

Proposed Minutes in Support of the Letter of Apology to Native Americans

Developed by members of Mt. Toby Monthly Meeting's Race and Class Working Group Revised for the April 11, 2021 Meeting for Business

Background:

Friends across the region are seasoning a draft Letter of Apology to Native Americans, see below, in preparation for NEYM Sessions 2021. The Race and Class Working Group is recommending that we record two minutes.

MINUTE #1:

We at Mt. Toby Monthly Meeting are in unity with the spirit and intent of the draft [Letter of Apology](#) as it has been circulated to monthly meetings and we hope that NEYM will feel clear to unite around it as one step to take.

Already, we have been active in this concern in the following ways:

- Held listening sessions and worship sharing to consider the Letter of Apology; shared a template for those sessions as a resource for NEYM.
- Engaged in individual and group study of the history and impact of settler colonialism and the Doctrine of Christian Discovery on Indigenous land, culture, and people of this region, utilizing documentary films, books, presentations, and workshops.
- Took a public stand in 2019 in support of Indigenous efforts to have the Massachusetts state flag and seal changed to remove racist language and imagery.
- Played a central role in the 400 Years Project, an interfaith effort with 25 congregations and organizations in our area to lift up and listen to Native voices, support Native-led efforts for rights, dignity, and land, and offer material support to Indigenous organizations.
- Raised over \$2000 for Indigenous projects for cultural preservation and land restoration as a form of restorative justice.

Humbly recognizing that there is much practical and spiritual labor yet to be done, we commit ourselves to the long journey of truth-seeking and relationship building.

MINUTE #2

We unite around the following acknowledgment of the ground on which we stand as a Monthly Meeting.

Acknowledgment:

We acknowledge that our meetinghouse is built on colonized ground — originally the land of the Pocumtuck — appropriated through a series of actions intended to destroy, seize, or diminish Indigenous people, culture, and resources.

Our very name, Mt. Toby Monthly Meeting in the New England Yearly Meeting, reflects a colonizing point of view. The nearby mountain originally called something like Kunkwachu (the original name could mean Rough Mountain or even Porcupine Mountain), was renamed Mount Toby in honor of a British military officer, Captain Elnathan Toby, who is purported to be the first white man to climb that ridge. Further, the expansive region that was originally known as the Dawnland was renamed New England by the people who came here on ships intent on taking possession of the land. In our day, we admit the burden and responsibility of holding the deed to 119 acres of traditional Pocumtuck homeland.

We are deeply considering historical realities, the impacts of settler colonialism, and how profit and harm still derive from these events. In particular, we are asking what is our right relationship with this land and the original people of the land?

In response, we affirm Indigenous identities in this community today and a vibrant cultural legacy. Through engagement with local organizations such as the [Ohketeau Cultural Center](#), [Visioning Bear Intertribal Coalition](#), and the [Nolumbeka Project](#), we respectfully support the healing and restoration that is underway. We yearn for genuine peace in our time and for generations to come.

NEYM Apology to Native Americans
(Draft, pending approval at Sessions 2021)

To the Algonquian peoples of the Northeast who continue among us: the Abenaki, Mahican, Maliseet, Massachusetts, Mi'kmaq, Mohegan, Narragansett, Nipmuck, Passamaquoddy, Pennacook, Penobscot, Pequot, Pocumtuc, Quinnipiac, Tunzis, and Wampanoag.

Apology

As participants in European colonization and as continuing beneficiaries of that colonization, Quakers have participated in a great and continuing injustice. For too long and in too many ways, we as a faith community have failed to honor that of God in you, the original peoples of these lands, and in doing so betrayed that of God in ourselves. We are deeply sorry for the suffering we caused in the past and continue to cause in the present. Today we acknowledge that injustice and apologize.

We acknowledge that Quakers participated in and benefited greatly from the colonization effort which stole your land and displaced your ancestors and caused genocide and sought cultural erasure. We know that the injustice of displacement and disrespect continues. We also see the ways that we continue to benefit from broken treaties and genocidal policies. We have much work to do to attain right relationship.

We are sorry for our advocacy of the “Indian Industrial Boarding Schools” which we now recognize was done with spiritual and cultural arrogance. Quakers were among the strongest promoters of this policy and managed over 30 schools for Indian children, mostly boarding schools, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We are deeply sorry for our part in the vast suffering caused by this system and its effects.

On behalf of New England Quakers, in particular those of us with European ancestry, we offer this apology. We commit to continuing our efforts to learn, to see more clearly the implications of settler colonialism in our own lives, and to work toward right relationship. We hold ourselves open to suggestions and to dialogue, holding no expectations of you. We will continue to pray for guidance and to seek divine assistance in the transformation we know is needed within each of us, and in the world.

[Signature on approval]

Note from the NEYM Right Relationship Resource Group — April 2021

How is your meeting engaging the Letter of Apology?

The Right Relationship Resource Group would like to know about monthly meeting engagement with the Letter of Apology and the Recommendations for monthly meetings. To see what other meetings have done, visit our [Local Discernment and Action page](#). If you have not already communicated via rightrelationship@neym.org, please let us know how your meeting has taken up this work. In general, we are asking for the fruits of reflection, discernment, and engagement with the Letter of Apology to be shared before Sessions. We will also accept suggestions for changes to the Letter, and weigh the need for revisions.

Toward Right Relationship Workshops, on Zoom

The 2-hour workshop for adults created by Paula Palmer and sponsored by Friends Peace Teams is called, *Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change: Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples*. It begins with a participatory exercise in which we hear the voices of America's past – the Native Peoples and the European popes, monarchs, and colonizers – and the voices that today are calling for healing and right relationship among all peoples and with the land. The exercise is followed by a period of reflection and sharing of responses. **Save the date:** The TRR Workshop will be offered expressly for NEYM, 4-6 pm on Saturday, July 17, 2021, as part of our preparation for Sessions. Registration details will follow.

TRR Workshop — a testimony to the experience, by Sara Smith “Most online workshops leave you wondering how you can possibly focus on that screen for another moment. This was different. I felt centered and deeply engaged, feeling my body respond to the emotional content. The loss I felt as the needs I had chosen were taken away was mirrored in the movement on the screen. Land and possessions and culture simultaneously erased. I thought back to the time I got to participate in person in the workshop at FGC, realizing that it was just as meaningful now sitting with my screen at home. The time moved quickly, from speaker to speaker to breakout rooms and back. The bigger picture became clearer and clearer, painted with broad brush strokes which created a sense of the movement of history yet with details that brought me to a deeper understanding. It was all there, but telling you is not the same as experiencing. If you need to get beyond the words to the deeper sense of what the Apology is about, this workshop is well worth taking.”