

**SANDY – SAULTEAUX SPIRITUAL CENTRE  
BEAUSEJOUR, MANITOBA**

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**PROPOSAL**

**That the Francis Sandy Theological Centre and the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre will amalgamate on September 30, 2011 to form a single new First Nation, Métis, and Inuit theological school called the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre.**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This Proposal was presented to the Boards of the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre, and the Francis Sandy Theological Centre for discussion, revision, and ratification. It is the fruit of much prayer, work, discussion, and consultation by the Wabung group (“wabung” is an Ojibway word for “tomorrow”).

The members of this group represent the two Centres, and the General Council Office:

Francis Sandy Theological Centre:

Peggy Monague (Board chair)  
Brenda Simpson (Principal)  
Lee Claus  
Grafton Antone  
Laverne Jacobs (alternate)

Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre:

Grant Queskekapow (Board chair)  
Norah McMurtry (Keeper)  
Barbara Shoomski  
Bernice Saulteaux

Elders for the Wabung circle:

Norma General Lickers  
Andrew Wesley

General Council Staff (non-voting):

Maggie McLeod (Aboriginal Ministries Circle)  
Steve Willey (Communities in Ministry Unit)

The members of Wabung eventually created 3 Task Groups to work on specific areas:

NB. Names of people added to a Task Group because they possessed important knowledge and experience are marked with an \*

1. Spiritual Guidance: Norma General Lickers  
Andrew Wesley  
Grafton Antone  
Bernice Saulteaux  
Maggie McLeod
  
2. Program: Norah McMurtry  
Carmen Lansdowne \*  
Kim Uyede-Kai \*  
Laverne Jacobs \*  
Aileen Urquhart \*  
Barbara Shoomski  
Maggie McLeod
  
3. Governance and Staffing: Grant Queskekapow  
Peggy Monague  
Barbara Shoomski  
Lee Claus  
Norah McMurtry  
Brenda Simpson  
Cheryl Jourdain \* (Speaker for the ANCC)  
Steve Willey (Program Coordinator, CIM Unit)  
Maggie McLeod (Executive Minister,  
Aboriginal Ministries Circle)

### **1.01 A Time of Transition**

Key to understanding many of the recommendations in this Proposal is that there is a need for 1-3 years of TRANSITION. It is impossible to decide now everything that needs to be decided for the longer term. All the information we would need to do this is not yet available. The Vision of the new school is making itself known as the communities talk, share, and make wise decisions. It is being born in its own time, and we can nourish it, but we cannot force it into its final expression.

The purpose of this Proposal is to use the information and wisdom we *do* possess to get the new school off to a strong start. This means making sure the transition period begins on a strong footing, and ensuring that the students are provided with the programming they need to continue their studies.

The transition period will continue beyond the initial creation of the new school, as this diagram illustrates:

Diagram 1

*the two schools decide to amalgamate....new school is born....new school grows into the vision...*

**Transition** 

As will become clear in the following pages, this reality shapes the need in the first few years for a certain kind of Board, a certain kind of Keeper of the Circle, (known as “Keeper of the Centre” at former DJSRC, and “Principal” at former FSTC), and a certain set of budget priorities.

## **2. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN A FIRST NATION, MÉTIS, AND INUIT CONTEXT**

### **2.01 Current Context**

First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities are changing rapidly. Among the changes happening are First Nation, Métis, and Inuit spiritual practices. This is best illustrated by two recent funerals at Walpole Island First Nation. Both of the deceased were young men with family affiliation with the church. The funerals were held at the community Sports Complex. This facility provided space for a large funeral and also a sense of freedom from perceived constraints of the church(es).

Each funeral was attended by several hundred people. The funeral services began with an Honour Song by the Big Drum and accompanied by women with hand drums. One funeral was led by a Traditional Elder assisted by an Anglican priest. The other funeral was led by a United Church minister and a minister from an evangelical church. The four colours used by some First Nation and Métis peoples draped the flower stands. Standards with Traditional flags stood by the coffins and in one funeral an Eagle staff was present. One gentleman was dressed in his dance regalia and the other in a ribbon shirt. The prayers of the church were used in both services and in one both Christian hymns and Ojibwa hymns were sung. Each funeral ended with a Farewell Song followed by a procession with the deceased and the congregants forming an honour guard. Traditional ceremonies were held at the grave as well as a Christian committal.

