

your spirituality and ours is possible through listening and learning with open hearts.⁹²

Unlike the Protestant churches, in which theological reflection and institutional reform have been undertaken at the national level, the Roman Catholic Church in Canada's approach to Indigenous spirituality has emphasized decision making at the local diocesan level. However, in a submission to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1993, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops expressed its views on Indigenous spirituality:

The Native spiritual voice is now finding greater resonance in the broader Christian and social worlds. Native Christianity today is marked by the development of a theology that comes from Native prayer, culture, and experience.... As bishops, we have encouraged Native Catholic leaders to take increasing responsibility for the faith life of their communities....

We also recognize that for some Native Peoples, Christianity and Native spirituality are mutually exclusive. We are committed to responding to this belief in a spirit of dialogue and respect, and to encouraging Native Peoples to join in conversation between Christianity and Native spirituality.... We will continue to explore the possibility of establishing channels of communication between our own spiritual heritage and Aboriginal spiritualities.⁹³

In terms of institutional reform, the Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council, established in 1998, advises the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops on issues regarding Aboriginal peoples within the Catholic Church. The council's mandate is to study and analyze "issues related to Catholic Aboriginal spirituality and education"; encourage "Aboriginal leadership in the Christian community"; support and promote "reconciliation in the context of the Catholic reality"; and serve "as an important link between Aboriginal Catholics and non-Aboriginal Catholics."⁹⁴

The Commission notes that all the Settlement Agreement churches have recognized the need to provide theological education and training for Aboriginal church members to take leadership positions within the churches and work in Aboriginal ministry programs. Beginning in 2007, the Churches' Council on Theological Education in Canada held a series of conferences that sought to encourage and deepen the exploration of questions with respect to Indigenous and Christian beliefs and the incorporation of Indigenous cultural and spiritual practices into Christian practices. Through these events, the council also sought to challenge post-secondary institutions to consider how best to prepare theological students for ministry in Canada, in consideration not only of Indigenous people, their culture and spirituality, but also of the need for churches to engage in healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

The Toronto School of Theology made a public commitment to giving the same academic respect to Indigenous knowledge, including traditional Indigenous spiritual teachings, "as [to] traditions of Greek philosophy and modern science."⁹⁵ This pledge was made