



Sandy-Saulteaux

Spiritual Centre



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The Learning Circle Within The Circle

by Deanna Zantingh, Keeper of the Learning Circle

"The Universe is circles within circles, and everything is one circle, and all the circles are connected to each other. Each family is a circle, and those family circles connect together and make a community, and the community makes its circle where it lives on the Earth. It (the community) cares for that part (of the Earth) but cares for it as a circle - which is to say in a cooperative and egalitarian way, where everybody is cared for, and everybody is respected." - Black Elk, Oglala Sioux Catholic Holy Man

In my role as the Keeper of the Learning Circle, I'm grateful for the reminder in Black Elk's words: when we gather four times a year as staff, students, elders and resource people, we are one circle connected to many other circles, and in our connection to these many other circles we collectively belong to one big circle that each of you reading this also belongs to. Each smaller circle has a responsibility to care for its part, and in the care and respect we show, we strengthen the unity of the large circle too.

There are currently 14 active students studying at Sandy-Saulteaux, and in recent months I've been gratefully overwhelmed by the interest of another 8 - 10 students. A few of these new students will be starting in January. Here at Sandy-Saulteaux we may form one learning circle, but we are connected to and supported by many other circles. There is much work to be done to care for our own smaller circles. It is a blessing to work with students who step forward to dedicate their time and learning to be people who can create spaces where everybody is cared for and respected as we care for the earth together.

You can express your care for these students with your prayers and with your financial donations to our Centre. Thank you for giving generously to support these circles. You'll find a donation form on the last page of this newsletter.

Black Elk knew well that something had happened to break the sacred hoop, or the sacred circle of his people. But he also knew that to be whole again required only that people be the best version of themselves, by caring for and respecting all beings in their circle. **As Christmas approaches, from our circle to yours, may you find yourselves drawn in by love, peace, and hope as we strengthen each other.** And remember! There's always room in our learning circle if you'd like to come and visit.



New Keepers of the Vision

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the board that guides our Centre. These fine people join Martha Pedoniquotte, Don Winston & Ray Jones to form our Keepers of the Vision. We are deeply grateful to Stan McKay, John Thompson, Barb Shoomski and Lee Claus who finished their service as Keepers of the Vision at our Annual General Meeting in September.

susanna suchuk



I grew up in Windsor, Ontario in the United Church of Canada and attended University of Windsor, graduating with a BA in Social and Family Studies (2004). Soon to graduate with a Masters from Athabasca University, my thesis focuses on building healing bridges between Settlers and Indigenous Canadians through métissage (braiding stories) in small groups. I want to express my deep gratitude to Mystery for this opportunity to learn and grow and contribute to realizing Truth and Reconciliation's "Calls to Action". Nia:wen and Miigwetch.

Steve Willey



I am a retired United Church minister and I live in Bracebridge, Ontario with my partner in marriage, Carol Hancock. I spent the first third of my life in British Columbia, and then served communities across Canada including Xai'xais (Klemtu, B.C.) where I was a student minister. For 9 years I worked for General Council, first in the area of intercultural ministry, and then as the church's bridge to its theological schools. In this capacity, I participated in the Wabung process that gave birth to the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, and sat with the Keepers of the Vision as an ex officio member of their circle. I am honoured, and humbled, to be invited to return to this circle.

Ron-Wayne Hoekstra



I am a Dutch speaking full blood born Mohawk, Snapping Turtle clan, Six Nations, adopted out at a young age into a Dutch (now 4 generations) minister's family. I was raised in the Netherlands, Suriname and went back and forth on 3 different occasions to Canada. 2-Spirit and a recovered alcoholic (26 years), I follow the Ojibway 3 Fires Mide teachings to the best of my ability. I am a member at St. Paul's United in Edmonton. I moved here from Southwest Ontario 6 years ago to be closer to my family - Dad, 92, a retired United Church minister and my

sister Rev. Debra Hoekstra, also a United Church minister. I have and am learning to work with both the indigenous faiths/beliefs and ceremonies alongside my Christian faiths.

