



Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre



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Come, Prince of Peace by Adrian Jacobs, Keeper of the Circle

This summer we asked some of you to share the impact SSSC has had on your journey. We heard stories of transformation, healing and reconciliation. Some spoke of how our Centre continues to be a bridge between peoples. Participants in learning circles here, through exploring the intersection between Christian faith and Indigenous spiritualities, saw their own spirituality transformed, with a renewed emphasis on openness and understanding. For Indigenous students, learning about the strengths of their own culture creates a foundation for inner peace and a validation of their identity.

As you know, deep rifts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities continue to hinder efforts to achieve reconciliation. In this season of Advent, as we await the coming of the Prince of Peace, we invite you to make a contribution to the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre to help us build peace on earth.



Our Students are empowered as leaders to learn and share traditional knowledge and teachings

by Eileen Antone

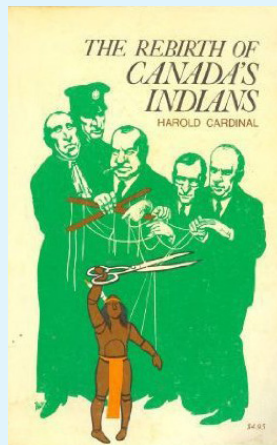


Eileen Antone

Shekoli Swa kwe kon, Onkwehonwe ni:i Onayota'a-ka Tsi twa ka tuh ti. London Ontario Akta. Tyotsunit ne Hotinnoshoni ne yukats, kale' Kaliwisaks ne yukyats Eileen Antone ne ah slo ni kek ne yukyats. Ano:wal ni wa ki ta lo ta. I bring greetings to you in the Onayota'a-ka language. I am one of the Original people of Turtle Island. I come from Onayota'a-ka known as Oneida First Nation of the Thames, near London, Ontario. My name in the Longhouse is Tsyot sunit. Ka li wi saks is my research name and it means "She who gathers information." Eileen Antone is my English name. I am from the Turtle Clan. I am one of the Keepers of the Vision for the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre.

In 1975, I started my journey through Post-Secondary Education where I was exposed to Indigenous writers talking about the political and social conditions of Aboriginal people. Their writing made me aware of the programme of extermination through assimilation policies of the government.

Cree writer Harold Cardinal's book, **The Rebirth of Canada's Indians**, was required reading for my sociology course. My six-year-old daughter picked it up and stared at the cover. "Look Mom," she said, "that Indian he don't want to be a puppet anymore." She was right. Puppets have no flesh, no spirit or soul and as Chief Dan George states, "our greatest wound was not of the flesh but in spirit and in our souls. We were demoralized, confused and frightened."



During my Doctorate programme in the 1990s I was encouraged to learn about who I was as a Native person. In my research, I encountered a talk by Lee Brown concerning North American Indian (Hopi) Prophecies:

"You're going to see a time when the eagle will fly its highest in the night and it will land upon the moon."
... The Eagle landed on the moon, 1969. When that

spaceship landed, they sent back the message, "The Eagle has landed." ... When [Native people] heard those first words, "The Eagle has landed," they knew that was the start of a new time and a new power for Native people.

Many of our people awakened from their sleep and began telling their stories. A new generation of people learned to understand the situation they grew up in and how it is necessary to establish Indigenous space in Canadian society including the Church.

I have had to go deep into the oppression of the educational struggles of the Aboriginal peoples. Why? To look for and raise up traditional knowledge and ways of being so that our people can create a place where we can validate our own right within this present society. We can no longer dance to the strings of the puppet. We dance to the beat of the drum, the heartbeat of our nations and the strength of our people.

It is great to see from the reports given at the Sandy-Saulteaux Keepers of the Vision Board meetings that students here are empowered as leaders to learn and share traditional knowledge and teachings from Indigenous communities as they develop their theology and spirituality. Our students are no longer bound by the oppression of assimilation as they bring teachings from their community Wisdom Keepers to the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre.

To read more of Eileen's story, visit our website.

References:

1. Brown, L., (1989) "North American Indian (Hopi) Prophecies" Talk Given at the Continental Indigenous Council, Tanana Valley Fairgrounds, Fairbanks, Alaska.
2. Cardinal, H., (1977) *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians*. M.G. Hurtig Ltd.
3. George, Chief Dan., (1969). "Our Sad Winter Has Passed." *I Am An Indian*. Ed. Kent Gooderham. Dent. 17-19

You Can Call Them Rev.

We celebrated the ordination of four of our graduates this fall. The unique circumstances of the pandemic meant that few friends and supporters could gather in person but some of the services were streamed online, allowing many more to share in these moments from a distance.



