



Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre



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Indigenous Spiritual Leaders Move Reconciliation from Aspiration to Reality

by Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole

Ten years after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) issued its 94 Calls to Action, Canada's progress remains disappointingly slow. Only 38 have been started and a mere 13 completed. The churches that once ran residential schools — Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United — still have unfinished business.

Some denominations that weren't directly involved, like the Christian Reformed and Evangelical Lutheran churches, have embraced reconciliation anyway, proving the TRC's message has taken root. Yet the landmark Covenant of Reconciliation promised in Call 46 is still missing, and while several churches have adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Call 48), few have woven it into real decision-making.

Where churches have excelled is education. Congregations now regularly teach the truth about residential schools, and seminaries are ensuring future clergy understand Indigenous spirituality and the trauma their institutions helped cause. Pope Francis's 2022 apology was a milestone — but one that stopped short of full accountability.

A decade on, reconciliation is more aspiration than reality. Both government and churches need to move from words to action. The real hope lies with young Indigenous leaders — educated, determined, and ready to reshape Canada's future. That's why I'm committed to supporting Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. The ministry here is raising up Indigenous leaders with the spiritual tools to serve their communities and make self-determination not just an aspiration but a reality. Won't you join me?

Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole is one of SSSC's Keepers of the Vision.



SSSC graduate Rev. Wayne Monague (centre) with family and friends at his ordination in Chimnissing, his home community. Leaders like Wayne give life to our hopes for reconciliation!

The Road to Ministry

What's the longest road trip you've been on? Have you ever spent 12 hours on a bus? Or reached a destination after traveling on a snowmobile, helicopter, plane and taxi?

For many of our students the journey to becoming a minister can be long and costly in more ways than one! Their training includes gathering in person four times a year for Learning Circles (classes). Thank you to all who've helped make the journey easier by giving to student travel costs!

Students are working hard to become leaders in their communities. Your support helps raise up the leaders our elders envisioned. You're building the leadership that Canada needs to move toward healing and reconciliation.

It's not too late to make sure our students can get to class in the coming year.

Give today at sandysaulteaux.ca/starsdonate.



We asked our students: What was the biggest AHA moment of the past year and what are you looking forward to?

Donna Moore



Reflecting on the last year of learning... feeling anxious and excited at the same time. The teachings, wisdom and knowledge which was implanted in me has made me gain a deep understanding of God's Word and work. I am looking forward to learning more leadership skills which will help me to be a good

prophet. I am interested in learning about the letters of Paul and the book of Revelation.

Iona Laughier



Being in this ministry program has helped me mentally, physically, and spiritually. I learned to accept the things I cannot change. I need to fix myself before I can fix anybody else! Talking and hearing people speak in the Learning Circle has helped me bring up my confidence. I am slowly

turning away from my shyness. I'm learning to forgive myself. In the coming year, I am looking forward to my personal growth, exploring the Word of God, having a healthy work life balance and contributing to my Church.

Join us in the Learning Circle

Guests are welcome to join our Indigenous ministry training students in any of these Learning Circles. All circles are held in person at our Centre in Manitoba, unless otherwise indicated. Contact us for details and to register.

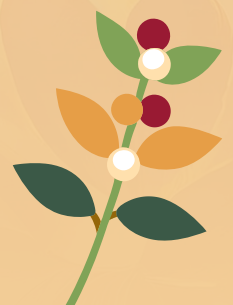
Exodus, Judges & Kings: Jan 19-23 (online)

World Religions: Jan. 26-30

Scriptures & Healing: March 23-27

Traditional Medicine: May 25-29

2SLGBTQ+ & Healthy Relationships: June 1-5



Welcome Shanley!



We are delighted to announce that Shanley Spence has joined our staff family! As our new Wahkotowin Cultural Coordinator, she will work with trusted elders and knowledge keepers to organize cultural and land-based programming at SSSC.

Shanley is a tribal member of Mathias Colomb Cree Nation and has Anishinaabe roots from Lake St. Martin First Nation. A graduate from the University of Winnipeg and cultural training programs, she brings over 30 years of lived cultural knowledge, experience, embodiment and practice through avenues such as traditional dance, drumming, ceremony life and following the red road.

Sign up for our e-newsletter, watch our website and follow us on social media to find out what ceremonies, workshops and more Shanley will be bringing to our community.

