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# Quakers, Indians and Congress:

## 40 Years of Engagement, 1976 to 2016

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Seventy-three years ago, Quakers gathered to establish an organization focused on federal policy. Some of the founders had been active with the American Friends Service Committee and recognized that a separate structure could take up the full-time work of relating Friends' service to the nation's policies and laws, and could gain expertise in bringing moral perspectives to bear on the making of those laws. The people who gathered for that founding meeting in 1943 were probably thinking mostly about the war the country was engaged in, and their hopes for long-term progress toward peace. But as it turns out, the committee's concerns were much broader.

Within a just few years, the Friends Committee on National Legislation had involved itself in federal policies toward American Indians. How did that happen? History? Most Friends (and many others) have learned of the long (and sometimes mythical) history of mutually respectful relationships between Quakers and Indians since first colonization of this continent. Cultural respect? Many Quakers have drawn inspiration from the religious and cultural practices of native peoples. A first FCNL-Quaker gathering with a concern for American Indians convened in 1957 urged that the distinctive Indian cultures should be preserved, "so that we who so often feel the imbalance and unimportance of our lives may draw wisdom and inspiration from the sensitivity, serenity, and spiritual wholesomeness found in so many Indian lives."

But for many of those who are drawn to work on federal policy, the relationship between the federal government and native peoples seems to be a simple matter of justice. FCNL's first lobbyist, E. Raymond Wilson, describes this early work in just those terms, in his first history of FCNL – *Uphill for Peace: Quaker Impact on Congress*<sup>i</sup>.

## Federal Policy Eras – Many Twists and Turns

Beginning in the 1940s, FCNL's work on Native American affairs tracks the eras of federal policy identified by the National Congress of American Indians<sup>ii</sup>:

- The colonial era was characterized by government-to-government treaty making (1492 to 1828),
- The removal and reservation era is remembered for forced migration (the “Trail of Tears”) and forced relocation of Western Indians to reservations,
- In the allotment and assimilation era (1887 to 1934), the government decided that the best plan was to divide tribally held resources among individuals, and to push Indians toward assimilation of European values and expectations. This period is known for forced attendance at boarding schools, and the sale of 90 million acres of Indian lands to non-Indians – nearly 2/3 of the land that was “reserved” for Indians.
- The Indian reorganization period (1934 to 1945) marked another quick turn in federal policy, when the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 began to restore some lands to tribes and to invest in economic life and tribal governance. FCNL’s Native American policy work began during this era.
- Then, in a quick right turn at the end of World War II, the termination era cut off federal assistance and recognition from more than 100 tribes, and strongly encouraged Indians to relocate to urban areas.
- Tribes pushed back in the self-determination era (after 1968), promoting policies of self-governance and self-determination. Congress leaned toward policies that supported tribal control over tribal affairs.
- By 2000, tribes’ increased involvement in federal policy-making began to lead back to an era of nation-to-nation dealings between tribes and federal agencies. The vestiges of earlier eras still drive some policies and activities, but increased consultation continues to push federal policy in a positive direction.

## Early Years of FCNL’s Program: 1948 to 1965

### Land Issues

The first few issues had to do with land grabs. As early as 1948, an FCNL newsletter<sup>iii</sup> called for an investigation of the “forces behind” a move in Congress to take land from Alaska natives -- six land reserves totaling 1.5 million acres -- without compensation. This move would have violated the *Organic Act of 1884*<sup>iv</sup> which set up the original structures of government in Alaska, and assured that Alaskan Native people had rights not to be “disturbed in the possession of any lands actually in their use now or claimed by them.” Through the 1950s, a handful of testimonies by FCNL committee members promoted the restoration of specific sites and areas that were sacred to Native peoples, and objected to the taking of more lands.

