

Indian Affairs Committee

History

The Indian Affairs Committee of New York Yearly Meeting was established about the time of 1790, at least in part to repay the help and kindness shown to settlers by Native peoples. New York Yearly Meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting worked cooperatively on projects and efforts to promote “peace and friendship” toward Native peoples. The work of Indian Affairs at that time was directed toward ensuring the physical survival of Native peoples through efforts to educate and civilize them. Education was focused on farming for the men and domestic skills such as spinning and weaving for the women. These roles conflicted with Haudenosaunee culture, where the women were farmers and the men were hunters; adoption of these ways required a restructuring of Haudenosaunee domestic arrangements. It is notable that Quakers did not try to convert Native Americans, but accepted them as separate peoples.

At various times, Native peoples sought Quaker assistance in land disputes because Friends supported the rights of Native peoples to remove settlers from their lands and to control trader access to their lands. Quakers also supported Native nations when they refused relocation.

It is interesting to note that Native influence initiated a change in the conduct of Quaker business. In the late 1700s, men and women held separate Meetings for Business. However, as early as 1796 the Stockbridge Indian women were sending letters to their Quaker “sisters,” which led to the feeling among Friends that women were “equally entitled to sympathy.” In 1804, the Indian Affairs Committee recommended that its members be appointed from both the men’s and women’s Yearly Meetings, and thereafter men and women served together on this committee.

Scope and Mission Statement

1. We will focus our efforts and our expenditures on the geographic area covered by New York Yearly Meeting.
2. We will work to make monetary disbursements in a prompt and timely manner.
3. We will commit roughly 50% of our resources for education and roughly 50% of our resources to other important projects.
4. We will continue giving a number of small, individual stipends to students to assist them in covering expenses that fall outside the realm of tuition. These stipends will not exceed \$450 and will be available to Native American students at all levels of education. They will be awarded directly to the student or the student’s family.
5. We will give one scholarship, designated the Marjorie Sexton Scholarship, in the amount of \$1,500 to a student in good standing who attends Onondaga Community College. This scholarship will be awarded through the Onondaga Community College Foundation, which will select each recipient.
6. We will work to incorporate more of a Native American presence at Yearly meeting.
7. We will continue our support of FCNL’s Native American Project.
8. We will support other projects as outlined in the guidelines of the trust funds from which we receive financial support.

Purposes and Objectives

1. To support Native American education and educational efforts.
2. To inform Friends and others of issues concerning Native Americans.
3. To form connections and cooperative alliances with Native Americans and Native American organizations.
4. To seek justice for Native Americans and all Indigenous peoples.
5. To raise awareness of the history concerning Native Americans and other Indigenous peoples throughout the world.

Functions and Activities

6. The committee receives information from Friends Committee on National Legislation on pending legislation affecting Native Americans and shares this information as widely as possible.
7. The committee receives information on Native American and Indigenous affairs and shares this with Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups.
8. The committee forms cooperative alliances with Native American organizations, schools, and other efforts within the geographic area of the Yearly Meeting.
9. The committee provides modest stipends to Native American students.
10. The committee provides the Marjorie Sexton Scholarship annually to a student at Onondaga Community College.
11. Committee members provide resources on Native American affairs for Meetings, groups and individuals.
12. The committee cooperates with other Yearly Meeting committees on Native American projects and arranges programs for the purpose of sharing information on Native American affairs.

Organization and Method of Appointment

The Yearly Meeting appoints up to nine members to the committee on the recommendation of the Nominating Committee for three-year terms, on a rotating basis. The committee appoints its own officers, presently consisting of clerk, assistant clerk, finance clerk, and recording clerk. The committee is an active one, and also names individuals to carry forward regular projects. These include stipend clerk, Marjorie Sexton Scholarship clerk, and archivist. It names a representative to the Witness Coordinating Committee.

Meeting Times and Places

Regular meetings of the committee are held at Spring Sessions, Summer Sessions, and Fall Sessions. Meetings may be held at other times as necessary.

Finances

The committee participates in the Sharing Fund of New York Yearly Meeting. The Sharing Fund (established in 1972) supports all the Yearly Meeting activities under the Witness Coordinating Committee. The Sharing Fund receives contributions from individuals through mailings and through income from the Fun(d) Fair at Summer Sessions. The Indian Affairs Committee must submit a Budget Request to Witness Coordinating Committee on an annual basis in order to be considered for Sharing Fund monies. The Budget Request is considered at Spring Sessions and is due by June.

The committee also receives support from trust funds under the care of the Yearly Meeting. Income from the trust funds is posted quarterly. In addition, the committee may apply for support to the Lindley Murray Fund on an annual basis.

Finance reports are received from the Yearly Meeting Office prior to each Session of the Yearly Meeting.