



The Storyteller

JULY 2025

From Darkness to Light: (Psalm 18:28)

A New Chapter for the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre

By **Eddie MacDonald**

What began as a time of uncertainty and fear has become a powerful story of reconciliation and renewal. The Anishinabe Spiritual Centre (ASC), once facing the threat of closure, has transitioned to Indigenous self-governance—marking a historic milestone in its over 40-year journey alongside the Jesuits of Upper Canada.

This transformation was made possible through the dedication of a transitional team made up of Jesuits, Indigenous leaders, and the local Bishop, Thomas Dowd. Together, they navigated a process filled with emotion, challenge, and ultimately hope. For all that was involved, there was a shared sense of loss—Jesuit Fathers facing financial constraints and a shortage of priests, and Indigenous leaders grappling with the reality of diminished support from a long-time partnership.

Yet, through deep listening, flexibility, and unwavering trust in the movement of the Creator Spirit—the Holy Spirit—a new direction emerged.

Vision

Wasse'aandimikaning a place of enlightenment for spiritual nourishment, growth and healing.

Mission

Wasse'aandimikaning provides the opportunities to find the Creator within self, others and in all creation as guided and inspired by our ancestors, elders and Catholic tradition.

A Spirit-Led Path to Indigenous Self-Governance

The path forward was carefully guided by Bishop and Canon Lawyer, Thomas Dowd, whose experience with partnership cessations helped the team navigate this complex transition. His expertise was complemented by Michipicoten First Nation's Noah MacDonald, also a Canon Lawyer, who brought both legal and cultural insight to the table. Together, they helped set the foundation for a new, Indigenous-led governance structure.

Leadership Rooted in Strength and Spirit

This renewal would not have been possible without the strength and vision of Rosella Kinoshameg and Mary O'Donnell. Rosella, former Chair of ASC's Board of Trustees and now Chair of the new Indigenous Board of Directors, stood firm in her commitment to the Centre's mission. Mary, who's gentle but firm "Auntie's" presence sparked the initial call for change, playing a pivotal role. In a time when many felt overwhelmed, these two Anishinabe women chose not to be guided by despair, but by a vision of growth and healing. Their faith, especially in the Eucharist, was their anchor.

A New Governance Model Emerges

As the team aligned on the need for change, they explored several governance frameworks—including the Clan model—but ultimately adopted a time-sensitive Indigenous self-governance structure. They formed a Board of Directors, guided by Indigenous values and supported by a small advisory group (now called Members) when needed.

The current Board includes representatives from Wiikwemkoong (2), Sagamok,

M'Chigeeng, and Garden River (2). Bishop Dowd holds an ex officio seat to ensure ecclesiastical (church) oversight, allowing ASC to continue its Catholic ministries, Masses, and community services through Damigoong Bimikaadawining Ministries.



*Back Row: Henry Madamin
Front Row: Debbie Ense, Sandra Southwind,
Rosella Kinoshameg, Mona Jones Missing:
Mary O'Donnell and Bishop Tom Dowd*

Baamaapii – Till We See Each Other Again

We say Chi-Miigwetch to the outgoing Board of Trustees; their time and talents have influenced the growth of the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre and we will be forever grateful to them and all the past Board of Trustees throughout the last 40 years. May you all be blessed!



Outgoing Board of Trustees back row, Father Gerry McDougall, Father Paul Robson and Father John McCarthy.

Ownership Secured—The Work Begins

After nine months of emotional and financial challenges—including the loss of regular donations—ASC is now fully owned by its Indigenous Board of Directors, including both the property and the non-profit charity.

With the transition complete, the real work begins: to ensure long-term sustainability while staying true to the Centre's core mission.

Miigwetch – Thank You for Your Support

The Board, the Jesuits, and the staff extend heartfelt thanks for the prayers and support offered throughout this challenging journey. With renewed purpose, the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre moves forward, committed to being **Wasse'aandimikaning**—a sacred place of enlightenment, spiritual nourishment, growth, and healing—for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.



Rosella signs the official transfer document!



