Robert Patton of Kahnawake United Church, Rev. John Maracle, and Rev. Attila Gyorgy
7. Keynote speakers and the presentation of Bible
 - Dr. Jeff Green, Canadian Bible Society
 - Rev. Dr. Rupen Das, Canadian Bible Society
 - Rev. Arlen Bonnar, St. James United Church
 - Mr. Royal Orr, United Church of Canada Foundation
 - John Maracle, Pentecostal Church
 - Murray Pruden, National Indigenous Council of the United Church of Canada
8. Choir
9. Scripture Reading in Mohawk:
 - John 1 – Taylor Daye
 - Jeremiah 29:11-13 – Cheryl Gabriel
10. Closing Prayer [Robert Patton], Lord's Prayer led by Satewas
11. Closing Hymn *Wonderful Words of Life*, in Mohawk #32
12. Benediction by Rev. Attila Gyorgy

Resources

Opening Prayer

Gracious Creator

By your Word, the universe took shape and continues to move and breathe and have its being. We thank you for innumerable galaxies of stars and planets and moons; for black holes and dark matter and other mysteries of the heavens.

We thank you for the words that created our mother, the earth, and called forth the glorious diversity of all your beloved beings who live here by your grace; we bless you as we await the day when your loving intention for us all is fully realized.

We thank you for the scriptures that speak of your faithfulness to a desire for relationship with us, a desire that was made visible when your Word became flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Yours is a powerful love story which some mortals have distorted in order to wield power over others. They easily overlooked the significance of your vulnerability and trust... but we see your tender compassion shining through your creative power, and offer you our grateful praise. Niawen.

Creator you have taught us the power of words; we see the significance of language in its interplay with the land and sky and water where it has come into being and in the way that it shapes our identity. We thank you for saving the Mohawk language.

There is so much to thank you for as we celebrate the gift of this Mohawk Bible, but for now we will thank you most especially for speaking your word into the minds of Harvey's great grandfather Joseph Sosé Onasakenrat, and Harvey's mother Gladys Jacobs, and the Mohawk teacher-translators of Kahnawake – and most especially, we thank you for your listening servant Harvey Satewas Gabriel – who has dedicated so much of his life to being attentive to your word and loving his language, so that he might translate your words of life into Mohawk. Bless those who have assisted and supported him these many years. Bless the reading and speaking and hearing of your word, we pray. Niawen kowa. Amen.

[Video](#) Harvey Satewas Gabriel: Message to the Churches dedicating their Mohawk Bibles (13 minutes)
[The Reading of Genesis 1:1 begins at 8:22]

Video Transcription (excerpts for those who don't have video equipment)

"Good afternoon, or good morning to all the other churches around here or up there.

This is the fastest way for me to visit your church wherever your territories are, or your county is and I would love to go personally and shake hands with all your church members but hey, I'm 84 years old. When you're 84 years old you don't feel like sitting in the car for over an hour and then coming back. ...But like I said, I would love to visit you...but you're welcome to come and visit me anytime in this church, anytime you feel like coming, and I'll welcome you and show you the history of this church.

What I am going to do today is read the Mohawk Bible which I have translated.

I've always questioned, "Why don't we have a Bible of our own, every other church has their own Bibles. Why not us?" Then in 1957 I came to church and I was sitting down there, and Reverend John Angus was doing the church service that morning and he was from this community, a fluent speaker. He came in and came to the front and he started speaking Mohawk, and when he started reading Mohawk and preaching in Mohawk that's the first time I heard my own language in this church... And when my mother and I got home I asked, "Why don't we have our own Bible? Because Rev. Angus read the Scripture all in Mohawk, he translated it right on the spot," I said, "Wow, that's a smart guy." So anyway my mother said, "That's a big project, who's going to translate it?" So that was a question that bothered me for maybe 35 years....

...In '74, after supper I went out to cut our lawn, or grass, and while I was cutting, the idea came, I think he sent me the word, he said, "You will translate the Bible." So when I finished, I went back in and told my wife, "Guess what? When I retire, I'm going to translate the Bible." All my wife said was, "That's nice."

...2005 is when I got serious about translating...

