

Quaker Apology and Reparations to the Pawnee People:

Report to Baltimore Yearly Meeting from the Indigenous Affairs Committee

At annual session in 2024, Baltimore Yearly Meeting approved financial reparations to the Pawnee people. Our BYM predecessors had organized and managed schools for Pawnee children in the early 1870s. Friends insisted that English be the primary language used at the schools, which helped break traditional and cultural ties within Pawnee society. (For more information on the period during which BYM Quakers were appointed as Indian agents and also ran schools for Pawnee students, see Martha Caitlin's book: *As They Were Led: Quakerly Steps and Missteps Toward Native Justice, 1795-1940*, available on Amazon or from Quaker Books.) As a gesture demonstrating our will to help repair the damage caused by BYM representatives, BYM agreed to offer the Pawnee a check for \$10,000 in 2024 and a second check in 2025. The funds may be used to support a language restoration program that is currently being offered. Three BYM Friends journeyed to Oklahoma in November 2024 to convey an apology to the Pawnee and provide the first check from BYM.



Pawnee veterans are honored by their community in dances.

On November 11, 2024, Patricia Powers, Susannah Rose, and Sue Marcus met Herb Adson, Cultural Director for the Pawnee Nation. The Friends were accompanied by Sue Morris (Comanche), a friend of Sue Marcus's. The Pawnee Veteran's Organization was holding a lunch and event celebrating retired and active-duty Pawnee military personnel. The Friends joined Herb at the building where women were preparing foods for the feast indoors and men were cooking corn soup and bison outdoors. We then went to the "round house," a modern building filled with traditional meanings, where the lunch followed by ceremonial dancing occurred. Friends contributed cakes and fruit.

Each Veteran was separately acknowledged with a description of his or her service. Out of respect, veterans were then served lunch before anyone else. After lunch, dances were held for different groups of veterans based on the wars in which they fought; some dances honored individuals. Some Pawnee men and women wore regalia, and many children danced or walked along with their elders. There were two large drums with several men at each. (The drum and drummers are collectively called singers, a term used throughout Indian Country.)

We Friends were unexpectedly called to the microphone by the master of ceremonies. We introduced ourselves and briefly spoke about our purpose for being there. There was even a bit of teasing back and forth, showing the relaxed, accepting atmosphere. Later in the afternoon, many individuals, primarily elders, came up to us and thanked us for coming "from the East." Pawnee leaders made clear that Quakers having the courage to make amends and to do so in person was meaningful and appreciated.

Herb invited us to present the check from BYM and a second check from Annapolis meeting on Wednesday, November 12 at a Pawnee language class. The class was led by Taylor Moore, a Pawnee Nation employee, and held in a small Pawnee museum in the town of Pawnee. About 20

people attended the class, all adults in a range of ages. There are four Pawnee bands (groups); Taylor uses the slightly different dialects of two of the bands to teach the class phrases.

When that session ended, and before a class in Pawnee culture class began (taught by Herb), we were invited to present the checks and tell them why we were there. Pat described serious Quaker mistakes such as forcing pacifism and English on the Pawnees and a few positives such as Quakers helping to free from jail Pawnee men falsely accused of murdering a white man. We read the apology and gave Herb the checks. There was applause and spontaneous picture-taking



Pat Powers and Sue Marcus present a reparations check on behalf of BYM, as well as a check from Alexandria Meeting. Left to right: Gilbert Beard, Chief of the Skiri Band; Taylor Moore, language teacher; Pat; Sue; and Herb Adson, Cultural Director for the Pawnee Nation.

by class members who welcomed our acknowledgment of past harms.

The apology was especially important. Money helps, but by appearing in person we made it clear that we were sincere in our wish to make amends. We did not hear from anyone who actually knew of the schools or their impact, but one man told us that his family's name was a result of Quaker imposition.

We've mentioned checks—plural. In addition to the check from BYM, Alexandria Meeting collected just over \$1,000 at its annual homecoming event. Each year, Alexandria Meeting chooses a worthy recipient for the funds donated that day. We are warmed that the Pawnee were chosen this year. Individual BYM members have also sent checks to the Pawnee for their culture and language classes.

Additionally, Susannah and Sue met with David Nagle, a Quaker Pastor, on Tuesday, November 12 in Hominy, OK. Hominy Friends Church is the Quaker



Susannah and Pastor David Nagles at Hominy Friends Church

meeting closest to the Pawnee lands. (It is part of Great Plains Yearly Meeting.) The Hominy Meeting members are mostly members of the Osage Nation or related to Osage members. The Meeting has been involved with the Osage people since 1908. David speaks Osage and has been adopted into the tribe. David was also instrumental in encouraging the restoration of the Osage language, and he told us there is now a “cultural immersion” school for Osage youngsters. Quaker services incorporate songs and prayers in the Osage language as well as English. In the past, David represented the Associated

Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs at national Quaker-Indigenous gatherings. His full engagement with Native people is inspiring.

Native people often use the words “Honor,” “Respect,” “Gratitude.” We experienced all of these in our interactions with members of the Pawnee Nation. We three Friends were honored to represent BYM. Thank you, Friends, for allowing us this unique opportunity for reparations and learning.

Susannah Rose, Co-Clerk, Indigenous Affairs Committee

Sue Marcus

Pat Powers