



ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025

Annual General Report

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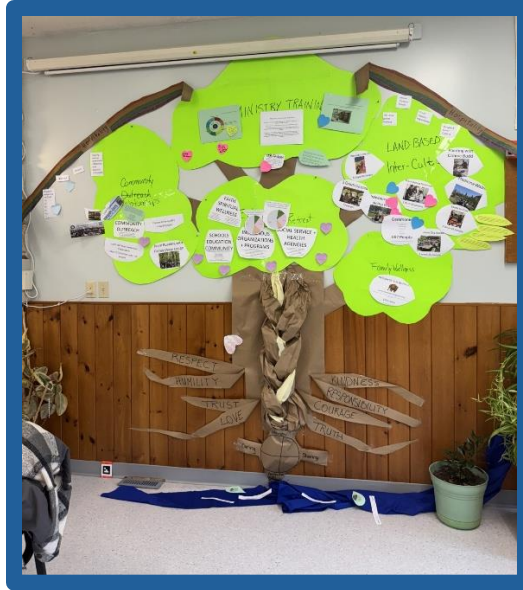
Introduction

The Annual General Report summarizes the activities, achievements, and challenges of the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (SSSC) for the year 2024-2025. The purpose of this report is to provide transparency, accountability, and reflection on the collective efforts of our Keeper of the Vision, staff, volunteers, and grassroots relationships.

Message from Leadership

This year has been marked with growth, resilience and collaboration. Despite challenges such as the 2025 Manitoba wildfires throughout the province, our team worked together to achieve a level of hospitality and care for our guests, learning circles, and community that we are proud of. The wildfires this year resulted in last-minute rental cancellations, halted our ability to hold sweat-lodge ceremonies, and affected the lives of our ministry training students. We remain dedicated to serving our communities (near and far), committed to hospitality, learning and outreach as we look forward to another successful year.





Tree of Life Model

Please explore this annual report through the lens of the Tree of Life. We developed a Tree of Life model to reflect on every part of the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, drawing on its significance in both Indigenous teachings of knowing, being, and doing, and also the teachings in the Bible. Guided by the wisdom of our Elders, we recognize that a person is like a tree- the body itself as a tree. This model also connects the biblical ideas of the 'body of Christ' and with the understanding that organizations, too, are often described as a 'body'.



Roots: Connecting our Core Values to the Land



Braided Trunk: one strand representing the Indigenous Ways, the second strand representing the Christian beliefs, and the Gold Strand representing our relationship with Creator. (Inspired by the sweetgrass teachings and the UCC Parallel Pathway document)



Branches: Explaining each programming area of Sandy-Saulteaux: Ministry Training, Group Rentals, Land-Based Learning, Family Wellness, and Community Outreach



Leaves: represent the SSSC's outcomes

Fruit: symbolic of the impact on individuals and families

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Mission:

The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is a place of spirit where both First Nation, Métis, and Inuit and Christian spiritual beliefs are respected, shared and understood.

In the circle, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit women and men are nurtured for leadership roles in The United Church of Canada, other denominations, and in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities as lay, diaconal and ordained ministers.

From the strength of Elders' wisdom, the Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre will foster teachings of respect, healing, and connectedness to be shared: for the benefit of individuals: for restoring balance and wholeness among peoples and with all of creation; and for nurturing a prophetic voice.

Core Values



Respect: Should we not agree, we will listen to each other. When we respect the circle, we follow its direction; when we respect the church, we engage. We will listen to the youth and their expressions.

Kindness: Despite our history of hardship and struggle, we move forward in a manner that expresses gentleness and affirmation to others as we live into our vision and purpose. Stories need to be told about kindness.

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Truth/Honesty: We acknowledge that truth can be painful, but it needs to be told for the sake of freedom from those things that bind us i.e. de-colonizing, inter-generational effects of residential school. We seek to be true to the spirit of who we are and what God calls us to be – fully realized children of God.

