



# Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre



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## Together on the Land by Marcus Rempel

At Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre we offer space for healing and peace-making that begins with the harmonious coming together of people on the land. Much talk of peace and reconciliation these days is just that, talk. We do have conversations, indeed, sometimes long and difficult conversations around the sacred fire as diverse and significantly trauma-affected groups have sought wisdom to live in a good way together on sacred land. But we begin many gatherings with the embodied, wordless prayer of the smudge.

At what has become our annual Mamawe Ota Askihk (Cree for sharing life together here on Earth) festival every summer for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, we organize our togetherness around physical tasks: the making of drums, the gathering of medicines, the processing of animal hides, the preparation of food. We see a healing space that can open up when humans share physical work. Before our minds know how to articulate a reconciled togetherness, the actions of our bodies moving in physical parallel toward common physical tasks bring us into a spirit of peace that is prior to language. This is especially so when these tasks bring us close to our mother, the earth, that beautiful body that feeds our bodies, with a generosity that heals our spirits.

This summer we also offered multiple retreats for parents who are working to be reunited with children apprehended by Child & Family Services (CFS). Central to these retreats have been times spent in the garden, the kitchen and sharing meals together. Simple hands-on activities that restore a healthy connection to the land can spiral outward in the Indigenous community to many other kinds of healing including; the reduction of diabetes, the strengthening of intergenerational ties and the thickening of community.

*Marcus is the Indigenous Family Initiative Project Coordinator at Sandy-Saulteaux.*



*Elder Shoon Keewatin teaches how to fillet fish at Mamawe Ota Askihk.*



# Introducing our New Keeper of the Learning Circle



**Susie McPherson Derendy** graduated from our ministry training program in April and we were pleased to welcome her to our staff team in July. She will be with us part time while ministering part time to Steinbach United Church.



*Susie speaking at her graduation service in April*

The past five years I have spent studying at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre are one part of my journey in Indigenous Christianity and reclaiming my identity as a Cree woman within a Christian context. Though my parents were traditional Cree speaking people who lived off the land, I did attend church growing up and have fond memories of a Cree fellowship on Sunday afternoons. Since then, I have sought this in life and church, not just for myself but for others also.

The World Christian Gathering of Indigenous Peoples cohosted by Richard Twiss and Terry LeBlanc on September 6-13, 1998 in Rapid City, SD, was the foundation on which the journey began toward wholeness and living out who God created me to be. There, a letter of apology was read by the mission group that carried the gospel to the people of the

area. It stated: "that the way in which the message of the gospel was carried to the people that said that Indigenous identity and culture was to be denied was not of God, but was of man". With grief and hope, I left the gathering with a renewed sense of direction in life and a prayer for spiritual revival and cultural restoration for myself, my family and my people.

So, my first call was deeply personal, and it was for reconciliation with who I was and who God/Creator/Sacred is and how to live from that truth. In 2005, my daughter and I attended Wiconi International Indigenous Family camp in Oregon, USA. The experience of traditional Indigenous life being lived out as Christians contributed greatly to a vision that Indigenous people of all tribes and nations were to celebrate their culture and heritage and to worship in their own ways to the Creator/Sacred/Universe that is in all creation and at the core of every one of us.

In 2009, I began to attend Knox United Church. I was encouraged and hopeful to be part of a denomination that would commit to the important step of apologizing to Indigenous people. I felt deeply that I was called to be a part of the church living that out. It was through my own faith/spirituality as a follower of Jesus Christ that I was able to come to the place of healing within myself that put my Cree personhood in perspective. If it was possible for me, then it can be so for others also.

I am called to not just knowing the effects of colonization on Indigenous people, but also to helping dismantle systems of oppression that have been, and in some ways continue to be, harmful, not only to us, but to all people. I know without a doubt that I am called to be a part of the solution whether that be in the church, with Indigenous People, and the community as a whole.

I am deeply thankful for all whose support made it possible for me to study at SSSC, to be ordained and now to continue my ministry as the Keeper of the Learning Circle. I thank the staff and students for the sacred journey we walk together. I am indebted to my husband and Kisayno Steve and daughter Segwun for taking care of each other and everything including me and our home, to my sons Leonard, Truman & Nathan for their love and to the rest of my family & friends for being in my circle throughout the whole process.



## Farewell to Deanna Zantingh by Adrian Jacobs

On the first day of her work at SSSC on May 3, 2016 Deanna laughed at my surprise when I discovered my favorite bench by the Brokenhead River was gone. We all laughed later when our neighbor across the river from us told us that he saw two young men pulling our benches in the water behind them while they paddled their canoe with shovels! We were happy to have our property returned later too.

It was my honor to be commencement speaker at Deanna's graduation from Canadian Mennonite University on April 23, 2017. We at SSSC were so proud to see her receive her Master of Arts in Theological Studies degree. Her excellent training showed up in her very effective teaching. But what was even

more of a gift was her pastoral heart in seeing after the needs of our students. Many tears were part of her baptism in leadership and advocacy for our students. We will miss her tender heart and excellence and wish her well in the next stage of her journey.

