



NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS
QUAKERS

Friends, I am following up with further information and guidance about the letter of Apology to Native Americans we approved at Sessions in August.

During a recent meeting with the Right Relationship Resource Group (RRRG), our concern was for the recipients of the apology, rather than for rapid and widespread distribution of the Letter. While we are aware of the openness of some native peoples to receive this, we are also aware of the heightened pain that many experience around native/non-native relations due to recent news about boarding schools. And we are aware of how easy it is to center ourselves, rather than the recipient. By this we mean that any sense of accomplishment or pride in the accomplishment of approving this letter makes sending it about us, rather than recognition of the pain that we or our forebears have caused. So we are more concerned with approaching distribution with care than with speed.

We are intending to send the letter to all the tribes for whom we have been able to find addresses, along with a cover letter indicating that we would like to present the apology in-person if the tribe is willing to receive it. While we plan to follow tribes' leads in planning such in-person events, we imagine sending a delegation of Friends, including someone representing the yearly meeting, and a few Friends representing meeting(s) local to the tribe. If you are interested in being part of a delegation in your area, or if you already have a relationship with someone in a local tribe, please reply to rightrelationship@neym.org. We hope that delegations will meet together in advance of presenting the Apology, to pray together, reflect on the significance of the gesture, and reach collectively for the humility a true apology requires.

I am attaching the final version of the Letter, which monthly and quarterly meetings are free to use for reflection, but we are asking that you not undertake presenting the Apology to local tribes without being part of this larger effort, and that, at least for now, you not distribute it beyond your MM without conferring with the RRRG.

While raising cautions about its distribution, I want to celebrate the work that Friends have done around the northeast region, engaging with the issue over the last year. I witnessed movement from widespread discomfort at Sessions 2020, to a sense of informed approval this year. I believe the recognition that Quakers can and have made mistakes, together with an awareness of our own complacency, will continue to bear fruit as we move past this initial step, in our continued efforts around supporting and building relationships with Native peoples, and in other continuing work before us.

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