Responsibility: In our gratitude and in recognition of *All My Relations*, we will discern together a good direction for our future. We will take ownership for decision-making and actions. And we accept the consequences of our choices.

Sharing: We offer our gifts to each other, to our communities, the church, and all Creation.

Caring: We encourage care for our Elders, and our children, mindful of the need to serve them first. We encourage care for the youth and adults too because God cares for the whole. We encourage care for God's creation because God said it was good.

Humility: We seek to be humble as Jesus was humble, letting go of self for the sake of ministry to the people.

Trust: We trust in God's Word. We understand that we need to be the seed to growth and transformation. The Learning Circle must be a place of safety, creating a sense of family for the students.

7 Generations: With the understanding that needs and contexts change, we will consistently consider our past and our future unto seven generations.

Love: All of the above is love made real. Love as God loves us. Blessings will flow.

Courage: To face change with confidence and walk into the future as Christians grounded in the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and knowing our Traditional ways to be taught at the new Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. Courage is what students need to become valiant ministers of the Gospel of The New Testament for an Old Testament people in the United Church of Canada and in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit territories in the new Wabung.

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Summary that highlights:

- **10 active Ministry Students across 3 provinces**
- **Total Reach (992 people) through programming**
- **\$200,000+ in grants & facility upgrades**
- **72% donor retention & 13 legacy commitments**
- **Key programs: Mamawe Ota Askihk, Seeds to Stew, Plant-Based Medicine workshops**
- **2026 focus: spiritual leadership, land-based learning, sustainable funding**



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Detailed Program Highlights

Ministry Training:

Key Achievements

- Keeper of the Learning Circle started in January of 2025
- Developed Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR)
- Coordinated 2025 Learning Circles, integrating virtual participation
- Implemented Leadership Mondays for peer support and ministerial development
- Deepened student understanding of Indigenous spirituality, Christian theology, and ministry practice
- Urban Ministries Connections: Raymond Flett Memorial Church, and 1 Just City



Challenges

- The Keeper of the Learning Circle role was vacant from June 2024 until January of 2025, in which the Keeper of the Circle supported in the role
- Remote work and mid-year onboarding required close collaboration
- Need additional support

Future Priorities

- Streamline reporting and administrative processes
- Additional support for ministry programming
- Continue to develop leadership, theological reflection, and Indigenous ministry integration



Ministry training students in the Learning Circle visited with Clan Mothers in Winnipeg to reflect on youth and urban ministry.

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Student & Program Statistics



- **Active Students:** 10 (Ontario 4, Manitoba 4, Alberta 2)
- **Inactive Students:** 4 (Manitoba)
- **PLAR Graduates:** 1 ordained in October 2025; 1 completing June 2026; 1 in progress
- **Learning Circle Focus Areas:** Church History, Bible Study, Youth & Urban Ministry, Worship, Preaching, Gospels, Apocalyptic Literature, Indigenous Teachings

2024-2025 Learning Year at a Glance

October 2024: The Learning Circle was hosted at 5 Oaks in Ontario and included:

1. **BS2 Wisdom and Psalms**

- **Course Description:** From the Wisdom books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations) a discussion of: the images of God and the Spirit; themes, metaphors, proverbs, poetry and art; and, human to human relationships and with creation. From the Wisdom tradition of Indigenous Elders a discussion of these same matters to encourage appreciation for and use of this cultural wisdom.

2. **HS4 Prophets and Prophecies**

- **Course Description:** This circle invites participants reflected on prophetic imagination as inspiring and participating in the creation and recreation of the world toward greater justice and harmony amidst cycles and systems of power built on dominance and death. It asks participants to draw together resources from both Indigenous and Christian traditions to enliven a posture of prophetic ministry to (re)build communities that promote life and justice amidst cycles and systems that wield oppression, death, and a consciousness of empire that plunders and dominates.



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January 2025: Hosted at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

3. HCD1 Introduction to Church History:

- **Course Description:** This Learning Circle offered an overview of church history from the perspective of mission. It explored the missionary movements of the early church through until the present, with particular emphasis on missionary work of The United Church of Canada. The colonial impact of mission on Indigenous peoples was critically examined.