In 1957, FCNL joined with other Quaker organizations and committees, including the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and other Quaker committees and individuals to protest the plans to build the Kinzua dam in Pennsylvania, which would flood nearly one-third of the lands of the Seneca Nation in New York and Pennsylvania. A Quaker, Arthur E. Morgan, who was the first chair of the Tennessee Valley Authority, had proposed an alternative routing of the waters -- north through a swampy area to Lake Erie. This plan would have protected Pittsburgh from flooding (the objective of the dam) and

preserved the Seneca’s homelands. The Army Corps of Engineers, however, refused to look at alternatives.<sup>v</sup> FCNL co-convened a national gathering on this issue, which was the first of five Friends’ seminars on Native American concerns. As the debate continued into the early 1960s, FCNL supported Seneca appeals, and bills to provide compensation and relocation assistance to the Seneca. Walter Taylor, representative to the Seneca Nation from Philadelphia Yearly meeting testified to that end in a congressional committee. Congress did not move on the issue until just a few months before the Seneca were required to vacate the claimed portion of their homelands.

## Termination

FCNL’s largest involvement in Native American concerns in those early years had to do with the federal policy of “termination” carried out from 1953 to about 1965. This policy had its roots in a 1943 federal government survey of conditions on Indian reservations. The survey found deep poverty and all of its associated scars on most of the reservations. Within the next several years, the nation’s growing post-war economy presented an opportunity for the federal government to meet fully its treaty obligations to first Americans, and to help restore the communities that had been devastated by the twists and turns of federal policy and actions. Instead, Congress decided that certain tribes should live *without* federal assistance. The goal, not unlike that of other earlier times, was that tribal members should sever their traditional tribal ties and adapt to “mainstream” white society. Government policies could have gone many directions from that point, but the direction chosen was annihilation of Indian tribes.

Congress adopted a resolution declaring the “sense of Congress” that all Indian tribes in four states (California, Florida, New York, and Texas) and five individually named tribes should be “freed from federal supervision and control.”<sup>vi</sup> President Harry Truman directed federal agencies terminate all federal obligations toward these tribes, extending eventually to 109 tribes, encompassing 13,000 people and more than 1.3 million acres of Indian land. Among the first to be “released” were the Menominee tribe of Wisconsin, the Klamath tribes of Oregon, and Agua Caliente of Southern California. The considerable land and resources held by these tribes were allotted to individuals on the tribal roles. Much of the land was lost to the government or to non-Indians in tax forfeiture sales.<sup>vii</sup>

The second seminar on Indian Affairs, held in 1960, included representatives from 19 Quaker yearly meetings and 18 Indian tribes.<sup>viii</sup> The seminar condemned the policy and practice of termination, and urged that “the goal of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (and the Indian Health Division of the Public Health Service) should be to provide health, education, welfare and expanded economic development to place Indians on an equal footing with other Americans.” The seminar also concluded that “such programs should continue until such time as Indians themselves ask that federal control and special services to them be discontinued.”

The cooperative work of FCNL with AFSC, the Associated Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs and yearly meeting committees set a pattern for later involvement. The sustained work – with termination policies and with Alaska Native Land claims, for example, along with other more episodic involvements inspired by requests from specific tribes for assistance, formed roots for the later development of the

Native American program at FCNL. These experiences help inform and shape FCNL's policy directions and ways of working – as respectful partners and allies with Native peoples.

## Middle Years: 1965 to 1975

These years were tumultuous in Indian country, as some tribes and many leaders and activists pushed back against broken treaties and intentionally destructive or inadequate federal policies. Dramatic actions such as “The Trail of Broken Treaties” (1972), the occupation of Wounded Knee (1973) and “The Longest Walk” (1978) brought together traditional elders and younger activists.<sup>ix</sup> They were visible and public responses to persistent federal court decisions and congressional actions that continued to abrogate treaties, diminish tribal authority, dismiss the importance of Indian religious practices, and take away land and resources.

Debates in Washington were sharpened as well. In 1970, President Nixon officially ended the termination policy and began to emphasize self-determination and self-governance. Depending on interpretation, this new policy direction could lead toward abrogation of all treaties (as proposed by some in Congress) or a respectful government-to-government relationship that incorporates treaty obligations.

