**Proposal for BYM to Pay Reparations to the Pawnee Nation:**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

Reparations are an offering, an attempt the repair damage done. The terms "gift" or "donation" are inappropriate terminology. Reparations are actions pursued because of harms done and are intended to help right injustice. Reparations may vary with the damage done and the group for whom the reparations is intended. Because of this causality, it is not truly a gift or donation. Flip the situation. If you or we, in our ancestral homeland where we spoke our language, was/were pressured or forced to use the language of the people who conquered ours, would a contribution towards restoring our language be considered a gift?

**Why not offer reparations to tribes within the BYM region?**

This is a huge topic. It takes us back to the history of BYM’s Indigenous Affairs Committee (IAC) ) and to the fund established by BYM Friends in the late 1700s. Martha Catlin wrote about the early history of the IAC in her book, *As They Were Led: Quakerly Steps and Missteps towards Native Justice: 1795-1940.* Pat Powers did the same for the later part of that history in her book, *Respect and Justice for Indigenous Peoples – A Quaker Advocacy Group's Experience Recounted: 1940-2022*. The IAC “historic fund” was created to repay Indigenous people for certain lands occupied (owned) by Virginia Friends. If the successors to those lands could not be found, it could be used to assist other Indians. The IAC has expended the historic fund and cannot accept donations.

Since its origins, the IAC sought to be a reliable ally to Native peoples and their governments. The tribes in the BYM region are small and diverse. Few have full-time staff. They have had more than 400 years of interactions with colonizers. The IAC and individual members have worked with local tribes in many ways. Within the past few years, members have met with tribal leaders, arranged for tribal leaders to address BYM sessions, visited a tribal museum (Monacan), and campaigned on behalf of tribal heritage protection (Rassawek, which some may recall and supported). We also enjoyed an Annual Session workshop presenter who spoke about the Indigenous people, past and present, of Baltimore and DC and where to see places related to them.

There are three state-recognized tribes in Maryland and others that are not state-recognized. In Virginia, there are 11 state-recognized tribes. Some local tribes disagree on the validity of other local tribes; the IAC tries to avoid these disputes as they are not ours to resolve. The IAC frequently considers how we may be useful allies to local tribes. A member of the IAC met with Rappahannock Chief Anne Richardson last year to ask what we might do to support her tribe. She specifically said that money is not what they want from Friends. She asked for help with a reforestation project, though the IAC could not find anyone to participate on the date of that event. We walk the walk as well as talk the talk. We remind Friends that land acknowledgments are mere symbols unless they are accompanied by actions.

The IAC has created and distributed fact sheets of tribes in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia that are available on our website. We have also distributed information on the original Indigenous peoples of the District of Columbia and where to find more information about them.

**Why pay restoration to the Pawnee Nation?**

BYM was one of the Quaker organizations that sought to decrease and prevent violence between settler/colonists and tribes and between tribes. BYM provided Indian Agents. Our predecessors believed that assimilation was best for Native people, though it was assimilation as those Friends thought best. It included requiring Native students to use only the English language for communication and adopting Euroamerican lifeways. Boys were expected to be laborers and girls were expected to become domestics; note that better paying skills were not taught.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Friends contributed to harming the Pawnee when they participated in practices of cultural assimilation in a school they established at the Pawnee agency in Nebraska. The school was a day-school and parental permission was required to attend.

Additional information is provided in the IAC’s full proposal.

**Is Language Restoration a Priority for the Pawnee Nation? Are there other priorities that would supersede it?**

There may be higher priorities. The reason language restoration resonated with the IAC is that Friends were part of that specific problem—the loss of fluent Pawnee speakers—due to the actions of our predecessors as teachers in the Pawnee school. Those teachers wanted English to be *the only* acceptable language. As reparations to the Pawnee Nation, any money BYM provides would go to the tribal nation for them to use as they choose (remember, this is not a gift). The tribe’s cultural director is aware that BYM would like the funds to be used to support the language restoration program.

**How was the proposal to offer $20,000 over two years determined? Is it based on BYM's capacity, the program's needs, or some other criteria?**

It is mostly a figure out of thin air. When we started discussing the possibility of Pawnee reparations, the Quaker actions in Alaska and California were unknown to us. Those of us who initiated the possibility have no insight about BYM finances. So, $10,000 seemed like a reasonable goal. When we learned of the much larger reparations by the AK and CA Friends ($93,000 and $200,000, respectively[[1]](#footnote-1)), and we learned that current BYM development goals preclude the option of conducting a matching donation fundraising campaign, we decided to ask for a second $10,000 for the Pawnee for another year. "Matching donations" means that people could donate money to BYM that would be matched by BYM up to a capped amount. We thought that $20,000 might be within the BYM financial capacity, though again, this was based mostly on speculation on our part, not knowledge of BYM's fiscal commitments.

What is the current annual operating budget of the Pawnee Nation’s current program?

It is not appropriate to ask a sovereign Indian nation the size of its budget. Here is an analogous example from the BYM IAC. During 2020, the IAC wanted to expend most of our remaining historic fund. After discernment, we agreed to give $5,500 to the Mattaponi Tribe. Our reasons were that the Mattaponi have existed since time immemorial, greeting the English who colonized Virginia. Though they had a treaty with Great Britain that predated the establishment of the USA, they do not have federal recognition. Without federal recognition, they did not receive federal COVID-19 relief funds, unlike most other Virginia tribes. The BYM, at the IAC's request, sent the Mattaponi a check. We heard nothing from the tribe for more than a month. An IAC member telephoned a few times and learned that they had received it, though not gotten around to cashing it. Eventually, the BYM Comptroller informed me that the check had been cashed. We still heard nothing from the tribe.

When an IAC member commented on this to several Native friends, the friends replied, "What did you expect?" and "Why should they?" Our desire for approbation was patronizing to the Mattaponi. These Native friends, and advice columnists in the newspapers, tell us that we should not *expect* thanks if we are truly providing something from us. From Sue Marcus, IAC member: “I feel strongly enough about this that I personally am willing to forgo any reparations from BYM that are conditioned on the Pawnees providing information. Please understand that this part is my personal belief, not an IAC communal decision. “

1. The Alaska Friends Conference provided reparations to the Organized Village of Kake because Friends had run a day school and mission there that forced assimilation on the children. Friends in California are donating the Woolman School property to the Nisean tribe (also known as the Nevada City Rancheria). The mortgage on the property was ~$200,000. They raised the money through a national fundraising campaign to pay off the mortgage so that land may be given to the Niseans without debt. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)