



NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS
QUAKERS

7 January 2025

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

% Chelsea Wilson
Senior Project Manager for the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative

Dear Secretary Haaland,

Attached find the response of the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) to the questions and issues you and others have raised about the participation of religious denominations in the operation of Indigenous Boarding Schools and the promotion of the assimilation of Native children.

We submit this report with sadness and remorse for the lasting harms caused by our spiritual ancestors. Our two-year study revealed many of the ways Quakers from New England and elsewhere shared the deep, negative prejudices of their Protestant contemporaries about Indigenous People and their lifeways. Furthermore, we learned how they enthusiastically promoted and enacted the assimilationist agenda for which the Boarding Schools were a central mechanism. We came to recognize that they believed, as many in the dominant society of the time did, that adopting the language, practices, mores, and beliefs of the ascendant, White society was the only alternative to extinction. We have also learned that nothing in their “good intentions” or hopes for Indigenous people can excuse or mitigate the grievous and continuing harms that resulted.

Our report details the following. Friends from New England directly operated or supported eight (8) Boarding Schools and five (5) Day Schools in the Quapaw and Sac & Fox Agencies in Indian Territory. (Modern Ottawa, Lincoln, and Pottawatomie Counties in Oklahoma.) Our involvement included sending teachers and other staff, financing, and supplies and clothing. Some Indigenous children were sent from these schools to the off-reservation Boarding Schools such as White’s in Indiana, Carlisle in Pennsylvania, and Chilocco in Oklahoma. Quakers from New England were also major advocates for the assimilationist policies of allotment, nominal citizenship, and de-tribalization. The records we have looked at so far do not include more than occasional references to the ill health or demise of students at these schools and shed no light on where children might be buried.

We have learned from Indigenous leaders and elders with whom we have been in conversation that truth-telling is the indispensable first step in building relationships with those we have

harmed. We fervently hope that this report can form the basis of new relationships between the Quapaw, Peoria, Ottawa, Miami, Modoc, Wyandotte, Seneca-Cayuga, Sac & Fox of the Mississippi, Iowa, Kickapoo, Absentee Shawnee, and Citizen Potawatomie People and New England Friends.

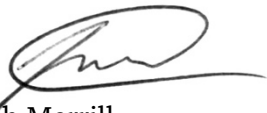
We hope in the not-too-distant future to begin substantive conversations about how we might acknowledge our kinship and support the healing and flourishing of the descendants of those who were robbed of their land, their languages, their lifeways, and their identities. We hope this report will contribute to telling the stories of the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, of their tribulations *and* their determination to resist their erasure.

In Friendship,

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers)



Rebecca Leuchak
Presiding Clerk



Noah Merrill
Yearly Meeting Secretary

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Enclosure