



# Sandy-Saulteaux

## Spiritual Centre

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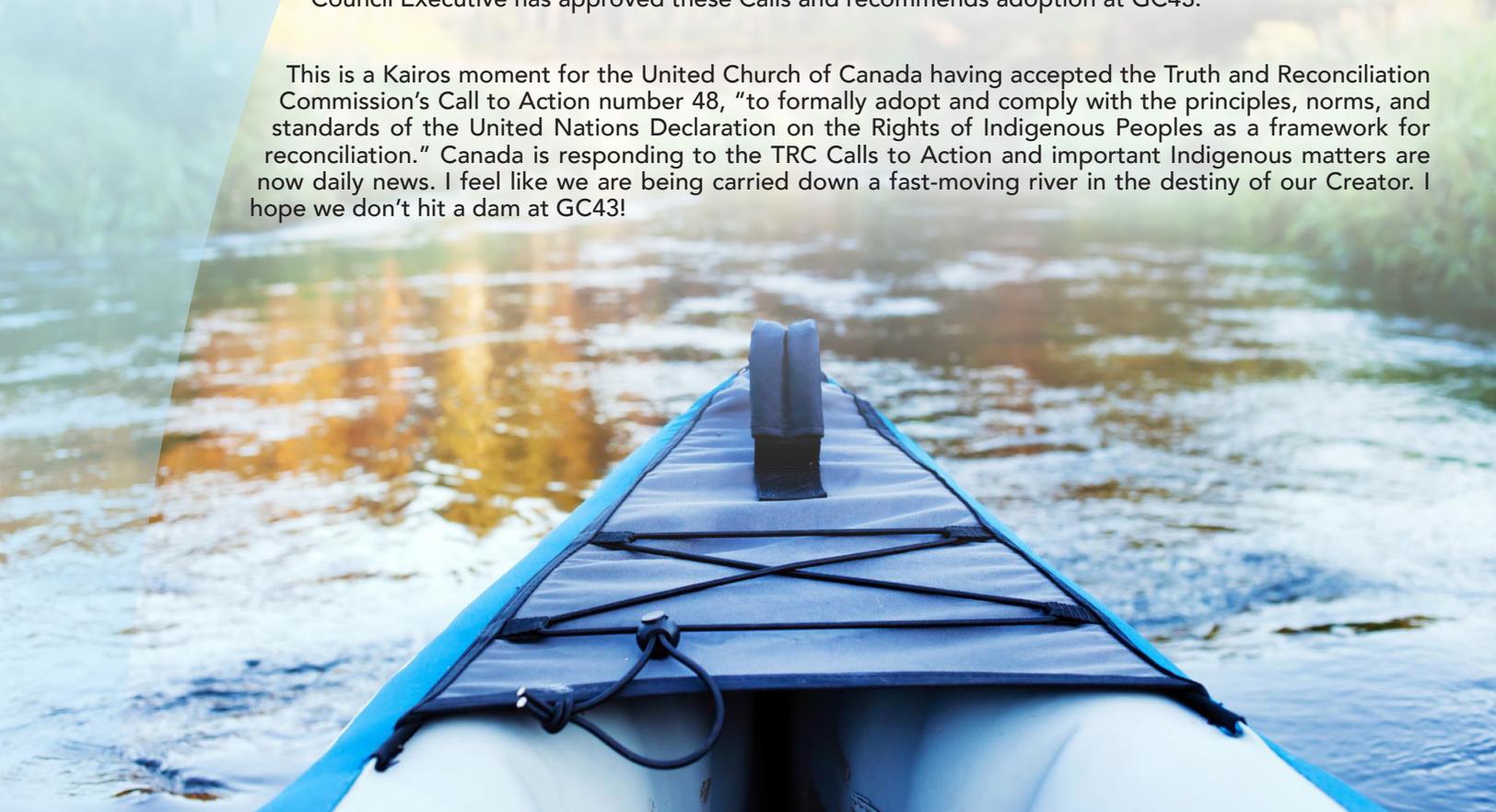
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## Indigenous Calls to the Church: A Kairos Moment for GC43 by Adrian Jacobs, Keeper of the Circle

The United Church of Canada is undergoing a deep fundamental change with almost all the proposed changes to the Church's structure now embraced by the Church. The last General Council (GC42) realized the Indigenous church had its own unique identity and way of doing things and it was agreed that negotiations with the Aboriginal Ministries Council would be undertaken to determine what fundamental change meant for them.

Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, All Native Circle Conference, BC Native Ministries and Native Ministries of Ontario and Quebec had representatives meet as "The Caretakers of our Indigenous Circle" to do the hard work of determining what the Indigenous faith community wanted. The result has been the nine "Calls to the Church" that will be presented at GC43 in Oshawa, ON in July 2018. These calls sought the input of the Indigenous communities of faith in their various collectives and affirmed by the National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering in Pinawa, MB in July of 2017. General Council Executive has approved these Calls and recommends adoption at GC43.

This is a Kairos moment for the United Church of Canada having accepted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action number 48, "to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation." Canada is responding to the TRC Calls to Action and important Indigenous matters are now daily news. I feel like we are being carried down a fast-moving river in the destiny of our Creator. I hope we don't hit a dam at GC43!



# Embracing the Gift of the Indigenous Calls to the Church

By Deanna Zantingh, Keeper of the Learning Circle

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.



*The students of SSSC with Elder Stan McKay and Liberation Theology instructor Benjamin Lujan at our last Learning Circle in January*



## Upcoming Events

**Spring Ceremonies:** March 18, 2018 at 1:00pm

*Join us for a sweat lodge ceremony followed by a potluck feast to mark the changing of the seasons.*

**Ceremony of Celebration:** April 14, 2018 at 2:00pm

*Join us for a worship service, followed by a feast to celebrate our graduating students and honoured elders.*

### Learning Circles:

April 9 - 13, 2018 - H/CD5 – Community Development

April 16 - 20, 2018 - PC4 – Family Violence & Gender Issues

**Visit [sandysaulteaux.ca](http://sandysaulteaux.ca) for details on these events.**

**Let us know you'll be attending at [sansau@mymts.net](mailto:sansau@mymts.net) or 204-268-3913.**

***He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.  
- Psalm 147:4***

**We apologize for misspelling the following names in our last newsletter:**

***Reynold Anderson  
Elenor Thompson  
susanna suchak  
Don Winstone***

## From The Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle: Calls to the Church...

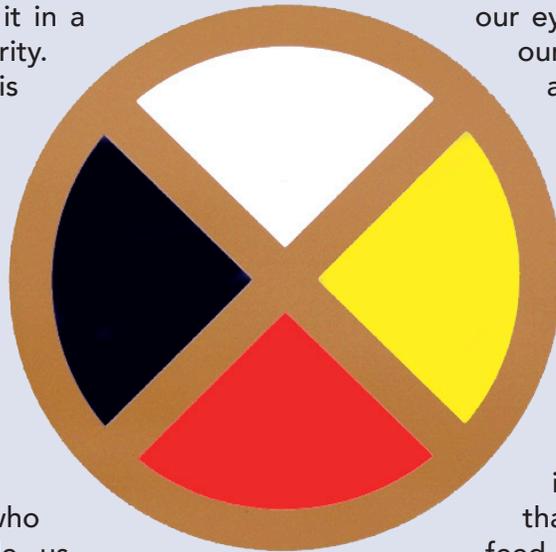
### We Will Say What Indigenous Ministry Is:

"We will decide for ourselves who we are, who constitutes our ministries groups and practices. Colonialism took community control away from us and placed it in a colonial centre of authority. Recovery from colonialism is our path moving forward. We will determine an Indigenous Testamur, a training program for ministry preparation, that will help our leaders be competent as the healers and helpers our communities are crying out for."

