

Interim Report of the NEYM Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group¹

Friends from New England were deeply involved at every stage and at all levels of federal Indian policy. Their involvement can be described in three categories: personnel, financial & material support, and advocacy. Their participation peaked during the Grant administration (1869-1877) but began long before, and continued long after. The Tribes and schools associated with the Quapaw and Sac & Fox Agencies in Indian Territory were the primary focus of New England Friends. In this report, we offer some resources and history, ending with where we are in the research now.

Whose stories are these to tell?

For us to attempt to write about NEYM's role in the forced assimilation of Indigenous people without first hearing from those who were the objects of that effort would be to participate in the attempted erasure of Indians and Indian-ness. It is not our place to describe what these children experienced. American Indians have been telling their own stories for a long time. Here are a few suggestions of books by Native American authors about the Indian Boarding Schools and the generational trauma that followed.

- Zitkála-Šá (Red Bird). *American Indian Stories*. West Margin Press, 1921, 2021.
<https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/zitkala-sa/stories/stories.html>
- Lomawaima, K. Tsianina. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.
- Lajimodiere, Denise K. *Stringing Rosaries: The History, The Unforgivable, The Healing of Northern Plains Boarding School Survivors*. Fargo, ND: North Dakota State University Press, 2019.
- White Hawk, Sandy. *A Child of the Indian Race: A Story of Return*. St Paul, MN Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2022.
- Novels by Louise Erdrich

We also recommend these media sources, which center Indigenous voices expressing the need for truth-telling to heal the ongoing, intergenerational trauma from the US & Canadian schools

- *Dawnland* - about Maine's Truth and Reconciliation Commission available to rent at <https://upstanderproject.org/individual>
- *Home From School: The Children of Carlisle*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHHVrLRy1oE>
- *The dark legacy of Canada's residential schools, where thousands of children died* excerpt from 60 Minutes report: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1CfRdEd_PI

¹ Established by the Permanent Board, in August, 2022, implementing NEYM Sessions Minute 2022-36: "Friends also asked the Permanent Board to begin the process of researching New England Quakers' involvement with Indian Boarding Schools, and to do this in consultation with the Archives Committee and the Right Relationship Resource Group. We recognize that this research may happen in stages, may require funding from sources other than our operating budget, and may benefit from widespread input from around the Yearly Meeting. It is hoped that the Permanent Board may report back on progress and findings at Annual Sessions 2023." The research group includes Janet Hough (Cobscook), Betsy Cazden (Providence), Andrew Grant (Mt. Toby), Gordon Bugbee (Beacon Hill), Emily Neumann (Cambridge), Evan McManamy (Providence), Merrill Kohlhofer (North Shore), Andy Grannell (Portland).

& *Canada's Unmarked Graves*; Sharswood 60 Minutes (full Episode from which the above was extracted) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4XE6-1lonw>

A few words of explanation & a reminder

Regarding terminology – Naming the peoples that inhabited this continent before Europeans conquered and colonized it is fraught. The modern descendants of those inhabitants hold a variety of views on this. Following the preference of many Native peoples, when possible, we will refer to nations, tribes, and bands by the English version of the name they use for themselves. When referring to a collective group, we will use Indigenous, Indian, and Native more or less interchangeably.² Our intention is to be respectful and inclusive, two things that do not always yield the same result.

A reminder – This committee of New England Yearly Meeting, was prompted by the decades-long request by NABS that religious denominations account for their roles in establishing and running Indian Boarding Schools. We see a report from NEYM to NABS as the next step in a journey that began with the Yearly Meeting's repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery³ followed by NEYM's Letter of Apology to Native Americans⁴ approved in 2021.

President Grant's "Quaker" Indian Peace Policy

In January of 1868, President-Elect Grant was visited by two delegations of Friends, one Hicksite and one Orthodox. They carried the same message, the wars against the Indians must stop. If you appoint men like ourselves, pious, upright, financially experienced, to the important posts of Agents and Teachers in the Indian Service you will be able to root out the corruption and inefficiency that is rampant, and you will be able to pacify the Tribes. Quaker elders like Thomas Wistar (Philadelphia YM) and Benjamin Hallowell (Baltimore YM) believed that Friends' long history of peaceful relations with Native Peoples and their more recent experience helping formerly enslaved people made them well suited to help Indian people.

