



Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre



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Living Life in Ceremony

When you think of ceremony, what comes to mind? A wedding? A prayer or a smudge? Maybe a graduation, like our celebration with Wayne Monague this June?

There are many types of ceremony. From the big occasions to the daily practices, ceremonies are practices that remind us that we are all connected: to each other, to the plants, the animals, the stones, the waters, to those who've come before us, and to the generations who will follow. Together, we are all part of something bigger than ourselves.

Every week, we hear from people who are looking for the things ceremony can offer: connection to the land, community, traditional teachings and opportunities to heal.

In the work we call "Return of the Buffalo", Indigenous parents on a healing journey spend time on the land here to heal their relationships with their kids and to reclaim the traditions and ceremonies that their parents may not have been able to pass down to them.

For many Indigenous participants in our programs, from Return of the Buffalo, to our Ministry Training, reclaiming traditional ceremonies and learning about the strengths of their own culture creates a foundation for inner peace and a validation of their identity.

With the help of generous donors like you, and guided by two new Knowledge Keepers on our staff team, one male and one female, we're looking forward to offering more traditional ceremonies this summer.

Our elders teach us that ceremony can be a way of life. When we're on our own, the need for healing in our world can feel overwhelming. When we come together in ceremony, there is so much hope.

Your gifts make ceremonies possible. Thank you for strengthening the connection we share to all our relations.



Some relatives in our circle who help us live life in ceremony (left to right): Tobacco grows in our garden. / Knowledge Keeper Carla teaches youth in our drum circle. / Elder Donna and graduate Wayne with communion elements for the Learning Circle. / Students gather under oak trees to hear the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving address. / Lodge Keeper Jamie prepares the ground for a sweat lodge. / The Brokenhead River surrounds our Centre on three sides. / SSSC staff Kristi and Rebecca prepare a feast for our Ceremony of Celebration.

Ceremony of Celebration

On June 8, we celebrated the graduation of Wayne Monague from our ministry training program and honoured two elders for the ways they live out the teachings of Wisdom, Love, Respect, Honesty, Truth, Humility and Courage.



Under our soon to be completed pavilion, student Jordan shared a reflection on learning to bridge his love for Jesus and his culture.



Drummer Erica of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation offered songs to acknowledge the strong leaders and generous supporters who bless the ministry training program with their gifts.



Honoured Elder Norma (right), student Brian (centre) and Norma's daughter Dena (left) enjoyed the feast, following the service.

Honoured Elders

Elder Norma Robson (Jones/Kegdonce) is a member of the Chippewa of Nawash First Nation, Neyaashiinigmiing, ON. Her traditional name is 'Waaasonoda Noongoom 'FarAway Star'. Norma has deep roots in the United Church and has been part of ministries of multi-denominations. She attended many circles at the Francis Sandy Theological Centre.

Norma is a residential school survivor and keeper of local knowledge, language, and history. She remains active with the Indigenous Language Committee. She has volunteered with Hospice for many years and won Citizen of the Year for Wiarton in 2008. She considers herself a water-talker and environmental advocate. She is a mother of 4 children, 7 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren.

Neil Monague is one of graduate Wayne Monague's elders. Wayne has learned under Neil for his entire life. Neil carried so many different life teachings. He became a respected elder, through self-discovery and finding his spirit.

Neil showed Wayne how there is spirit in everything and how

faith in the Bible and traditional teachings are the same thing. Neil's wife is Peggy Monague, one of the founding members of Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. Through Peggy and Neil's faith and love for one another, Wayne could see how their two different faiths could stand together and respect one another.

Spirituality As My Backbone by Wayne Monague

I am from Chimissing, Christian Island, ON. I studied Indigenous based Social Development in college in Barrier, ON. After I was hired by the Correctional Service of Canada as a guard in the federal prison system, I became a specialized counselor for Indigenous offenders.

Throughout my entire life I have always had Spirituality as my backbone. My family was involved in both the catholic church on my father's side and the united church on my mother's side. My grandfather taught me the old Native ways. The positive influences I have had throughout my life, led me to Sandy-Saulteaux. My training here has allowed me to work farther within the church for the good of our people.



