

on an ongoing basis. Where education about residential schools is minimal, provincial and territorial governments can benefit from the lessons learned in jurisdictions that have made this material a mandatory requirement.

The Commission notes that throughout the residential school era, Catholic and Protestant religious schools taught students only about their own religions. Students were ill prepared to understand or respect other religious or spiritual perspectives, including those of Aboriginal peoples. In our view, no religious school receiving public funding should be allowed to teach one religion to the complete exclusion of all other religions. This is consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *S.L. v. Commission scolaire des Chênes* in 2012. At issue was whether Québec's mandatory Ethics and Religious Cultures Program, which was introduced in 2008 to replace Catholic and Protestant programs of religious and moral instruction with a comparative religions course taught from a neutral and objective perspective, violated charter rights of Catholic parents and children to be taught only Catholic religious beliefs.¹¹⁰ However, the court ruled:

Exposing children to a comprehensive presentation of various religions without forcing the children to join them does not constitute an indoctrination of students that would infringe the freedom of religion.... Furthermore, the early exposure of children to realities that differ from those in their immediate family environment is a fact of life in society. The suggestion that exposing children to a variety of religious facts in itself infringes on religious freedom or that of their parents amounts to a rejection of the multicultural reality of Canadian society and ignores the Quebec government's obligations with regard to public education.¹¹¹

The Commission believes that religious diversity courses must be mandatory in all provinces and territories. Any religious school receiving public funding must be required to teach at least one course on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices.

Calls to Action

- 62) We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
 - i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
 - ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
 - iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.