Susie McPherson Derendy



I am Cree, born and raised in Churchill, Manitoba. I live in Brandon, Manitoba with my husband Steve and my daughter Segwun where we attend Knox United. My passion and commitment is to spiritual revival, cultural restoration and reconciliation through relationships and community development. For the past four years I have worked in Adult Education with the Brandon Friendship Centre. I have a Bachelor of Arts from Brandon University and I am now a student at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre and in the Masters of Divinity at

UBC - Vancouver School of Theology Indigenous Education Programs. I love to write, sing, laugh, play and dance.

Rob Murray



I'm a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Canada who has been serving an Anglican, Mennonite, Presbyterian, and United Church Ecumenical Shared Ministry in Pinawa Manitoba, for the last 21 years. Pinawa is just down the road from SSSC and we have had many personal connections over the years (including our mutual friend, Rob Smith, Keeper of the Centre, who is a member of our congregation). I'm very pleased to join the Keepers of the Vision as an expression of our congregation's solidarity with the ministry of Indigenous people. I'm also on

my own personal journey along the road of reconciliation and hope to build new friendships as we serve together.

Susan Beaver



I am Mohawk and was born and raised on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. I served at Grand River United Church (my home church) while studying at Emmanuel College in Toronto and have continued to serve there since I was ordained in 2014. I also serve in Great Lakes Waterways Presbytery as Co-chair of presbytery and Chair of the Council on Learning. At the national level, I serve on the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle

Garden Therapy to Help Indigenous Families Heal

by Adrian Jacobs, Keeper of the Circle

Since the fall of 2015 SSSC has been on a journey to respond to the horrendous child welfare crisis in Manitoba. Instead of spending the approximately 1.7 million dollars to raise a child in the system from birth to eighteen years old we would like to work with families to be whole again. Part of this vision includes garden therapy. This fall we had the Mamawe Ota Askihk - Sharing Life Together Here on Earth learning event at SSSC.

Taking Indigenous food sovereignty seriously, learning healthy food and seed processing, and the do-it-yourself skills we shared made for the flourishing of friendships and even personal wellness and healthier eating. Healing in the Indigenous world is embodied. It is not just personal and mental but experienced in the world of emotions and with dirt under your nails as participants of our week could attest to.

We have just begun the gardening aspect of our work toward an Indigenous Family Reunification Centre and our week together confirms we are going in the right direction. The plants are saying yes to this vision and we couldn't be happier.



Mamawe Ota Askihk - Sharing Life Together Here on Earth: A festival & a feast for friends

From Oct. 16-21 we hosted this event with Ploughshares Community Farm, Canadian Mennonite University, the Student Christian Movement and the Feast for Friends partners. An intergenerational and intercultural group of 30 enjoyed a beautiful week together, much of it outside in the sunshine, teaching each other about traditional skills and do-it-yourself ways to use the gifts of the land. We wrapped up the week with Feast for Friends where over 100 people joined us to make art, go on walks, listen to teachings by the fire, play Indian Baseball and share good food together. We are grateful for the support of The James Robertson Memorial Fund at the United Church of Canada Foundation and the Jubilee Fund of Mennonite Church Canada that made this week possible.

To Fly Far Ahead by Marcus Rempel



"When we were kids, my mom would give us a little piece of hide for ourselves, cut off from the legs, to make our own little frame." This was the reminiscence of Eleanor Thompson. As she gave guidance to our hide-tanning process during the festival, she recalled the family rhythms of tanning moose hide growing up in Oxford House.

It is hard to put into words what happened at Mamawe Ota Askihk. We know that we danced on wild rice, that we smoked fish, that we toured some local homesteads, that we made compost and apple sauce and sausage and Three Sisters stew. We know that we ate well! But like smoke from the sacred morning fire, spreading through the camp long after it can be seen, a blessing hung in the air all week. What was it? Why did it feel so right to engage our food with our own hands, to work together side by side, close to the earth? There are many ways to do things faster, cheaper, more independently now. Why go back to old ways?