Wayne was supported on his graduation day, and throughout his ministry journey, by his mom (left), wife (right of Wayne), and aunts (right).



In a joint Learning Circle with Canadian Mennonite University's School of Peacebuilding, Adrian Jacobs and Deanna Zantingh led our students through an exploration of community and reconciliation. Students were invited to pray in their languages. "Though I didn't understand what they were saying," reflected Shantelle (standing, 8th from left), "the fact that they had an opportunity to speak in their language was good. Because historically they were not allowed to speak in their languages. It was something taken away from them. I used to say to myself: I don't say "Amen" to things I don't understand. But this space felt so safe that even though I didn't understand what was said, I knew I could agree. I knew it was only blessings."

Learn With Us

We're bringing our October Learning Circles to Five Oaks, in Paris ON, former home of our founding school: the Francis Sandy Theological Centre. In January, we'll be back at our Centre in Manitoba. Want to join our ministry training students in exploring one of the following themes?

At Five Oaks, Paris ON:

October 21-25, 2024: BS2 Wisdom/Psalms with Adrian Jacobs & elder Eileen Antone

October 28-31, 2024: HS4 Prophets & Prophecy with Deanna Zantingh & elder Lee Claus

At Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, Beausejour MB:

January 20-24, 2025: H/CD1 Intro to Church History with Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd

January 27-31, 2025: BS1 Intro to the Bible with Dan Epp-Tiessen

Contact us for details and to register: 204-268-3913, connect@sandysaulteaux.ca.

Water Ceremony

At every solstice and equinox we host a seasonal ceremony. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, some for the first time, come for time around the sacred fire and in the sweat lodge to refresh their bodies, minds and spirits. To mark the summer solstice, our elder began with a water ceremony.

Together, we sang this song:

*Ne-be Gee Zah gay-e-go
Gee Me-gwetch waya-ne-me-goo
Gee-Zah Wayn-ne-me-goo*

*Water we love you
We thank you
We respect you*

Getting to Know Our Grassroots by Aliesha Desjarlais

Land. Language. Culture. As I learn about the diverse communities who made Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre who we are today, the common commitment to these three things stands out.

In May, I took part in the Native Peoples' Retreat at Five Oaks in Paris, ON. This annual retreat began over 65 years ago with informal weekends for fellowship and learning. I heard how the Francis Sandy Theological Centre (FSTC) bubbled out of the Native Peoples' Retreat and became an important support for Indigenous communities in the area, particularly Six Nations. Based at Five Oaks from 1987 until 2011, FSTC trained Indigenous ministers who understood the culture of each community they served. I heard about the loss that was felt when FSTC amalgamated with Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre (DJSRC) and the new Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre became based in Beausejour, MB.

A few weeks later, I sat with Keewatin Circle, where I met representatives from many of the remote communities in Northern Manitoba and Ontario who formed DJSRC in 1984. I heard how these communities built up a community-based education model for ministry training that wrapped their students in support.

As I listened, key differences in the communities served by each of our founding schools also emerged. For example, in Six Nations, a minister can drive from a nearby urban centre. In one of the remote communities of Keewatin Circle, ministers either live in the small community they serve, or face lengthy and expensive travel. Processes that work in one setting, don't in another.

Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is rooted in visions of flourishing Indigenous communities, where the culture is strong, the land is honoured and the languages are alive. Both of our founding schools were born out of grassroots movements to return to communities the control that was taken away by colonialism.

I look forward to working with communities to continue that tradition and to find a balance that prepares students for ministry in diverse settings, honouring the lands, languages and lifeways of Indigenous communities. Your prayers, energy and donations honour our roots and help us grow toward that balance.

Aliesha Desjarlais became SSSC's Keeper of the Circle in March. She lives in Baaskaandibewiziibing (Brokenhead Ojibway Nation).



Our Keeper of the Circle, Aliesha, met with Keewatin Circle to hear about a history of ministry training immersed in community life.