From 1964 to 1971, and from 1971 to 1973, FCNL published a monthly “Indian Report.” The volunteer authors monitored federal legislation and shared the reports with about a thousand readers around the country. While there was no FCNL lobbyist assigned to carry Friends’ concerns on Indian issues to Congress during these years, about half of the *FCNL Newsletters* published in that time carried stories of congressional action on Indian issues, and encouraged grass roots responses. The articles and Indian Reports included coverage on efforts to repeal or modify the termination policy, funding for schools and economic development, funding for health care and sanitation, the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act, and fair distribution of oil royalties (head rights) among the Osage. There was a hiatus in the Indian Report for two years, after the last volunteer author of the reports, Richard Thomas, left to work with AFSC in Vietnam.

## Friends in Washington: 1975-1976

An enduring concern for just relations with Native Americans rose from Friends in Nebraska Yearly Meeting. Those Friends were joined by other Quaker organizations including the United Society of Friends Women, Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore Yearly Meetings, and many individual Friends who sought a sustained Quaker witness in Washington on Native American concerns. This energy among Friends resulted in financial support for a one-year Friend-in-Washington experiment, to determine whether such a sustained presence in Washington could be effective and would be adequately supported. Diane Payne and Brian Michener staffed the program. The one-year project extended beyond its initial term; by the time it ended in 1976, an appropriate and effective role for a Quaker lobbyist on Indian concerns had been identified.

The following are excerpts from Diane Payne's memorandum submitted at the close of the project<sup>x</sup>:

**Policy goals:** The Legislative Advocacy program was established ... to further legislation bearing on long-standing Indian goals, in cooperation with priorities of the FCNL and Friends, including Preservation and Indian Control of Resources, Indian Health Care, Housing and Employment. Our goal has not been to establish a new Indian policy, but to expedite legislation currently within the legislative process.

**Activities:** We have worked toward this end in a non-partisan, non-tribal way which has often placed us in a unique constructive role as catalyst agents. The staff has monitored most current legislative activities in Congress and, wherever possible, sought to monitor administration of existing laws, as in the case of self-determination, housing and judicial problems. We have attended virtually all major hearings on Indian legislation and appropriations, many mark-up and conference sessions, and innumerable meetings with over a dozen national Indian groups concerned with legislation and other groups.

[We have] participated in contemporary strategy discussions with Native Americans, seeking a supportive and tactical role. We have lobbied over 400 Congressional offices on various issues and deal constantly with nine major Committees and many more subcommittees. We have frequently accompanied Indian delegations and others seeking to penetrate the legislative labyrinth.

We have become familiar with over a hundred specific Indian bills and several general bills which have an impact on Indians in the areas of energy development, resources, justice, employment, education, and health.

**Issues:** The Friends in Washington worked on water rights (Colorado River, Orme Dam flooding, unauthorized sale of water by the Department of the Interior), Indian Health Care Improvement Act (helped draft amendments), the crime bill (arranged for expert testimony re impact on Native Americans), tribal recognition (assisted Yaqui AZ, Siletz OR, Yuchi OK, Klamath and Ylaki), and violence on Pine Ridge. The staff assisted 45 members of the Lakota Treaty Council in arranging meetings with 70 members of Congress about the violence at Pine Ridge, and sought hearings into FBI and Army participation in questionable activities on the reservation.

The Friends in Washington and their advisory committee had tried to create an interfaith Native American Advocacy Project, with support from many of FCNL's faith partners: Episcopal, Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Reformed Church, United Methodist, United Church of Christ and others. By the end of 1976, however, the interfaith structure had not come together.

## An Enduring Presence – the FCNL Native American Advocacy Program, 1976 to Present

The Mennonite Central Committee and FCNL decided to proceed with a joint project, incorporating Mennonite volunteers who committed to two years of services with subsistence support. The volunteers were “housed” at FCNL and functioned as part of the FCNL staff. In 1979, the Jesuit Office of Social Ministries joined in, sending Father Ted Zuern, who had many years of experience in Indian Ministries, to work with the Mennonite volunteers.

Jan Harmon was the first MCC volunteer; in 1977, she joined Phil Shenk who had been volunteering his time in the interim following the Friend in Washington program. Don Reeves also joined the FCNL staff as Legislative Secretary in 1977, hailing from Nebraska and from the yearly meeting that had been so firmly supportive of the Native American program.

