

## **Aikido Classes Offered at the Alexandra Centre** submitted by Robb Wheatley

“Aikido” is a traditional Japanese martial art or budo (a martial way). The Japanese characters break down into “Ai” “Ki” “Do” literally, “Way of Spiritual Harmony”. A “dojo” is literally “a place to practice the way”, to polish the body, mind, and spirit through diligent physical and mental practice.

My name is Robb Wheatley. I’ve lived in Inglewood since 1995. I have been practicing Aikido for about 20 years in Calgary. I hold the rank of 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt. I am a student of Kawahara Shihan 8<sup>th</sup> dan, the technical director of the Canadian Aikido Federation. I have been an instructor with Aikido Bozankan since 1997. **Aikido Bozankan** is a non-profit society that runs Aikido instructional programs in Calgary. For more information please visit our website at <http://www.bozankan.com>. We’ve been running an Aikido dojo at the Alexandra Centre in Inglewood since September 2006. Generally, I instruct classes and Jim Nield has been an able substitute when required.

A key feature of the Aikikai style of Aikido is that it is non-competitive. Some people believe that Aikido is a “watered down” martial art as a result. However, others believe that competition can encourage egotistical and aggressive behaviour. Perhaps, a competitive environment is best in order to achieve the highest human performance results in a specific endeavor; however, not everyone is going to the Olympics. Aikido is intended to allow participants of various levels, gender, ages, and physical stature the ability to practice together. When “win” and “lose” are just not applicable, the nature of the practice is very different.

Aikido is definitely not about fighting. It is cooperative and inclusive and a lot of fun. Increased strength, stamina, flexibility, and improved balance and posture are the physical rewards of regular Aikido practice. Aikido is also a great way to relieve stress, to develop a calm, relaxed attitude, a balanced emotional state, and to improve self confidence, self discipline and awareness. Aikido philosophy promotes a positive, compassionate attitude, and emphasizes conflict resolution over aggression and competitiveness.

There is a lot more information about Aikido available in print and on the web. A trip to the library or Google search on the Internet will provide access to it. Some links for the tech savy include <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aikido> and <http://www.aikiweb.com>.

A common thread between the Alexandra Centre Society (ACS) and Aikido Bozankan is community involvement and volunteerism. A key reason for submitting this article is to help make sure that people, especially residents in the Inglewood, Ramsay and Victoria Park neighbourhoods, are aware of the Aikido program running at the Alexandra Centre. It’s a solid program with a core group of participants and we’d like to get some more folks from the local communities participating. Residents of the tri-area community get a discount on fees, although residents of other communities are welcome as well.

People have sometimes asked if we have a children's Aikido class in Inglewood. Although Aikido Bozankan is running successful children's programs at their main location and in conjunction with the South Fish Creek Recreation Association, at the moment, we don't have an instructor that's available to teach a kid's class in Inglewood.

Along with our regular adult class offering, we are considering running an Adult (18 and over) Introductory / Beginners Aikido program with the ACS in the coming months to give prospective new members a taste of Aikido. If you are interested in introductory sessions, please phone the ACS at 403.269.5588 to inquire. Alternatively, please just visit the ACS Dance Hall (south entrance 922 9<sup>th</sup> Ave SE) during any of our Tues or Thurs class times from 6pm - 8pm. Visitors are more than welcome watch and/or to try a free class before committing to register. To answer questions specifically about Aikido, please visit our website FAQ at <http://www.bozankan.com>, email us at [bozankan@telus.net](mailto:bozankan@telus.net) or phone Robb Wheatley at 403.237.8718.