



THE
CHRISTENSEN
FUND



Executive Director

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The Organization

[The Christensen Fund](#) (the Fund) envisions bioculturally diverse landscapes and seascapes stewarded by Indigenous Peoples and local communities with thriving governance systems, vibrant culturally-rooted stewardship practice, and secure territorial rights guided by community wellbeing and buen vivir. The Fund backs the Global Indigenous Peoples' Movement in its efforts to advance the rights and opportunities of stewards of biocultural diversity. This new mission is rooted in a commitment to support the full and effective implementation of the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#).

The Indigenous Peoples' Movement and its allies are among the most articulate, persistent and strategic advocates for biocultural diversity today. They are a critical force in challenging the anthropocentric worldview that has brought us to the brink of ecological collapse. The Christensen Fund has a 15-year history partnering directly with, investing in, and learning from Indigenous communities. To realize its new mission, the Fund has shifted its focus to specific UNDRIP themes, currently those of Lands, Territories, Resources and Governance (LTRG). Applying a rights-based approach to philanthropy, the Fund's goal is to become a strategic philanthropic ally to the Global Indigenous Peoples' Movement.

Founded in 1957 by Allen D. and Carmen M. Christensen, The Christensen Fund is a private grantmaking foundation contributing approximately \$10M in annual grants. The founders' global perspective, interests in non-Western art and the environment, and appreciation for creativity and education strongly influenced the Fund's initial direction and have informed the Fund's evolution over its sixty-year history.

The Fund's team members represent broad cultural and geographic diversity and are based in San Francisco, CA and selected regions abroad. The Christensen Fund is currently governed by a seven-person Board of Directors which will expand to nine in 2021; two of these seats are held by Christensen family members.



The Opportunity

This is an exceptional opportunity to lead a foundation at the forefront of supporting and elevating the rights of Indigenous Peoples around the world. With its historic focus on biocultural diversity and strong conviction that environmental and cultural stewardship by Indigenous Peoples is the path forward, The Christensen Fund is a philanthropic trailblazer. Admired as a thought leader and influencer in this work, the Fund has distinguished itself as a credible partner to indigenous communities in part because team members bring lived experience, and in part because collaboration is ingrained in the organization's DNA; listening to and following the lead of community partners is how funding opportunities are identified and developed.

The new Executive Director will join the Fund at a pivotal moment and will help shape the trajectory of the new strategy. They will hold a vision and lead the team bringing the rights-based focus to life through investments and partnerships designed to:

- amplify grassroots indigenous voices;
- build solidarity between and across Indigenous Peoples' movements; and,
- increase awareness of international frameworks that protect LTRG rights.

Reporting to the board of directors, the executive director will partner with the board and staff to bring the Fund into its next phase of impact by building on its exceptional reputation and track record of programmatic accomplishments.



Key Priorities and Responsibilities

The new executive director will have overall strategic and operational responsibility for The Christensen Fund's staff, programs, future strategy refinement, finances, and fulfillment of its mission. The following highlight the key priorities in the first year:

Strategic Leadership

- Champion and lead a culture of forward momentum on the newly approved Indigenous Lands, Territories, Resources, Governance (LTRG) strategy, curating a vision that will bring this work to life and achieve outcomes that advance Indigenous Peoples' rights and well-being.
- Build on and support the deep expertise and networks at both the board and staff levels to create partnerships that will catalyze funding, networks and advocates in the field.
- Leverage the Fund's legacy and credibility to articulate its solidarity with Indigenous Peoples' self-determination.

Staff and Board Leadership

- Lead staff and board with vision, strong managerial skills, a focus on team culture and full transparency.
- Champion teamwork across the organization by providing effective internal leadership, coaching, performance management and professional development.
- Reinforce a culture of empowerment that enables team members to leverage their subject matter expertise as the new strategy takes shape programmatically.
- Build strong relationships with board members, actively engaging them in governance and strategically deploying their strengths and interests in support of the Fund.

External Engagement

- Serve as the public face and spokesperson for The Christensen Fund, representing the organization with credibility and enthusiasm, leveraging its reputation and clearly communicating its vision and learning to diverse stakeholder audiences.
- Advance the Fund's position as an influencer and advocate through speaking and writing.
- Develop and expand the Fund's networks, bringing more allies to the work and serving as a convener for knowledge sharing to advance the Global Indigenous Peoples' Movement.





Ideal Candidate

The Christensen Fund's new executive director is an inspiring leader who sees the opportunity to advance Indigenous Peoples' rights as a calling. Whether or not you have lived experience with indigenous or marginalized communities, you bring a deep understanding of the challenges we are trying to address and the cultural competencies to help us do it successfully. You are an individual who has established your reputation as a leader in philanthropy or in a field relevant to the Fund's work (social justice, human rights, land rights, climate change, food justice, agroecology) and will leverage your networks and passion to serve and promote our mission.

The new Executive Director will exhibit a leadership style that is highly collaborative, fosters diverse points of view and encourages constructive discussion to advance the Fund's work. You operate with a sense of humility and an intellectual curiosity that encourages continual learning and understanding. You are a seasoned people leader who has guided a team through transition, enjoys a mentoring role, and who is creative in finding ways for employees to grow professionally. You have an ability to nurture an environment of shared vision and responsibility between the board, the executive director, and staff.

Successful candidates will possess a high level of emotional intelligence, diplomacy and a warm, approachable style that readily engenders trust; you are as comfortable in conversation with an indigenous community leader as you are giving a conference keynote before a large audience. Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills are required to be an effective advocate for our partners and a successful leader of our staff and board.

Additional attributes that will serve candidates well include high intellect; flexibility; charisma and an engaging presence; the ability to build trust, respect, and credibility with low ego; and a sense of humor. Nimbleness and flexibility are also important characteristics for the role.



Qualifications

- Candidates must have a minimum of 15+ years of progressively responsible executive leadership experience in a dynamic and innovative social sector organization, preferably in a foundation.
- Those who have developed their experience in a global context or outside of the US are encouraged to apply if they have permission to work in the U.S.
- Experience gained in proximity to indigenous communities and an understanding of their rights is an asset.
- A demonstrated track record working in close partnership with a governing board of trustees and managing a team of at least 10 fulltime staff members is required; experience leading a globally dispersed team is valued.

The Executive Director will be based in The Christensen Fund's San Francisco office.

To Be Considered

An equal opportunity employer, The Christensen Fund is committed to a diverse and inclusive work environment. The Christensen Fund does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, marital status, national origin or any other characteristic protected by law.

All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply. A current resume and cover letter articulating your interest and fit for the role should be submitted through the [Waldron Search Candidate Web Portal](#). Letters may be addressed to Sarah Meyer.

The search for the Executive Director of the Christensen Fund is being assisted by a team from Waldron Search:

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Waldron is honored to work with The Christensen Fund in the search for an Executive Director. The Christensen Fund does amazing work, and we are doing our best to recruit a talented team member who will accelerate this mission. As the consulting partner strategic leaders choose to help attract, engage, and inspire effective leaders, our passion is helping people and organizations realize their full potential and increase their impact.