During the gift giving ceremony, Bishop Tom Dowd entrusted the ASC with a gold-plated medallion from Pope Francis's visit—a commitment to truth and reconciliation between the Church and the Indigenous People of Canada. Our Bishop is in full support of the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre, giving his own time and talent to us as well as the backing of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie. This Bishop goes above and beyond!

Speaking of support, Mayor Douglas Gervais and our MPP Bill Rosenberg were present and are clearly supportive to the ASC as well. Again, we are grateful for their presence and support.



Left to Right: Mayor Gervais, His Excellency Bishop Thomas Dowd, Executive Director ASC Eddie MacDonald and the Honourable MPP Bill Rosenberg

Pilgrims of Hope: The Jubilee Year 2025

The faithful can obtain a Jubilee Indulgence if, individually or in a group, they devoutly visit any Jubilee site and there, for a suitable period, engage in Eucharistic Adoration and meditation, concluding with the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form, and offer invocations to Mary, the Mother of God.

The Anishinabe Spiritual Centre has become a Designated Pilgrimage Site in the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie! What an honour and a blessing!

We have been preparing the grounds and the building for you and your family, friends or parish community to come and do your Pilgrimage today! We have the St. Kateri Moccasin Trail (wear your running shoes, the terrain is a bit steep). There are 3 levels you can explore, each level offers a different prayer site and statue – St. Kateri, Mother Mary and a lovely surprise on the hike back down. The exit leads straight to the Labyrinth if you care to walk your meditation. Stations of the Cross are found on an easier path as well.

Inside the Small Chapel, the Blessed Sacrament awaits your Adoration. Coming mid-August for a limited time will be the Sacred image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which has touched the real Tilma (making it a third-class relic); contains the soil of Tepeyac Hill that Our Lady stood upon and has a papal blessing by Pope Benedict XVI, this amazing relic will be located in our spacious Large Chapel. We are so excited to share all of this with YOU!

After you have met your Jubilee Indulgence requirement, join us in our Tea Room for a light lunch and dessert, or bring your lunch and eat outside at one of our picnic tables overlooking Anderson Lake. Before you head off, come peek at our gift shop, you will find both Indigenous and Catholic gifts to bring home to remind you of your time with us. Remember, joining us helps us to continue our mission of sharing the faith; supporting our Indigenous laity that serve their Catholic parishes on reserves and beyond; and becoming a beacon to others who are struggling to do the same across the North.

Call ahead to place your food order so we can prepare your meal fresh! Please let us know what time you would like to arrive so that we can put Jesus out into the monstrance for you to Adore. There are pamphlets with prayers for the Jubilee as well as information on what an Indulgence is.

Enjoy a hike up the hill and find Mary waiting for you on the St. Kateri Moccasin Trail.



Volunteers Barb and Marie take a break and spend some time with their beloved St. Kateri, who has answered prayers for both.



Father Paul Robson SJ, Final Vows

Our very own Father Paul, who is the pastor and friend at Holy Cross Church in Wikwemikong, after spending 8 years serving the Manitoulin region, made his final vows, the sealing of his commitment to the Society of Jesus. This incredible Mass and celebration was held at the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre. Guests from all over came

to show their love and support of this very special priest. Not a seat was left in the dining room, there was so much support! Father gave an address, cut the cake and presented a rose to his mother and



then all the ladies in attendance. **UPDATE:** Father Paul is now the Superior of the Manitoulin region. We are not surprised Father! You are the joyful organizer who gets things accomplished. We are blessed to have you assisting us with our training needs!



From the Desk of the Acting Chair of the ASC Board of Directors

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Community Members,

Warm greetings from the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre.

As many of you know, our beloved Chair, Rosella, is on a sabbatical. During her absence, I have the honour of stepping in as Acting Chair to help guide the Centre through this time of transition and renewal.

We are pleased to announce the formation of a new Board of Directors, composed of dedicated individuals who bring a deep commitment to Indigenous spiritual renewal, Catholic tradition, and community service. This is a time of great possibility and promise for the Centre, and the new Board is already engaging in thoughtful planning and visioning for the future.