Young people were very involved in both services. There was the sense of a People finding their way and trying to recover what was lost through colonization. One could sense that something was happening that was both beautiful and painful at the same time. It is a people reaching for something and yet some still grieving the loss of the colonial church which had come to mean so much to them.

There is a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices, from evangelical Christian to the traditional, which are alive in our communities. A new dialogue between these perspectives is underway which is creative, freeing and life-giving.

That colonial church, with the help of the Residential School system and other colonial practices, shaped and changed the lives and ways of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. This action was acknowledged in the United Church of Canada Apology to First Nation Peoples (1986):

*We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be. (General Council 31, 1986)*

## 2.02 Future Directions

The new First Nation, Métis, and Inuit theological school is being created in the context of the United Church of Canada Apology to First Nation People and will try to live out the commitments made in the apology. This will mean creating something new, moving forward out of Western models of education which have so often been used as tools for oppression and colonialism.

The new school will also have to develop its own language and terminology appropriate to and coming out of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit contexts. It must be about decolonizing in all aspects and must hold in balance the spiritual wisdom, values, and ways of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples and of the Church.

Since time immemorial First Nation peoples on Turtle Island have known and communed with the Great Spirit. Chief Oshawana in a debate with the Jesuits on Walpole Island affirmed:

*“...We...know that the Great Spirit created man, and that he gave him a mind to acquire wisdom. We know that he gave him knowledge....I know these truths. The Great Spirit taught them to me through my Ancestor. My way of seeking light is right for me.” (Chief Oshawana, The Ojibwa-Jesuit Debate at Walpole Island, 1844)*

In 1988, Edith Memnook, in the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit response to the United Church Apology shared a similar message:

*“...The All Native Circle Conference has now acknowledged your Apology. Our people have continued to affirm the teachings of the Native way of life. Our spiritual teachings and values have taught us to uphold the Sacred Fire; to be guardians of Mother Earth, and strive to maintain harmony and peaceful coexistence with all peoples. We only ask of you to respect our Sacred Fire, the Creation, and to live in peaceful coexistence with us.” (1988 Record of Proceedings, p.79)*

Both of these truths were affirmed in the United Church Apology:

*Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your Elders an understanding of creation and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich, and to be treasured.*  
Rt. Rev. Robert Smith, *Apology to Aboriginal Peoples* (1986)

It is important to honour First Nation, Métis, and Inuit spirituality, and it is equally important to foster and strengthen Christian spirituality maintaining the centrality of the Gospel. The curriculum must be a balanced curriculum. The new school must continue to honour the Christ who said:

<sup>17</sup> *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”* (Matthew 5:17)

We must remember our Elders from whose vision the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Schools arose. In the words of the Letter to the Hebrews:

<sup>7</sup> *Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.* <sup>8</sup> *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* (Hebrews 13:7-8)

The following covenant, made in 1988, expresses the all-encompassing vision of the Elders describing the unity and purpose that is the basis of this proposal:

*May the fire in the centre of our circle continue to light the faces of our grandfathers and grandmothers, give guidance to us, love to our children and grandchildren, and hope to those yet unborn, as we choose to stand together as caretakers of the earth our mother, as servants following the teaching of Christ, as brothers and sisters sharing in the wholeness of life that God has given us. May the symbol of our hands united be for us the truth of our united hearts and minds in this purpose.*

These teachings, taken from a book called "Wisdom of the Elders", summarizes the spiritual wisdom offered by the Wabung Elders as the group has taken counsel together:

It is a teaching among the Cherokee that in order to grow we must let go of emotional attachments, and that this can be painful. Sometimes new growth allows us to deal with fear, which can fall into two categories. First, fear that we are going to lose something that we have; and second, we're not going to get something we want. Both of these fears can cause pain. The best way to grow new is to pray to the Great Spirit and ask him to guide and protect us. All new growth is guided by God.

The teaching of Chippewa elders says that when a community does something together, that community is very happy and unified. The First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people have always been able to adapt. If the hunting changed, we found new hunting grounds. If the earth changes, we moved to a better place. If the river changed course, we followed the river. But with every change we kept our Indianness and our spirituality. Our culture and our spirituality have always been our strength. Our culture and spirituality taught us to live in harmony. We must maintain our culture and spirituality., always living in harmony. We believe the Creator is praying for us to be unified.

