



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

August 8, 2017

God has spoken to people throughout history. God continues to speak to us today.

Not far from Pinawa, Manitoba there is a fascinating place where centuries ago, people arranged rocks into the shapes of turtles, snakes, fish, and humans. The petroforms are located on large flat rock surfaces where the Precambrian shield lies exposed. There is a sense of mystery, even of the sacred, as you walk among these ancient figures.



I explored the petroforms on an excursion with others who were attending the [National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering](#). At this time in the church when we are preoccupied with structural things that seem to us like huge changes, it was helpful to place our efforts in the context of centuries of human life. I thought about those people who had walked the same land so long ago, and wondered what their lives were like, and what they wondered about, and what was holy to them.

We were accompanied by a group of Aboriginal and Second Peoples leaders from the Uniting Church in Australia, here at the invitation of the Moderator as part of our walk towards reconciliation. They, in their church and in their country, are on a journey that is similar in so many ways to our own. Several times they mentioned **their understanding that, “God was present in Australia long before the churches came...”, or words to that effect, a concept that resonated strongly with us!**

There were two meetings held in Pinawa the last week in July, the All Native Circle Conference Grand Council, and the Aboriginal Ministries Council National Spiritual Gathering. I was privileged to attend both. It was a chance for worship and conversation with old friends and new. The leadership for change that comes from within the Aboriginal community in the United Church was evident. The **“Caretakers,” representatives of different parts of the Aboriginal community,** presented the principles that they have developed for Indigenous governance within the United Church. These were discussed and feedback given. The Caretakers will do some more work, including adding words to recognize more **clearly the place of “urban” or “off-reserve” Aboriginal members, before sharing a** revised document with the General Council Executive in November, and General Council next July.

The Very Reverend Stan McKay led a Bible Study one morning that took us through passages from [Acts \(2:14-21, 37-47\)](#) and [Revelation \(21:1-7\)](#), along with the Seven Sacred Teachings from First Nations tradition (Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility, and Truth). God has spoken to people throughout history. God continues to speak to us today. Thanks be to God.

Nora



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