

Approved June 6, 2021

Beacon Hill Monthly Meeting

Minute of Support of the NEYM Apology to Native Americans

In the seventeenth century our ancestors – whether biological, cultural, or spiritual – cleared land, built homes, and planted fields on the Shawmut peninsula and the shores of the Quinobequin (Charles), Missituk (Mystic), and Neponset Rivers, failing to reckon with the needs and desires of the Massachusetts, Pennacook, Nipmuc, and Wampanoag people who had called these lands home for thousands of years. In the years that followed, our forebears spread north, south, and west, settling lands taken from Indigenous people with little or no thought for the children and adults dispossessed or murdered. Many Friends shared the prevailing and persistent views that Native culture was not worthy of preservation and Indigenous identity was best erased, and lent their efforts to profoundly destructive programs like the Industrial Boarding Schools.

Our awakening to this grievous history has been belated and slow, and remains incomplete. Some of us have been eager to support the draft NEYM *Letter of Apology*, others reluctant, mindful of the dangers of insincerity and token gestures of the well-meaning. Our process of engagement is described below. We were reminded that the NEYM *Apology* came about after two years of consultation with Indigenous elders who named the *Apology* and accompanying acknowledgments as the appropriate first step.

None of us defend what has been done to the Native Peoples of this continent, and all of us wish for honest, authentic, meaningful engagement in establishing right relations with our American Indian neighbors. Therefore, for harms done and things left undone, inadvertently or by design, whether through ignorance or arrogance, by us or by those who have gone before us, we offer our deepest apologies.

The Beacon Hill Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends unites with the draft *New England Yearly Meeting Apology to Native Americans* and urges its approval at NEYM Sessions in August 2021. We also charge the Working Group on Right Relations of BHMM with bringing forward concrete and meaningful measures, informed by consultation with local Indigenous people, that we might take as individuals or collectively that will make this *Apology* more than words on a page.

Note: The Yearly Meeting has asked us to share our process of engagement with the proposed Apology to Native Americans, and here is what we have done. In response to the NEYM Clerk's letter regarding the proposed Apology, Beacon Hill Monthly Meeting (BHMM) created a Working Group on Right Relations to help guide the Meeting through an open and honest process of reflection, information-sharing, conversations, and discernment. That process utilized communication through the Meeting's listserv, individual outreach by Working Group members to adults and many older children on our contact list, several facilitated listening sessions open on Zoom to all Members and attenders, monthly reports to Meeting for Business that were also sent out on the listserv, and four Meeting for Business discussions to consider the issues and drafts of this Minute.