MURRAY PRUDEN

Murray Pruden (left) was ordained by Pacific Mountain Regional Council on October 16. He was joined by his two guests Rev. Mary Fontaine and Rev. Dr Ray Aldred.



JOHN SNOW

John Snow was ordained by the Chinook Winds Region on September 17.



DEB ANDERSON-PRATT

On September 27, Deb Anderson-Pratt and Bruce Kakakaway were ordained by the Living Skies Regional Council.



BRUCE KAKAKAWAY

What are the Calls to the Church?

One of the key documents guiding our work at Sandy-Saulteaux are the Calls to the Church prepared by Indigenous communities of faith and approved by The United Church of Canada in 2018. The Calls outline our long history of Indigenous ministry and put forward nine specific ways for the whole church to support Indigenous self-determination.

We encourage you to read the Calls to the Church on our website. 'Tis the season to give and receive gifts. As our former Keeper of the Learning Circle, Deanna Zantingh, pointed out in her 2018 reflection reprinted below, the Calls represent a true gift.



Embracing the Gift of the Indigenous Calls to the Church by Deanna Zantingh

Can we re-imagine what it means to be the church together?

In my daily work with SSSC students I've witnessed the resiliency and strength of Indigenous communities across Canada. I learned quickly that it has been a hard journey within rigid structures that often testify that there is only one (right) way to do things. For decades, churches in North America have created disunity and division by erecting boundaries along lines of race, class, denomination and gender. The church has called some things good and some things bad, and then attempted (using whatever means necessary) to turn what is bad into what is good. People suffer, the land suffers, and God suffers too. Sadly, often those who lead the church are the first to set boundaries between who is in and who is out. Theologian James Allison suggests this is because "it's very difficult for us to imagine the new form of being together." The colonial history of Canada exemplifies this difficulty; many of our systems and structures - churches included - were designed for and very rarely with Indigenous peoples, experience, or vision. This is a tragedy, but it is also an opportunity.

The Indigenous Calls to the Church are one such opportunity. They are like an overflowing basket of food, being indiscriminately passed out to all who are hungry and to all who aren't yet aware of how hungry they are! We will all be the richer for being in relationship with those who are able to say who they are, who are able to gather and do Indigenous theology together and who can say what the future of Indigenous ministry looks like in regards to training, student support, accompaniment, oversight and student field placements.

The whole purpose of the church, (in the Greek: ekklesia, or assembly), was to produce a new way to assemble, to gather, to be together. The Indigenous Caretakers' Calls for a healing church point us back to this most foundational question. The Calls are an urgent and needed wake up call to the whole church. To fail to attend to the disunity is not an option. You can't negotiate or control unity. You can't enforce good news. These things are always a gift.

The possibility of a church re-imagined is available wherever we seek and create unity, accepting the gifts of our sisters and brothers in Christ.



Gzaagin is a word for love in the Anishinaabe language. The couple our student minister Joyce Johnston married (see next page) chose it as an important part of their ceremony. The bride explained that it means "I'm sharing my love with him with the world. It means so much more than just I love you."

Every Child Matters



On September 30, we marked "Orange Shirt Day" to honour residential school survivors and remember the children whose childhoods and lives were stolen in the residential school system. Two of our students wrote prayers for the day and Keeper of the Learning Circle Susie McPherson Derendy shared two drum songs. Cherokee Morning Song is one Susie teaches to kids so that they can sing "I am of the Great Spirit. It is so. It is so." and be reminded that they are of the Great Spirit. With *Nia:wen*, which means "thank you" in Mohawk, she expresses gratitude for the children and families who survived residential schools and who have given so much for us to be where we are now, celebrating our cultures and heritages.

You can read our prayers and listen to the songs at sandysaulteaux.ca/every-child-matters.



Sandy-Saulteaux staff members on Orange Shirt Day.

Filled with Love

Sandy-Saulteaux student Joyce Johnston officiated her first wedding in October in Neyaashiinigmiing as Student Minister.

"It was an honour to facilitate," Joyce said, "I've known the bride for a long time and was delighted when she asked me to officiate along with traditional helpers. It was a small group, but filled with love, laughter and good wishes. She was married in the Palisade built by men in my community, just behind the United Church.

My daughter-in-law officiated the traditional piece, during which the groom shared blueberries and she used strawberries. They fed each other and used the Ojibway language and spoke to each of the seven grandfather teachings as part of their commitment... it was so beautiful. So when I did the more official language of the church it was just as beautiful, right down to the part where they were invited to share a kiss. So, so proud to have been asked and proud that it incorporated our traditions."



Joyce, wearing the stole that her daughter-in-law made her for the occasion. It features the crane, her clan, on one side and the cross in the four colours on the other.



