

abuse and the damage that has been done in residential schools, one of the primary sources of that is the church. And the church has to take ownership for that. But what bothers me about it is that the church continues to have a hold on our people.... Just get out of the way for awhile so that we can do what we need to do because as long as you are standing there thinking that you are supporting us, you are actually preventing us from getting to our own truth about this and our own healing about this. But I think the other thing that's being avoided by the church is their need to reconcile with the Spirit.... I think that the church has to reconcile with the Creator.... I'm not a Christian but I have a high regard for this Spirit ... who is called Jesus.... What I think is that when the church can reconcile with their God and their Saviour for what they have done, then maybe we can talk to them about reconciling amongst ourselves.⁸³

In contrast, Aboriginal Christians who also practise Indigenous spirituality seek Indigenous and Christian spiritual and religious coexistence within the churches themselves. United Church Rev. Alf Dumont, the first speaker of the All Native Circle Conference, said,

Respect is one of the greatest teachings that come from the original people of this land. Our ancestors followed that teaching when they met with their Christian brothers and sisters so many years ago. They saw a truth and a sacredness they could not deny in Christian teachings. Many were willing to embrace these teachings and leave their traditional teachings. Some were willing to embrace the teachings but still wanted to hold to their own. Some did not leave their own traditions, and when persecuted, went into hiding either deep in the mountains or deep inside themselves. Many were suspicious of the way the [Christian] teachings were presented and how they were lived. They were suspicious of the fact that they were asked to deny their own sacred teachings and ways and adopt *only* the new teachings they were given. Why could they not take what they needed from these new understandings and still live from their own? That was the understanding and teaching of holding respect for others' beliefs. It was the way of the first people.⁸⁴

Presbyterian Rev. Margaret Mullin (Thundering Eagle Woman) put it this way:

Can the Rev. Margaret Mullin/Thundering Eagle [W]oman from the Bear Clan be a strong Anishinaabe woman and a Christian simultaneously? Yes I can, because I do not have my feet in two different worlds, two different religions, or two different understandings of God. The two halves of me are one in the same Spirit. I can learn from my grandparents, European and Indigenous Canadian, who have all walked on the same path ahead of me. I can learn from Jesus and I can learn from my Elders.⁸⁵

Each of the Settlement Agreement churches has wrestled with the theological challenges and necessary institutional reforms that arise with regard to Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices. At the same time, Aboriginal church members have taken a leadership role