Mamawe Ota Askihk – Sharing Life Together Here on Earth



Every summer, we hold a week-long spiritual gathering for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of all ages to come and root themselves in an understanding of the land as our health. We share land-based skills, working alongside each other in friendship. This year, activities included blending plant medicines for tea, soapstone carving and basket weaving - and stacking! We loved having one of our graduates, Rev. Connie Budd (pictured, left) join us as our elder. Watch our website for 2026 dates and registration.

Reconciliation Reflections

It's been 10 years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) issued its final report and 94 Calls to Action. Commissioner The Honourable Murray Sinclair said at the time: **"We have described for you a mountain. We have shown you the way to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing."** We asked some friends for their reflections on this anniversary.

Elders and knowledge keepers in our circle often remind us that hearing and sharing the TRUTH must happen before reconciliation is possible. As we listen and honour the truth, we can look to Indigenous wisdom to point the way forward.

Thank you to everyone who shared. Let's hold each other in prayer and find the strength to keep climbing together. If you haven't yet, we invite you to consider these questions too. Send your reflections to connect@sandysaulteaux.ca and we may publish them in our next newsletter.



How is the climb going for you? How are you feeling as we mark this anniversary of the TRC?

I feel hope,

as a teacher in a high school, because the youth are really proud of their heritage, are reclaiming culture and are using their energy to make change. But, it's not the responsibility of only Indigenous peoples, it's the responsibility of all Canadians and I hope that the symbolic changes we've seen, transmute into policy change and real, practical improvements that people can see and feel.

- Chenoa Walker

I was unknowingly part of a problem,

I will knowingly be part of a solution. I commit to educating myself and to hear the stories of survivors. It breaks my heart that I was unaware that there was such a thing as a residential school, during the time I went to school (in the 70s).

- Kim Wasnie

The climb has always been a challenging one.

I sought out my culture when I was a teenager and found myself feeling left behind as there was little to no programming. My cultural journey was at a standstill until I went back to post-secondary school. Not only did I learn about residential schools, it opened the doors for my parents to share snippets of their agonizing & heartbreaking residential school experience, especially when the TRC held its closing ceremonies.

Recently, I feel like the climb is getting manageable with more and more people including Indigenous people in various settings. This brings us together to heal, to learn, to understand and to share our gifts with one another.

- Roxanne Kent



I feel like I am challenged and privileged...

...to live out the calls to action every day. Many families are struggling with intergenerational trauma and its impacts in their lives and family relationships. Being able, as a settler with power, to honour the stories, experiences, and struggles that come with that by messaging to the people I serve that such experiences will be heard and validated has created new bonds and connections. By being willing to ask questions about lateral violence, family myths, and experiences of family expectations and parenting styles, I have felt truly invited to walk with people on their healing journey.

- Kathy Carlson

We continue on.

The journey to fostering Truth and Reconciliation is just that. Marked by small steps but everything good is worth working for. [On Sept. 30] there is a symbolic meeting on the bridge that separates the town and nearby First Nation. A brief ceremony and drumming will be part of acknowledging the wrong that has been done and that we will continue to work together to ensure it does not happen again. Nahow. Baamaapii gawaapmin miinwaa

- Janet Kewaquom-Root



Where have you heard truth shared and honoured over the last 10 years? What Indigenous words, stories, songs and sacred objects are you carrying or learning about on this journey?

"And you will know the truth,

and the truth will make you free." When I share this I carry it a little further with: "But you have to hear it without the guilt of your ancestors otherwise you are just as culpable as they were in their actions when they came. To our people because guilt doesn't let you see past negative behaviour it convinces you that you were right."

- Rev. Deb Anderson-Pratt

Many times I have sat in the circle...

...listening to stories of courage, of pain, of the lost and the found. The Traditional circle can offer an advanced form of conflict resolution that is far more effective than models of punishment, retaliation, shaming or force. I believe that Indigenous Elders and communities may hold an important key to truth and reconciliation for other conflicted communities. I have often wondered what would happen if communities, wedged by a deep divide of mistrust and even hate, could sit together in a Traditional circle led by a wise Indigenous Elder. Might Sandy-Saulteaux be called by the Creator to host such miraculous gatherings?

- Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd

Truth is not only spoken, it's carried.

We have learned that carrying truth and reconciliation means embodying it in how we live, work and play. It's not enough to say we acknowledge the land or value Indigenous ways of knowing, we have a responsibility to live those values.

- Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre

I believe that...

the Calls to Action are the single most important document in the history of the Canadian nation alongside, and growing out from our Charter of Rights and Freedoms - Marion Hodge

Traditional Teachings & the Bible: Blanket Ceremony

by Rev. Agnes Spence



We wrapped Melody McKellar in a star blanket this summer. Melody has a deep history with the Centre (beginning as a student in the 90s) and returned to our staff as cultural resource and elder for a year. She gathered medicines, sat with students, kept a sweat lodge here, led a women's circle and shared teachings with guests from across Manitoba and beyond. Her gifts in teaching, hosting, leading ceremony and cracking jokes are already missed! Miigwetch Melody!

Since time immemorial Indigenous people have used robes of furs and hides to honour others at the time of life changing events such as births, deaths, graduations and marriages. They are also given to recognize elders and those involved in a worthy endeavour. Star (quilt) blankets have replaced the furs and hides as a gift that shows utmost respect and admiration.

It is widely accepted that star blankets result in good dreams and prosperity. It is also believed that when you are wrapped in a star quilt, your ancestors are present and among you.

The sacred star is often referred to in the Bible story of the magi/astronomers. They were inspired by God to follow the star on a long journey to Bethlehem. The star pointed them to where Jesus was. It points us to the way to follow Jesus (Loving Spirit) and teaches us how we can share the gift of God's Love.

We have the star in our church. This star reminds us of the honour of the way of God. In our teachings (when we parallel with Christianity) it teaches us that the star is the endless cross of Jesus. No matter which way you look at it, you will see the cross.

Rev. Agnes Spence of Nisichawayasihyk Cree Nation graduated from Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in 2012. She is the Vision Keeper for current student Jordan Spence.



In the Learning Circle we honour both Indigenous and Christian spiritual teachings. We gathered in October to bring these teachings together at Five Oaks, former home of one of our founding schools, the Francis Sandy-Theological Centre. From left to right: SSSC student Iona Laughner, inquiring student Karen Segrave, SSSC student Donna Moore, beloved elder Norma General Lickers, Keeper of the Learning Circle Maggie Dieter, Continuing Education student Lori Neale, Sitting: St. Andrew's College student Samantha Humphreys, Standing back row: Centre for Christian Studies student Vanessa Benoit.

Merry Christmas

from all of us at
Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre!

Note that our office will
be closed from
December 20 – January 4.
You can make an online donation
anytime at sandysaulteaux.ca/donate.

Donor Connections: Barton Stone-Mount Hope United Church

When Barton Stone-Mount Hope United Church wanted a way to mark the 100th anniversary of the United Church of Canada, one of their members, Rev. Lee Claus, had an idea. "As the church moves forward in challenging times, the non-Indigenous church has so much to learn from the Indigenous church," he explained. What better way to honour our past, than by making a gift to support Indigenous ministers and a hopeful future for our church?

Lee got everyone's attention when he stood up in church and sang "I'm leaving, on a jet plane...". He shared how Indigenous ministry students travel long distances to attend Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, at an average cost of \$4,800/year. "Even though students may have the desire to enter ministry, many of them still need financial support to travel to SSSC to learn about and do the hard work to undo the damage that our forebearers and governments did in colonial times."

Over 3 months, members of Barton Stone-Mount Hope responded with gifts totalling \$4049.54. Their board matched these gifts with an additional \$4,000. From now

on, they plan to make an annual gift on Indigenous People's Day of Prayer.

Lee offers a friendly challenge to other United Church congregations: will you join Barton Stone-Mount Hope in answering prayers for justice, healing and reconciliation?

Learn more about how Barton Stone-Mount Hope United Church supported Indigenous ministry students and take up their challenge: sandysaulteaux.ca/anniversary-challenge/.



Thank you for your generosity!

Everyone below has made a gift since our last newsletter, to nurture Indigenous leadership, support traditional ceremonies, and move us all along a path to reconciliation. We are also supported by The United Church of Canada, through Mission and Service.

Elsie, Alexis, Keith, Brooklyn	Barbara Carruthers	Jay	Richard Miller	Rob & Deb Smith
C. Alguire	Libby Cassidy	Lorraine Kakegamic	Bonnie Montgomery	Susan Sorensen
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Barton Stone-Mount Hope	Jolene Iris Donaldson	Susan Loeppky	Robert Patton	Bri-anne Swan
United Church	Caryn Douglas & Peter Kidd	Sandy MacGean	Denise Pauls	Dr. Ruth Swan
Brenda Batzel	Bill Doyle	Holly MacPherson	Gale Payne	Kim Uyede-Kai
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Susan Buss	Dianne and Jim	John and Mary McNairnay	Pat Seale	Erica Young
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Carberry United Church	Reverend Bill & Mrs. Carol		Missions	



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

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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:

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☐ 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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Thank you for your generosity

