

## **RELATIONSHIP AND MINISTRY ACROSS CULTURAL AND RACIAL DIFFERENCES**

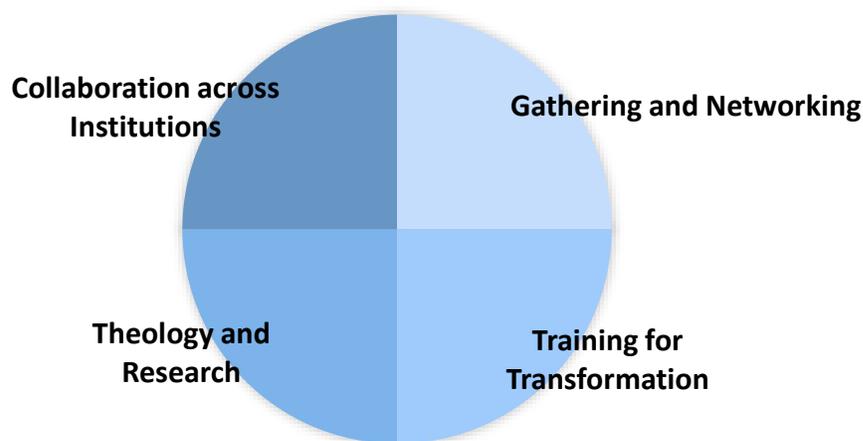
In the spring of 2018, the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) hosted a **nation-wide ecumenical consultation** to hear the experiences, resources, successes and needs of its members around relationships and ministry across cultural and racial differences. This consultation was a step toward forming the new CCC reference group, **The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (FILL)**. This reference group builds on the work of The Canadian Churches Forum, an arm's length agency of the CCC which began in 1921 as the Canadian School of Missions. The process of forming FILL includes bringing the work of the **CCC Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network (CEARN)** into the intercultural ministry work of FILL.

A full day face-to-face consultation was held in Toronto April 12 followed by a series of 3 video consultations. Approximately 60 people participated from contexts across Canada and representing or having membership in a number of Canadian denominations or institutions. Participants self-identified a wide range of social locations.

This document is a summary of the learning through these consultations.

### **WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER?**

**What can the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning be and do?**



## Training for Transformation

**There is a need for ongoing training for intercultural ministry and racial justice.**

Intensive **longer programs** like the “Engage Difference! Deepening Understanding for Intercultural Ministry” program should still be offered.

There is a need for **shorter and introductory workshops**.

There is a need for **training in facilitation**.

- Produce grassroots, hands on workshop resources on intercultural ministry similar to *Cracking Open White Identity*. Create workshops that could be facilitated by others.
- A day-long “Engage Difference! Deepening Understanding for Intercultural Ministry” seminar to offer basic materials for people who can’t do the full five day program.
- Provide anti-racism training especially to target structural or hidden forms of racism.



## Gathering and Networking

***There is a strong need to bring people together.***

FILL can support **networking nationally and locally**. It can provide opportunities and safe spaces for conversation, dialogue, and learning. As it does it can **engage the margins**, provide **alternative models of leadership**, and be rooted in the **experiential** and **contextual**.

- A place for dialogue and a place we can meet.
- Communication across reference groups [of the CCC].
- It would be a good to facilitate more conversations like this one in different local areas and on different scales between different denominations.

## Theology and Research

FILL can serve as a **Canadian Centre for well-done theologies of intercultural ministry and racial justice**. It can also provide connections to research on these topics and resources from social sciences disciplines such as sociology and anthropology.

- Development of theological framework resources.
- Provide solid and sound theological resources.
- Sharing tasks like research and summarizing books.



## Collaboration across institutions

**FILL should continue to work ecumenically.**

It can **encourage collaboration between institutions such as theological colleges and learning centres**. It can be a resource to these institutions as well as encouraging them to provide training in intercultural ministry and racial justice. FILL should **collaborate with other bodies of the Canadian Council of Churches**, including challenging the CCC and other institutions to look at their diversity and ways of being through intercultural and racial justice lenses.

- Development of regional ecumenical networks.
- Opportunity to caucus by racial or ethnic groups interdenominationally.
- FILL could facilitate Canada-wide partnerships between theological colleges around intercultural ministry.

