

**Approved as a Minute at Sandwich Monthly Meeting for Business on July 12,
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AN OPEN-HEARTED PLEA CONCERNING NATIVE PEOPLES AND MASHPEE IN PARTICULAR

Sandwich Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, known as Quakers, does not, as an organization, weigh in on political sides. Friends vary in their political affiliations. However, Friends have always had a strong moral interest in the society at large. This sensitivity almost always has political consequences, that we have accepted without endorsing. This letter is a case in point.

Our plea is a moral one. The Federal government has removed its protection of lands in trust for the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, in spite of their previous decisions given the tribe's recognition as a sovereign entity. In plain terms this is yet another case of the Federal government voiding a treaty obligation arbitrarily, deliberately, and destructively for its own political ends. The decision appears to us morally bankrupt and oppressive. Of course, this matter is presently before the courts. We are painfully aware of the often destructive history of the Federal government with regard to native peoples. Friends in general and individually encourage any action by the government that repairs historical injustice or enables native tribes to pursue their own destinies in a positive relationship with the Federal government. Therefore, it is doubly painful to see past evil revisited yet again upon human beings who have already had to contend with the various prejudices of being the first human occupants of the land.

Sandwich Monthly Meeting has a suggestion for individuals who own land, to orient their thinking and relationship to native peoples in a positive moral and reparative manner. To wit, when land is sold by someone, one percent of the profit can be designated by the seller to go to a local tribe. This kind of relationship honors the present sense of law and ownership, while acknowledging the moral debt landowners have by virtue of an often bad history not of their own making. We are particularly interested in the concept of a relationship with the land itself, and native peoples, that is morally positive and aids in repairing past action. We are particularly interested in a relationship that is contemporary, healing, and not based upon returning to some ideal past. We are particularly interested in the Federal government being a moral and healing partner with native peoples rather than a destructive power that repeats old mistakes regarding human beings. Although we are unable to alter the past, we can see it for what it was and not behave in the same old way when we know better.

The website for the Peace Abbey (peaceabbey.org), specifically the Native Land Preservation Action page, provides further explanation for this movement, as well as a form for those who own land and wish to commit themselves to being some of the solution. This step by landowners reconnects us, wherever we are

in this country, to native peoples, the land itself which has become our land as well, and to a vision of a moral government that regards human beings as intrinsically valuable.