4. BS 1 Introduction to the Bible and Bible Study Methods

- **Course Description:** This course provided an introduction to the Bible and Bible study by exploring the Bible's major themes and the story that it tells of Creator's relationship to humanity. The course looked at how the content of the Bible is shaped by the geographic, cultural, and social contexts out of which its different writings emerged. The Circle looked at various methods and approaches that can be used to study the Bible in ways that nurture faith in Creator and Creator's saving ways.

April 2025: Hosted at Sandy-Saulteaux and in Winnipeg



5. CE5 Youth and Urban Ministry

- **Course Description:** Explored spirituality, theology, and practices surrounding the faith formation of youth and people who live in urban settings. Students learned about different ways that urban and youth ministries and outreach look in urban settings, identify ways to partnership with urban ministries in their area and generate practices for walking alongside youth on the adventure of discipleship.



6. PM3 Communion, Baptism, Marriage, and Funerals

- **Course Description:** This course looked at the history, theology, and practice of Christian worship services for communion, baptism, marriage, and funeral/celebration of life and to compare these with traditional Indigenous teachings and ceremonies and enhance knowledge, skills, and experience of Indigenous teachings and related traditional Indigenous ceremonies for rites and passages through life alongside Christian theology and worship services for communion, baptism, marriage, and

Ministry Students visited Pimicikamak Wellness Centre to learn how 1 Just City serves the urban population

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funeral/celebration of life. Students will also learn how to record these events to meet requirements for church archives and vital statistics.



Photo of 2024 Graduation Celebration: Wayne Monague with his mom, wife, and aunts and he will be ordained this October 2025!

June 2025: was hosted online and at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

7. PM 1 Worship and Preaching

- **Course Description:** This course was designed to explore practical tools in crafting and delivering sermons; as well a look at oral traditions. The learning Circle participated (virtually) in the 2025 Festival of Homiletics provided space for deep theological reflection. Its preachers/lecturers were inspirational. They demonstrated how to navigate 21st century realities. The 2025 theme was *Preaching to Heal the Divide*, apropos for a time such as this in our families, communities, and world

8. CS 2 – Gospels

- **Course Description:** This course was designed for students to gain experience and skill in reading and interpreting the bible and theological reflection on scripture.



“About a month and a half ago after worship, my sister said she had noticed that I was speaking with more confidence and commented that the sermons were more meaningful. She could see what she called ‘real growth’. I felt humble and so

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happy because I know she wouldn't say those things just for nothing." - Janet, ministry student

Upcoming Courses for 2025-2026



October 2025 Five Oaks, ON	BS4 Daniel and Revelations AT8 Traditional Teachings
January 2026	HS2 Exodus, Judges, and Kings TH4 World Religions
March 2026	PC7 Mental Health First Aid BS3/PC6 Scriptures & Healing
May 2026	AT1 Traditional Medicine PC4 LGBTQ2S+ & Healthy Relationships

To read the syllabus, register for one course or to apply as a ministry student, please visit our website at www.sandysaulteaux.ca



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Intercultural Programming Highlights/Community outreach:



Key Achievements

- Partnership with Family Ways Lodge to provide land-based, ceremonies and family wellness programming. Knowledge Keepers from Norway House, Fisher River, Brokenhead, Garden Hill, Cross Lake and Lake Man support individuals, families, and schools



Knowledge Keepers Greg Robso, Denny Murdock sharing the medicines that grow on the land at Sandy-Saulteaux

- Community relationship with Clan Mothers Healing Village
- Reached 992 individuals through teachings, ceremonies, workshops, and events.
-

Highlights:

- Hosted Mamawe Ota Askihk, an intergenerational land-based learning camp with 21 participants.
- Delivered Seeds to Stew workshops linking Indigenous teachings, gardening, health, and food, with over 24 registered participants for each of 4 workshops
- Partnered with 15 UCC congregations to host the UCC 100-Year Centennial Service (~130 attendees).