**Issues:** Don Reeves and Phil Shenk delivered testimony on the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and on “Indian Action Teams” – a mechanism for investing in Indian employment and training. Don and Barbara Reeves testified from deep personal experience on the Indian Child Welfare Act. Other issues of concern in that year included a trans-Alaska pipeline for natural gas, Indian housing, tribal administration of the food stamp program, surface water rights for five tribes in Arizona, and ownership of the Arkansas Riverbed. FCNL supported a negotiated process to settle a law suit for the wrongful taking of land in the town of Mashpee, Massachusetts. A congressional review commission on American Indian Policy reported that year, addressing a wide range of Indian issues and programs.

On some issues, tempers were hot. Indian back-lash bills were often introduced, such as legislation to restrict the taking of the Bowhead whale by Eskimos, and another to quantify and limit water rights for Indians on reservations.

FCNL’s work became more visible with four briefings for staff of Congressional offices, in cooperation with the “Indian Committees”(the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, the House Interior subcommittee), and with representatives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and several Indian organizations. The briefings covered the mechanics of legislative processes relating to Indian issues, an introduction of staff of the committees and agencies, and topics including Indian water rights, land claims, fishing rights, criminal jurisdiction, and health and education needs. FCNL kept in touch with constituents on funding for Indian programs, the Indian Child Welfare Act, water rights and fishing rights, Indian Religious Freedom, and the building of Orme Dam.

From 1976 to 2016, FCNL has maintained a persistent presence on Native American concerns in Washington D.C. In 1978, FCNL named Native American issues as one of ten priority issues for its work in the new Congress. FCNL staff led an interfaith working group on Native American issues, and continued in this leadership role most years up to the present<sup>xi</sup>. During this time, the program has been staffed—in all but two years<sup>xii</sup> – by at least one full-time advocate, and in most years by two.



FCNL's work in these years has covered a wide range of issues, as they become important to Indian leaders and communities, and as they emerge in Congress. Year after year, however, they tend to fall into seven priority areas – which were reviewed in FCNL's November Washington Newsletter<sup>xiii</sup>

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## Healing Past Wrongs

In the late 1800s, the U.S. government began a project of “assimilation” of Native Americans, many of whom had already been forced westward to land “reserved” for their use. Communally held land was broken up, and children were taken from their homes to be taught to suppress Native languages and traditions. These policies continued, with some variations, well into the 20th Century.

## Healing the Experience of Forced Assimilation

From the 1880s until the late 1960s, many Native children were sent to boarding schools designed to eradicate all Native culture and practices believed to stand in the way of progress and assimilation. Quakers were among the denominational groups who offered to operate these schools.

Students were expressly forbidden to partake in their traditional ceremonies or practices, and observing Christianity was compulsory. The schools outlawed speaking in Native languages, forcing children to live with others from different tribes and to speak English at all times. Their hair was cut and they were dressed in Western clothing rather than the familiar clothing of their parents and ancestors.

These schools were closed or taken over and re-envisioned by tribes, but the effects endure. Generations of potential tribal leaders, teachers, and advisors grew up without a traditional understanding of tribal governance, compassion, and relationships to each other and to the earth. For Native Americans, culture lives in the community even more than in the individual. The schools helped fragment families and communities, leading many traditional practices and some Native languages to be lost.

While the effects of this trauma are visible today in the poverty, ill health, addictions, and suicidal behavior that are epidemic among Native peoples, resilience is also visible. Through resilience, creativity, and deep cultural knowledge, Native Americans have survived as peoples and nations.

This issue is important to FCNL because of the personal responsibility that Quakers bear for our probably well-intentioned, but clearly destructive, leadership role in establishing these schools. It is also important to us because of the lessons we can take from this time and circumstance to apply in other ways. How often should we be asking ourselves “Are we assuming we know best?” “Have we consulted with the people who would be most affected by this policy or this program?”

As more people of faith are becoming aware of their denominations' involvement in boarding schools, Native Americans encourage them to acknowledge that contribution as a way to begin the healing.