The work ahead is important. As we continue to listen to the Spirit and to our communities, we are laying the foundation for an Anishinabe Catholic Spiritual Centre that welcomes all people—a place of retreat, prayer, cultural learning, and healing. In the coming months, you will notice both small and significant changes, all grounded in our mission to be a sacred space where Anishinabe identity and Catholic spirituality walk together.

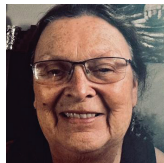
We ask for your prayers, your ideas, and your support as we begin this next chapter. Whether you've been part of the Anishinabe Centre's journey from the beginning, or have just recently come to know it, we welcome your presence as part of this shared vision.

Meegwetch for walking with us.

In peace and gratitude,
Sandra Southwind Acting Chair, Anishinabe Spiritual Centre

July 04, 2025

Sandra Southwind, long-time guide, Board member and friend of the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre



A Renewed Focus on Youth

By Eddie MacDonald

Over the last two years there has been a renewed focus on high school and college students visiting the ASC for an Immersive Cultural Experience. Students from Sudbury come in for half and full day encounters while students from Montreal have come for a weeklong experience, in fact they are preparing for their 3rd year here!

FAITH AND RECONCILIATION FOR CATHOLIC STUDENTS

ASC offers Half-Day, Full-Day, or 5-Day Programs for Catholic Elementary School Students (Sacramental Years/Graduation) & High School Students. Each program is designed specifically for that group to meet the teacher's goals and curriculum. ASC staff and volunteers provide the program while teachers and parent volunteers manage the students.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Catholic/Indigenous Awareness Program at the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre offers a unique opportunity for Catholic Elementary and High School students to deepen their faith while gaining a meaningful understanding of Indigenous culture. When the Catholic faith meets Indigenous Spirituality there becomes an awareness, a depth that isn't reached individually. Eyes open! Hearts open! The seeking of truth, reconciliation and healing is initiated.

We aim to strengthen Catholic identity through Mass and spiritual reflection; introduce students to Indigenous teachings shared by local Elders and cultural experts and inspire reconciliation and respect for diverse perspectives. The youth are the future for both the Indigenous culture and for the Catholic faith. The bridge is being built one group at a time.



Volunteer Blake Walker drives our fearless leader Rosella Kinoshameg through centre ice with the boys from Loyola High School spontaneously raising their stick in honour as she left the ice! A fantastic day for all.

WHAT EDUCATORS ARE SAYING

"The experience provided to our students

at the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre was so engaging and impactful that our students are still talking about it almost a full year later. They were deeply touched by the wisdom of the Elders, the spiritual depth of the teachings, and the joy of engaging in hands-on learning. We are eager to return with a new group this year."

Fr. Len Altilia, SJ, Chaplain, Loyola High School

WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING

"Before spending time at the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre, I was very naive about First Nations culture. After five days, I learned how fascinating their traditions are and how little I knew despite living in Canada my whole life. The staff was incredibly friendly, the food was amazing, and the teachings were unforgettable. It's a place to make lifelong memories."

Anthony, Grade 10 Student Participant

To learn more, go to our renewed website at www.anishinabespiritualcentre.ca

A Note of Gratitude from a Patron

Thank You to the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre We would like to give a heartfelt thank-you to the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre for hosting such a beautiful celebration of life for our mother.

Everything was truly 10/10 — from the warm and welcoming atmosphere to the cleanliness of the venue and the overall peaceful setting. The food was incredible, and the accommodation was both comfortable and beautiful.

We are so grateful for your kindness and support in helping us create such a meaningful day.

With appreciation,

The Family of Louise Marie LeBlanc

Another Baamaapii!

We say farewell to our dear Father Mark Hoelsken SJ who has returned to the US to continue his ministry in Montana. This wise, joy-filled priest brought us insights from his work with our Indigenous brothers and sisters from Alaska. His talents and laughter will surely be missed!

We wonder who we will play cribbage against now and who can comfort our community cat Boots as well as you did:(He leaves quite the hole to fill, both in the ASC and in our hearts. WE LOVE YOU MARK!



