

Mt Toby Friends Statement of Support for Truth and Healing

December 16, 2024

Mt Toby Friends Meeting fully supports the *Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act* (S.1723), in alignment with recent statements and research findings of the New England Yearly Meeting (Quakers).

Our commitment stems from a painful historical truth: Quakers were active participants in a broader Christian institutional effort to assimilate Native American children, ultimately by force. Working alongside other denominations and in concert with federal authorities, Quaker 'Indian Agents' were on the federal payroll during the Grant administration, overseeing 30 schools. Later, we supported the off-reservation industrial schools, starting with Carlisle. Through these institutions, our predecessors enacted the firmly held belief that being a "friend of the Indian" required stripping children of their culture, language, and spirituality. They asserted that "Christianizing and civilizing" was the only path to survival and breaking kinship ties was necessary.

Humbly, we acknowledge the profound, intergenerational harm inflicted upon Native American children and their tribes. This is not a distant historical footnote but a living wound that continues to reverberate through Indigenous peoples today. We are responding to requests of impacted and resilient communities, amplified by the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (boardingschoolhealing.org).

As Quakers, we believe that healing begins with truth-seeking. In the words of Jesus, "The truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Confronting our involvement in this grievous period is not an act of shame but the way of peace.

Some among us imagine our spiritual predecessors would hear these testimonies with open hearts, recognizing the profound harm done, and would be called to a deeper understanding of our shared human dignity.

We are committed to:

- Acknowledging the full extent of historical wrongs
- Supporting a comprehensive, transparent investigation
- Working alongside Native American communities to heal and rebuild
- Creating a more just and equitable future for all

We call upon other faith communities to join us in supporting the *Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act*. By standing together, we can create a united front of moral responsibility and support for healing. We invite fellow religious organizations to contact their congressional representatives, share their support for S.1723, and commit to understanding this painful history.

Mt Toby Friends Meeting is a Quaker faith community in Leverett, Massachusetts, and a monthly meeting of the New England Yearly Meeting.