

PYM INDIAN COMMITTEE REPORT – FY July 2005-June 2006

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 continuously operating Quaker committee in the United States.

During FY05-06 the Indian Committee had 17 active members and attenders (all volunteer). An average of 100 volunteer hours per month are contributed to the work of the committee.

During the past year, the Committee welcomed David Carline, a visiting Australian Aborigine and Friend, to our meetings while he was at Pendle Hill. David Carline, serves with the Long Term Indigenous Concerns Committee with Australia Yearly Meeting. During his stay he was a valued member of the Indian Committee and brought new insight to our work. A minute of support was written by the Indian Committee for travel by David and Indian Committee Member Elizabeth Koopman to visit Wabanaki friends and Friends of Maine.

Funding Support to Native Americans

A request from the Ikce Wicasa Ta Omnkiye Tribal Council (via Gerald One Feather) for funds to support a summit meeting of Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota Tribal Council leaders was supported.

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.

Funding was approved to support the Indigenous Strategy Meeting on the draft U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples held in Montreal during August, 2005. The money supported attendance by 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.

The Seneca Nation in New York State was granted funding in connection with their project to copy Indian Committee material at Haverford College Library Special Collections for their own archives.

Round Dance Productions was supported to cover costs of a benefit concert to be held June 30, 2006. Called "An evening of Native American Music and Culture with Joanne Shenandoah and Spirit Wing," this would benefit the traditional people of the Oneida in New York State.

A project by the Bolivian Quaker Education Fund (BQEF), a 501.c.3 under the care of Buffalo Friends Meeting, NYYM, was supported for costs for training materials and the travel of volunteer facilitators for Alternatives to Violence Project workshops for Bolivian AmerIndian Quakers.

The Committee supported a project by Newtown Monthly Meeting (Bucks Quarter) to provide labor and roofing equipment and building supplies for the Houma Nation in Louisiana.

The Committee approved funding for the purchase of a radio station by Richard Silliboy, a member of the Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians in Maine. This radio station will serve the Micmacs and Maliseet Indian communities, providing a much needed communication link as well as outlet for cultural expression.

Support was given to Carol Dana for a project she is coordinating to record songs and stories in the Penobscot language. The funding would be used to produce CDs as well as provide an honorarium to the singer who will be singing the songs. The CDs would serve as a resource for Penobscot children in Maine to learn their Native language.

A funding request submitted by Maria Barrera, Indian Ministry Outreach Chaplain with "With-In With-Out the Circle Inc.," was approved to assist basic needs of Native Americans participating in the Eagle Mountain Sundance, July 9 to 16, 2006, in Gardner, Colorado. "Ben Carnes," Chief of the Choctaw Nation and the Sundance Chief, will administer the funds.

Non-Funding Work of the Indian Committee

Support and Learning – Local Indian Initiatives

Five members of the Committee took a trip in August 2005 to the Lenni Lenape Historical Society to meet with new leadership and learn about the museum's plans for changes and improvements.

The Clerk attended the Native American Awareness Rally held in Trenton, New Jersey, November 28, 2005,. This was organized by the New Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs and included Lenape from the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape in Bridgeton as well as the Ramapough Lenape of northern New Jersey, and other Native Americans of New Jersey. The predominant message was the desire to create awareness of Lenape and Native Americans living in New Jersey today and to urge schools to present a more accurate idea of history as well as current communities and traditions.

The Committee met with Native and Non-Native individuals in the initial planning stages for a Native American Center in Philadelphia. The mission of this would be "To provide Native American cultural education to Philadelphia, its surrounding communities, and visitors." It is their hope that a center for culture and arts will be developed in conjunction with the current ongoing interpretive history programs in the city of Philadelphia.

Work with Friends on a National Level

In view of strong feelings expressed on the issue of the Quaker Sweat Lodge at Friends General Conference, the Committee drafted a Response Letter printed in the July issue of the Friends Journal. This was also distributed to a number of Friends organizations such as FGC itself, FCNL, and the Baltimore and New York Yearly Meeting Indian Affairs Committees.

The Committee sent a letter to AFSC to express its concern that a national staff person be hired on the retirement of Ed Nakawatase to provide a perspective of vision, advocacy, and networking in pulling together AFSC regional work on Native American concerns. The Committee met several times with Catherine Kurtz of AFSC who will meet again with the Committee in the fall of 2006 to review an AFSC evaluation of its Native American programs.

Four Indian Committee members attended the "Native American Media Symposium", held in Washington, DC on March 2-3, 2006. This is an FCNL initiative aimed at creating a dialogue between Native peoples and journalists, legislators, and opinion leaders to better understand issues affecting indigenous people, with the ultimate goal of creating a stronger Native caucus on Capitol Hill.

Work within PYM

The Indian Committee prepared a Workshop for Residential Yearly Meeting on July 26, 2006 This will provide workshop attenders with queries to guide future thought on the history of Quakers and Indians, issues of land and cultural appropriation, and the contemporary presence of Native Americans in the Delaware Valley. The Committee will have an information table at the July 29, 2006, Faith and Action Fair, for which the Committee has arranged to have the Native American group Spirit Wing perform.

Members of the IC rotated in attending three meetings of the Peace and Social Concerns Standing Committee. This was requested as a means for committees to update Peace and Concerns on their work and to become better aware of the work of Peace and Concerns. Two committee members attended the April 8, 2006, Peace and Social Concerns All-Working Group event. .

The Committee has initiated conversation with Nancy Gibbs, Visitors Coordinator for Arch Street Meetinghouse, concerning plans for an annual William Penn celebration (around his birthday in October) and will assist the planning group in their desire to give voice to the Lenape in programming at the event.

Report by Lois Kuter, Clerk