The elders of the Lakota teach that the Creator designed us to act on faith. We are able to do this by holding firm to our beliefs. If we believe something and if we don't want the belief to change, we need to add the power of the Great Spirit to this belief. We must always have the spiritual added to our belief. The wind may blow on the red willow trees bending them and causing the roots to grow deeper. The more the wind bends the trees, the bigger, stronger and deeper the roots grow. We should be happy that we are tested. It's the Creator's way of making us have greater faith for greater results.

### **2.03 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Values**

The New School will live out of the ethos and worldview of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. One of the primary values of First Nation and Métis, and Inuit people of Turtle Island is the relationship of all created order. First Nation and Métis people often end speeches, addresses, and communications with “*All My Relations*”. One of the priorities of the new school must be to foster and nurture in the school right relations with self, each other, creation and with Creator. Am I at peace with myself, with my brother/sister, with creation and with my Creator? Right Relations must be one of the primary marks of the new school.

In community, relationships take precedence over duty. If there is a death in the community or one who is critically ill, members of the family and close friends will often be with the family at the hospital and absent from work or school. This also relates to the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people's different rhythm in life and sense of time. In the past it was very common for a whole class of children to be absent from school because the fishing season, or hunting/gathering season, had started and the children were on the land with their families. This way of life still exists in some communities and will surface in the schools. Thus it would be wise for the new school to have some flexibility and be able to provide opportunity for students to fulfill their studies and assignments.

Being connected to the Land is vital to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit spirituality. Showing respect for all creation is common to all our Nations. In the Six Nations Thanksgiving Prayer to the Creator, for instance, the Elders teach us to begin our prayers by beginning with our Mother Earth. We thank Mother Earth for the grasses, the medicines: tobacco, strawberries, sage, cedar, and sweetgrass. We then give thanks for the trees, bushes, and forests. Then we offer thanks for all

the animals that live on Mother Earth. This establishes our connection to the Land, and we say: Let our minds be gathered together and let it be so in our relations.

Language is inseparable from First Nation, Métis, and Inuit culture because it is the voice and action of our communities. Language binds us to the Land and to the seasons of life. It is our understanding of relationship to each other, and all our relations. Language is the song of life. Language is who we are.

Flowing from the centrality of language is the fact that oral tradition and learning through story-telling is an important value. We remember the oral teachings that have been passed down from generations of our Elders. The legends, the seven sacred teachings, and the stories are our way of learning valuable lessons. In the past, these oral teachings were used to show how we treat each other and how to show respect for all creation.

Ceremonies also connect us to Mother Earth and to Creator. Hidden in the ceremonies are the many truths, many principles, many guidelines for living that grant access to the unseen world, healing, visions, and dreams. The ceremonies are handed down from generation to generation to learn their meaning. We need to go to the Elders and learn the ceremonies so we can pass them on to our children. The sacred ceremonies given to us by the Creator are the Heart of our Existence. These ceremonies are our first duty.

#### **2.04 The Eagle Vision**

The Six Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca & Tuscaroras) were united by the Peacemaker, and to mark the event, they buried their weapons of war under the White Pine Tree that they named the Tree of Peace. To guard the Confederacy's vision of peace they placed the Eagle at the top of the Tree of Peace to warn if any danger approached the confederacy of Peace. The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre combines these eastern and western best practices in Wabung (Ojibway word meaning for tomorrow) and keeping the community based theological education model as their Eagle Vision. Wabung expresses the beautiful words of education that were first raised up by Dr. Jessie Saulteaux of Carry the Kettle, Saskatchewan and Elder Francis Sandy of Christian Island in Ontario to have a learning place for Aboriginal students. Today we see this Wabung vision as being celebrated in the new Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre.

In their Eagle Vision, the members of the Spiritual Guidance Task Group identified the core values that will sustain the Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre:

