



# Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

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## Christmas Crisis

by Adrian Jacobs, Keeper of the Circle

The Christmas story tells of happy announcements of the Christ Child to bewildered shepherds, and very public visits to Bethlehem by Wise Men from the East. This happy side of the story is followed by an ominous and deadly occurrence – the killing of all children under the age of two and the weeping of mothers.

In the January 10, 2018 issue of Today's Parent, author Kyle Edwards of Maclean's Magazine reported that Indigenous infants were being apprehended out of hospital nurseries in Manitoba at a rate of an infant a day. The weeping and lamentation of Indigenous mothers and families today are no less excruciating than those in Bethlehem two thousand years ago.

Jesus was born in a volatile time with a politician protecting his place of power by killing babies. Today another politician is snatching babies from refugee mothers (some are Central American Indigenous mothers) to satisfy his political base. We need the saving and peace-making promised in the birth of the Christ Child now as much as ever.

We at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre advocate and are working for our Indigenous children in Manitoba and across the country. We held a successful Indigenous Family Reunification culture camp this summer and are planning an expanded work for 2019. May we be an active part of stopping the violation of Indigenous family integrity so that babies can attach in a healthy way to mothers in healing Indigenous families and communities.



*This nativity scene, belonging to a friend of the Centre, was created by Mohawk artist Keena.*

# Sandy-Saulteaux Grads Bringing Light into the World



*Elder Connie at the Kitchi Blanket Exercise on Parliament Hill, 2017. Photo credit: KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives*

Elder Connie Budd from Norway House First Nation graduated from the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in 2015. After serving as the Minister at North End Stella Outreach Ministry in Winnipeg, these days she can be found helping out as an elder at the Indigenous Family Centre in Winnipeg's North End and leading blanket exercises where ever requested. Through the blanket exercise she helps people, from students to business leaders, understand the history and impact of colonization. She just led a blanket exercise for a conference of foster parents and foster workers. She also lends her support to community-building events like the weekly Meet Me at the Bell Tower anti-violence rallies in Winnipeg's North End. She notices that she always finds her way back to this neighbourhood where she feels comfortable, where she is known and knows many.

Connie's training at SSSC prepared her to be in ministry to this community. She credits Sandy-Saulteaux for welcoming her and not judging her study of traditional values and ways of life. At SSSC, she could integrate the sacred teachings she learned from her grandfather with biblical teachings because the two aren't something she can separate. Connie also says that coming to SSSC gave her the nerve to step out of her comfort zone and leap into the unknown. She has no regrets about leaving her home community to try to do something for her people who are living in the city and often cut off from connections to family and community. She sees herself as doing things the Jesus way, practicing anywhere, just being with people, no matter who they are, listening to them and praying with them.

*Your gifts to the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre help train students like Connie for a ministry of justice, peace and healing in our world.*

*We ask you to give generously through our website or by using the donation form at the end of this newsletter.*



**MERRY CHRISTMAS  
FROM THE STAFF  
AND KEEPERS OF THE  
VISION OF SSSC!**

# Global Awareness & Contextual Theology

by Susie McPherson Derendy



On October 20, 2018, five students including myself and my daughter Segwun, John Snow, Keith Keno and Murray Pruden, as well as two elders, Judy Delorme (Cree from Fisher River MB and Winnipeg Presbytery-MBNWO Conference) and Ray Jones (Gitxan from Skeena River and BC Conference), and Deanna Zantingh, Keeper of the Learning Circle at SSSC left on a Global Awareness trip to the United States Southwest. Over the 14-day study tour to Arizona and New Mexico we connected with elders, Indigenous Spiritual leaders and faith communities across a broad spectrum of denominations and beliefs providing us the opportunity to discover the rich fabric of the southwest through community visits, urban ministries, conversations with faith leaders, museum visits, food, art, free time and the landscape of Arizona and New Mexico with a focus on the people, their land, and its connection to their spirituality and their faith.