Encouraging Congress and the administration to enact legislation to aid Native communities in their own efforts to recover, rebound, and rebuild their communities is another way to help.

In every Congress since 1976, FCNL has supported funding for **Indian education**, in schools operated by tribes and the Bureau of Indian Education and in public schools. We've lobbied for stronger funding for Head Start and for Tribal Colleges, and all of the schools in between. Specifically in the last several years, we have promoted more attention and more funding for the **reconstruction of schools** serving Indian children. A commissioned study that was part of a negotiated rule-making process reported in 2011 that 63 of the 183 BIE schools were in "poor" condition – a status that means that the school is unrepairable and should be torn down and replaced, and that it would cost \$1.3 billion to bring these schools up to just "adequate" condition.<sup>xiv</sup> The budget for Indian school reconstruction in 2011 was less than \$5 million.

Another deep concern has been the **Indian Child Welfare Act**, adopted by Congress in 1978. FCNL strongly supported this legislation which attempts to reverse the practice of taking Indian children out of their homes and their home communities and placing them in non-Indian foster care. The law requires that Indian tribes be consulted first when an Indian child is being considered for a placement in foster care or for adoption. Even with this law in place, Indian children continue to be removed from their home communities at a much higher rate than non-Indian children. And so we also support Foster Care and Adoption assistance to Indian families, to support them in giving temporary or permanent care to another child their community.

Most recently, it has been our pleasure to see a "simple little bill" pass easily in the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs: a bill offered by Senator Rounds of South Dakota that repeals obsolete laws affecting Native Americans, such as the ones that require families to send all their children, up to age 21, to boarding schools, or risk the loss of food assistance or other penalties.<sup>xv</sup> Committee chair, Senator John Barrasso commented on the passage of the bill: *"Most of these laws are not enforced and Congress has disavowed long ago the policies underlying these laws. While this bill can't rewrite history, it could help reinforce contemporary policies of self-determination and move forward our government-to-government relationship."* Small but sweet.

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## Reclaiming Native Languages

Language is critical to identity, both individual and shared. Native languages carry concepts of spiritual connection and community relationship. When the boarding schools forbid generations of Native children to speak their languages, they deprived later generations the opportunity to learn the languages — with all their nuances — from their elders. Members of Congress heeded calls from the Native American community to help revitalize and reclaim this aspect of their culture by passing the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act, which became law in 2006. FCNL lobbied for the original passage of this Act and most recently to reauthorize the program. The Act promotes opportunities for children to learn their Native languages from elders and in schools. Proposed



legislation, the Language Preservation Act and the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act, would authorize Native language immersion programs, similarly helping to recover not just the traditional words but the deep values that they carry.

FCNL is committed to supporting Native languages as it honors one of the values “we seek” – *We seek a society in which every person may reach their potential.* To honor language is to honor culture, and to honor culture is to allow ourselves to learn from the different visions that each of us holds.

## Investing in Safety and Well-Being

### Improving Justice Systems

Native lands are grossly underserved by police. In many places, 2 or 3 tribal officers might be responsible for a land area large than Rhode Island. Even when tribal police apprehend someone who has committed a crime, jurisdictional issues on Native lands can hinder effective responses. In most cases, tribal police may not arrest — and tribal courts may not try — a non-Indian accused of a serious crime in Indian Country. This patchwork of laws protecting Native peoples was improved somewhat when Congress passed the Tribal Law and Order Act five years ago and reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act in 2013. These changes allow tribal police in some circumstances to arrest a non-Indian for certain kinds of crimes committed in Indian country. FCNL was a strong advocate for the provisions of this legislation helping victims of domestic and sexual violence in Indian Country. Senator Tester (MT) has now proposed an expansion that extends coverage to domestic violence crimes committed against children and to serious drug trafficking crimes.

FCNL is committed to finding ways to reduce crime that do not involve harsh punishments and long terms of incarceration. At the same time, we respect the ability of a community to arrest (literally, to stop) activities that injure others in the community, and to begin a process that will turn those activities around. Many Indian communities have incorporated “Healing to Wellness” courts, which focus on crimes related to poverty and addictions. Teams of people from the community, along with the police and prosecutors, meet with the individual whose activity has been arrested, and work out a plan that will end the need or compulsion to commit crimes that injure others. These courts have had great success – and also cost a lot less than prisons. Legislation in the Senate would offer support to this type of court and community support system.