- Respect: Should we not agree, we will listen to each other. When we respect the circle, we follow its direction; when we respect the church, we engage. We will listen to the youth and their expressions.
- Kindness: Despite our history of hardship and struggle, we move forward in a manner that expresses gentleness and affirmation to others as we live into our vision and purpose. Stories need to be told about kindness.
- Truth/Honesty: We acknowledge that truth can be painful but it needs to be told for the sake of freedom from those things that bind us i.e. de-colonizing, inter-generational effects of residential school. We seek to be true to the spirit of who we are and what God calls us to be – fully realized children of God.
- Responsibility: In our gratitude and in recognition of *All My Relations*, we will discern together a good direction for our future. We will take ownership for decision-making and actions. And, we accept the consequences of our choices.
- Sharing: We offer our gifts to each other, to our communities, the church, and all Creation.
- Caring: We encourage care for our Elders, and our children, mindful of the need to serve them first. We encourage care for the youth and adults too because God cares for the whole. We encourage care for God's creation because God said it was good.
- Humility: We seek to be humble as Jesus was humble, letting go of self for the sake of ministry to the people.
- Trust: We trust in God's Word. We understand that we need to be the seed to growth and transformation. The Learning Circle must be a place of safety, creating a sense of family for the students.
- 7 Generations: With the understanding that needs and contexts change, we will consistently consider our past and our future unto seven generations.
- Love: All of the above is love made real. Love as God loves us. Blessings will flow.
- Courage: To face change with confidence and walk in to the future as Christians grounded in the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and knowing our Traditional ways to be taught at the new Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. Courage is what students need to become valiant ministers of the Gospel of The New Testament for an Old Testament people in the United Church of Canada and in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit territories in the new Wabung.

Wisdom: To cherish knowledge is to know wisdom as it emerges from within our lived experiences and in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit contexts we trust the guidance of our Christian and Traditional Elders because they combine life and lived experience to show us how to treat others with kindness, love and service. The Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre combines our memories together to become a strong foundation for teaching our students coming to the Brokenhead River at Beausejour, Manitoba.

### **3. FIRST NATION, MÉTIS, AND INUIT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN A NATIONAL CONTEXT**

The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre will serve all First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities of the United Church of Canada across the country. Whereas the Francis Sandy Theological Centre served primarily the First Nation and Métis communities in southern Ontario and Quebec and the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre served primarily the First Nation and Métis communities in northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, the new Centre now has the opportunity and the challenge to connect with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities across Canada, in the United Church, and ecumenically. Both former schools also have provided support to clergy in their areas, and have offered cultural and cross-cultural programming. The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre will need to develop ways to maintain and even increase a presence across the country, with a strong commitment to the network of communities so that the work established by the Francis Sandy Theological Centre and the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre will not be lost.

The following are ways to have a presence in all the communities:

- Support to students and their vision keepers
- Recruitment of new students
- Strengthening of faith formation in the communities by providing opportunities for theological reflection, leadership development, and having a physical presence in the East.
- Continuing education opportunities for clergy and lay people

The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre recognizes and affirms the cultural differences and distinctions of our peoples across the country and will therefore honour this diversity (languages, traditions, expressions of faith and spirituality, music, customs, foods, etc.) while working and learning together. The Centre will endeavor to reflect this diversity in the development of its curriculum, and the appointment of resource people and Elders.

## 4. VISION AND MANDATE

Aboriginal people identified education for church leadership as a key element in the very beginning of the Aboriginal self-government process in the United Church. Dr. Jessie Saulteaux was at a church gathering where she thought she was going to be asked to speak and was not. She had a vision of little lights dancing over the people's heads, and she recognized the stars as young Aboriginal people rising up to be leaders in their own churches. Dr. Jessie Saulteaux and Francis Sandy and other Aboriginal church Elders "dreamed the dream" of Indigenous leadership rising up in the church, incarnated in the people's own cultural identity, giving the people's voice to the Gospel. (compiled from, Janet Silman. *The First Nations: A Canadian Experience of the Gospel-Culture Encounter* by Stan McKay and Janet Silman, p.30.)

**4.01 Vision** *[This statement is a meld of the two schools' Mission statements. The Transitional Board will have to develop a vision statement as part of its work and can hopefully build on this.]*

The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is a place of spirit where both First Nation, Métis, and Inuit and Christian spiritual beliefs are respected, shared and understood.

In the circle, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit women and men are nurtured for leadership roles in The United Church of Canada, other denominations, and in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities as lay, diaconal and ordained ministers.

From the strength of Elders' wisdom, the Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre will foster teachings of respect, healing, and connectedness to be shared: for the benefit of individuals: for restoring balance and wholeness among peoples and with all of creation; and for nurturing a prophetic voice.