Eleanor used to ask the same question of her own mother. Why did she insist her daughters learn to tan a moose hide when it was so much work, when they were getting good jobs as teachers and

nurses? Eleanor said that her mother gave them the image of a bow and arrow. "To fly far ahead, first you have to pull back."

Eleanor reminisced as younger members of the community stretched the big hide onto the frame. Tanaka, one of the youngest, was inspired by her memories. An adult cut off a corner of the hide for him and it didn't take long before he was proudly stretching it onto a miniature frame. We could all see that that boy is going to fly far.

Marcus Rempel is a farmer, author and pastor who envisioned and helped organize Mamawe Ota Askihk. He lives near SSSC at Ploughshares Community Farm and has just published his first book: *Life at the End of Us Vs Them*.

Mamawe Ota Askihk - Sharing Life Together Here on Earth

October 16-21, 2017



Kenton Lobe harvests the seeds and shares the story of the famous Gete Okosomin squash with Elsie Ballantyne



Elsie and Tanaka Ballantyne harvest potatoes with Stan McKay



Marcus Rempel shares his music in the circle

A Journal Entry from SSSC student Murray Pruden

Sharing my last thoughts at the fire in the evening, I spoke how our coming together was a reminder of how we used to gather and communicate with our non-Indigenous neighbours around us. We all had connections to agriculture and farms, gardens and living off the land. We would share or trade amongst each other to help each other out and that created good relationships, but also good stories to talk about. It is the stories that helped remind us of our connection to the land and to each other. There was no need to see us or them or Native or non-Native. It was how do we live off the land and support each other but also respect the land?



Whitefish brought from Grassy Narrows is smoked over the fire

A Journal Entry from SSSC student Nathaniel Keno

When we read the Bible, the book of Daniel [where Daniel refuses the rich food from the king and eats only vegetables and water] I was just thinking about that verse - that's what we have in our land. We should be eating that instead of what they sell at the store.

In the afternoon we were spending our time outside, learning how to prepare the cow hide. I was watching how they do it. Preparing the wild rice is awesome. This is the first time I knew there's a wild rice that can grow in the wild, just like wild blueberries. To learn all this is great.

It's really cool the things I learned on this trip. I really enjoyed myself. It's very nice to meet people too. I will never forget this in my lifetime.



Rey Anderson and Zack Flett show off tools both ancient and modern

THREE SISTERS STEW

Corn, beans and squash are sisters planted together by Indigenous farmers because they support each other in the garden. This was one of the favourite meals of the week, even for people who don't normally like vegetables!

1 large butternut squash	2 cups corn kernels
1 Tbsp oil	1 cup vegetable stock/water
1 medium onion	1 small fresh hot chilies
¼ bulb garlic	2 tsp cumin
1 medium pepper	1 tsp dried oregano
1 - 28oz cans diced tomatoes	salt and pepper to taste
2 cups kidney beans (1-15oz cans)	1 bunch minced fresh cilantro

1. Cut the squash in half lengthwise and remove seeds and fibers. Cover with aluminum foil and place the halves, cut side up, in a foil-lined shallow baking pan.
2. Bake at 400F for 40-50 minutes, or until easily pierced with a knife but still firm. When cool enough to handle, scoop out the pulp, and cut into large dice.
3. Heat the oil in a soup pot. Add the onion and sauté over medium-low heat until translucent. Add the garlic and continue to sauté until the onion is golden.
4. Add the squash and all the remaining ingredients except the last 2 and bring to a simmer. Simmer gently, covered, until all the vegetables are tender, about 20-25 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
5. If time allows, let the stew stand for 1-2 hours before serving, then heat through as needed. Just before serving, stir in the cilantro. The stew should be thick and moist but not soupy; add additional stock or water if needed.