### Investing in Native Youth

Native youth are one of the most vulnerable populations in this country. Bearing the effects of historical trauma passed down generation to generation, they are less likely to have adequate education, health care, and food security, even in comparison to other people living in poverty in the United States. Native youth suicide is 2.5 times the national rate, showing the federal government’s failure to meet its trust responsibility. Many tribes are working to heighten young Native Americans’ sense of purpose, cultural understanding, and community belonging.

The Obama administration has made an important effort to reach out to and invest in Native youth, both highlighting the importance of their voice within the federal government and helping them to connect to other Native youth across the nation. This initiative is meaningful and is creating significant waves across Indian Country as Native youth are given some of the tools they need in order to take on leadership roles in their communities and to hold on to hope for their collective future.

Investing in youth is an investment in the creation of hope. At FCNL, we see this investment as a value embraced by Quakers.

## Self-Governance and Self Determination

### Advancing Self Determination

Tribal governments must address the same education, infrastructure, and economic development issues as most state and local governments — typically with fewer resources, and with an additional layer of federal bureaucracy and requirements to contend with.

Over the past 15 years, most federal government agencies have been in consultation with tribal governments. A number of tribal assistance programs were rewritten in the 1970s and later as “self-determination” or “self-governance” programs. These laws authorize tribes to administer a program and receive federal reimbursement for administrative costs. As of 2009, almost half the tribes had self-governance arrangements with the Department of the Interior, and about sixty percent with the Department of Health and Human Services. FCNL has lobbied for full payment of administrative costs, even when federal agencies’ budgets were strained by spending cuts.

President Obama has convened Tribal Nations Summits annually since his first year in office in 2009. These summits are an occasion for cabinet agencies to meet with tribal leaders to hear their concerns, questions, and views on current or planned federal activities. Government-to-government relations are rarely smooth, especially when one government controls the resources and has a long history of dealing in bad faith with leaders and citizens of the other government. But the consultations open the doors for repairs and rebuilding.

Prompted by the confrontation occurring this year between the Standing Rock Sioux and the Army Corps of Engineers, three federal agencies ( Interior, Energy, and the Army Corps) have asked for a meeting of tribal leaders that would *define* appropriate consultation for federal agencies. As in the 1940s and 1950s, the question about the meaning of consultation (does it include consent?) is still unsettled.

### Preserving Land and Resources

Like any nation, an Indian nation’s land base helps define the community and provide resources for its survival. Within its borders, the tribal nation keeps the peace, cares for children and elders, honors and keeps traditions, and develops and sustains an economy. Reservations governed by tribes range from

the 16-million-acre Navajo Nation, with lands in three states, to a 1.32-acre parcel in California where the Pit River Tribe's cemetery is located. Many reservations are smaller than 1,000 acres, and many tribes have no land base.

About 56 million acres remain in Indian Country within the continental U.S., while Alaska Natives control another 44 million acres, which they own directly through regional corporations and villages. In much of Indian Country, however, lands are held "in trust": the federal government owns and is obligated through various treaties to protect the land, and the tribe retains an "equitable interest." As with all federal land, state and local governments cannot tax either the trust land or the business conducted there. As tribes' revenues have increased, from extractive and gaming industries in particular, more municipalities are resistant to this arrangement. Today, U.S. and tribal leaders are considering how to "modernize" the definitions of the trust relationship – keeping the essentials that honor the treaties made long ago, and modifying some of the more paternalistic aspects of relationship.

FCNL has also given strong support to both judicial and congressional action to restoring the integrity of the trust process. In recent cases, it has become apparent that the U.S. has not managed its trust responsibility with the care and honesty that one has the right to expect from a trustee. The U.S. has held mineral in trusts for lands owned by tribes and individuals for many decades, without necessarily collecting, recording, or distributing the considerable royalties generated by mines and oil wells on trust property. The *Cobell* case, which brought this failing to light, dragged on for more than a dozen years. FCNL closely monitored the process and lobbied Congress for funding of the settlement that was at last approved by the courts.

