

This letter is in support of H.R. 5444 Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

In May 2021 Boulder Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Boulder, Colorado approved a minute in support of a Truth and Healing Commission for Native Peoples. (See Minute 1 below.) The next month Intermountain Yearly Meeting (IMYM) also approved of a minute in Support of a Truth and Healing Commission for Native People. (See Minute 2 below.) IMYM is made up of 17 unprogrammed Monthly Meetings and about a dozen Worship Groups in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Texas, South Dakota and Idaho. In total there are about 1,000 Friends in IMYM

As we mention in our minutes below, we support the establishment of a Truth and Healing Commission to address the historical trauma experienced by Native American and Alaska Native children who were forcibly removed from their homes between 1869 and the 1960's and placed in Indian Boarding schools. The children were taught to reject their Native languages, cultures, and spiritual practices and adopt Euro-American culture. Native Americans continue to suffer multigenerational trauma caused by this policy of forced assimilation and cultural genocide. Quakers were among the strongest supporters of the Indian boarding school policy and operated some 30 Indian schools (some in collaboration with the federal government) for varying periods of time.

For far too long Native American people have lived with unresolved grief and multigenerational trauma. Native communities are in need of healing from the damage caused by federal policies. The announcement this June of the Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Truth Initiative is an important first step in the federal government taking accountability for revealing the truth. It's crucial that the commission center the testimony of boarding school survivors so our nation can bear witness to their experiences and support the healing journeys for generations of Native people who have experienced loss due to the Indian boarding schools

Sincerely,

Jane Westberg - Convener  
Indigenous Peoples Concerns Committee  
Boulder Friends Meeting

Minute 1

*Minute in Support of a Truth and Healing Commission for Native Peoples*  
Brought forward by the Indigenous Peoples Concerns Committee  
May 2021

The Boulder Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends supports the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy Act” (HR 8420) that was considered by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2019-2020. Although HR 8420 did not become law, Boulder Meeting continues to support the establishment of a Truth and Healing Commission. The bill’s purpose was to set up a Truth and Healing Commission to address the historical trauma experienced by Native American and Alaska Native children who were forcibly removed from their homes between 1869 and the 1960’s and placed in Indian Boarding schools. The children were taught to reject their Native languages, cultures, and spiritual practices and adopt Euro-American culture. Native Americans continue to suffer multigenerational trauma caused by this policy of forced assimilation and cultural genocide. Quakers were among the strongest supporters of the Indian boarding school policy and operated some 30 Indian schools (some in collaboration with the federal government) for varying periods of time.

U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, has tasked Senator Elizabeth Warren with reintroducing the bill this year. Senator Warren will consult with the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition for wording for the bill. It is expected to be introduced before the August Congressional recess, with wording very similar to last year’s bill.

Boulder Meeting urges Friends to watch for this bill and give it their support through Friends Committee on National Legislation and other means. Boulder Meeting makes modest annual donations to support the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, the Southern Arapaho language education program, Isna Wica Owayawa Loneman School on Pine Ridge, and the cultural youth camps on Pine Ridge reservation, all of which support positive Indigenous identity formation among Native youth. Boulder meeting encourages Friends to learn the history of the Quaker Indian schools and consider additional ways to support Native-managed healing processes.

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#### Resources for Further Information and Reflection

- 1) The website for the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. <https://boardingschoolhealing.org>
- 2) HR 8420 link: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/8420/text>
- 3) Paula Palmer’s video “*The Quaker Boarding Schools: Facing our History and Ourselves.*” <https://vimeo.com/192219802/376f2f1ddb>
- 4) Paula Palmer’s article “*Quaker Indian Boarding Schools, Facing Our History and Ourselves,*” Friends Journal, October 1, 2016. <https://www.friendsjournal.org/quaker-indian-boarding-schools/>
- 5) Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples website, <https://friendspeaceteams.org/trr>

6) Decolonizing Quakers website, [www.decolonizingquakers.org](http://www.decolonizingquakers.org)

## **Minute #2**

A Minute in Support of a Truth and Healing Commission for Native Peoples

Brought forward by Friends Peace Teams/Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples  
and the Indigenous Peoples Concerns Committee of the Boulder Meeting  
June 2021

The Intermountain Yearly Meeting supports the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy Act” (HR 8420) that was considered by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2019-2020. Although HR 8420 did not become law, IMYM continues to support the establishment of a Truth and Healing Commission. The bill’s purpose was to set up a Truth and Healing Commission to address the historical trauma experienced by Native American and Alaska Native children who were forcibly removed from their homes between 1869 and the 1960’s and placed in Indian Boarding schools. The children were taught to reject their Native languages, cultures, and spiritual practices and adopt Euro-American culture. Native Americans continue to suffer multigenerational trauma caused by this policy of forced assimilation and cultural genocide. Quakers were among the strongest supporters of the Indian boarding school policy and operated some 30 Indian schools (some in collaboration with the federal government) for varying periods of time. We recognize that the history of the Indian schools is more complex than can be described in this brief minute.

Senator Elizabeth Warren is working with U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, and plans to reintroduce the bill this year. Senator Warren will consult with the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition for wording for the bill. It is expected to be introduced before the August Congressional recess, with wording very similar to last year’s bill.

IMYM urges individual Friends and monthly meetings to watch for this bill and to urge their congressional representatives to support it. IMYM further urges Friends to learn the history of the Quaker Indian schools and consider ways to support Native-managed healing processes, including programs to teach Native languages and prevent youth suicide.

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### Resources for Further Information and Reflection

- 1) The website for the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. <https://boardingschoolhealing.org>

- 2) Paula Palmer's video "*The Quaker Boarding Schools: Facing our History and Ourselves.*" <https://vimeo.com/192219802/376f2f1ddb>
- 3) Paula Palmer's article "*Quaker Indian Boarding Schools, Facing Our History and Ourselves,*" Friends Journal, October 1, 2016. <https://www.friendsjournal.org/quaker-indian-boarding-schools/>
- 4) Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples website, <https://friendspeacetams.org/trr>
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- 5) HR 8420 link: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/8420/text>
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- 6) Decolonizing Quakers website, [www.decolonizingquakers.org](http://www.decolonizingquakers.org)
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- 7 Interior Secretary Haaland Opinion | [My grandparents were stolen from their families as children](#)