

PROFILES – RECOGNITION

Samuel (Sam) Ross
(Designated Lay Minister)



Image and article by Joyce Johnston via https://sandysaulteaux.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sandy-Saulteaux_September-2020.pdf

“Humble with the energy of two men at times, Sam loved the music and often leads us in song. Sam had a long history in the church and had such an open mind about the traditional rites that were discussed. His heart is one of love for everyone in the circle, often lending his support in individual services provided by other student Ministers. I am so glad to hear he is one of the graduates as he is likely as much of a Blessing to his community as he was to his company of student Ministers.”



Elenor Thompson*
(Ordinand)

I grew up in a small remote northern Cree community of Oxford House in the 1960's and 70's at the time when there was still an 'indian' agent. My first formal education was in an United Church ran day school. All the teachers were non-local and all jobs were occupied by non-Indigenous people, so there was still a great apprehension towards them. There were days when my mother would tell us to hide under the bed when she saw a non-Indigenous person walking on the road. She had this fear that we would be taken away to Residential School like my older siblings. In spite of all that, my mother insisted that we learn our language and culture. She taught all her children independence, survival – living off the land, and pride.

Even as a young child, I saw how my older siblings and other community kids that returned for the summer from Residential Schools were different in a way that they were not as proud of the creator's gifts. I learned much later why all this occurred. I did not attend residential school however it had an affect on me. During the summers, getting to know my older siblings and bonding with them during the summer was good, but then to see them leave for the year was hard on me and even harder my parents and them. One of the eight students that perished in a plane crash returning from Residential school in 1972 was my sister, Ethel Francis Grieves.

Faith was always important in my family as my father -Vernon Grieves - was an elder in the United Church and he later became the first ordained Indigenous minister in Oxford House. My mother maintained strong traditional beliefs and practices while respecting all faiths. I learned much from both of my parents and they have broadened my vision and nurtured my own spiritual growth.

I married Rev. John Thompson in 1977, and the first 9 years of our life together were at South Indian Lake where I saw first hand the devastation to creation and a way of life when the Hydro dam raised the water 18 feet.

While living in Thompson and Winnipeg I furthered my post secondary education obtaining a diploma in Business Skills Integrated and a Bachelor of Education with honours.

In 1997 we moved to Oxford House, where I began my teaching career. Over the next 18 years I enjoyed teaching numerous classes in both the Elementary and High School.

My 'Call' to ministry came in very subtle ways. In 1997 my aunt Mary suggested that I train for ministry. Over the years, she asked me twice after that but each time I would tell her that I wasn't ready. But her suggestion had sparked something in my heart! In January, 2005 remembering that dad's wish was that one of his children become a minister so my brother, Gregory and I decided that we would start our training in October 2005. This didn't happen because my brother died from a heart attack in April 15, 2005. During the next 10 years, there were many youth suicides and daily attempts in my community. After school I would try to think of ways to reach out to our youth in need and I knew full well that traditional teachings were not seen as a means for healing. I decided that I would go through the church and try to bring about the healing since it was through the church that played a huge part of the loss of the traditional teachings. I started my training at SSSC on April, 2015. Little did I know that I would be the one that would find the great 'healing' through the church! My teaching career ended when I endured a stroke in July 2015. After recovery I continued my training the Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Center in Beausejour as well as taking several courses at the Vancouver School of Theology and devoted my full time in my personal spiritual growth through Christian and traditional teachings.

I have enjoyed the journey, and I am very grateful to my family and grand children for their support and encouragement. A very special thanks to my daughter-in-law Jocelyn who drove me back and forth to Beausejour during my years of attending the SSSC. My grandchildren often came for the ride and this made the travel easier. Thanks also to my sons Victor, John and Joshua and my husband John for getting me a laptop to ease my education. I still don't know how to use it fully but their belief and confidence in me strengthens my resolve to overcome all challenges. Out of struggle and perseverance comes strength and compassion.

By the Grace of God, I look forward to serving the people at Gods Lake Narrows and wherever I am able. Faith and hope in one another will ensure a good way forward for generations to come.

Mehtoni nihnanaskomaw kihcimanihtoo!