### A Healing Church:

"We are embracing who we are as Creator made us. The Indigenous church will be an instrument of healing our identity and a place of renewal of our cultures."

"We will teach you who we are, what our values are, and place into practice how we want toward among ourselves and with others. We have faith that the Spirit of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the evidence of creation, and the love of God will move us forward on the road of true reconciliation so that we can know "the beloved community" of "All Our Relations"."



### We Will Do Indigenous Theology:

"We are finding our own spirituality and Indigenous understanding of Jesus and his work in our communities. We will see through our eyes who Jesus is and decide for ourselves what this means for us as ministries and communities of faith."

### The Earth is Our Provider:

"Indigenous spirituality is not confined to buildings, but is connected to the land. The United Church is asset rich. Rich in land and properties. These lands were stolen by false promises in treaty negotiations. We meant to invite settlers to our lands and that we would share it. It would feed us both. But we are cut off from the land."

"Selling church properties is a matter of Indigenous land justice or injustice. We are grateful for every effort churches, presbyteries, Conferences, and the General Council have done to give back to the Indigenous ministries when churches decommission and properties are sold. May this justice flow like a river."

*You can read the full Calls to the Church document at [sandysaulteaux.ca](http://sandysaulteaux.ca).*

## Indigenous Ministry by John D. Snow Jr.

Through the remit process we have been imparted a new structure for the United Church. We renew our relationship to God and one another. How we move forward depends on Healing, Understanding and Reflection. Like the Hebrews of old the Indigenous people have a Creator who spoke to them in their Sacred Sites in their homelands. Our Indigenous people have their own languages and ceremonies that are gifts from the Creator. As we move forward respecting one another we must do so together as a renewed United Church of Canada implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and The Treaties.

At Samson United the Moderator shared a sermon on Acts 16: 16-31 (see the story in our last newsletter). As the story unfolds we find that the prisoners' and the guards' survival are tied to one another. When they realize their situation, freedom and healing are possible. For us to heal within

the United Church and beyond we must be able to heal together.

Some churches support missing and murdered women and girls. Where else are we called as a church? Are we looking to understand issues from an Indigenous context? If so how do we engage Indigenous communities of faith in the United Church Family? Do we know our Family? We must define our healing together instead of saying this is what you need to heal yourself. This inclusiveness is part of the Oral Tradition of Indigenous cultures. It is important to share and heal with the non-indigenous community. We must follow what the Spirit is guiding us to do, healing together.

*John D. Snow Jr. is a student at SSSC while pursuing his M.Div. at the Vancouver School of Theology. He is a Student Minister at Samson United, Maskwacis Alberta.*



*Winter at the  
Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre*



## Reconciliation Hymn by John D. Snow Jr.



*SSSC students Tony, John and Gloria Snow with Gloria's husband and two members of Knox United*

In November 2017 I received an email from the choir at Knox United in Calgary. They wanted the correct pronunciation of the Dakota words "Many and Great" from the Voices United hymn book. I embarked on a journey of Song. Being a Nakoda from Morley I was not able to readily translate and pronounce Dakota words and sought help from my Friend, Isaiah Brokenleg, an

Episcopal Student Minister from South Dakota. I was able to connect with Isaiah and in turn teach the correct words to the choir at Knox United Calgary for their Advent Communion.

This song comes from the Dakota warriors who were hung because of a war that was started as the people were starving. The hanging is also commemorated as the Dakota 38. My brother and sister and I, all of us in training for ministry, shared insight and the words as well as the singing of the Dakota Hymn with the Knox choir, who learned quickly.

This was a reconciled song by the warriors. As they went to their execution they shook hands and forgave all the military on site and sang this song before they were hung. It is a solemn and emotional remembrance for Indigenous people.

I am happy for the outreach and the teachings shared on this reconciliation hymn. The singing was a revelation and healing.