The Global Awareness and Contextual Theology trip encouraged us as students to step outside of one's comfort zone, make theological, social, and political connections between Canadian and Global contexts and deepens our understanding of accompaniment and solidarity. It offered a deep intercultural encounter of being and witnessing being church in a different context, as well as highlighting the resiliency of hope of Indigenous communities through self-governance, food security and other community development initiatives. Regular reflection through journaling and sharing circles with fellow travellers touched on how the experience informs participants' perspectives on being the Indigenous church, as well as what inspires us to act in creating hope in our own context as we learn from leaders and communities that have faced similar challenges.



*Susie with her daughter Segwun in the Painted Desert*



*We visited Spider Rock lookout in Canyon de Chelly, which is a very spiritual place for the Navajo people as it is a part of their creation story and explains how they came to be gifted weavers of rugs and blankets.*



*Here we are at the Hozho Healing House in Farmington that is in the process of being renovated from an old hospital into a Women's Wellness Centre by the Episcopal Church of Navajoland.*



*Sandia Pueblo is a Tiwa-speaking Pueblo north of Albuquerque on a site the Sandia people have resided in since 1300 A.D. Their Spirituality is drawn from the Sandia Mountains and the plants, animals and resources that have ensured their survival in a desert region. Here we are with an "horno", an outdoor oven used to bake bread.*



*We met with Father Richard Rohr at the Centre for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque where we had a sharing circle and shared our stories with him on Culture and Christianity and how for many of us, our faith had led us back to our Indigenous Identity and Culture.*



*We had a tour at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Centre where the mission statements says, “We are a family of people dedicated to protect and share the amazing culture of our 19 Pueblos of New Mexico.” Then we enjoyed supper at the Pueblo Harvest Restaurant whose traditional food offerings represent Native foodways from times of pre-European-contact through contemporary favorites; sourcing as many ingredients as possible from the Pueblos of New Mexico and other tribal communities throughout the US.*



*Segwun and Judy at the Mission San Xavier del Bac, the oldest Catholic church in the United States still serving the community for which it was built, the Tohono O’odham nation.*



*Keith photographing the beauty of the Painted Desert.*



*We visited with elders Elvin & Patricia Keeswood. Elvin is a language and culture teacher and they hosted us at their Hogan which they called their family’s prayer house, sharing with us about Navajo Spirituality.*



*Elder Cecil Corbett joined us and connected us with different Indigenous communities. Here we are with Reverend Norma McCabe, Reverend Martha Sadongei, professor Gary Kush and members of the Central Presbyterian Church which is the only Urban Indigenous Presbyterian Church in the USA. Our visit ended with “Native Humor – Healing through Laughter” with Gary Kush.*



*The view from Spider Rock lookout.*

# Grafton and Eileen Antone win Heart & Vision Award



*Eileen and Grafton accepting their award.  
Photo credit: Nadia Angelini*

The Toronto United Church Council's annual Heart & Vision Awards Concert honours "the work of individuals who have made outstanding contributions to social and environmental justice." Their tenth annual celebration honoured the Rev. Dr. Grafton Antone, and Dr. Eileen Antone, as well as Senator Murray Sinclair, each of whom was recognized for their pursuit of justice for First Nations' peoples. Grafton and Eileen Antone are elders of the Oneida Nation. They were recognized for their tireless efforts in mentoring First Nations' youth, the preservation and teaching of First Nations' culture and language, and the establishment and operation of the social and spiritual ministry of the Toronto Urban Native Ministry. After serving with Francis Sandy Theological Centre for many years, Grafton served as a Co-Chair of our Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre Keepers of the Vision/Board for six years.

## Family Reunification as a Social Enterprise

Almost anything a charity does ends up saving government some money. Take family reunification as an example. It costs government \$80,000 per year to keep a child in foster care. Say that five children are apprehended from an Indigenous home. That's a cost of \$400,000 per year. Now, say that a charity spends \$50,000 to provide that family with the necessary support to reunite. That's a saving of \$350,000 in the first year! Social Entrepreneur Shaun Loney is helping us understand this as an opportunity to disrupt business as usual in the "apprehensions industry." There are serious funders who are ready to invest money in social enterprise, and strong signals

from government that they are ready to partner with innovative problem-solvers who are ready to save tax dollars and improve social well-being at the same time. Shaun hosted the most recent design charrette for the Indigenous Family Reunification Centre at the Winnipeg Social Enterprise Centre. Elder Stan McKay sees the value of the formation of a social enterprise. One that would specialize in Indigenous family reunification work that could bring the opportunities of this new funding model to local First Nations as well as to the project underway at SSSC.



