

Indigenous Spiritualities and Contemporary Issues Syllabus

Adrian Jacobs, Keeper of the Circle, Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre
Patricia Vickers, PhD, Director of Mental Wellness with the First Nations Health Authority, BC
July 11 to 15, 2016 at Native Ministries Consortium/VST Summer School

Course Description – Indigenous principles and laws have and continue to provide an invaluable resource to “being” in and with an ever changing society that has a history of violence and injustice against Indigenous peoples for hundreds of years. An overview of contemporary issues will be presented with a framework for analysis from an Indigenous perspective: Indigenous governance and ancestral law; Treaties, from Guswentah to modern treaties; Colonialism and the Policy of Assimilation; Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People; Colonial violence, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; Grassroots resistance and restoration.

This course will discuss the essential, fundamental beliefs and principles that have sustained Indigenous peoples through generations of cultural oppression.

Course Design – This course utilizes the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre Learning Circle design and methodology. The class will be set-up in at least three differing configurations during the week: a circle with an “eastern door” entrance and the SSSC Student Bundle in the Centre; two parallel facing rows with the SSSC Keepers of the Vision Buffalo Pipe Bundle at the centre; and a square set-up with right angle rows facing the centre. Each day will bring unique Indigenous ceremonies and protocols to open, conduct and close the day. Some of these will include: smudging, sharing circles, thanksgiving address, pipe ceremony, grief ceremony, etc. No one is obligated to participate in any ceremony but is expected to display respect for the various protocols.

Educational Philosophy – SSSC utilizes an adult learning educational philosophy that views the resource person as a learner and learners as educators. Each participant brings a wealth of experience and unique cultural contexts to the educational engagement. Transformation happens when there is a profound meeting of hearts and minds. Barbara Wilson, BC Elder and Chair of the Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools Committee of The United Church of Canada, is the Learning Circle Elder this week. She is available as a resource for students and encouraged to offer her valuable reflections throughout the week. Should the need arise, the Resource People, Learning Circle Elder, and VST Representative(s) will address the issue and guide the Learning Circle response.

Course Rationale – Indigenous people across Turtle Island have been deeply impacted by colonization and intergenerational trauma. Indigenous identity was the main target in this sad history. The land taught our elders and shaped our Indigenous languages. Each unique Indigenous culture responded to the Earth our Faculty (SSSC guiding philosophy) and situated us in our worlds and let us know who we are and what our responsibilities are in regards to our relationship with the land and how we must live in a good way with it. We will examine some of these cultural understandings as a platform to engage with some of the contemporary issues Indigenous people face today. We will also be cognizant of the legacy of colonialism and how this has impacted our contemporary cultures. We will also be cognizant of the ways in which oppression is perpetuated. It is believed by both resource people that our Indigenous ancestral ways, which helped us flourish for millennia, hold answers and guidance for the renewal of our flourishing.

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Desired Learning Outcomes: Participants:

- Will become familiar with some of the rich diversity of Indigenous cultures in Canada
- Will gain a sense of how the land shapes language and culture
- Will notice patterns and similarities in Indigenous cultures and will understand the importance of not reaching conclusions without engagement and the need to dialogue and observe deeply before offering reflections
- Will begin to appreciate the resilience of Indigenous people in surviving cultural genocide
- Will gain a greater appreciation of the way their own experience and cultural context enriches their engagement with others
- Will increase their understanding of the background of contemporary Indigenous issues reported on in the media and give some sense of how to respond more intelligently and be more of an ally rather than a colonizer
- Will experience a more egalitarian Indigenous approach to education

Teaching Strategies

- Opening and closing sharing circles
- Participation/observation of Indigenous ceremony
- Daily/regular check-ins
- Presentations (PowerPoint, verbal, ceremonial, video, story-telling and otherwise) and discussions of course materials
- Honoring of emotional and relational dimensions of transformation
- Acknowledging the Unknown and the unknown and our vulnerability as human beings

Your feedback throughout the course is sought and appreciated. Please send your suggestions, via email (Adrian@sandysaulteaux.ca or pjvickers@mac.com) or in person, so we can cultivate a good learning environment and valuable experience for us all.