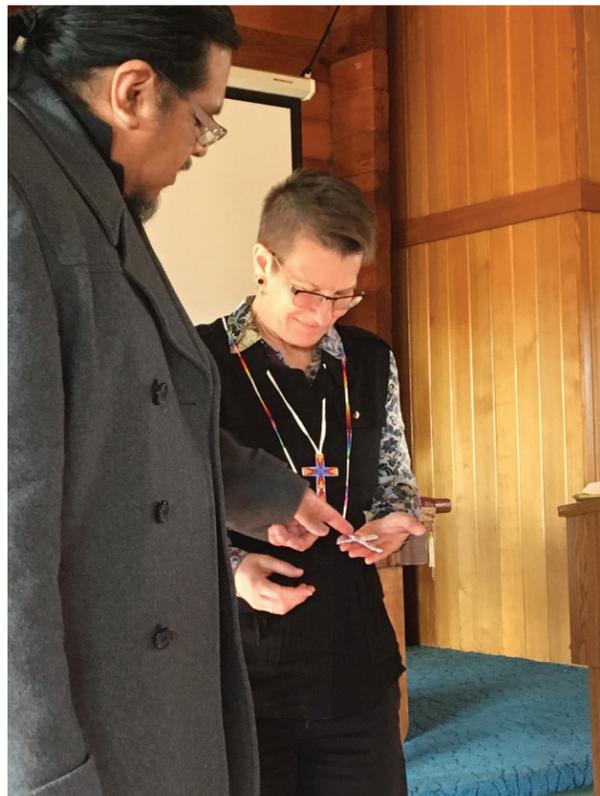
Dancing on the wild rice.



Karen Tjaden and Naw Kay Seng talk by the fire



A Visit To Samson United by TJ Snow



TJ Snow presents the Moderator with a beaded cross he made for her

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. - Acts 16:26

The revelation that the Moderator of the United Church of Canada, the Right Reverend Jordan Cantwell, presented to Samson United Church in September 2017 resounded with a deeply held knowledge and understanding of the role church plays in society and through scripture.

The Right Rev. Cantwell has visited many First Nations and Indigenous communities throughout her tenure. On this first visit to Samson United Church she reflected on Paul's experience in Acts 16 of being misrepresented, beaten, incarcerated and delivered by an earthquake (a divine salvation, which he accepted but did not exploit). She went further to explain that the sudden exoneration that occurred once Paul's Roman citizenship was revealed, did not excuse the "social justice establishment" of their actions and abuses against him and his party. Even as Paul had been saved from injustice through a divine intervention and a political one (through the convenience of Roman citizenship), Paul continued to act against the social injustice he saw and called for an accountability from highest office to come and release them personally. Paul acted with his compatriots to stand up not only for their rights but for the larger social issue. The Right Rev. pointed out that in our modern context we must learn the lesson of justice not only to protect ourselves, but to stand up for the rights of others as well.

Right Rev. Cantwell noted that while white society may observe the United Church Apology and efforts at Reconciliation as a way to confront the abuses and systemic infringement of rights and liberties of Indigenous people, it does not give them a pass to walk

away, to walk out of the prison as Paul did, and to move on. We cannot move until we understand that we are all in need of liberation and healing. As the Moderator said, "Our healing as people of faith in the church is tied to the healing and justice of Indigenous people". And we cannot move on until an accounting is made from the highest offices to change their practices for the betterment of all those afflicted by the Church's abuses and shortcomings, and we implement a larger systemic change that builds a better future for everyone based on Christian values of respect, harmony and love.

The earthquake of this thinking was a welcome message to the congregants and Indigenous community representatives at the Samson United event. To hear the top official of the United Church speaking of the need to move forward together, with a better understanding of the challenges facing Indigenous people and their communities, and to know that the United Church wanted to be a willing ally in the call for social justice, equality and respect for human rights, gave many hope for a better future, and acknowledged that there is a deeper compatibility between Christian thinking and the Indigenous ways of knowing that can help solve so many issues we face today.