Now Congress has approved legislation that would allow tribes to move the trust responsibilities out of the hands of the federal agencies, and to manage the trusts directly.

Still, Congress allows and promotes more takings of land and water, more pressures on aboriginal fishing and hunting rights, more destruction of sacred sites. FCNL has been a persistent promoter of the protection of sacred sites – some of which are on the traditional lands of a tribe, though not on lands within their reservation. FCNL has also supported the Native American Graves Protection and Restoration Act, which requires museums and other holders of Native remains and burial objects to identify the tribal origins of the remains or the object, and to return them to the tribal heirs. These returns, which have been occurring over the last several years, have been critically important to many of the tribal leaders who come to recover them. Some of the objects are central to religious ceremonies, or embody a core tradition for their tribe.

In all these areas of government and culture, Native peoples are taking action and advocating for their interests and survival. As they seek to overcome the legacy of violence and subjugation in their past – and the effects and legacy still felt today – there is an important role for people of faith and conscience to educate ourselves to be effective and compassionate allies and to hold our elected leaders accountable for upholding our moral and legal obligations to the Native peoples in our communities.

## Honoring the Promises

At one time, native peoples occupied this entire continent. By 1887, when Indians had been pushed from the East and West coasts and were already being concentrated in reservations, they occupied about 150 million acres. Much of the land lost in those years was exchanged in treaties and other documents for promises of sustenance and support in perpetuity. Then in 1887, two thirds of the remaining land was taken, through the “Dawes Act” which authorized the allocation of communally held land in small parcels to individual families, and sold the “surplus” to non-Indians.

As a matter of honor, and as a matter of obligation, the federal government is responsible for meeting the promises made by treaty and by deed, in exchange for what our government took from native people. Health care, food and housing assistance where needed, investment in economic development, support for education and employment are all parts of those promises. FCNL works each year to support the federal budgets for these programs, to exempt them from cross-the-board cuts or from specific slices that are easily taken from a vulnerable population.

There is much promise in Indian country. Honoring the federal side of those promises can realize yet-undiscovered wisdom and leadership. Friends around the country know this and clearly want to go forward in respectful relationship with Native peoples. The most persistent question heard is “how?” “What do I do?”

One direction is to consider how connections that can be built to create change. At FCNL, our advocacy on Native American issues makes connections with **members of Congress and their staff** to promote legislation to support Native rights. We meet regularly with members’ offices to support legislation or share concerns. Native American issues bring us into partnership with some offices that disagree with FCNL’s policy positions on some other issues, providing an opportunity for us to increase understanding to benefit not only our work on Native issues but in other areas as well.

As important as our relationship with members of Congress is our relationship with **tribal leaders and Indian organizations**. FCNL’s advocacy on Native American issues is based on the concerns and priorities of Native people, not on our own assumptions about what they need. We work closely with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and consult with other Native American groups that specialize in health care, education, and Native rights.

FCNL’s multi-issue advocacy gives us the ability to make connections **among issues** in a productive way. For example, our work on Indian energy legislation is informed by our sustainable energy and environment program’s focus on green energy development. Our work on military spending issues has helped us raise the disparity between the money spent for school reconstruction in the Department of Defense (\$315 million) and the funds allocated for school reconstruction in Indian Country (\$2 million, a few years ago). Native issues are not isolated concerns of just one constituency or one committee but are interwoven into every issue Congress addresses. FCNL’s perspective helps to emphasize these connections.

Finally, this advocacy builds stronger connections **among us all**. Doing this advocacy requires us to pull back the curtain on our country's often shameful history in relationship to Native Americans. Seeing the violence and broken promises on which our country was built can be painful, but doing that work together can also create strong bonds of purpose and commitment.

Canada Yearly Meeting recently adopted a minute that offers some significant suggestions about how we as Friends can begin to make these connections and create the resilient bonds needed to move in the right direction for us all.

