

It is with great regret & sadness that we announce the Loss of Renshi Sandy MacKay 6th Dan

Renshi Sandy Mackay

1962-2023



Sandy has a long history with Ishigaki and its parent organisation, Jikishin. He started training at Ishigaki in 1994, shortly after the club was founded. He was already a brown belt in Judo and progressed through the Jikishin syllabus quickly: within five years he had become the third Ishigaki student to grade to black belt. Always community minded, he joined the club's management committee and, along with the other committee members, founded Ishigaki Brighton, travelling down at the weekends to teach.

Over the years he served as membership secretary, club treasurer and Head Sensei. In the last few years, he helped lay the foundations for Ishigaki's next thirty years, separating the club's teaching 'in dojo' function from its administrative function, leading the transition of Ishigaki into a Community Interest Company and becoming the CICs first president.

He leaves Ishigaki a strong LGBT+ club, running adult classes 6 days a week over 4 locations, with the highest membership in its almost 30-year history.

In March 2022 Hanshi Herbert awarded Sandy sixth dan. A belt he was particularly proud to have received.

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Sandy taught his many students with kindness, patience, and good humour. So many people will have deeply treasured memories of their time with him on and off the mats. For many of us, his passion for jujitsu was infectious and the reason we still train today. His willingness to explore and be receptive of new methods of reaching out to the LGBTQ+ community and build membership paid dividends. His talent was to explore and encourage and motivate those, whatever their belt, within the club that had a different skill set to him, to Ishigaki's best advantage. He was also an LGBT pioneer and role model. LGBT sports clubs did n't exist 30 years ago like they do today. They had to be started, and supported, and led, by people who did so in the face of indifference at best, and at worst by both covert and overt opposition. Sandy stood up for himself, and for all of us, in his membership and subsequent leadership of Ishigaki; in the jujitsu that he embodied, in his teaching, and in the relationships that he made.

He fostered many meaningful friendships across Jikishin, becoming a regular at gradings, ko-budo, revision days and competitions.

Jujitsu took Sandy all over the world, forging links with LGBT martial artists across the globe. The Gay Games, Pink Power, OutGames, and Tournoi International de Paris took him to Sydney, Cologne, Cleveland, Paris and Munich, where he competed, officiated, refereed and taught. He later joined the board of directors for the International Association of Gay and Lesbian Martial Artists and was most recently their vice president and delegate to the Federation of Gay Games. While recently reminiscing, he confessed one of his highlights was travelling to Paris ahead of the 2018 Gay Games in order to train the French Karate Federation judges on how to referee the competition.

In 2022 he won the Outstanding Achievement prize at the Out for Sports award ceremony, where they recognised him for his long commitment to LGBT sports.

Sandy has been a very modern leader of Ishigaki and a cherished Sensei (in every sense of the word). Ishigaki will be his proud legacy for the sport he loved.