### 4.02 Mandate

- To uphold and teach the liberating gospel of Jesus, the Christ.
- To provide culturally specific theological education and preparation for both lay and ordered ministry that respects both Christian beliefs and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit spirituality and values
- To warmly welcome people from other denominations into this educational program of the United Church of Canada; to build partnerships with other denominations, and encourage ecumenical participation at the school.
- To honour the diversity of cultures, languages and traditions of the communities.

- To develop a strong focus on ministry with, and in, urban First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities.
- To honour and carry out traditional ceremonies.
- To honour Elders rooted in community who bring special spiritual gifts.
- To use a community-based model for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Christian ministry preparation in changing contexts.
- To honour a learning circle model that enables everyone to have a voice, be respected and included, bring their particular experience and perspective, and to listen.
- To find opportunities for students to serve in a pastoral ministry setting in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities – both urban and rural - during their studies.
- To provide a learning context that addresses healing from the effects of racism, colonization, the inequitable attribution of cultural value, residential schools legacy, and the “60s scoop”.
- to promote right relations through cross-cultural healing and learning between First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples of diverse identities and non-Aboriginal\* peoples and communities.
- To deepen local, regional, national, and global ecumenical and interfaith relations, particularly with Indigenous peoples.
- To support ministry personnel serving First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities, with continuing education and support.
- To provide a retreat and educational facility for organizations and individuals desiring time on the land.

## **5. MODEL OF MINISTRY / THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

The Wabung Program Task Group affirms and endorses the community-based model of learning described in material from both the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre and the Francis Sandy Theological Centre. Both programs are equal and transferrable.

The key elements of the model are:

- Five years for Order of Ministry (Ordained, Diaconal).
- Three years for Designated Lay Ministry.
- A balance of learning in a supervised ministry field placement with learning in the teaching circle with Elders, staff, resource people; integrated learning between the two.
- Experiential, action-reflection model of education.
- Learning in and about a variety of contexts – small communities, urban, various cultures.

- Curriculum is offered through one-week learning circles per subject (minimum of 45 credits for Order of Ministry and 27 for Designated Lay Ministry) with the possibility of some credits being earned in additional ways, in consultation with the Keeper of the Circle.
- For a period of time, to ensure continuity for existing students, the Centre will follow the pattern of learning circles of DJSRC: four 2-week Learning Circle blocks, four times a year with one additional week being active participation in Grand Council, and/or Annual Meeting of Conference, and/or Presbytery. The delivery of the learning Circles will need to be assessed for balance between travel costs, time away from community for students, etc.
- The cycle includes a Global Learning experience organized once in the five-years.
- There will be an Elder (Traditional or Christian) present at each Learning Circle, aiming for a balance of gender and different regions and cultures.
- Students are required to obtain credit for work in a field placement for a minimum of half-time (based on minimum of 20 hours per week) in each of the five years for order of ministry students (3 years for DLM). This work has a job description and is accountable.

Wherever possible, diaconal candidates are placed in ministry settings with a focus on educational, social ministry, and/or pastoral skills. Wherever possible candidates for ordination and lay pastoral ministry serve one year in an outreach setting or have an outreach component as part of their congregational responsibilities. The student may work in a non-paid placement for a maximum of two years.

*(The following issues need to be clarified: Can increased field-placement time provide some alternative e.g. ¾ time over four years?, paid versus volunteer work, what does “accountable” mean?, what proportion of the five years can be in congregational setting or in social justice, pastoral care, educational settings, and if there is some leeway for the first year e.g. can first year students have less field time?)*

- Support, guidance and opportunity for theological reflection is offered through a Vision Keeper who meets with the student on a regular basis and provides reports to the Program Staff. Usually the Vision Keeper is in the local community.

*(The role of Vision Keeper will need to be clarified as both Schools provided Vision Keeping in different ways – DJSRC had one VK from the community for each student. FSTC staff provided much of that role when a local Vision Keeper was not present.)*

- The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre will follow the current curriculum cycle of DJSRC for at least the first year. This will allow for continuity for students in the program; and will give time for developing new courses to integrate into the cycle. Resource people and Elders for the classes will be drawn from different regions. The curriculum is approved by the UCC and though different in some aspects, meets the UCC requirements.
- Integration happens in a variety of ways in both the learning circle and field placement (see handbooks and diagrams).
- Wabung suggests that: an evaluation of the existing program be conducted before significant changes are made to this model. The last evaluation was held in 1989, and as part of the self-study in 2005/6. An evaluation should include: consulting constituencies/communities in the evaluation process; reviewing notes from the Wabung consultation; examination of integration of learning, learning outcomes, personal and spiritual growth, admissions process, and policies. Such an evaluation should happen in a culturally appropriate way .

