



Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre



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Tools for Transformation

Can Indigenous traditional practices and the teachings of Christianity be blended? Brian George reflects on a beautiful vision for Indigenous ministry.

In our January Learning Circle on Indigenous Family Wellness, one of our facilitators pointed out that colonialism cannot be reversed but it can be transformed.

When we reject the need to live in harmony and to nourish relationships that are offered to all through the land we dwell on, we ignore the light from within, that spark of respect and love. But I see God's seeds of hope and faith taking root.

One of the hopeful signs of transformation is for our communities to establish Indigenous identity. Who are we? What is our culture? What is our relationship to the land and how is that rooted into our original language?

We have been on the defensive for a very long time. Many of our older people need to be sought out because they speak the language, they know the families in a community, they teach us that the land and those that live and grow on the land collectively creates Indigenous culture.

Training in the Learning Circle was very real. It gave us tools to help with personal trauma, to identify the hurtful damage that exists in our communities, and to define who we are. I pondered about using the tools we learned to focus on and help the faith community.

For many years I've heard people wondering if it's okay to believe in the use of sacred tobacco and to use the teachings of the Bible in their lives at the same time. Or does it have to be one or the other?

My vision is for each of us to embrace the beauty of this life in its myriad expressions found in Nature. Whether we drum a song at the sacred fire or sing a song in a church sanctuary we are being grateful for this life. We grow together as a sharing community and we give light and respect to each other by generating compassion to all.

This is Indigenous Ministry but wait, it is also found in the wind that blows through the pines, it is the cry of the eagle in its lofty heights, it is the life that God Creator puts in a seed, it is the laughter of the children, and it is in a cup of tea that Grandma offers. Each of us is capable of creating, then sharing these luminous expressions of what this life is about. Then we give it away as the Sun gives us a ray of sunshine. For all speaks to us of the powers of the Creator. It is spirituality simply because it is God's Spirit at work.

Brian George began his training for ministry at Francis Sandy Theological Centre, one of our founding schools. He lives and serves his community in Neyaashiinigiing, Ontario.

Will you join us in the Learning Circle? For a list of upcoming topics, taking place at SSSC in Beausejour, MB or at Five Oaks in Paris, ON, visit sandysaulteaux.ca/events.



Medicine Wheel Teachings



At the centre of our logo lies the Medicine Wheel. Our students and staff have been learning about the sacred teachings it represents. We're pleased to share some Medicine Wheel teachings with you, offered by our graduate Rev. Agnes Spence.

Traditional Teachings & The Bible with Agnes Spence

Indigenous Celebrations of the Medicine Wheel

The colour celebrations of the Medicine Wheel are said to be the way the colours are set on the medicine wheel. The colours are usually Red/White/Dark/Yellow and the celebrations are set in quadrants. (Note: Black in the Nehetho language is "Dark", therefore, Dark or Royal Blue is usually used for black.)

All directions symbolize aspects of health and the cycles of life.

Directions: East, South, West, North

Life: Infant, Youth, Adult, Elder

Health: Emotional, Mental, Physical, Spiritual

Seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter

Elements: Earth, Water, Air, Fire

There are many, many other different celebrations (colors and how they are set) and they are set according to the order of preference of each Nation.

Once the flames of the wheels are cleaned (balanced), in all aspects, (spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally) rest, and the spirit of God rests with them.

The colors, and the wheel are referenced in different books in the Bible, like in the prophet Ezekiel's vision recorded in Ezekiel. From there we learn all of God's creation is one wheel intertwined with many different wheels. It teaches us God's Spirit is with all of His creation and all must be kept in balance.

Rev. Agnes Spence of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation graduated from SSSC in 2012.

Remembering Joyce Johnston by Wayne Monague

I connected indirectly with Joyce through ceremony and powwow for some years before we ended up at Sandy-Saulteaux at the same time to fulfill our Spiritual paths. I was blessed to have both Joyce and our friend Robert with me in the ministry training program. Being the youngest of the three they took me under their wings, and Joyce, in a good way, pushed me forward as "the future". We learned of each other's ways of life, families and how that influenced our learning. We faced stresses together and triumphs.

Joyce loved her family and her community. She would do all she could for each. Joyce had passion and was a woman of experience. She was never afraid of sharing points that others would be afraid to, and she would do it in a fashion that could not be overlooked.

Joyce's spirit has always been strong and will remain that way. It was an honour to watch her receive her diploma from Sandy-Saulteaux and sing to her spirit when she did. Joyce will have a forever presence in my life spiritually because of the connection we had as students.



SSSC graduate Joyce Johnston passed away in December 2023.



Return of the Buffalo Drum Circle

Your gifts support monthly gatherings at SSSC for young people to learn drum songs from local knowledge keepers.



Upcoming Events at the Centre:

May 26: Tipi Raising: an afternoon of teachings, teamwork and time on the land

June 8: Celebration: a time to recognize our students and honoured elders

August 19-23: Mamawe Ota Askihk – Sharing Life Together Here on Earth: a spiritual gathering of land-based learning for all ages

Visit sandysaulteaux.ca/events for details.

Welcome Aliesha!

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Aliesha Desjarlais as our new Keeper of the Circle. She will help us move forward together and in a good way, overseeing all aspects of the Centre's life and work.

Aliesha has been married for over 24 years and has raised 2 children from her multi-faith home in Baaskaandibewiziibing (Brokenhead Ojibway Nation) in Manitoba since she was 18 years old; she is fortunate to have had the blessing of being welcomed at a young age, encircled, and trained in the values and ways of her Community. She has over 20 years experience working for Brokenhead Ojibway Nation in roles within Health, Social Development, Entrepreneurship, and Food Sovereignty. As an instructor and coach she has trained First Nations leaders across Canada in strategic planning, leadership and human resources.



Donor Connections: Sandra Dunning



Sandra Dunning was blessed with a somewhat unique upbringing, in that her family taught her the value of all people and provided her with a positive influence on her journey towards reconciliation and building relationships with Indigenous people. Her father, for example, sold seed corn on their farm in Ontario. One customer from a nearby reserve would pick up his corn at planting time "on faith" –

meaning he would pay at harvest time. Her father trusted the man, and that mutual trust was always honoured. This upbringing left Sandra with the lifelong desire to meet Indigenous people, learn from them and build lifelong relationships. In 2007, she was on the United Church Women's executive. This group went on a day trip to Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre to visit and learn. She has kept up a connection ever since.

Will you join Sandra in giving generously to this place where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can come together in friendship? Mail in the form on the last page of this newsletter or give online at sandysaulteaux.ca/donate.

Thank you to everyone who's made a gift to Sandy-Saulteaux since our last newsletter!

Your generosity nurtures Indigenous leadership and move us all along a path to reconciliation.

Jill Allan	Caryn Douglas & Peter Kidd	Susan Loeppky	Dr. Greer Anne W. Ng	St. Paul's United Church, Oxbow SK
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Aliesha Desjarlais	Pat & Murray Krug			
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Northern Hokkaido Group				

Along with these individuals and organizations, Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is supported by our major funder, The United Church of Canada, through Mission and Service.



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My gift is in honour of _____
(we will acknowledge this gift with the honouree or family if you provide contact information.)

This is an unrestricted gift to the Centre or I wish to designate this gift to:

- Return of the Buffalo - fostering family well being
- Legacy Fund - an endowment to provide long-term support

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- I have included a gift to Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in my will.
- I am considering including Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in my will. Please contact me.
- I offer prayers for the ministry.



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