Sakoieta

Learning Online

We are wrapping up two more online Learning Circles in early December: Models of Education and Intro to the Bible. We have met weekly through Zoom over 8 weeks.

We were also able to move our annual Mamawe Ota Askihk: Sharing Life Together Here on Earth festival online in August. A small number of participants gathered to listen to recorded presentations and share stories, teachings and prayers that tie us to the land in gratitude and cooperation.

One of our Mamawe Ota Askihk guests, Mohawk teacher Sakoieta, shared teachings about traditional foods and medicines. You can find his presentations on our YouTube channel.

Staying Connected

These days, we cannot risk bringing people from various locations to share time on the land at Sandy-Saulteaux. But we are learning to host online spaces where our stories and laughter, smiles and tears can still be shared.

Our elder Stan McKay tells us stories about the community radio transmitters that connected northern communities to each other in the 1970's. This new technology at the time helped the Indigenous church to find its voice as elders, pastors and community members swapped stories, shared prayer concerns, spoke the language and exchanged ideas relevant to the unique context of their communities.

Building on this history, Stan suggested that we work on a podcast to collect stories, dreams, questions and encouragements from students, graduates and friends in Indigenous ministry. We are especially interested in stories of land-based healing initiatives that strengthen family and community ties and reconnect us with "all our relations."

If you are interested in this conversation, we would love to hear from you. Contact marcus@sandysaulteaux.ca or 204-205-0664.



Rev. John Crate and Rev. Dr. Stan McKay, two of the ministers who made good use of the radios to stay in touch, are pictured here (standing) in 1972 at the Northern Elders Conference in Norway House. This was the year that the "Indian Ministry Training Program" was launched, a precursor to our Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, preparing Indigenous leaders for ordination. Photo source: UC Archives Winnipeg, ANCC_003_10

A Design for the Future

In this time of reflection and renewal, our Keepers of the Vision (board) have engaged Prairie Architects to develop a conceptual design for enhancements to our site to meet the evolving needs of those we serve. Prairie Architects, with their reputation for participatory design and green building, will lead a Design Charette process to gather wisdom from our Elders, past and present students, staff, rental groups and other people with an interest in the future of the Centre.

If you would like to take part, contact our Keeper of the Centre, Rob Smith, at robert@sandysaulteaux.ca / 204-268-3913.

In Your Words

When we asked people who've been to the Centre to tell us what their time here has meant, here are some of the things we heard.

"The Centre is a sacred space where I have experienced deep and life changing transformative learning in a beautiful and peaceful intercultural setting."

"The instructors are kind, caring and thoughtful which makes the SSSC a relaxing environment to learn and grow in Christ."

"The land-based setting is so valuable. When I led outreach camps with inner city residents there, I remember one mother commenting how she was able to "sleep" there unlike her constant tension in the city."

"I love what you do. I was completely changed by my experience at the Centre and hope to return on a regular basis throughout my career and beyond."

"As a settler, I was welcomed into circle and had an opportunity to learn in a warm welcoming environment that is still deeply challenging."

Donors like you have helped make this place possible. The Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is changing lives. Will you make a donation to support the spiritual health of our country today?

You can make an easy online donation through our website or use the last page of this newsletter to donate by mail.

Donor Connections: Beatrix Schirner



Near the end of my United Church Diaconal Ministry training from St. Stephen's College at the University of Alberta I attended a residency at Sandy-Saulteaux. I still remember Stan McKay telling us that we could integrate new learning while we slept. I was so grateful for the permission to sleep in the middle of the day.

I served as the full-time minister in Ponoka, AB, for 13 years where my husband and I were next-door neighbours to Russell Burns. I went on to take training in Spiritual Direction with Prairie Jubilee. In total, I have spent 12 week-long residencies at your beautiful Centre.

I strongly support your ministry of teaching Indigenous students for The United Church of Canada. When Garth Mundle died, his family asked for donations to be made in his memory to Sandy-Saulteaux, which we did. Then this summer you

rose to the top of my mind and heart. I knew you would need support, especially during COVID. Thinking about the irrepressible Garth, and my continuous connection with the Centre through Prairie Jubilee over the past 7 years I decided that I would give regularly.

Will you join Beatrix in making an automated monthly donation to the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre? This is a convenient way for you to become a regular partner in our life-changing work. Even a small amount adds up to reliable steady support for the Centre. Contact robert@sandysaulteaux.ca to set up a monthly donation today.

TELL US YOUR STORY!

We want to know how the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre has impacted your life or the life of someone you care about. Email erica@sandysaulteaux.ca

Merry Christmas!

*from the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre Staff
and Keepers of the Vision*





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