President Grant, through his Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Eli Parker (Seneca), took up this proposal and assigned the supervision of many Tribes and Bands to the major Protestant religious denominations.⁵ Quakers from New England were among the first to be appointed to positions of authority. From the beginning, Indian Agents had education, "christianization" and assimilation as part of their mandates. To advise him in enacting his "Peace Policy," Grant created a Board of Indian Commissioners. New York Quaker Vincent Colyer was appointed in 1869 as the first Secretary to the Board. John D Lang, from Vassalboro Meeting in Maine, was appointed in 1870 and served until his death in 1879. There was at least one Quaker Commissioner on the Board from its beginning through 1933⁶

² We recognize that these words ring differently in Canadian ears. We mean no disrespect.

³ Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery NEYM Session Minute 2013-52 <https://neym.org/minute-repudiating-doctrine-discovery>

⁴ NEYM Letter of Apology to Native Americans <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/approved%20Apology%20with%20note.pdf>

⁵ Congregationalists (ABCFM) and (AMA), Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Reformed Church, Orthodox Friends, Hicksite Friends, Unitarians, and Mennonites. Roman Catholics were added later.

⁶ Vincent Colyer (NYYM) 1869-72, John D. Lang (NEYM) 1870-79, B. Rush Roberts (Baltimore) 1874-80, Albert Smiley (NEYM 1879-1912, Daniel Smiley (NEYM) 1912-30, George Vaux Jr (PYM) 1906-27, Mary Vaux Wolcott (PYM) 1927-33.

Native leaders traveled to Washington to address Congress and the President. They spoke to friendly gatherings in large eastern cities like New York and Boston. They had ready access to the Commissioners who traveled extensively in Indian Country and served as special commissioners for various negotiations. While the Commissioners' reports show they thought the Tribes had very reasonable complaints, they believed, like most of their contemporaries, that the only solution was assimilation and citizenship.

Orthodox Friends were assigned to manage the Central Superintendency, which encompassed the state of Kansas and the large tract of land designated by the government as Indian Territory (now the state of Oklahoma). Hicksite Friends were assigned to the Northern Superintendency. There were no Hicksite meetings in New England at that time, so our research is focused on the activities of Orthodox Friends in the Central Superintendency.

The Orthodox yearly meetings, including the Gurneyite New England Yearly Meeting and the Orthodox Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, formed the Associated Executive Committee of Friends for Indian Affairs (AEC) to carry out this work. Enoch Hoag was named Superintendent of the Central Superintendency. Taking up his post in 1869, Hoag was a prominent member of Iowa Yearly Meeting who was born in and retained strong ties to Sandwich, NH. Dr. William Nicholson born in North Carolina and educated at the Friends Boarding School in Providence became the first general agent for the AEC and later served as the government-appointed head of the Central Superintendency.

Of the ten Agencies within the Central Superintendency, the Quapaw Agency, and later the Sac & Fox Agency, came under the particular care of New England Yearly Meeting. NEYM provided both personnel and material and financial support. Asa and Emmeline Tuttle went out from Dover NH meeting to the Quapaw Agency in 1869. Asa was the Agent, and both he and Emmeline were teachers. NEYM appointed representatives to the AEC. The share of the AEC budget apportioned to NEYM was included in the yearly meeting's annual budget. In addition, significant funds for the agencies and missions under NEYM's care were raised by "subscription" and administered by the Committee on Western Indians. Later, funds were also raised and administered by the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Yearly Meeting of Friends for New England, precursor of today's United Society of Friends Women International.

In their reports and at meetings of the Board of Indian Commissioners, John Lang and other Quakers spoke out against white encroachment on Tribal lands. They argued that children and adults needed to learn to read and write in English so they would be able to defend themselves against fraud and encroachment. They denigrated indigenous cultures and life-ways, which they considered "uncivilized." They bemoaned the continuing influence of the traditional ways of parents on students at the on-reservation day-schools, and supported the boarding school movement. Quaker schools adopted policies aimed at erasing native languages and beliefs, forced the cutting of hair and wearing of "civilized clothing," and Friends advocated for boarding schools to remove children from their parents and tribal elders. These policies brought about deep and ongoing harms, and are now seen as cultural genocide.