...On the cover are the three clans [Bear, Wolf, Turtle] of the Mohawk.... They are all messengers...

I tell the young people, This language that's in here is going to be here for a long, long time, like Jesus says, his words will never pass away ...

Our language is in this book, our language is never going to disappear....

[Harvey Satewas Gabriel reads from Genesis 1:1 in Mohawk.]

...Anyway, I thank you for listening to me, and like I say if you feel like visiting me in the church, come over if you feel like it and we can sit down and talk about it, about the translation in Mohawk...

So I'll be waiting for your visit ... And I'm sorry that I can't come visit you in your churches, maybe this little video will do the job for me....

O'nen ki wahi (Goodbye)

Prayer of Dedication

Leader: Lift up our hearts in dedication.

People: **Come and let us kneel before the Lord our God, as we are the people of the Lord's pasture and the flock under his care.** (Psalm 95)

Leader: The skies and the highest heavens cannot contain the Creator God, neither can the church buildings that are made by human hands, still the Word of God has been revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures in order to listen and to obey. (Chronicles 6.)

People: **Today, we dedicate the Mohawk Translation of the Holy Scriptures to the Lord. May God give strength and blessings to the people in the congregation and to the wider church, as the sanctuary and the community has been built around the Word of God.** (Psalm 29)

Leader: We dedicate the Mohawk Translation of the Holy Scriptures to the service of God. May we also devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2)

People: **Accept, oh LORD, the willing praise of our mouth, and teach us your laws. Your statutes are our heritage forever; they are the joy of our hearts. They are set on keeping your decrees to the very end for the always greater glory of God.** (Psalm 119)

Leader: Let our hearts therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord, our God, may we be always ready and content to walk in the Lord's statutes and to keep God's commandments, as they are written in the Holy Scriptures.

People: **Let us sing before the Lord with thanksgiving and extol God with music and songs of joy. May the Lord's name be praised by the Holy Spirit, now and always.** (Psalm 95)

ALL: **May the Grace and the Love of Jesus Christ build us up as a spiritual house to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. AMEN** (1 Peter 2:5)

Closing Prayer

Sonkwaiatison, wah tkwanonweraton tanon ionkwatonhahere onwa wenniserate tsi Satewas wahasa watawenateni kaia'tonsaratokenti.

Ronatsenonni ratiksahokona, tahatikonsotontke tsi sekon kaien ne onkwawena Kanienkehake.

Teietinonweraton ne onkwaonkwesonah ronwasnienon ne Satewas, tanon teietinonweraton tsi sakowenarakwen ronistenha.

Creator, we greet and thank you, we are happy now that Satewas has finished the translation of God's holy book, the bible, into our Mohawk language. We are very grateful for all those who worked with Satewas and very thankful that he listened to his mother who was very protective of her language after almost losing it in residential school.

Our children, those little faces that are coming, are cheering that our language is kept alive. Creator today is a joyous day; we thank you for your presence, wisdom and guidance to make this happen. For us, Onkwehonwe, this is so important because our governments, for many generations past, worked to get rid of our language. Our language is sacred.

Today is a special day. We come to you with great gratitude, a Niawen Kowa for the work and dedication of our friend Harvey Satewas Gabriel who translated the bible into Mohawk. He spent nearly 20 years of his life in this labor of love for Sonkwaiatison, for his words of wisdom and guidance for all peoples.

Takwaieatison, we give thanks for the many people and organizations who worked along with Satewas to make this great achievement happen. God bless all who worked so hard to make this wonderful gift to our future generations. With great pride and honor that we have laid down our Song of Thanksgiving to Sonkwaiatison, as we say, wahtewahteronian.

Now as we close, we pray that Sonkwaiatison will watch over all who travel home to their families to arrive safely and healthy to their loved ones. All this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Etonaiawen

More About the Harvey Satewas Gabriel and the Mohawk Bible

[The Bible Society](#)

[The Holy Bible in Mohawk – Dedication Event](#) UCC – Sept 9, 2023 (5:49 minutes)

[Every word you'll ever need is in the Bible: Mohawk Bible Translation](#) UCC (6:00 minutes)