

Baltimore Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

Apology to the Pawnee Nation from Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers)

11 November 2024


In the 19th century, Pawnee families were harmed by Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends which includes Quakers from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. We Friends humbly apologize. As we seek to repair the harms of our Quaker ancestors, we are committed to learning to be allies to the Pawnee and to all Indigenous people.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Friends joined other religious groups to press President Grant to replace corrupt Indian agents with agents of high character or charitable intent in the 1860s. As a result of the Grant Peace Policy, Quakers from Baltimore Yearly Meeting were appointed as Indian Agents. Our ancestors came to Nebraska tasked with administering federal policy. They harmed Pawnee communities - causing personal traumas and societal losses of cultural traditions. Quakers began overseeing the Pawnee agency around 1869. Some of our Quaker ancestors had good intentions, but their impact was ultimately harmful. For many years they provided supplies for starving members of the tribe who were denied access to their traditional hunting practices. They distributed government goods that were owed and tried to obtain more. They secured the release of jailed Pawnee men who were unfairly accused of murdering a white man. Yet they made no effort to understand Indigenous culture. Instead, they promoted Western “ethics” and culture, including beliefs in private landholding, to the detriment of Pawnee people. They believed that assimilation was the only alternative to extinction—ignoring the inherent dignity, self-determination, and resilience of Native Americans.

Our Quakers ancestors also ran day and boarding schools. While they did not force white/settler attire or require attendance, they accepted the practice of soldiers escorting the children to school. Later, they went along with the federal government as it became increasingly coercive and forced all children into boarding schools, separating them from their families and cultural foundations. With an assumption of cultural inferiority, they wrongly insisted on English only in their schools. Such cruel behavior is inexcusable.

Quakers believe there is Light, the Light of God, in everyone. We grieve the harm we have caused the Pawnee and Indigenous people throughout North America. Seeking humbly to repair these generational wounds that live on today, we seek to connect the Pawnee Light with ours. We want to listen, to learn, and to act.

With respect,



Sarah M. Gillooly
General Secretary

Baltimore Yearly of the
Religious Society of Friends