

## Selected Quotes from Indigenous and Racialized Youth Event 2024 Participants

There are many ways to experience spirituality. I grew up in the United Church and was taught to connect with God and the Spirit by going to church and reading the Bible but I don't think it's expanded past that. Being here, being able to connect with nature, is spiritual in itself and connecting back to where we came from. The experience in the sweat lodge, specifically, was very spiritual. The guide explained the experience was like going back to our mother's womb. In my reflection, it was very calming and peaceful. It was also very dark in there but it was not a scary darkness. It was a peaceful darkness. —*Racialized youth, 22 years*

I learned that the Indigenous youth are very close and connect with their ancestors. This impressed me as I learned it was really important to where you come from and be grateful for what your ancestors did for you in the past. I also learned from the Indigenous youth how they welcome me by showing who they are and their culture. I think this is important for our society as our society tries to make us forget where we came from. —*Racialized youth, 16 years*

This year, I experienced the sweat lodge. It was wonderful and I discovered that it was an amazing way to connect with my spirituality. It was very much a very different way than I've ever been taught. It was very outside the conventional connection to God and the Bible. —*Racialized youth, 21 years*

I learned a little bit about the African communities. We tried a couple of African dishes cooked by some of the African youths. The kindness I learned from them during our circle time is deep. I also learned that spirituality is inside all of us and doesn't necessarily have to be associated with the church. —*Indigenous youth, 16 years*

Even though I didn't get to interact to an enormous degree, it was great to see, interact, and bond with one another knowing everyone came from different backgrounds and values. It is a beautiful thing when youths like us come together and bond together on things we share in common. I really didn't think Racialized people and Indigenous people have similar background and history although we came from different places. —*Indigenous youth, 18 years*

I really looked forward to the sweat lodge, which I know nothing about. The sweat lodge I learned meant that we're welcoming not only Indigenous ancestors but we're also welcoming my own ancestors to think about and reflect on my heritage throughout the process. I really feel I'm really connected especially after recent loss of one of my grandparents. It meant a lot and big privilege to participate in that ceremony. —*Racialized youth, 21 years*

I gained more insights about cultural diversity. Even though we experienced the same things as Indigenous and Racialized peoples, our stories are different. And that shows how rich and great our strengths are. Together, I feel we were able to connect with each other for the week and it was lovely because we were able to embrace who we were without feeling ashamed or having to experience the barriers we do in our everyday lives. —*Indigenous youth, 19 years*