*You can listen to the Knox United choir singing "Many and Great" on [sandysaulteaux.ca](http://sandysaulteaux.ca)*

## Infusing Indigenous Ways by Susie McPherson Derendy



The General Council 43 (GC43) Youth Forum was held at Five Oaks Centre at Six Nations Haudenosaunee Grand River Territory near Paris, ON. I attended as one of the GC43 Worship Committee members to help with worship and the theme of Reconciliation. I am both blessed and hopeful to have been there with young people representing most of the United Church of Canada's conferences.

As a student at SSSC and Vancouver School of Theology and an alumni of DUIM (Deeper Understanding of Intercultural Ministries), for the past four years I have been heartened by some pretty special student-led worship and inspired to consider ways of worship that are reconciliatory and honouring of Indigenous cultures. These worship experiences have been sacred personal

connections for me so it was exciting to offer this to the Youth Forum. We began on February 16th with familiar UCC worship. Over the next couple of days we infused Indigenous ways of using songs with drum, wisdoms and ceremony, including smudging, into our worship.

Indigenous spirituality and ways of prayer and worship are important to this time of change within the church. In times of sharing over the weekend, I sensed for some a better understanding and awareness of who we are and what the work of reconciliation means to us as individuals and as a church moving forward. I am deeply grateful to the UCC for being faithful and taking important steps to reconciliation. My thoughts and prayers are for all those that were with us and for the youth chosen for the GC43 2018 pilgrimage.

# In Memory of Alice Paupanekis by Melody McKellar



*Alice, far left, pictured at our Ceremony of Celebration where she was named an honoured elder*

As an Elder in the circle at Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre (one of the founding schools of SSSC), Alice was always supportive of us as students, our learning and our dreams for the present and the future. She offered words of encouragement and was eager to listen to the sharing of our ministries, both the joys and the challenges. That gift was also offered to the staff and board members. She had an endearing smile and a chuckle to her laugh. One day she surprised me with a beautiful hand knit sweater with matching socks! How she guessed what size to make and how long to knit the arms was always a mystery to me! She always had stories to share of her home community of Norway House and

Towers Island and could speak fluently in Cree and English. Alice was a woman of integrity who shared and lived her faith, accepting all people in the circle. Our prayers and thoughts are with her family, the community of Norway House, and the many circles of people whom Alice touched through the years. You have fought the good fight Alice. May your spirit now rest in peace.

# In Memory of Aileen Rice by Lee Claus



Aileen was one of our first graduates from the Francis Sandy Theological Centre (one of the founding schools of SSSC). She was known as 'Soda' which absolutely fit her sparkling personality. Her hearty laugh was so infectious and bubbly that she could lighten up any room. Aileen's wisdom and humour was renown among the students, and she was always ready to help. Aileen served as the Chair of FSTC. She had this wonderful way of twisting arms to enlist help for the centre. Aileen Rice was truly a friend and a blessed 'Companion of the Francis Sandy Theological Centre'.

## Centre Updates



In 2017 we unpacked our library of theology and Indigenous culture books into a new home in Lodge 1. We are grateful for the help of Deb Smith in this task. Now when our students come to the Centre for Learning Circles they have a quiet study space and easy access to the wealth of materials here. We have had some donations of books during the last few months so we are looking at getting some double sided shelving made so that these books can be displayed and catalogued. We are also looking into possible software packages for the database.



Our new fireplace was enjoyed by the Prairie Jubilee Deepening group when they were at the Centre in early February. Thanks to everyone that made a contribution to this project.

The sweat lodge black and beige canvas covers are in need of replacing so we will be accepting contributions towards this. Around each solstice and equinox we offer a sweat lodge ceremony open to everyone to mark the changing of the seasons. Groups who use our space also use the sweat lodge. These ceremonies are an important way for the Centre to serve those seeking teachings, healing, connection to the land and to Indigenous cultures.





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