*Supporters of the Family Reunification Project gathering at the Social Enterprise Centre in Winnipeg to discern next steps for our project.*

## Farewell to ANCC

All Native Circle Conference (founded in 1988) has been a vital part of Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre's work in training people for Indigenous ministries and communities of faith. Keewatin Presbytery (established in 1981), the first Indigenous one in The United Church of Canada, has been the most abundant source of students for our program.

December 31, 2018 is the end of ANCC and the beginning of a new era. We are saying a sad farewell from SSSC to ANCC and its conference staff. We are very happy with our history together. We will continue some of what we started thirty years ago – our students will continue to be guided by SSSC and the Indigenous Council on Learning (Indigenous Candidacy Board of the Office of Vocation). The Indigenous Council of Elders, the National Indigenous Organization and other matters are still being worked on but will carry forward the vision our Indigenous Elders have given to us. We look forward to our work building and developing on our solid foundation!

# Leaving a Legacy – by Lorraine Harkness on behalf of SSUC-Saskatoon



*The congregation of Meewasin Valley United at their annual Celebrating Spirit Event*

In June of 2018 the congregation of Meewasin Valley United (MVU) closed as a congregation of the United Church. What follows, however, is not a sad story.

MVU in its later years was a small, close knit congregation that had intentionally chosen a Progressive Christian journey. They identified and lived by these values: Justice, Respect, Passion, Balance, Courage, Integrity, Creativity, Gratitude, Inclusivity, Spirituality, Compassion, Responsibility, Open-Mindedness, Continuous Learning and Joy. Their unofficial motto was “Life is a journey not a destination” and MVU enjoyed the journey, never afraid to take the road less traveled.

Before the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, MVU saw social justice works as a significant part of their ministry. We attended talking circles to listen, learn and, as it turned out, cry, as we heard and felt the pain of Indigenous folks. This led us to both volunteer and listen at the national event. Out of these experiences we began to develop relationships with Indigenous brothers and sisters. We invited our new friends to join us at events and share with us from their hearts. The Calls to Action highlighted how much more work and effort is needed. From my perspective this journey is bolstered by first creating relationships of meaning. Once you reach out with a willingness to learn from Indigenous folks, you leave some aspect of Empire and capitalism behind and learn to see things differently, especially yourself as white privileged folks. The Calls to Action can guide you on your journey to reconciliation.

In MVU’s history there was a split in the congregation, which led to the sell of our building.

For a time we supported our ministry with funds from the sale of the building. In 2018 we made the decision to close as a congregation. We identified Progressive/ Expansive Christianity, Social Justice and Education as the three priorities where we wanted our legacy to make a difference. I suggested the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre because it names itself as a Spiritual Centre, that educates and serves social justice in its own way. We hope that our legacy gift will enable Sandy-Saulteaux to continue its good works.

MVU courageously made the decision to close not knowing what door would open to us. Fortunately we live on as Spiritual Seekers United in Community - Saskatoon (SSUC). We have joined in partnership with Southminster Stienhauer United Church – Edmonton (SSUC).

Closure for us was about grieving but more importantly it was about opportunity. The opportunity to invest our legacy in various organization that will carry on good works, that we believe in and to explore new opportunities.

If you would like to explore how supporting Indigenous ministry at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre can be part of your congregation’s journey of reconciliation, contact us at 204-268-3913 or [robert@sandysaulteaux.ca](mailto:robert@sandysaulteaux.ca).

## 2019 Learning Circles

Come to a learning circle at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre to discover new ideas and resources. These are part of the Ministry Training program and they are open to others in ministry.

**January 21 - 24:**

Pastoral Ethics & Boundaries

**January 25 - 26:**

Sacramental Elders Training

**January 28 - February 1:**

Introduction to Christian Scriptures

**For more Learning Circles and events,  
visit [sandysaulteaux.ca](http://sandysaulteaux.ca).**



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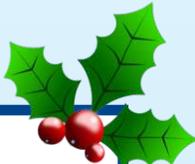
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