The election of Hayes in 1876 brought changes to the appointment of some Indian Agents, as government funded positions were managed by local political cronies. In addition, there was a shift in emphasis towards large, government-funded and managed, off-reservation schools, starting with the Carlisle Indian

Industrial School in 1878. By 1885 four more schools had been established.⁷ Highly regarded Friends like Benjamin Coppock extended the influence of Quakers. Coppock was the first federal superintendent of schools for the Cherokee Nation. He went on to be the Superintendent of White's Indiana Manual Labor Institute (funded and managed by Quakers), and later the Chilocco Indian School.

The peak participation of Orthodox Friends as government agents and teachers lasted only ten years. In 1879, the AEC were told that the prior arrangement was no longer in effect, and their nominations would no longer be honored. Unable to ensure the work would be done as they thought it should be, the AEC surrendered to the President all responsibility for the civil administration of Indian affairs. Over the next several years, some of the Quaker Agency schools were transferred to other denominations. Individual Friends continued to be employed as teachers at government schools, but they were not under the organizational supervision of Friends.

The focus of New England Friends and the AEC shifted to Mission work, including schools, which continued well into the 20th century. We end this report with just a few early examples. In 1888, Mary B. Sherman (Rhode Island MM) joined Quaker Elizabeth Test as a teacher at the Kickapoo and Iowa Missions, paid by the New England Women's Foreign Missionary Society. Lina Lunt (Durham MM) followed in 1890. From 1894-1900, children's, young people's, and women's auxiliaries from around New England raised over \$5,275 to support Elizabeth Test and Lina B. Lunt in their work at the Kickapoo Mission.

What more and what's next?

Part of the work of the NEYM Quaker Indigenous Boarding School research group is to help New England Friends recognize, understand, and reflect on our yearly meeting's support of the assimilationist policies of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to take responsibility for the harms caused by our actions. Our Quaker forebears engaged in this work collectively, with multiple yearly meetings working together. In our work today, we are similarly collaborating with a loose network of Quakers from around the country who are engaged in similar research about their yearly meetings' past involvement and current responses. Along with Paula Palmer (Boulder), Andrew Grant (Mt Toby) has been instrumental in shepherding weekly online sessions for collaboration between Friends.

In our May report, we will lay out the involvement of Friends from New England in detail in the three categories of personnel, financial & material support, and advocacy. Thus far, we have not found the kind of records from individual schools that are of the greatest interest to NABS — student rosters, enrollment cards, progress reports, and burials. We have not yet been able to develop rich narratives of the Quaker-operated schools and their personnel. NABS is eager for these information gaps to be filled. This month, Gordon Bugbee (Beacon Hill) is visiting the National Archives in Ft Worth TX and the Oklahoma Historical Society to look for school records. He will be joined in Oklahoma by Suzanna Schell (Cambridge). They plan to spend time in what were the Sac & Fox and Quapaw Agencies familiarizing themselves with the land, and, whenever possible, connecting with the tribes most affected by the actions of Quaker agents, teachers, and missionaries.

⁷ These were: the Chilocco Indian School, in Indian Territory; the Indian Industrial School at Genoa, in Nebraska; the Haskell Institute, in Kansas; the Chemawa Indian School, in Oregon; and the Albuquerque Indian School, in New Mexico Territory.

Additional Resources

- Adams, David W. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995.
- Blackhawk, Ned. *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of U.S. History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023, Chapter 10: "Taking Children and Treaty Lands."
- Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2014
- Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report
https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi_investigative_report_may_2022_508.pdf
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013.
- National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/>
- Nielsen, Marianne O. and Barbara M. Heather. *Finding Right Relations: Quakers, Native Americans, and Settler Colonialism*. University of Arizona Press, 2022.
- Palmer, Paula. "Quaker Indian Boarding Schools: Facing Our History and Ourselves," *Friends' Journal*, October 1, 2016.
- The Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools: Facing Our History and Ourselves* A slide presentation by Paula Palmer, Gail Melix, and Andrew Grant, recorded on November 15, 2022 <https://bhfh.org/the-quaker-indigenous-boarding-schools-facing-our-history-and-ourselves/>
- Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples <https://friendspeacetteams.org/trr/>