Native Peoples' Retreat participants gathered on the banks of the Grand River for a baptism that celebrated connection to the land.

Wholly Herself: Janet Root's Journey to Ministry

by Pastor Liz Brasier & Janet Root

Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre's students all share two qualities: love for the Creator and love for people. Janet Root exemplifies both.

Having grown up in Chippawa Hill, a part of Saugeen First Nation where she was born, Janet was baptized into the United Church. While her parents were not very involved in the church, they always encouraged Janet and her sisters to attend Sunday School. Janet says the encouragement she received as a young girl fostered a deep love for her community and for God.

Janet describes her call to ministry as a journey. Having worked most of her adult life in administration for Saugeen First Nation it wasn't until later in life she says she really felt a deeper understanding of what God's plan was for her. She relates with a laugh how she doesn't always understand what is being asked of her, sometimes it takes being told more than once.

Once in a bookstore, the words on a simple Bible protector spoke to her: "I know the plans I have for you" Jer. 29:11. A feeling of wonder and wanting to find the meaning to the

message has been part of her inspiration to serve.

Over the years she has seen a good thing happening in reconciliation work in the United Church. Janet is an Anishinaabe kwe who loves who she is as an Ojibway woman. Growing up she relates how very limited her exposure to her own Anishinaabe culture was. Ceremony was not practiced. It wasn't until the early 90's when this knowledge was introduced, thanks to the brave efforts of her sister who was the Health Director for the community.

Janet has found her traditions and Anishinaabe way of life have really brought about a deeper love for self and all people. She has found there doesn't have to be a choice; Creator/God has provided a comfortable fit between being both who she is and what she is and Christianity.

This is where she sees her work in the church: bringing the two aspects of herself wholly to her ministry. A special hope for her is to work with all people in her community. Her education at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre will help her to find balance and direction in this work. "The Centre is important because they have the sacred bundle," she says. "You know when it is real, and it is."

Janet started at SSSC in October 2023. She will attend Learning Circles four times a year while doing a placement at her home church. She looks forward to time spent at SSSC. "The staff is great," she says, "and on the beautiful property there is a deep sense of peace."

Pastor Liz Brasier is a writer and friend of SSSC who serves an ecumenical shared ministry in Pinawa, MB.



More to Celebrate: Robert Patton Ordained



SSSC graduate Rev. Robert Patton (centre) on April 27, his long-anticipated ordination day. Terrence Whiteye (left) and Rev. Stan McKay (right) were just two of the many who gathered for the celebration at Kahnawake United Church. For many years Robert has been part of the movement to return to Indigenous communities the control that was taken away by colonialism, all while following his personal call to ministry. Congratulations Robert!

Remembering Esaias Beardy

by Glenn Beardy

Esaias Beardy was born in Garden Hill, MB in 1941. His parents were Elijah and Mary Beardy. Esaias was taken away from home at a very early age and his experience in the residential school system had a negative effect on his future personal life. When he turned his life around, he enrolled with the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre to become a Diaconal Minister for the United Church of Canada. About his graduation day in 2003 he wrote: “Ten years, I struggled trying to maintain a respectful conduct. I slipped and got up, slipped and got up, finally on that special morning, I jumped out of bed and said out loud, “I did it.””

For his commissioning, he had to travel to Sylvan Lake, Alberta. He went by plane and to his surprise, his children drove all the way there so they wouldn't miss the momentous occasion. Esaias went to work at the United Church in South Indian Lake, MB and eventually in Garden Hill. He passed away in May 2023. He was a great servant of the Lord and was faithful until the very end.



The journey was at times very discouraging and sometimes frightening. But if we have faith in god, we will reach our destination to the eternal place prepared for us
- Rev. Esaias Beardy

Farewell Sandi

Sandi Gendreau has moved on from the role of Keeper of the Learning Circle. We thank Sandi (centre) for her care for our ministry training students and the passion for education that she shared. We wish her all the best!

