



**FRANCIS SANDY  
THEOLOGICAL CENTRE**

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**Diakonia of the United Church of Canada  
National Gathering April 5-8, 2005  
Tatamagouche Centre, N. S.**

**RE: THE LIFE AND WORK OF FRANCIS SANDY THEOLOGICAL CENTRE**

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Francis Sandy Theological Centre, I am pleased to share with you highlights of the life and work of our Centre in recent months.

I write to you from our location on the beautiful grounds of Five Oaks Education Centre near Paris, Ontario. My window on this expanse of the Grand River reveals not only the frozen river below, but also the stark branches of numerous trees, not frozen, but giving pathways of life to the movement of bird and wildlife along them.

The Francis Sandy Centre also gives a pathway of life to those who choose to minister to the aboriginal communities in our midst. Our students come to us from varied corners of our network in southwestern Ontario and Quebec; Cape Croker, Christian Island, Moraviantown, New Credit/Delaware, Ohsweken, Rama and Toronto. We number seven in our Learning Circle now with three new students and one enquirer. We look forward to graduating one of our students this summer while welcoming another in September.

Vision Keepers, Rev. Maggie McLeod and Rev. Lee Claus provide rich staff resource. Both have just returned from Beausejour, Manitoba where they attended a Vision Keepers Event sponsored by Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre. They are eager to share their findings and explore new directions with local vision keepers and Presbytery supervisors. We are missing the experienced and knowledgeable presence of our Office Manager, Anne Miller, who remains seriously ill. Fortunately the work of the centre has been ably carried on in her absence.

Our Learning Circles have encompassed a cross-section of themes including pastoral, worship, theology, social ministry and in the coming months, Biblical, history and church governance, with leadership provided by local ministers, college professors, General Council staff and our own staff. We are in the midst of plans for a cross-cultural learning experience in 2006 when students of Queen's Theological College will join the students of Francis Sandy. A joint diploma is being explored with the Centre for Christian Studies and course supplementation with Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre. Our diaconal student is

ministering in a First Nation Congregation and gaining an increasingly aboriginal perspective as she continues her studies through FSTC.

Our students have successfully ministered in a variety of contexts, congregational, urban, community and Conference positions. Sometimes they preach, sometimes they heal and sometimes they make waves, but they are always in the service of their Creator and come from the perspective of first peoples.

Activities of the Centre also include collaborative ventures with Five Oaks Education Centre such as Aboriginal Women's Wellness Weekend planned for July and Mission Study focussed on Right Relations, even a Gardener's program to benefit our natural landscape. We benefit also from the exceptional opportunities for continuing education afforded by such proximity to Five Oaks.

Francis Sandy Theological Centre works hand in hand with sister organizations Great Lakes Waterways Presbytery and All Native Circle Conference, especially the Councils on Learning, which provide oversight on education and students. Through these bodies we also contribute to the National Aboriginal Consultation and National Curriculum Consultation as well as local tasks of needs assessment. ANCC Grand Council meets in Wasauksing in July and will provide an example of aboriginal church governance for our students.

Deans and Principals of Theological Schools are responding in positive ways to changes in Education for Church Leadership (ECL). Francis Sandy joins Toronto School of Theology in representing the theological schools to ECL.

Our Board of Directors provides a solid base of support and direction to the Centre. Board membership consists of eight elders and nine other members drawn from the geographic area served by the Centre. Three out of five central conference representatives are on the Board at any given time, plus a permanent representative, Sophia Jamison, ANCC Leading Elder. Current central conference representatives are: Margaret Smith (LON); Linda Parsons (TOR); Rev. Jean Wilson (BOQ). Jean finishes her term this spring while Montreal and Ottawa Conference appoint a representative.

Francis Sandy Theological Centre is supported through grants from the United Church of Canada as well as individual and group donations. We welcome those who would walk with us in our journey through their gifts of time and money. We continue to be available to UCW gatherings, congregations, Presbyteries and Conferences through Conference representatives to our Board of Directors, our students and our office. We welcome invitations to tell you more about what we do here in our ministry with aboriginal communities as we attempt to live out the love of Christ in our student circles and in our communities.

Your Sister in Spirit,

*Brenda Laronde Simpson*  
Director, FSTC