## **6. WHO THE MINISTRY TRAINING PROGRAM IS FOR**

These are the constituencies who have been, are being, or could be served by the Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre :

### **1. Existing students**

- we will plan for the transition of FSTC and DJSRC students so that there will be minimal disruption to the completion of their programs.
- we will provide additional learning opportunities for students nearing the completion of their studies so they may graduate in a timely manner (April 2012).
- We will have an on-going commitment that allows St. Andrew's students to take one credit at the Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre.

2. First Nation, Métis, and Inuit persons who want to be educated for paid accountable leadership in the church (ordained, diaconal, lay ministries)
  - the current United Church process and model for discernment needs revision to make it appropriate to our First Nation, Métis, and Inuit contexts. The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre will participate in wider denominational discussions on discernment, candidacy and preparation for ministry.
3. Elders and lay people
  - We will address needs of individuals who seek leadership development, become Sacrament Elders, participate in Continuing Education, and develop skills in worship leadership, chaplaincy work such as hospital care, and social justice work.
4. Congregations
  - In partnership with the Aboriginal Ministries Circle, we will offer educational opportunities for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit congregations in congregational development and leadership.
5. Partnering and Linking
  - We will explore ways to offer programs in partnership with other UCC schools such as St. Andrews, University of Winnipeg , Queen’s School of Religion, Emmanuel College as well as Aboriginal Ministries Circle staff, and other learning centers and schools such as the Centre for Christian Studies and the Native Ministries Consortium Summer School.
  - We will also explore partnerships with ecumenical First Nation, Métis, and Inuit schools and groups.
6. First Nation, Métis, and Inuit and non-Aboriginal\* people
  - We will continue to offer cultural and cross-cultural teaching led by Elders, both Traditional and Christian
  - This takes many different forms: seasonal and other ceremonies, summer Family Gathering, Right Relations groups, school groups and other organizations.

7. Non-Aboriginal people are eligible to enroll in the diploma program if they can demonstrate that they have had a long and deep relationship with a First Nation, Métis or Inuit community, and come with the recommendation of a First Nation, Métis or Inuit community.

The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre will also offer cross-cultural orientation and continuing education opportunities for Aboriginal\* people seeking to deepen their understanding of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and to increase their cross-cultural competence.

### **6.01 A Word about Non-Aboriginal\* People in Ministry with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Peoples**

Along with the Gospel message, Non-Aboriginal\* people have historically brought and continue to bring great harm and disrespect to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and their leaders. For there to be wholeness of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people, Non-Aboriginal\* people who feel specially called to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit pastoral ministry must know their own identity and understand their place in the historic relationship of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit and Non-Aboriginal\* peoples in Canada. They must understand their ministry in the context of the community's healing and to discern who Creator might be calling from within the community into leadership.

Over the decades, many First Nation, Métis, and Inuit congregations have been served by non-Aboriginal\* ministry personnel. However, no matter how well-intentioned or well-liked, many of the ministers have not deeply understood the history, protocols, culture, or spirituality of the people and have often unintentionally reinforced dominant, non-Aboriginal\* cultural values and dependency.

The Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre will provide non-Aboriginal\* ministry students and ministry personnel with programs and opportunities to participate in regular and ongoing learning circles. This will help them to learn from First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people about:

- The protocol of the circle
- First Nation, Métis, and Inuit perspectives and worldviews
- the relationship between traditional and Christian theologies and spirituality
- how to be shaped by First Nation, Métis, and Inuit values and spirituality

Learning how to be in and with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit community is a long journey. This initiative toward decolonization will need the full participation and support of Presbyteries and Conferences, as well as communities themselves.

## **7.0 GOVERNANCE AND STAFFING**

### **7.01 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Models of Governance and Current Legal Requirements**

There is a lively discussion taking place in many First Nation, Métis, and Inuit circles about the need to develop models of organizational governance that reflect First Nation, Métis, and Inuit worldviews and values. The Wabung group believes that the Sandy – Sauleteaux Spiritual Centre should engage in its own discussion about what a comprehensive First Nation, Métis, and Inuit model of governance would look like in its context. This would be consistent with the larger conversation taking place within the General Council of the United Church as it seeks to “re-language” its worldview, and its understanding of being the church on this land of Canada.

