

FRANCIS SANDY THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

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REPORT TO DUCC NATIONAL GATHERING CONFERENCE – SPRING 2007

Francis Sandy offers: a Community-based Model of Native Ministry Leadership Preparation for First Nations Congregations and Educational Events for the Whole People of God

Students: As spring approaches we have eight on our role plus two new inquirers. Sheena Marini, MIT at New Credit/Delaware, and Betty Lou McNabb, MIT at Georgina Island, will graduate from FSTC at the Annual Celebration, July 13, 2007. Sheena will be ordained at Hamilton Conference on May 26, 2007. Betty Lou will be commissioned at Toronto Conference on June 3, 2007

Staff: Vision Keeper, Rev. Lee Claus has been instrumental in the work required to prepare students for ordination and commissioning. He provides leadership on committees at the local and national level, giving voice to the needs of both Francis Sandy and our wider network. Office Manager, Wanda Montour, continues to deepen her understanding of the role of FSTC and her pivotal place at the centre. Director, Brenda Simpson celebrates her third anniversary at FSTC on July 1, with gratitude for the opportunity to work with committed and caring staff and Board and the varied and wonderful communities in our network.

Program: 2007-2008 Learning Circle dates and themes are in progress with topics in guided meditation, conflict resolution, church governance, creative liturgy, aboriginal history and the church, the meaning of Jesus, and aboriginal issues and spirituality. You are invited to join us in continuing education and to encourage members of your aboriginal communities to explore their spiritual roots at our monthly circles.

Board of Directors: Chaired by Rev. Grafton Antone; Secretary, Rev. Jean Wilson. The Fall Meeting is planned November 8-9, 2007. We appreciate the rich resource that representatives from our network Conferences provide: Linda Parsons (TO); Rev. Margaret Smith (LON); Rev. Frank Giffen (M&O). We welcome Hamilton and Bay of Quinte representatives in the near future.

Five Oaks Education Centre – Collaboration on programs with our sister centre continues. The March Circle, *Aboriginal History: Overview, Mission & Treaty*, shared with the wider church, welcomed Moderator David Giuliano in our midst. We participated in *Journey to Bethlehem* and shared worship and call to ministry with a large confirmation group. As we plan the 52nd Native Peoples' Retreat we are grateful for Five Oaks continuing support of this tradition. Our Boards are exchanging visits and exciting changes are afoot as Francis Sandy moves up to the Retreat House, our new location as of July 2007.

Native People's Retreat: Honouring the Child Within – May 4-6, 2007 – Aboriginal communities in our network and beyond join together for fun, relaxation, learning and worship. Music and ministry are key words for this sacred gathering. We have applied for a *Healing Fund Grant* to help keep this tradition alive.

Annual Celebration, June 13, 2007 - We look forward to graduating two of our students and honouring new companions. Your Conference is a vital part of our network and we invite you to bring greetings.

Quarterly Minister's Gatherings - Ministers in our congregations will meet during the April Circle helping students put church polity into native context. FSTC has applied for a *Learning Communities Grant* to help support our efforts to bring our ministers together.

Community Fellowships - The last Monday of May through October, we visit as many of our network communities as possible as they gather in this time-honoured way.

Local community – Some staff and students participated in Emmanuel College's *First Peoples and the Churches: For Generations Yet to Come* with Rev. Stan McKay and St. Paul's College, *Aboriginal Education in the 21st Century*. We are collaborating with Six Nations United Churches led by George Montour on development and use of their manse, and strengthening ties with Woodlands Cultural Centre and Library where our artwork will be displayed with the *Manitou Collection*.

Brantford Native Housing Women's Circle will hold their 3rd Women's Wellness Retreat at FSTC and Five Oaks in July. We are grateful to *Common Life* for helping to make this possible.

Great Lakes Waterways Presbytery and All Native Circle Conference - FSTC provides support as a member of Council on Learning. Executive continues to meet at FSTC. ANCC Council on Learning and Council on Healing and Respect will be held at FSTC/Five Oaks in May with opportunity to stay for Native Peoples' Retreat. FSTC staff has participated in Oneida UC Needs Assessment and Presbytery Oversight Meetings at Walpole Island and Wasauksing/Shawanaga.

Aboriginal Theological Schools: Self-Study of DJSRC, FSTC, VST has been completed and presented to ECL-CC. Implications for our future work are under review.

Deans and Principals – at a workshop gathering in the new year will examine the leadership outcomes curriculum approach.

We remember : Companions and honoured Elders, *Lloyd King of Six Nations* and *Dora Benson, of Rama First Nation*

Your Sister in Spirit,
Brenda Laronde Simpson, Principal