

# CONTACT



Council  
of the North

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a newsletter for the Council of the North

## Healing in Eastmain

*Diocese of Moosonee combines Gospel vision  
with Cree culture in special weekend gathering*



Participants at the healing gathering celebrate the Eucharist

Contributed photo

The Rev. Dr. Marilyn van Duffelen is not afraid of a challenge. The Priest-in-charge at St. Mark's in Eastmain, QC has seen her community's struggle to heal from past wounds—and felt called to action.

This past August a healing gathering was held in Eastmain in the Diocese of Moosonee. The Cree Nation of Eastmain is the smallest of the Cree communities around James Bay. "There's around 900 people here, half of them under the age of 16," says van Duffelen. The 3-day event,

which culminated in a Eucharist with anointing with healing oil, featured Gospel singing, craft exchanges, traditional food, a surprise concert and, most central to the event, healing circles.

Past diocesan healing events had featured more of a workshop-style format; however, van Duffelen had a different idea. "I went to the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] conference in Montreal. And there, I didn't see healing happening in workshops—I saw healing happening in

### *A message from the Chair*

We're pleased to share our Fall issue of CONTACT with you. This issue features northern ministries of healing and reconciliation; if you enjoy these stories, please consider passing this newsletter along to others in your parish. We thank you for your continued financial support for the Council of the North and also ask you to keep praying for all those—both lay and ordained—who are sharing the healing love of Jesus in Canada's North.



In Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Michael Hawkins  
(Saskatchewan)  
Chair, Council of the North

small circles formed in the retreat rooms."

The use of circles is a traditional Cree way of meeting in which a member of the circle holds a ceremonial feather (or other special object) while speaking--and no one interrupts or rushes the one who shares. At Eastmain, each of the gathering's circles had a facilitator, who opened the session by sharing a personal story around the topic, and a designated support person available



# Making Crosses

## Building Relationships

Twice last year, about a dozen men from St. David's Anglican in Prince Albert (Diocese of Saskatchewan) gathered to assemble wooden crosses. One of the men cut the cross pieces before they met. Then the group, aged all the way from 13 years to a man in his eighties, met to sand, assemble, stain and string the cross necklaces. The Rev. Norbert Haukenfrers, Rector of St. David's, said they used the "Harley Davidson method of Assembly—one artisan from start to finish on each cross."

Two meetings in St. David's basement—



Contributed photo

*A parishioner at St. David's in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan fashions wooden crosses for inmates*

over snacks of sausage, cheese, crackers, chips and pop—produced 700 crosses. Then one of the group's elders, Tony, took home the remnants and finished another 150. When Haukenfrers thanked him, Tony replied, "I can't do much anymore but I can still sit, with my coffee, and fiddle with

sandpaper and glue...it's not much."

These men are part of the Anglican presence at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary—even though they may never enter its doors. Kathleen Stewart, layreader

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## St. George's Brandon Mission Possible: Feeding the Hungry

Whether it's grocery store gift cards on the offering plate, home-cooked meals tucked away in the parish freezer, non-perishable food items in a cart in the narthex, or hot dogs and hot chocolate delivered to people living on the streets, the parishioners of St. George's Brandon in the Diocese of Brandon have made it their mission to feed the hungry.

St. George's is located in a low-income residential area in Brandon and Father Chad McCharles, Incumbent since 2012, says the neighbourhood residents, like many Canadians who are struggling financially, often find themselves a few days from payday and they just can't make it.

But more and more, as word spreads around the community, people in need know they can turn to St. George's and they will not be turned away.

"A family or single parent can afford to rent a house, and put food on the table," says Father Chad, "but the hydro bill comes, or the car needs gas and there isn't enough money to buy bread, or formula." Because of the generosity of parishioners, the Church has a variety of options to give those in dire need some emergency supplies or to give them the resources to buy what's most urgent.

"The Grocery Card ministry has exploded. I used to get 1 or 2 cards a week



Contributed photo

*Members of St. George's Dragon Slayers youth group*

on the offering plate, now I get 6, 8, 10 and some are in \$50 increments." Even with the outpouring of generosity, the Church still doesn't have enough cards to meet the need, so parishioners fill the grocery cart in the narthex with non-perishables and the freezer with home-cooked meals to augment much-needed outreach to the community.

When asked "How do you know what people are buying with the grocery cards?"

Father Chad's response is simple: "It is between them and God if they buy a pack of cigarettes. It's not for me to judge." He acknowledges that some in the parish have felt that tension, the anxiety of no-strings-attached giving, but he stresses that there are many outlets for generosity in the Church. "There are people who feel called to give to other things: baked spaghetti or shepherd's pie. People in the frozen food ministry are not the same ones who participate in the grocery cards."

The ways and means by which parishioners support the food ministry draw on a variety of expressions of generosity. But, viewed together, Father Chad sees them as a portrait of love and a faithful partnership in mission.