Indigenous Day at the Martyr Shrine 2025

The word keeps spreading as more people come out for a wonderful two-day event at the Martyr Shrine. Each year on the second weekend in June is marked as Indigenous Day at the Shrine. This gathering begins on Friday evening with a sharing circle outside, with a massive fire. Approximately 25 people came out that evening and enjoyed the time together, the location and the feast that followed.

The next morning, we met in the lower hall for a talk given by Sam Stewart PhD Theology student from St. Michaels College. Each month DB Ministries meets with a guest speaker and this year they came to Martyr Shrine for everyone to hear! Following an active discussion with Sam, Father Bert Folio shared the story of Joseph Chiwatenhwa, Ontario's first Indigenous Catholic and later laity. Joseph's story is compelling as he truly was a Holy man. He influenced many to become Catholic. He was the first to work with and assist St. John de Bebreuf and friends.

Father Bert shared that the most important group that is welcomed by the Martyr Shrine is the Indigenous people! Our ancestors in essence became the first Catholics of Canada, through the gentle guidance by Jesuit missionaries. Across from the Shrine is Saint Marie Among the Hurons, an historic site and home to the first community of the Jesuits as they served the Wendat-Hurons of the area. This hands-on historic museum is a replica of the first community! This is such

a powerful way to truly understand the work our ancestors did in building faith.

Lunch was graciously provided once again by the community of Christian Island, a yearly gift of a very yummy picnic! Chi-Miigwetch to those who donated and to those who prepared and delivered the food. Following lunch, we all had time to walk to the site, shop in their amazing gift shop and some enjoyed Hiawatha Ice Cream. We all came together and prayed the Stations of the Cross using a meditation that reflected Truth and Reconciliation. It truly was an emotional movement of Spirit! We, this generation, are now an integral part of the healing, the bridge uniting a painful past to the goodness of Christ. Later, we came to the area that is dedicated to St. Kateri and Holy man Joseph Chiwatenhwa, their statues overlook the area where we raised the colors of the medicine wheel. How perfect- these two Indigenous spiritual leaders, showing by their faith how to overcome adversity. We completed our pilgrimage with a peace-filled Mass outside, within the woods. So spectacular!

We invite you all to join us next time as we grow as Indigenous Catholics. Bring your friends and family, there is more than enough to see and experience, thanks be to the Creator God!

Father Bert Folio

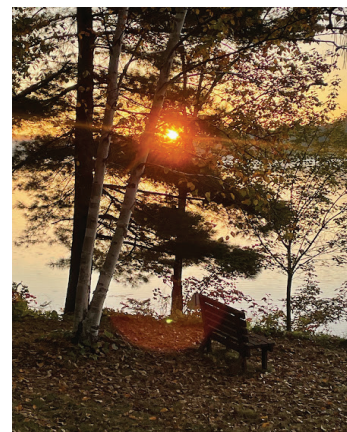


The Dance of Breakfast at the ASC

By Ann Naples, Our Kitchen Volunteer

Ann came in at 4am to assist with cooking breakfast for 100 guests. As our oven was not working properly, ovens from cabins on site were used to run things back and forth. Ann is a delightful woman who enjoys a challenge! She wrote this whimsical poem after her very early day of volunteering. We say Chi-Miigwetch dear Ann and all the volunteers who come out to assist us.

PS. We need to replace that stove- if you are able to help us financially we are in need of \$4,500 to replace it.



Mother Nature's orchestra started rehearsing at 3to 4am in preparation for its concert at sunrise. Sort of dramatic this morning, Beethovenish.

The winter wind rises up against the spring rain and the branches of the trees bear the brunt of their battle while the daylight hides its eyes under a blanket of cloud, a little unsure of what it should do.

Inside, the oven yawns, pots, pans, glass, and silverware all clang in anticipation of the grand revealing of egg frittatas - about 6 different kinds to accommodate over a hundred finicky bellies.

And the muffins stand on tiptoes. And the cookies so grateful to be there before lunch try their best to blend in.... It was very fun!



**Be sure to leave your email address so we can stay in touch (and save some trees AND money!)
Contact Aaron at anishinabe.centre@gmail.com will email you our monthly activities on our calendar:)**



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