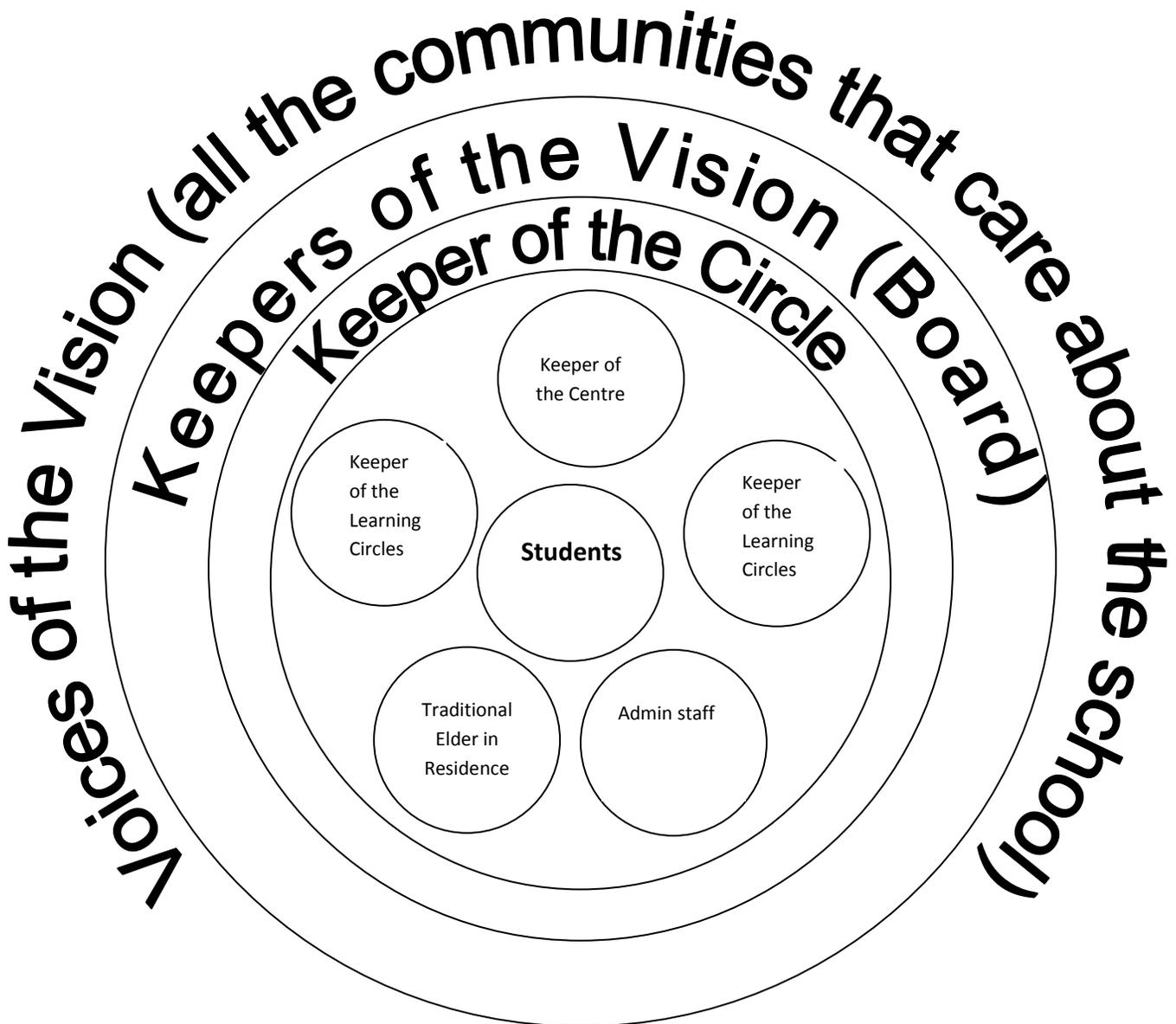
To establish the Sandy – Sauleteaux Spiritual Centre in the meantime, however, a set of bylaws for incorporation are required. Such bylaws are legal entities that must conform both to the laws of the province of Manitoba, and to the sections of *The Manual* of the United Church of Canada regarding incorporated bodies.

