

Ministry Program Team: Roles & Collaborative Function

The Ministry Program at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is supported through a relational team model, where each role contributes distinct responsibilities while working collaboratively to form Indigenous leaders for ministry as helpers, healers, educators, and guides. Together, these roles embody a circle of shared leadership that integrates learning, community, and national vision.

At the national level, the **National Vision Keeper (NVK)** serves as a bridge, vision-holder, and coordinator, connecting the Ministry Program to the wider Indigenous Church, national partners, and theological institutions. This role provides overall oversight to the Ministry Training Team, ensures alignment with the Lilly Grant strategy and performance indicators, and fosters partnerships across the United Church, Indigenous organizations, and broader sectors such as healing and wellness.

Working closely with the NVK, the **Keeper of the Learning Circle (KOLC)** focuses on the core educational experience. This role walks directly with students through Learning Circles and field placements, guiding reflection, competency development, and discernment of call. The KOLC leads the planning and facilitation of Learning Circles, collaborates with the Indigenous Office of Vocation, and ensures students are progressing toward Testamur and ministry readiness.

Complementing this, the **Keeper of the Learning Pathway (KOLP)** serves as a guide and companion across the full student journey. This role supports recruitment, intake, and ongoing accompaniment of students, while also orienting Vision Keepers and strengthening relationships with communities of faith. The KOLP ensures that students are supported between Learning Circles, helps coordinate field placements, and maintains an environment of life-long learning through continued education opportunities.

Surrounding this core team are **supporting staff roles**, including Wahkotowin (prepares spaces for prayer, reflections, and fellowship, arranges ceremony and implements land-based learning that compliments the Learning Circle) and Office Administration (logistics, arranges student travel, preparing learning materials, and maintains student records), which ensure that the learning environment is prepared in a holistic and practical way.

How the Team Collaborates

Together, the NVK, KOLC, and KOLP function as an integrated circle of leadership:

- **Shared Planning & Delivery:** All three roles collaborate to design Learning Circles, develop curriculum, and align programming with student needs and community realities.

- **Student-Centered Support:** The KOLC provides direct educational guidance, while the KOLP ensures ongoing relational and logistical support across the pathway, with the NVK mentoring both roles and ensuring alignment with the broader vision.
- **Partnership & Pathway Alignment:** The team works collectively with the Indigenous Office of Vocation, Vision Keepers, Elders, and theological partners to support candidacy pathways, field placements, and accreditation processes.
- **Evaluation & Adaptation:** The NVK, alongside the team, analyzes data, evaluates learning outcomes, and recommends program and curriculum changes to ensure sustainability and responsiveness to community needs.

Alignment with Lilly Grant – Reimagining Theological Education

This collaborative structure directly supports the goals of the Lilly Grant by:

- **Reimagining Indigenous Theological Education:** Grounding learning in land-based, relational, and community-driven approaches that honour Indigenous self-determination.
- **Strengthening Partnerships:** Expanding relationships with theological schools, Indigenous organizations, and community sectors to create diverse learning pathways and shared programming.
- **Supporting Flexible Pathways:** Integrating PLAR, field placements, and community-based learning to recognize lived experience and create accessible routes into ministry.
- **Building Sustainable Leadership Development:** Encouraging lifelong learning, supporting Vision Keepers, and engaging communities of faith as active partners in forming leaders.
- **Ensuring Accountability & Measurable Impact:** Using shared evaluation, reporting, and alignment with grant timelines and performance indicators to track outcomes and inform ongoing development.

Summary

Together, this team operates not as separate roles, but as an interconnected circle, where each position strengthens the others. Through shared leadership, relational accountability, and a commitment to Indigenous ways of knowing and being, the Ministry Program Team supports students, communities, and the wider church—while advancing the vision of the Lilly Grant to reimagine theological education in a good and life-giving way.