

**Job Description: Keeper of the Circle
Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre
The United Church of Canada**

Position Title: Keeper of the Circle

Purpose:

The Keepers of the Vision for the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (“the Centre”) hold many of the same responsibilities as does a Board of Directors in non-indigenous organizations. The Keeper of the Circle is accountable to the Keepers of the Vision for the practical implementation and coordination of the vision for the Centre. The Keeper of the Circle position encompasses the responsibilities usually assigned, in non-indigenous schools, to a “Principal” in regards to theological education which is one focus of the Centre. The leadership of the Keeper of the Circle includes the capacity to offer teaching, instruction, and guidance within both the school’s educational programs and in programs offered by educational partners. The position is also responsible for the cross-cultural educational focus of the Centre’s work. The position is responsible for overseeing the healthy and effective functioning all aspects of the Centre’s life and work: educational, spiritual, financial, administrative, staff team development, community relations and partnerships, student recruitment, and facilities management.

Context:

As a participant in Canada’s colonial history that sought to eliminate First Nations’ peoples, the United Church of Canada (the “UCC”) has made an intentional, enduring commitment to walk in solidarity with indigenous peoples in Canada (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) as they seek self-determination, reconciliation, and right relations. Further information regarding this history and commitment can be found at: <https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/reconciliation-and-indigenous-justice>.

The Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre hosts a theological program that is one of the two programs within the UCC that prepares indigenous people for lay, ordained, and diaconal Christian ministries. The Native Ministries Program within the Vancouver School of Theology is the other such program. The Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is also one of the educational institutions that has been given the right to grant *testamur* by the United Church of Canada. While its primary focus is on preparing indigenous students for service within predominantly indigenous communities, graduates of the diploma programs leading to ordination and commissioning are eligible to serve in any ministry of the United Church of Canada. Further information about the theological schools of the United Church can be found at: <https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/explore-your-faith-united-church-theological-school>.

In the 1980’s the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre (located near Beausejour, Manitoba) and the Francis Sandy Theological Centre (located near Paris, Ontario) were envisioned by the community Elders involved in UCC indigenous ministries. The amalgamation of these two historic indigenous theological schools was directed by the Executive of General Council in June of 2010. The new Centre, established in September 2011, brought together students from distinct indigenous cultures. The new Centre represents strong stewardship of available resources and enriched educational opportunities.

Indigenous Ministry Transition

The Wabung group (Ojibway for “tomorrow”) managed the transition period leading to the creation of the Centre. This process was coordinated by a group with representatives from Francis Sandy Theological Centre, Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre, and General Council staff from the then Aboriginal Ministries Circle and the Communities in Ministry Unit. Transitional issues, activities and goals continue to be developed in the new Centre. The Keeper of the Circle must work to coordinate and lead the continuing process of development in collaboration with the Keepers of the Vision.

This continuing development includes the ongoing changes in the UCC in general and those of Indigenous ministries in particular. The Keeper of the Circle carefully guides the Centre in responding to these outside changes to ensure the original vision of the Wabung group is honoured, developed and advanced. The Keeper of the Circle works to advance the indigenous educational [Calls to Action of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) and the development of an indigenous *testamur*.

Key Values

The Centre is a community which honours the two spiritual paths of:

1. Historic Christian faith, and
2. Traditional Native spiritual practices.

The Keeper of the Circle must respect and uphold:

1. The value of each spiritual path;
2. The ability to relate effectively to students who live primarily in one spiritual path or the other;
3. Sensitive spiritual leadership of discerning where each person is in their spiritual growth and when the community, or an individual, requires the spiritual nurture of prayer, smudge, Holy Communion, or other ceremony;
4. Model for students a deep appreciation of both spiritual traditions;
5. Respectful participation in, and leading both Christian and traditional spiritual practices.

The Keeper of the Circle leads in a way that deeply honours:

1. Relationship,
2. Respects the circle,
3. Is attuned to the counsel of the Elders, and
4. That seeks the best interests of the students, staff and clients.

The Keeper of the Circle sometimes works in highly ambiguous situations and needs to be sensitive and a listening peacemaker. The Keeper of the Circle coordinates the overall life of the Centre, and is not necessarily responsible for doing all the required work, but for *seeing that it is done*. The Keeper of the Circle must also be willing to “pitch in” and do whatever needs to be done for the sake of students and clients, and the welfare of the Centre, when circumstances require it. The Keeper of the Circle needs to model self-care and encourage this with the staff.

