



# **Travels in the Shining Island: The Story of James Evans and the Invention of the Cree Syllabary Alphabet**

*Roger Burford Mason*

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In 1842 at York Factory, the English-born missionary James Evans built a lightweight tin canoe that glittered and shone in the sunlight. Wherever he went, Native peoples called the canoe his "Shining Island" or "His Island of Light."

*Travels in the Shining Island* chronicles important events in the life of the extraordinary Methodist missionary, James Evans (1801-1846). It was Evans who created a written alphabet in native languages that remains in use to the present time. Truly the first printer/publisher in the Canadian Northwest, his story is one of incredible courage, perseverance and unwavering faith.

"Using clay, lead and hand-carved wood to make characters, and soot, oil and animal blood for ink, he created a unique literary tradition that has become a central part of Northern Aboriginal culture."

- *Queen's Quarterly*

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