As a school we were able to say goodbye at SSSC in a celebration the Sunday after the April, 2019 Graduation. As a staff we were able to say goodbye in a lunch meal at Pine Ridge Hollow near Oakbank, MB. Even in goodbye we will still be seeing Deanna again as she helps us with transition. Thank you Deanna for all your good gifts, talents and tears!!!

*Adrian is the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre Keeper of the Circle.*

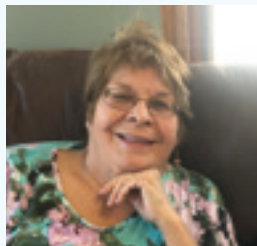
## New Keepers of the Vision

Last fall we welcomed the following new members to the board that guides our Centre. They join Ray Jones, Steve Willey, R-W Hoekstra and Rob Murray in keeping the vision of Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre.



**KEN THOMAS**

I am both a certified professional accountant and an ordained United Church minister. I have served on the executive of numerous church and non-profit organizations including chairing the Conference committee for learning sites, committed to the education of clergy. As Treasurer, I am blessed to be able to use these skills while gaining insight into and supporting the healing and restorative work of the Indigenous church.



**JOYCE JOHNSTON**

I am from Neyaashiinigmiing (in Ontario) where I serve my community as the Student Minister at Cape Croker United Church. I entered the ministry training program at Sandy-Saulteaux in January 2019 and represent the students to the Keepers of the Vision. I enjoy life and raising my great granddaughter Meadow who I consult regularly about technical matters.



**JAMES SCOTT**

I am a retired United Church minister, raised in Toronto and ordained in 1976. Following pastoral ministry in Saskatchewan, my ministry has focused on conflict resolution and restorative justice. From 2003-2015, I served as the General Council Officer for Residential Schools where I sought to live out the United Church's 1986 and 1998 apologies in the negotiation of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement and the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I live near Ottawa.

# CEREMONY OF



*Elenor & John Thompson with grandchildren*

*Grafton & Eileen Antone*

## HONORED ELDERS

### Rev. John Thompson & Eileen Antone

At Graduation, 2019 we were so happy to recognize our Honored Elders John Thompson and Eileen Antone for their life long contributions to Indigenous ministry and education. John is married to our student Elenor and they have been such a vital part of life here at SSSC with all the wisdom and experience they bring to our Learning Circles. John told us he followed in the footsteps of Henry Bird Steinhauer, the Methodist Ojibway leader who was instrumental in the establishment of Indigenous churches in Manitoba and Alberta that have become part of The United Church of Canada. Eileen Antone has served in many capacities in Oneida United Church on Oneida Territory near London, ON and in the former Great Lakes Waterway Presbytery and in the former All Native Circle Conference. Eileen has a doctorate in education and has shared much wisdom with our Indigenous community and we are blessed!

# CELEBRATION 2019



# Stew and Stories

by Marcus Rempel

Audrey Logan says to Indigenous youth, "When you're eating that French fry with ketchup, that's our food, done a different way." A lot of people are unaware that the potato and the tomato are both native to Turtle Island. In March, our event "Stew and Stories: Indigenous Farming on the Prairies" brought knowledge-keepers Logan, Stan McKay and Caroline Chartrand into conversation with neighbours of SSSC to dispel the myth that farming belongs to white people. Participants worked together to prepare a Three Sisters stew with squash, corn and beans, an ancient triad that complement each other nutritionally and agronomically. Logan says, "When I went back to the traditional foods, and to dehydrating, I lost 100 lbs, I lost the diabetes, I feel free. I don't eat from the store any more. That \$4/day they give you for food when you're on disability—I don't worry about that any more."

Chartrand is founder of the Metis Horticultural Society. She has dedicated herself to documenting and preserving the crop varieties used in the Red River Settlement. She told sad stories about the loss of these varieties as seed-saving has been commercialized and monopolized by agribusiness, and funny stories about applying "corn condoms" to keep ancient corn varieties from cross-pollinating with new-fangled hybrids.

McKay shared a story about his grandmother. "She gave me this paper bag with potato sprouts and told me, 'Take these home and plant them.' I thought, 'This lady is crazy,' but my parents dug up a 10 x 12 plot in front of my house and told me to weed and water it, and in the fall we had big potatoes. So I have always known that the earth gives us what we need. When we say the earth is our mother, it's a personal relationship."



# Growing our Garden

With the guidance of elder Stan McKay and our groundskeeper Victor Robertson, our garden at the Centre expanded and flourished this year. Many meals served to guests and students over the last few months have included fresh produce from the garden and more has been preserved to carry us into the winter.

We were also happy to include a group of CFS-involved youth from Winnipeg, through the Action Therapy network. They came out repeatedly during the spring and summer to plant and tend potatoes and more. They were moved by the connection to the land here and proud to be able to share their harvest with their families.



## Putting Our Family Back Together

"This rattle is our family." These were the words of an Indigenous man as he drew his son into the shared task of filling the shell of a deer-hide rattle with small stones. He had saved this task for a much-anticipated visit with his and his partner's children. "We are fixing our family," the father said. "We are putting our family back together."