The minute<sup>xvi</sup> acknowledges, "that part of our journey is to decolonize our own thinking and sit in the discomfort and pain of confronting where we need to deepen our understanding, bear witness, and transform our behavior." To that end, Friends' Meetings are asked to:

1. continue to educate themselves, including children and youth, about the doctrine of discovery, the ongoing effects of colonialism, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, residential schools and their legacy ..., the history of the land on which they live, and reconciliation efforts;
2. formally acknowledge the traditional territories where their Meetings are located and engage in processes of reflection on the meaning of this;
3. find out about current concerns of Indigenous Peoples from those territories, including land appropriation or resource development, with which the Meeting could be engaged;
4. investigate projects of cultural revitalization that Indigenous Peoples are involved in and discern if there is an appropriate role (including funding) that Friends can play;
5. uphold and support individual Friends involved with grassroots Indigenous rights and provide spiritual support to Friends led to this work. This might include offering committees of care and approving minutes of support...

This decade seems to be a time to go deeper, to uncover some difficult truths that we know with some part of our being, and to find a way reconcile, first with ourselves, and then with others who have been directly affected by the directions of this country's history. This decade could be a new time for discovery –not of lands to take, but of visions we haven't seen yet, through eyes we haven't yet had the pleasure to meet.

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<sup>i</sup> Wilson, E. Raymond, *Uphill for Peace: Quaker Impact on Congress*, (Richmond, IN, Friends United Press) 1975, p. 127 et seq. For most of the information about FCNL activities before 1965, I rely on this volume and am grateful that Raymond recorded his memories.

<sup>ii</sup> National Congress of American Indians, *Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction*, 2014, p. 13

<sup>iii</sup> Friends Committee on National Legislation, *Washington Newsletter*, No. 49, (FCNL Archives, Volume 1, 1943 – 1950, February 1948.

<sup>iv</sup> Cite for Organic Act of 1884

<sup>v</sup> Wilson, op.cit., p. 128 - 134

<sup>vi</sup> The five tribes named in the first resolution were "the Flathead Tribe of Montana, the Klamath Tribe of Oregon, the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin, the Potawatomie Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, and those members of the

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Chippewa Tribe who are on the Turtle Mountain Reservation, North Dakota.” U.S. House of Representatives Resolution 108, 83rd Congress, 1953 (US Statutes at Large, 67:B132): [http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/vol6/html\\_files/v6p0614.html](http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/vol6/html_files/v6p0614.html) from the OSU Library Electronic Publishing Center (1953-08-01), accessed 9-10-16.

<sup>vii</sup> National Congress of American Indians, op.cit. p. 13.

<sup>viii</sup> Wilson, op.cit. p 128 - 134

<sup>ix</sup> Reeves, Don, “Indian Lands: Property or Mother Earth,” report to FCNL Policy Committee 1978

<sup>x</sup> Diane Payne, Summary of the Friend in Washington Program, FCNL bound archives, 1976

<sup>xi</sup> References to FCNL history in the remainder of this paper are drawn from contemporaneous documents in FCNL’s bound archives, in the volume relevant to the year cited in the text. These bound volumes are available in the Swarthmore Peace Collection, at FCNL, and in ten other locations.

<sup>xii</sup> From September 2001 to August of 2003 the program was suspended while staffed focused on responses to the September 11 attacks, and took time to assess the future of the Native American program. That review resulted in the hiring a full time senior staff person (Pat Powers) assisted by a program assistant.

<sup>xiii</sup> Friends Committee on National Legislation, Washington Newsletter, September-October 2015. Available on line at [www.http://fcnl.org/resources/newsletter/nov15/](http://fcnl.org/resources/newsletter/nov15/) Some of the text below is drawn from articles in that issue.

<sup>xiv</sup> Broken Promises, Broken Schools: Report of the No Child Left Behind School Facilities and Construction Negotiated Rulemaking Committee. Available on line at [www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xraca/documents/text/idc015478.pdf](http://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xraca/documents/text/idc015478.pdf)

<sup>xv</sup> S.2796: RESPECT Act

<sup>xvi</sup> The full minute is available at <http://quakerservice.ca/reconciliation>