As with all of the ministries at St. George's, feeding the community is an intergenerational affair. Heart Dogs is a monthly initiative of the Dragon Slayers youth group: "The Church is our base camp. We use the kitchen to help us get the hot dogs and hot chocolate ready and then we pack up our stuff and head downtown to meet the folks we serve."

At St. George's Brandon, faith and an unwavering generosity have made feeding the hungry Mission Possible.

Michelle Hauser  
Council of the North Communications

## HEALING

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in case a speaker became overwhelmed and needed to leave the circle for more private listening or prayer. The support person would then help the speaker rejoin the circle.

Circle topics included: Forgiveness, Broken Family Relationships, Parenting Issues, Residential School Healing and Healing our Communities. At least 2 hours were allotted for each circle—with many going well past that limit—and most of the facilitators were local people or others with Cree backgrounds, including Bishop Tom Corston, Eastmain Band Councilor Kenneth Gilpin, and Irene Barbeau, who hosted her circles in Cree.

Over the weekend, many took what van Duffelen calls “those baby steps;” they “began their healing journey.” At the final Eucharist, van Duffelen describes, “We practically doubled our showing, and they all came to the Eucharist. And then everyone lined up to be anointed with healing oil. So it made an enormous difference that the people were comfortable enough in a Church setting, in the Eucharist, to own that.”

This unity was particularly poignant for van Duffelen, who facilitated a healing circle called “Christian and Indigenous Spirituality Walking Together.” She explains, “You know, within the community of Eastmain, there’s actual divisiveness between the longstanding Christian practicing people and the Christians who are now exploring their Indigenous identity through the practice of traditional ceremonies.” As a facilitator, van Duffelen told her personal story of the “hurt that is caused by that divisiveness.”

She reflects on how people work through this conflict within themselves: “Some people do, without any difficulties....If you’re comfortable in your faith, then you can be a Cree person and a faithful person, there’s no dichotomy there.”

But others are working towards integrating their Christian and Cree identities. This problem has been “compounded by the stripping away of cultural identity, caused by the residential school experience—stripping away their language, stripping away their ability to belong to the communities from which they came.”

When van Duffelen considers the healing that needs to happen around this issue, she takes the long view—the long view back. “We have to remember the Indigenous people here around James Bay, which is all that I can really speak of, were Christian Cree people for more than a hundred years before the residential school experience. So they had no difficulties being Christian Cree people. But when the Christian white church then strips away their Cree-ness, we’re now in the fallout of that act.”

So there’s still a long way to go. But van Duffelen is thrilled with the outcome of the event—at any one time 60 to 100 people were in attendance. In addition, the costs came in well under budget—a surplus van Duffelen hopes will be set aside for future gatherings since, she says, “the need is great.” But just as inspiring is the community’s growing commitment to healing—shown particularly in the enormous amount of unsolicited hands-on help from the band and the participation of band leaders and social services workers.

Thinking back, van Duffelen describes a moment between her and the band’s Chief:

among the men of the congregation.”

Those relationships spill over into goodwill towards the men across town at the prison. Haukenfrers remembers one cross-maker saying, “It’s good to do something for those boys, some of them never had anyone do anything for them.”

And who can say? Perhaps the thoughts and prayers go both ways. When presenting the crosses, Stewart asks that they “pray for themselves, and others in the institution, as well as offer thanksgiving for those who made the crosses and the many that pray for them.”

Sharon Dewey Hetke  
Council of the North Communications

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Contributed photo

On behalf of St. Mark’s, Eastmain, Sheila Mark-Stewart (seated) receives a cheque from Frances Mark. Frances and her husband, John, of Wemindji, QC wanted to help with expenses for the gathering.

“At one point, the chief was there, and we caught eyes, and I put up my thumb, and he put up his thumb, an exchange of ‘This is good.’ And later on as we passed each other he said, ‘This is a beginning.’ So to me, I know it was the right thing. Everything we did was the right thing.”

Funding for Eastmain’s healing gathering came from the Council of the North, the Anglican Foundation, the Diocese of Moosonee and local sponsors.

Sharon Dewey Hetke  
Council of the North Communications

## CROSSES

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at St. David’s, is a regular minister at “The Pen” and these crosses are a gift to the men with whom she works. Stewart says, “I take a few in with me weekly and if there is a need or one is requested I pass them on.”

Reflecting on the cross-making, what really stands out to Haukenfrers is that “Great conversation was had about sports and life...and relationships are building



## Council of the North Sunday

Celebrate a Council of the North Sunday in your parish and help raise awareness about the Church’s mission and ministry in the north.

Visit [www.anglican.ca/cn](http://www.anglican.ca/cn) to download or order our video and a variety of other resources to make your celebration a truly inspired worship event. Contact Council of the North Communications at: [cnc@national.anglican.ca](mailto:cnc@national.anglican.ca).



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