Nature journaling together at Mamawe Ota Askihk Camp

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Served the community at Beauhead Arts Festival, providing food for 300 people, and providing drum songs at Christmas on Park, Louis Riel Day, and the Beauhead Arts Festival.

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- Hosted the Brokenhead River Recreation Summer Camp, the EESS Barons Indigenous Club, Network 4 Change, and Survivors Hope Crisis Centre.
- Held Friends & Family Celebration with 80 participants in the new Pavilion.
- Engaged local youth through ROTB family programs and school partnerships.
- Held a total of 10 sweat lodge ceremonies that were available to the public.
- Held Plant-Based Medicine workshops with 30 registered participants in each of 4 workshops, exploring sacred medicines.



Youth making 'liquid smudge' for people to smudge when in the hospital



Challenges & Future Focus:

- Need for sustainable funding to reduce reliance on small grants and staff burnout.
- No designated staff plan to implement the Land-Based and Intercultural Programming, which is requested in increasing amounts every year.

Future Priorities:

- Hire a Cultural Coordinator to coordinate the programming
- Strengthen and expand the land-based programming
- 30 local schools engaged and ready to partner for land-based STEM curriculum
- Strengthening drum groups and cultural programming with secured 2025/26 funding.
- Continue building partnerships with schools, churches, and community organizations.
-



"I'm so excited to see non-Indigenous people here that are joining in on our ceremonial practices and learning with us. Because we live amongst each other. Everyone can learn from each other. Everyone brings a unique gift, unique skills to offer. I think that's very special" - Roxanne, Mamawe Ota Askihk participant

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Communications & Fundraising Highlights

Key Achievements

- Increased donor numbers and retention (72%)
- Planned gifts reached 13 legacy commitments
- Produced newsletters, social media content, and event communication

Challenges

- Limited staff for multi-event management
- Website accessibility and security improvements needed

Future Focus

- Expand strategic communications and community engagement
- Enhance donor stewardship and legacy giving initiatives



“Thank you for including us in your celebration of family and friends. We were grateful for the welcoming energy we received from everyone in attendance.

- John & Charley, neighbors & donors

Land and Building

Key Achievements



- \$200,000+ in grants for programs and infrastructure upgrades
- Completed facility upgrades: offices, flooring, cabinets, workshop garage, sweat lodge, Lodge House
- Upgraded Dining Room, cabins, outdoor seating, and coffee/breakfast counters

Family Ways Lodge member Greg Robson helped put up a new sweat lodge, with the new lodge house in the background.

Challenges & Needs

- Facility and accessibility upgrades needed
- Need for new kitchen cabinets, storage, and laundry facilities

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- Hire full-time seasonal garden support and part-time property help
- Facilities: Accessibility, cabin upgrades, workshop completion, hydro upgrades, kitchen and storage improvements
- SSSC is serviced by a drilled well, and low water seasons are a concern

Future Priorities

- Address ongoing facility and infrastructure needs
- Expand teaching kitchen and cookbook initiatives
- Upgrade storage, kitchen cabinets, and cabin facilities



“The meals were awesome, tasty & healthy. It is very welcoming, staff is awesome.”

- Lesley, retreat guest

Financial Overview

Major Funding and Grants 2025: United Church of Canada, IERHA Healthy Together Now, Brokenhead River Community Foundation, New England Grant, MB Government from the Ground Up, and others.

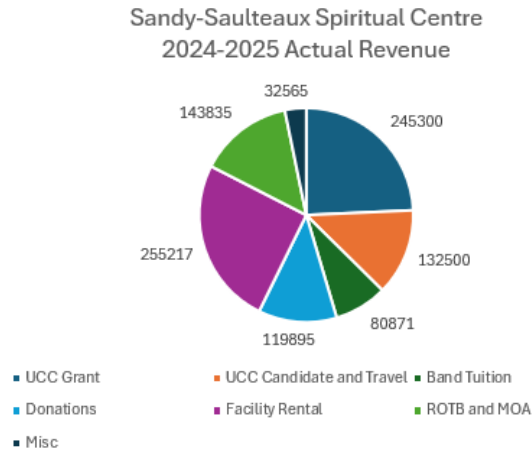
Challenges:

- Burn-out from small grant and report writing
- Explore additional support during peak periods in finance
- Primary funding is expected to dramatically reduce in the next 1-5 years and require sustainable, long-term solutions

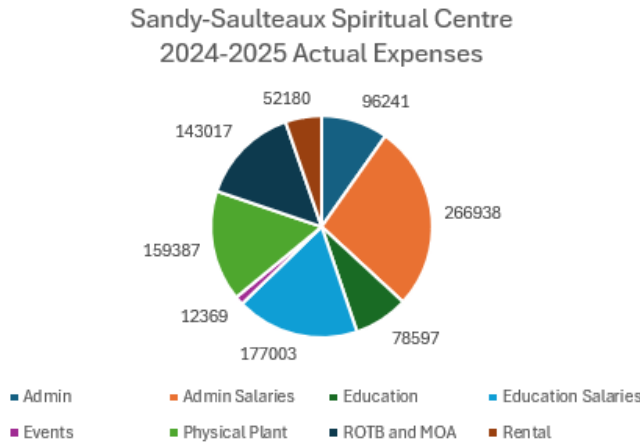


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Total Income and funding sources



Total Expenditures



*“This is one of the most important things the church is doing right now.”
- Rob, honored elder & donor*

Collaboration (partners and teamwork success)

- Brokenhead Arts Festival, opportunity to outreach and provide food services, and share drum songs with the community
- Brokenhead River Recreation Commission: opportunity to share land-based knowledge with youth and participate in Louis Riel Day and Christmas on Park providing drum songs for the community and share information about SSSC.

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- EESS, Barons Indigenous Club (grades 6-8), A group of 8 students will be volunteering to support our Orange-Shirt Day event.
- St. Pauls United Church, Beausejour: SSSC was the recipient of their winter cake-auction fundraiser
- A group of 8-12 women each month would gather at SSSC to work collaboratively to fulfill needs of Centre that included harvesting and cleaning medicines, creating fabric storage bags for medicines, making rawhide rattles for drum circles, cleaning and shelling dried beans from the garden, etc.



“Today when I came home and reflected on the day at Sandy-Saulteaux I remembered this print I’ve had for about 40 years, and how it attracted me when I first saw it in a shop in Winnipeg. I think much was accomplished today, in more ways than one. It was a beautiful day. Thank you!” - Wendy, women’s circle participant



Looking ahead

Our path ahead is to continue to nurture Indigenous spiritual leadership development, expand the land-based programming while deepening community connections to support learning, healing, and spiritual growth. To do this, there will be a focus on broadening and seeking long-term funding to ensure sustainable growth, implement fundraising initiatives and upgrading our facilities to make it more accessible for visitors, families and learners.

Key Focus for 2026:

- Strengthen and expand Indigenous ministry, land-based learning, and spiritual leadership development.

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- Address funding and infrastructure gaps to support accessibility and growth.
- Strengthen communications, fundraising, and community engagement initiatives.

Commitment to continuous improvement

Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is committed to continuous quality improvement across all aspects of our services. SSSC will strengthen and enhance the work already being done by being guided by feedback, reflection, and emerging needs. We strive to ensure our programs, services, and spaces remain accessible, and sustainable, fostering meaningful learning, spiritual growth, and strong connections to the land and for the communities we serve.

Acknowledgements

We extend a heartfelt thanks to:

Staff and volunteers for the dedication

Partners and community members for their collaborations

Funders and donors for generous support

Conclusion

This year has demonstrated our team's dedication to our shared vision. As we move forward, we are confident that with continued collaboration, innovation and resilience, that we will achieve even greater impact in the year ahead.



*Tobacco is a medicine for offering thanks.
Staff and volunteers worked together to
harvest wheelbarrows full of tobacco from
our garden.*