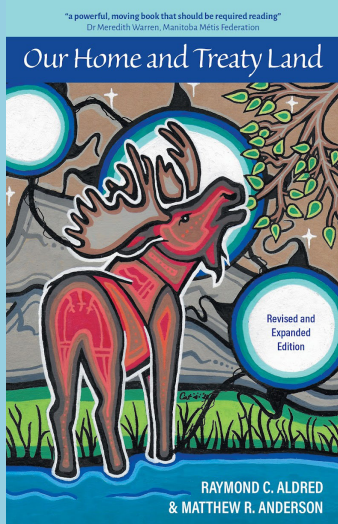
Help us find our next Keeper of the Learning Circle.

View the job posting at: sandysaulteaux.ca/hiring



Reconciliation Reads: OUR HOME AND TREATY LAND

by Kathryn Fournier



Our Home and Treaty Land is one of the most helpful contributions to reconciliation and right relations in Canada that I have come across.

This slim collection of collaborative writing is by two authors: Rev. Dr. Raymond Aldred is Cree from Treaty 8 territory and the director of the Indigenous Studies Program at the Vancouver School of Theology, and Rev. Dr. Matthew Anderson is a settler descended biblical scholar.

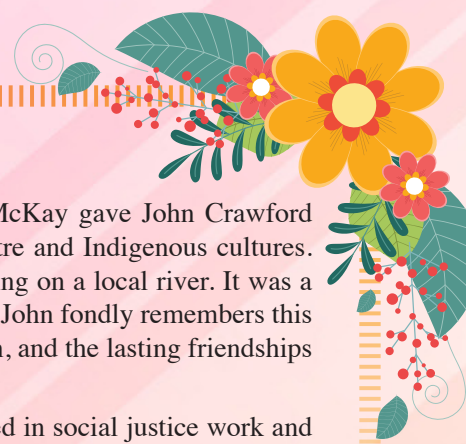
The focus throughout on the fundamental centrality of the land provides precisely the kind of grounding lens that is so necessary to understand who we are – and could serve to infuse land acknowledgements with real meaning and depth.

The other outstanding feature of this book for me, as a First Nations woman who has spent many years working with non-indigenous people within and outside the church, is how well Rev. Anderson “gets it”. His depth of understanding of what occurred as people like his forebears came to Canada, how that shaped his own life and what he now must see, hear and do provides a real-time model for anyone who professes an interest in reconciliation and right relations.

Our Home and Treaty Land is itself an exercise in reconciliation and points a way forward in love and respect.

Kathryn Fournier is a member of SSSC's Keepers of the Vision.

We want to hear what you're reading! Tell us about a book that has been helpful on your journey to reconciliation.



Donor Connections: John Crawford



A 2002 canoeing excursion with the Very Rev. Stan McKay gave John Crawford a chance to learn about Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre and Indigenous cultures. There were approximately 19 people on the trip, canoeing on a local river. It was a remarkable opportunity to learn and build relationships. John fondly remembers this special adventure, the orange canoe paddle he was given, and the lasting friendships that were formed.

He has maintained connection with the Centre, interested in social justice work and First Nations issues. In the 1960s, he spent 5 years as a United Church minister in Neyaashiinigiing, (known then as Cape Croker), Ontario. His interest in Indigenous life and its challenges and joys took root there and go deep. John understands Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre's challenges as they work to create and maintain programs for First Nations people and for allies who desire to build healing relationships, and he is glad to be able to support this important work.

Will you join John in nurturing healing relationships with a gift to Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre? Mail in the form on the last page of this newsletter or give online sandysaulteaux.ca/donate.



Are you a Member?

Our Annual General Meeting is on September 21 at 2:00 pm Central.

If you have donated money to SSSC since July 2022, you are welcome as a member of the corporation and have a vote! Honoured elders and members or representatives of Indigenous communities of faith in the United Church of Canada can be members too.

Register to attend in person or online by emailing connect@sandysaulteaux.ca

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

Your generosity supports traditional ceremonies, nurtures Indigenous leadership and move us all along a path to reconciliation.

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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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Yes, I support the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre!

With a gift of: \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other _____

I would like to make my gift monthly! Please contact me to set this up.

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

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

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



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