

PYM INDIAN COMMITTEE

REPORT- for FY July 2004- June 2005

The Indian Committee is dedicated to the support and funding of Native American initiatives that develop leadership and self-sufficiency, and preserve cultural heritage.

This committee is also a resource for Friends seeking a better understanding of Native American issues. Established in 1795, it is the oldest continually functioning Quaker committee in the United States.

During FY04-05 the Indian Committee had 21 members and attenders (we have no paid staff support for the work of the committee). An average of 100 volunteer hours per month are contributed to the work of the Indian Committee.

Support of Local Native American Initiatives

The committee supported the food and housing needs for a gathering hosted by the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape of New Jersey of Lenape/Delaware from various parts of the U.S. and Canada held in May, 2005. This gathering was one of a series designed to strengthen communication and cultural bonds within and among Lenape communities.

Support Nationally and Internationally to Native Peoples

The committee supported the expenses of a part-time Navajo organizer to assist in the planning and marketing of a Navajo Arts and Crafts Festival to raise funds for the Torreon Community Store in New Mexico. This store provides economic relief and employment for members of the Torreon/Starlake Chapter of Navajo in New Mexico.

A request from the Ikce Wicasa Ta Omnikye Tribal Council for funds to support a summit meeting of Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota Tribal Council leaders was supported. This planned for July, 2005.

The committee supported the work of Lenny Foster, a member of the AFSC Native American Task Force, to provide spiritual services to Navajo prisoners in Federal penitentiaries in Leavenworth, Kansas and Florence, Colorado.

The committee supported the Maine Race and Sovereignty Initiative, held in May, 2005 (with support also of AFSC). The purpose of this gathering of 20 local Wabanaki tribal leaders and non-Native allies was to advance the rights of the Wabanaki people and to begin a dialogue about race and tribal sovereignty in Maine. Timber, land, and recreational incursions on tribal lands are bringing rapidly escalating pressures.

Funding was approved to support the Indigenous Strategy Meeting on the draft U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to be held in Montreal during August, 2005. The money will support two Native American representatives from the United States. The meeting is co-hosted by the Grand Council of the Crees and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, with logistical support of the Quaker Aboriginal Affairs Committee of the Canadian Friends Service Committee

Work with Friends/Other Friends Organizations

Hominy Monthly Meeting of Oklahoma, whose membership is largely Osage, was granted funding to purchase a used van to enable meeting members to expand its participation in activities of the Great Plains YM and the Associated Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs (ACFIA). The van will also allow for expanded engagement in youth development and cultural enrichment such as language instruction.

The Bolivian Quaker Education Fund was supported with a grant to purchase computer networking and printers. This is part of a larger project to build computer facilities in Quaker schools which serve indigenous students.

The committee supported a request from the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) Education Fund for an initiative called "Translating and Narrating the Native American Story." This media/education project will make information about Native American issues more broadly known.

An emergency funding request was granted to St. Louis Friends Meeting's Project Lakota to cover part of the January expenses in their Self-Help Housing project on the Pine Ridge reservation of Oglala Lakota in South Dakota. Our grant was also matched by an individual donor.

Two members of the Indian Committee visited and provided volunteer work for the MOWA Choctaw Friends Academy in Alabama as part of a continuing relationship with that community.

Outreach / Participation in the Wider PYM Community

The Indian Committee has its own website, linked to the main PYM website, containing information about the Indian Committee, and weblinks to resources about Native Americans, such as news articles, publications, and suggested readings.

At Yearly Meeting, Lois Kuter, clerk of the PYM Indian Committee, co-hosted a workshop with two members of the FCNL Native American Advocacy program. This was well attended and created much interest. Two committee members also participated in the "Seek and Find" activity, where they distributed dream catchers, Algonkian story tapes, Indian Committee brochures and met with interested Friends.

Lois Kuter participated in the PYM Granting Group Clerks Meeting on Counter-Terrorism Measures in March 2005.

The committee co-sponsored a forum on "Native Peoples in the International Arena" with AFSC and the PYM UN Working Group which was held at the Friends Center in December 2004. Speakers were Esperanza Lujan, of the Indian Law Resource Center in Washington D.C., and Kent Lebsack, a Lakota attorney with the American Indian Law Alliance in New York City. This was the first in what we hope will be a series of educational programs for the Quaker community about Native American issues.

The Indian Committee has been deeply affected this year by a November 2004 ruling in the lawsuit of The Delaware Nation v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In this suit, Delaware Indians sought to reclaim title to 315 acres of land in the Easton, PA area, which in 1741 was owned by Chief Tundy Tetamy. Their claim was dismissed, but the case will continue to be fought in the courts. The committee considered putting forward an amicus brief to be entered in court regarding the historic injustice of the Walking Purchase and other land transfers. This led to our desire to find clarity ourselves and to educate others about this and the related issues of land claims, ethics, Friends testimonies and contemporary concerns of the Lenape/Delaware who still live in our area. We began by purchasing educational resource kits from the Canadian Quaker Aboriginal Affairs group. A

number of committee members are researching aspects of these issues, which we anticipate will evolve into presentations, workshops, worship-sharing, etc., which can be shared with the wider Quaker community. We have created a leaflet entitled "A Spiritual Journey for Friends- Native Peoples, Land and Justice" to introduce this initiative to Friends in the Fall of 2005.

Prepared by Carol Ann Gray & Lois Kuter, July 2005

For more information about the Indian Committee please contact the Clerk, Lois Kuter (215 886-6361 / Lkuter@fast.net)