Key Responsibilities of this Position:

The Keeper of the Circle builds strong relationships with:

1. The students to:
 - a. Participate in Learning Circles as a supportive presence, and teacher (as required);
 - b. In coordination with the Keepers of Learning (Keeper of the Learning Pathway & Keeper of the Learning Circle), visit the home communities and churches of students to build relationship and become familiar with realities as they are being lived;
 - c. Teach effectively using traditional indigenous wisdom-based perspectives, and de-colonizing and indigenizing educational methods;
 - d. Demonstrate understanding of issues of systemic racism, lateral violence, sexism, colonialism, and principals of justice, diversity, equity and inclusion (JEDI);
 - e. Assist the Keepers of Learning with coordinating an effective educational program that uses a variety of methods suitable to students with varying learning styles, and levels of formal education;
2. Elders to:
 - a. Ensure the land and ceremonial possessions are cared for appropriately;
 - b. Ensure the Centre's programs and projects are informed and guided by traditional knowledge and wisdom;
3. The staff to:
 - a. Support the Keepers of Learning to ensure that the educational needs of students are met by the program and staffing;
 - b. Support the Keeper of the Centre in grant writing and other fund raising work;
 - c. Enrich the ministry training and cross cultural educational programs;
 - d. Be the team leader in building the identity and morale of the staff team;
 - e. Help individual staff members fulfill their potential;
 - f. Delegate and encourage others to assume added responsibility, authority, and accountability;
 - g. Ensure a safe working environment and healthy boundaries are maintained;
 - h. Ensure a safe and orderly management of records;
 - i. Engage the conflict resolution process when needed and assure the staff has access to the Personnel Committee for any issues needing to be addressed with the Keeper of the Circle
4. Keepers of the Vision to:
 - a. Work cooperatively, collaboratively, and think strategically to honour and respect the visions of the Francis Sandy and Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Centres, and follow through with the commitments made by the Wabung group;
 - b. See the big picture, take action, and address barriers in the way of the Centre's goals;
 - c. Bring a theological perspective and understanding to policy, practices, and programs;
 - d. Develop, and implement a strategic plan and purpose that integrates into a coherent and functioning whole the diverse programs, activities, and partnerships that make up the life of the Centre:
 - i. The Program for Ministry (educational model, course content, vision keeping)

- ii. Cross-cultural programming (ecumenical guests, sharing circles, Aboriginal culture education)
 - e. The development of the indigenous family wellbeing program
 - f. Oversee:
 - i. Spiritual and seasonal ceremonies
 - ii. Continuation of the Centre's property and facilities renewal and development plan;
 - g. Work in conjunction with the Personnel Committee and the Keepers of the Vision to develop a staffing plan that responds to the various needs and programs of the centre, works to continue indigenizing all human resources functions of the Centre;
 - h. Assist with the development of necessary by-laws, policies, and procedures as the Centre's identity and programs evolve;
 - i. Work with the Keeper of the Centre, Finance Committee and Keepers of the Vision to ensure that a detailed annual budget is established and approved that will sustain the vision; and ensure internal financial controls are in place to ensure accuracy and accountability;
 - j. Be responsible for an accurate accounting of the budget and financial situation;
 - k. Develop a communications strategy, program, and staffing to communicate broadly the vision of the Centre and elicit support for its programs.
5. Supporting communities to:
- a. Recruit students;
 - b. Monitor community needs and how the Centre may respond to these.
6. The Centre's partners to:
- a. Be a welcoming presence and inviting to collaboration;
 - b. Work collaboratively and strategically with the National Indigenous Council, the National Indigenous Elder's Council, the Theological Schools Circle, BC Native Ministries, Native Ministries of Ontario and Quebec, the other 16 Regions within the United Church, and the General Council Office;
 - c. Develop knowledge of and networking with North American and global indigenous theological schools, other relevant organizations;
 - d. Advance the discussion of contemporary indigenous issues and movements;
 - e. Work in an ecumenical and interfaith context.

Required Education & Demonstrated Experience:

- Master's Degree in theology or related field required; doctoral degree preferred
- Clarity on own spiritual self-identification (including affiliation with a religious tradition) and comfort with spiritual pluralism and traditional indigenous spiritual practices
- Track record of teaching excellence
- Student Services Experience an asset
- Record of public speaking and published writing an asset
- Online Course Instruction Experience an asset

Required Documents:

- Cover Letter
- Curriculum Vitae
- One-page statement on indigenizing theological education
- One-page statement on own research and teaching interests
- Statement of teaching philosophy
- Writing sample or video link to recorded public speaking/teaching

Appointment Type:

Principal

Appointment Status:

Full-time, permanent

Tenure Status of this position:

Not applicable; the Centre does not have an academic charter or accreditation with Association of Theological Schools (ATS)

Statement of Faith Required:

None; Understanding of the structure and polity of the United Church of Canada an asset

Organizational Budget & Staff FTEs:

The Centre has an overall annual budget of approx. \$600,000, 4 full time and 10 part time staff.

Compensation & Benefits

\$85,301 - \$113,735 depending on experience.

[Group benefits](#) including extended medical and [defined benefit pension](#). Professional development allowance no less than posted current UCC minimum (2021 min. rate is \$1,474).

Interested applicants should forward required documents to connect@sandysaulteaux.ca by January 15, 2022.