*In each of the consultations a number of questions were asked. In the following sections a number of interesting or repeated answers are highlighted.*

## **What are the issues in your context, denomination, or institution?**

### **- DIVERSITY and RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS CULTURE -**

- There is **hidden diversity** – conflating visible diversity & cultural diversity as “diversity”
- Common to assume “because we have a policy we have done it” instead of engaging in long time work
- People see intercultural as **work of few** instead of work of the whole church.
- Denominational and institutional structures privilege voices of white people over others, there is a need robust practice to include diversity in structures and decision making.
- There is complacency at local levels – stopping with presence of visible diversity rather than deeply engaging difference
- Diversity includes human sexuality, language, work-ethic, worship style, theology, gender issues, ability and more
- Questions of **how to truly share leadership** in the local church when there is cultural diversity of membership
- Monocultural communities
- Intercultural relationships **focus on global diversity and partnerships rather than local** experiences of diversity
- There is a **lack of diversity** at the national levels of governance structures
- There is a lack of diversity at the diocesan + parish levels of governance structures and leadership
- There is concern about people not understanding cultures of newcomers
- Sharing power is a challenge in cross cultural work
- People don’t understand the depth and impact of their Eurocentricity
- Churches are used to doing things a certain way which makes it difficult to be more inclusive.
- Figuring out how as institutions (theological colleges) can relate to students from other cultures, especially how to integrate them into Canadian academic setting.
- Recognizing that in some cases students are preparing to lead congregations in diaspora communities; how can we contribute to that preparation?
- There is a need to help local ministers to have **intercultural ministry skills**.

## What are the issues in your context, denomination, or institution?

- RACE -



- Perception that racialized people are theologically conservative so won't engage
- Immigration often flavours conversation about race
- Loud and frequent voices are privileged in power structures
- Need to encourage leadership from racialized communities; **how do we share power?**
- Racialized people are used to fill "gaps" for institution – for example migrant ministers serving in congregations that are difficult to fill
- **Cross-cultural racism**
- Welcoming the stranger
- Who gets to tell the Church's stories and speak on behalf of the Church?
- Visible minorities not represented/seen
- Racial profiling very present
- Working with indigenous group showed different attitudes to process; Indigenous point of view was that it is important to build relationship before tackling issues
- Working with indigenous group brought growing **awareness of "settler", "Indigenous" and "newcomer"**
- You can't divorce **race and culture**.
- The church is increasingly losing its relevance among indigenous populations. The church needs to help indigenous people actualize their indigenous selves, as God created them.

## What do you NEED and OFFER as a denomination?

- **How does the church apologize?** This would involve the church being open to indigenous worship and seeing it as worship. Should there be an all-nations indigenous worship circle?



- Refugee sponsorship has opened conversations between and within communities
- Anti-Racism training
- Kenosis groups – small groups encouraging anti-racism, understanding white privilege, indigenous issues, racialized stories from the margins
- Attempts at accepting/understanding LGBTQ
- Developing of diverse leaders
- Refugee sponsorship
- Each year produce a video stories to help educate about situations in different countries; hope to change peoples' attitudes through story
- Holding mini DUIM workshops; 12- 18 people; sometimes with the minister
- Monthly intercultural lunches at different restaurants
- Indigenous people taking steps in their own spirituality.
- Section of the service in French.
- Community has a platform to bring cultures together through food, entertainment, music, and sports.

## Celebrations and Challenges

### What are you doing as a denomination and in your context?

#### Need

- Help people to find and tell their own stories - even the hurtful/harmful parts
- How to make restitution in a positive, helpful manner
- Educational tools e.g., current videos about people from other cultures; maybe produced by national church
- help to **restructure thinking**
- Resources
- more sharing circles
- Sensitivity training that is specifically focused on the church environment
- Reorient meaning of interculturality
- Humility
- CEARN and other **resources**
- To **partner together** towards a renewed relationship with the First Nation, Inuit and Metis People of Canada
- Ways + tools to address white fragility and white identity
- External reference to my identity and needs
- Pay indigenous clergy
- **Be intentional multicultural church**

#### Offer

- **Resources** of people, money, etc. to this work
- **Openness** to ecumenical collaboration
- Intentional **engagement** regardless of diversity, race or culture