Attendance Policy

Participation in course discussion is essential. Scheduled Learning Circle sessions and events require attendance and journals should be done daily.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9 AM to Noon – LC – Introduction and Opening Sharing Circle	9 AM to Noon – Learning Circle Adrian Jacobs	9 AM to Noon – Learning Circle Adrian Jacobs	9 AM to Noon – Learning Circle Patricia Vickers	9 AM to Noon – Learning Circle Patricia Vickers
Noon – lunch	Noon – lunch	Noon – lunch	Noon – lunch	Noon – lunch
1:30 to 4:30 PM – Learning Circle Adrian Jacobs	1:30 to 4:30 PM – Learning Circle Adrian Jacobs	1:30 to 4:30 PM – Learning Circle Patricia Vickers	1:30 to 4:30 PM – Learning Circle Patricia Vickers	1:30 to 4:30 PM Closing Circle Adrian Jacobs Patricia Vickers
6 hours	6 hours	6 hours	6 hours	6 hours
TOTAL LC = 30 HOURS				

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Daily Journals

Three to five pages of a daily journal must be handed in to complete course requirements. The daily reflections should address the following areas:

- What do I observe and understand from the Indigenous knowledge shared today?
- How shall I move forward with further understanding and appreciation of the kind of Indigenous knowledge I engaged with today?
- What Bible and theological considerations do I bring to my engagement with Indigenous knowledge and issues?
- As an influencer what can I do to assist the development of good relations given the Indigenous knowledge and perspective from today's Learning Circle?
- What needs to change/grow/heal/etc. in me to help me be a contributor to reconciliation?

Reading Resources

1. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People:
http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf
2. Royal Commission on Aboriginal People Summary (selections given in daily reading):
http://iog.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/1997_April_rcapsum.pdf
3. Doctrine of Discovery: A Pirate Law paper by Adrian Jacobs, 2015
4. Calls to Action of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:
http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
5. Church Apologies
 - a. The United Church of Canada - <http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/apologies>
 - b. The Anglican Church of Canada - <http://www.anglican.ca/tr/apology/>
 - c. The Catholic Church -
 - i. <http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/media-room/files/2630-apology-on-residential-schools-by-the-catholic-church>
 - ii. Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate - <http://caid.ca/MisOblMarImmApo2001.pdf>
 - iii. Pope Benedict XVI - <http://www.ctvnews.ca/pope-apologizes-for-abuse-at-native-schools-1.393911>
 - iv. PM Trudeau asks Pope Francis for apology - <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/trudeau-says-he-will-ask-pope-to-apologize-for-residential-schools/article27782671/>
 - v. Pope Benedict apology for colonization in Bolivia - <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/pope-s-apology-in-bolivia-a-good-sign-for-residential-school-survivors-trc-commissioner-211237308.html>
 - d. The Presbyterian Church of Canada - <http://caid.ca/PresChuApo1994.pdf>
6. Government Apologies
 - a. Canada - <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prime-minister-stephen-harper-s-statement-of-apology-1.734250>
 - b. United States - <http://indianlaw.org/node/529>

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- c. Australia - <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples>
7. Indigenous Child Welfare – <https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/Information%20Sheet%20re%20CHRT%20Decision.pdf>
8. Indigenous incarceration - <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/aboriginal-inmates-1.3403647>
9. Indigenous Women - <http://www.nwac.ca/policy-areas/violence-prevention-and-safety/sisters-in-spirit/>
10. Indigenous education - <https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/FN-Education-Info-Sheet.pdf>
11. Indigenous water supply - <http://canadians.org/fn-water>
12. Krishnamurti, J. Freedom, Love and Action. Boston: MA, Shambala Publications Inc. 1994.