The father was a participant in the one of three land-based retreats for CFS-involved Indigenous parents hosted at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in the summer of 2019. We are grateful to the Reconciliation Fund of the Winnipeg Foundation and the wide-hearted gifts of donors to the Indigenous Family Reunification Initiative for making these retreats possible.





## Mamawe Ota Askihk: Sharing Life Together Here on Earth

Our third annual gathering bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to reclaim the homegrown, the homespoken, the homebred, and the homemade, took place August 19 - 23. The week included hands-on learning about growing, harvesting and preparing medicines and foods from the land. There was time for listening, sharing, singing, ceremony and sharing good food together.

One of the activities that created the most buzz at Mamawe Ota Askihk this year was a pemmican-making workshop led by inner-city food sovereignty activist Audrey Logan. A

field trip from Siloam Mission joined us for this afternoon. For these housing-insecure participants, the preparation of these healthy, high-energy, nutrient-dense food packets that they could take with them in their pockets and would keep indefinitely without refrigeration was a powerful reconnection to their culture and to their food security.

Afterwards, one SSSC ministry student was imagining a pemmican ministry for the homeless. Taking our relationship to food back into our own hands has a way of decolonizing our imagination.





# Partners in Teaching, Learning & Moving Around

We collaborate on a regular basis with our partners at the Indigenous Studies Program at Vancouver School of Theology (VST). SSSC and VST share a memorandum of understanding that allows interested SSSC Students to

pursue an M. Div. by extension through SSSC Learning Circles and courses at the Indigenous Studies Program Summer School held at VST every July.



*In March, as part of the Vancouver School of Theology Indigenous Studies Program's 'The Teaching House That Moves Around', Adrian Jacobs, Lauren Sanders, Elaine & Ray Aldred, Linda & Rick Martin led a course on "Ministry in the Midst of Trauma" at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre.*



*In July, 'The Teaching House That Moves Around' came to the Banff, AB area for the Ecumenical Conference with spiritual leaders and youth from various denominations, jointly hosted by Sandy-Saulteaux students John and Tony Snow of the Stoney Nakoda First Nation.*

## Learning "In a Good Way." by Kim McNaughton

"In a good way" is a phrase Elder Rev. Bernice Saulteaux used during prayer and teaching at the Christology learning circle in April. I am a 4th-year student in the diaconal ministry program at The Centre for Christian Studies (CCS). As part of the external studies requirement of CCS, I was able to meet and study with Sandy-Saulteaux students and to learn "in a good way" from the Elders, Rev. Bernice and Rev. Andrew Wesley. For me, the circle was as much a healing circle as a learning

circle. I experienced both as Rev. Wesley encouraged us to "live into" our Christian faith by finding ways to step into the gospel stories, to make them each our own story, in order to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ. I witnessed how it is possible to honour and hold to Indigenous traditional teachings along side Christian faith to better our ministry and service to others. I am very appreciative of the opportunity to learn "in a good way" at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre!



*Elder Rev. Bernice with Kim and SSSC students Elenor and Joyce*



Thank you to Agassiz Presbytery for donating their sound system to the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. We used it for the first time at our Ceremony of Celebration in April.

### Upcoming Learning Circles & Continuing Education Opportunities

CGPI UCC Church Doctrine & Polity - October 21 - 25

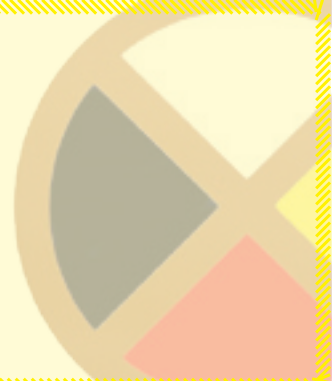
PC1 Basic Pastoral Care - October 28 - November 1

Visit [sandysaulteaux.ca](http://sandysaulteaux.ca) for more events.  
Contact [sansau@mymts.net](mailto:sansau@mymts.net) or 204-268-3913 to register.

## Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre Legacy Fund

We have established a new fund to provide a long term source of funding for the operation of our Centre. It is held by the United Church of Canada Foundation and will make annual grants to our Centre. Want to support our Centre's ongoing work as part of your legacy?

Contact Keeper of the Centre, Rob Smith, for details.  
[robert@sandysaulteaux.ca](mailto:robert@sandysaulteaux.ca) / 204-268-3913



## National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering

In August, Indigenous members of The United Church gathered for ceremony and discernment. Consensus was reached to establish leadership for the National Indigenous Organization. One of their tasks will be to establish what self-determination, spoken of in the

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, will look like in The United Church of Canada. Another significant task will be to determine ordination and commissioning in the Indigenous community. A new National Elders Council was also named.



*Elected National Indigenous Council receiving charge from Rev. Lawrence Sankey, Chair of National Indigenous Council (outgoing)*



*National Elders Council receiving charge from Rev. Lawrence Sankey.*



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