Appendix I contains a proposed set of bylaws for incorporation. They reveal those elements of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit values and practices which have already been part of the tradition of both the Dr. Jessie Sauleteaux Resource Centre and the Francis Sandy Theological Centre: the centrality of the circle in decision-making, coming to a common mind through consensus, board representation from a wide diversity of communities, and the language of “Keeper”.

## 7.02 Circles of Keeping

The structure of the Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre can be represented by a number of concentric circles (please note that the names for the various keeping positions, and the number of staff, are open for further discussion):

Diagram 2



### **7.03 Keepers of the Vision (the Board)**

The Keepers of the Vision, occupy a crucial threshold between the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities, and the purpose of the school. They listen from the communities, and speak into the life of the school to ensure that it is responding to the evolving Vision. The Keepers of the Vision are also responsible for keeping the Visions that inspired and guided the Francis Sandy Theological Centre and the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre.

The Keepers of the Vision shall consist of eight members elected at the Annual Meeting for a 3 year term, and one Student Representative chosen by the Students. Of the eight members elected at the Annual Meeting, four shall be chosen from the constituency formerly served by the Francis Sandy Theological Centre, and four from the constituency formerly served by the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre. These members are voting members of the Board. There shall be two Ex-officio Corresponding Members representing The United Church of Canada. The Personnel Minister of All Native Circle Conference shall also be an ex officio member of the Board. The Board shall also appoint an Elder(s) who, as the Sandy – Saulteaux Spiritual Centre lives into the vision, will develop a position that rotates between the east and the west.

A full description of the responsibilities of the Keepers of the Vision can be found in Section 6-8 of the Bylaws in Appendix I. The proposal that a Transitional Board be established for the first three years, and the focus for those years can be found in Recommendation 4 on page 21.

### **7.04 Keeper of the Circle**

The Keeper of the Circle is usually called the Principal in non-Aboriginal\* settings. The Keeper of the Circle is a leader who oversees all aspects of the life of the school. This includes the education for ministry component, the cross-cultural and rental components, and the supervision of other staff. The Keeper of the Circle coordinates, but is not necessarily responsible for doing all the required work, but for *seeing that it is done*. In the first 3 years the Keeper of the Circle will need to put an emphasis on administrative leadership in order to put the school's infrastructure in place e.g. write position descriptions, hire a staff team (giving preference to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people), develop a strategic plan. The Keeper of the Circle must also be able, and willing, to offer leadership as a teacher in some Learning Circles.

The Keeper of the Circle will focus on building strong relationships with the students, Elders, staff, board, supporting communities, and the School's partners. He, or she, must lead in a way that honours relationship, respects the circle, is attuned to the counsel of the Elders, and that seeks the best interest of the students. The School is also a community which honours the two spiritual

paths of historic Christian faith, and traditional Native spiritual practices. The Keeper of the Circle must respect and uphold the value of each spiritual path. She, or he, must also be able to relate effectively to students who live primarily in one spiritual path, or the other, and model for students a deep appreciation of both spiritual traditions.

For a full description of the responsibilities of the Keeper of the Circle, refer to Appendix II for the detailed position description that will be used in searching for a Keeper.

## 7.05 Staffing

Among the first responsibilities of the new Keeper of the Circle, and the Transitional Board, will be to put together a new staff team consisting of full and part time positions (with preference given to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people):

- **Keeper of the Centre** This person's detailed responsibilities will be decided by the Keeper of the Circle and the Board. Generally speaking, he/she will be responsible for the daily operations and upkeep of the facilities, care of the land, guest hospitality, coordination of kitchen staff, and cross-cultural education events and other cultural programs.
- **Keepers of the Learning Circles** Staffing the Learning Circles is a core commitment. There will be two Learning Circle Keepers, and a commitment to having staffing presence in the east and the west. The nature of this presence, and detailed position descriptions, will be determined by the Keeper of the Circle, and the Transitional Board.

Areas of responsibility for the Learning Circle Keepers might include, but not be limited to: recruitment, working with the students on their programs of study, organizing the learning circles, arranging for resource people, evaluation, connecting with students' home congregations, communities, presbyteries and conferences.

- **Traditional Elder in Residence** The nature of this position will be decided by the Board and the Keeper of the Circle, but the intent is that this person will hold ceremonies, offer teachings, and keep the medicines.
- **Administrative staff** will cover receptionist duties (including hospitality), minute-taking, photocopying, record keeping, bookkeeping etc.