

The Commission asked all the Settlement Agreement churches to tell us their views on Indigenous spirituality and what steps were being taken within their respective institutions to respect Indigenous spiritual practices. In 2015, two of the Settlement Agreement churches responded to this call.

On January 29, 2015, the Presbyterian Church in Canada issued a “Statement on Aboriginal Spiritual Practices.” Among other things, the church said:

As part of the Churches’ commitment to a journey of truth and reconciliation, the Presbyterian Church in Canada has learned that many facets of Aboriginal traditional spiritualities bring life and oneness with creation. Accepting this has sometimes been a challenge for the Presbyterian Church in Canada. We are now aware that there is a wide variety of Aboriginal spiritual practices and we acknowledge that it is for our church to continue in humility to learn the deep significance of these practices and to respect them and the Aboriginal elders who are the keepers of their traditional sacred truths....

We acknowledge and respect both Aboriginal members of the Presbyterian Church in Canada who wish to bring traditional practices into their congregations and those Aboriginal members who are not comfortable or willing to do so. The church must be a community where all are valued and respected. It is not for the Presbyterian Church in Canada to validate or invalidate Aboriginal spiritualities and practices. Our church, however, is deeply respectful of these traditions.⁹¹

On February 18, 2015, the United Church of Canada issued a statement, “Affirming Other Spiritual Paths.” The document sets out various statements and apologies made by the church with regard to Indigenous spirituality, including an expression of reconciliation at the TRC’s Alberta National Event on March 27, 2014. Among other things, the church said:

In humility, the Church acknowledges its complicity in the degradation of Aboriginal wisdom and spirituality, and offers the following statements from its recent history. In doing so, the Church recognizes with pain that this is a complex and sensitive issue for some within Aboriginal communities of faith, who as a result of our Christianizing work, and the legacy of colonialism, are on a journey to restore harmony and spiritual balance....

We have learned that ‘good intentions’ are never enough, especially when wrapped in the misguided zeal of cultural and spiritual superiority. Thus, we have learned that we were wrong to reject, discredit, and yes, even outlaw traditional indigenous spiritual practice and ceremony; in amazing circles of grace, as we have begun to listen to the wisdom of the Elders, we have found our own faith enriched and deepened. And we are grateful. We know we have a long journey ahead of us. We are committed to make that journey in humility and partnership, engaging in the healing work of making “whole” our own spirituality, and acknowledging that holding both