

## Featured Dojo-cho, May 2017



### **Andrew Haight 4th Dan**

Aikido of Colchester, Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada  
Division 3

I first heard about Aikido from my Grandfather who lives in England and had earned his Black Belt at the age of 63. He suggested that I might find an Aikido club when I was about to start University here in Canada. Walking through the campus my first week I saw a notice advertising an Aikido demonstration. Absolutely mesmerized by the fluid movement and the dynamic practice, I signed up that day (Sept 91'). Not a month later I found myself participating in my first Aikido Seminar with Aikikai Shihan and Head of the Canadian Aikido Federation, Yukio Kawahara 8th dan. I continued training for over three years.

After University I worked for a couple of years with only sporadic training. I found that I really missed Aikido and that I wanted to make it a priority in my life. I couldn't find any full time Dojo in Canada but found a website that listed Aikido of Fresno as having a live-in-student program. After a few phone conversations I bought a ticket and flew to California to see what they had to offer. After six weeks, I knew this was my path. For the better part of the next four years I was Uchi-deshi for Sensei Patrick Cassidy at Aikido of Fresno.

I tested for Shodan the summer of 2000, then returned to Canada and started a small group to continue training. We were the Aikido Club of Truro and we built from the ground up as Aikido had never been taught there before.

In 2009 we hosted Sensei Cassidy for a special weekend seminar. I was testing for Sandan and my senior student was testing for Shodan. It was an intense and meaningful week-end. We saw a great turnout with people coming from all over Eastern Canada. By the time the week-end was over, we realized that

the Aikido Club of Truro had achieved quite a few milestones; our first black belt student, my own 3rd Dan, and our club had achieved Dojo status. This was the birth of Aikido of Colchester. Through Sensei Cassidy's continual support and guidance, this Aikido journey of growth & transformation for many people, had been made possible.

The newly formed AOC moved into a larger space. By 2015, I had been promoted to 4th Dan, and had the wonderful experience of watching and guiding 6 students to Shodan and two to Nidan, along with the many others in our Dojo who continued to progress.

Since 2016 I have been on a journey to deepen and challenge my own personal Aikido practice. Gathering inspiration over the last year and a half from travels abroad, seminars and meditations on O'Sensei's writings, I have realized how deeply I value the breadth and depth of Aikido. I am currently preparing to open a new training facility in Nova Scotia to continue sharing O'Sensei's profound practices and teachings. What could be more necessary in today's world than Aikido?

## **My Most Memorable Aikido Experience**

Over 26 years of training, I have had the great pleasure of being on the mats with many people of all shapes, sizes, ages and dispositions. I have been instructed by dozens of great teachers and shared numerous moments of generous give and take. The moment with the deepest impact, is one that took place during a trip to Switzerland. I was attending an Evolutionary Aikido seminar with Sensei's Patrick Cassidy, Miles Kessler and Dave Goldberg. Near the end of the seminar I was working directly with Sensei Cassidy and experienced a profound sense of releasing, a kind of ecstasy brought on by some form of remembering; a "self"-less freedom that affirmed my sense of a hidden and even Divine aspect to all form.

As a wise friend once told me, "any coach can help you learn techniques, but a true teacher will show you the Universe".