TJ Snow is a student at SSSC. He is a member of the Stoney Nakoda First Nation and works with McDougall United Church's Community Care Ministry in Calgary, Alberta. He helped host the moderator's visit to Samson United Church in Maskwacis, AB along with his fellow SSSC students and siblings, John Snow and Gloria Snow.

Upcoming Events at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

Winter Ceremonies: December 23, 2017

Come for a sweat ceremony at 1:00 pm, followed by a potluck feast.

Learning Circles:

January 15 - 19, 2018 - Worship & Preaching - Resource Person: Basil Coward

January 22 - 26, 2018 - Liberation Theology - Resource Person: Benjamin Lujan

Visit sandysaulteaux.ca for details on these events. Let us know you'll be attending at sansau@mymts.net or 204-268-3913.



Manitoba Poem by Rhonda Waters

originally published by the Anglican Journal, September 19, 2017, at <http://www.anglicanjournal.com>

Eleven members of the Church of the Ascension community in Ottawa (seven youth age 14–22 and four adults) spent a week at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre near Winnipeg.

We had a wonderful experience learning about Indigenous spirituality and the importance of relationships with the land and the church. A morning spent with an elder who generously shared her story and her teachings moved us deeply.

We also experienced a sweat lodge and visited the Museum for Human Rights and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. The group is currently preparing how it will share its learnings with the rest of the parish.

Rowan Hughes is in her second year at the University of Guelph, and wrote this powerful narrative poem that she read to us at church on the Sunday following our return:

My trip to Manitoba began with a bear and ended with a buffalo.

On our first day, I don't know what my other group members would say, but I took two steps out of my comfort zone and found myself overwhelmed by the open hearts of our guides, willing to share with us powerful songs and sacred teachings meant to open our eyes, ears and hearts to a history left untold for such a long time...well, not untold, but unheard, because all the powerful words that graced our ears echoed the teachings of ancestors long gone, but in sweat lodge songs somehow still breathing, on beating drums and in dancing their stories.

One by one, our journey began to connect each Indigenous teaching back to each other in a circle, back to ourselves and back to the Bible.

Now this is something I must admit I grappled with for a while. I couldn't comprehend how a woman we met on our second morning connected her native heritage back to a church that had a huge role in trying to eradicate her culture and way of life. This woman was a residential school survivor. So we asked her how it was she found balance? How was it that she could reconcile all the teachings of the Bible with the ones passed down by her grandfather? And so she told us about seven sacred animals.

The first one I had come across the night before, when I said my trip began with a bear. He walked with me on big black paws in my dreams through a place of peace we visited called the Human Rights Museum. We walked around and up and down passages of alabaster, connecting stories until the morning, where I listened and learned from this woman that bears teach us to be courageous; to take the steps to do the things we are afraid to, bears will walk by our side so that we may believe in ourselves as we believe in them.

And there was so much else I learned—that eagles teach love; a Sabe (Saskquatch) asks honesty; a wolf begs humility, and on and on until we understood what she was trying to help us comprehend.

That, in fact, there wasn't anything to reconcile between the Bible and her teachings, because without love, truth, honesty, courage, humility, wisdom and respect, there would be me and there would be you.

And the truth is, if we ripped pages from the Bible that bred those life lessons, teaching of love, courage and so on, there would be nothing left.

What I learned on this journey is that I may not know much about spirituality, but that's all right because you don't need to know it to feel it and you don't need to worship the same way as others in order to live life on an honest red road path.

On our last day, I had an encounter with a buffalo; and I'll tell you all a secret that he told me: he said, "Go in peace and write what you know."

The Rev. Rhonda Waters is incumbent of the Church of the Ascension, diocese of Ottawa.



Contact us if you would like to book a cross-cultural learning experience at our Centre for your group



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