

The Indigenous Peoples Concerns Committee

Our committee members and conveners include Friends from Boulder Friends Meeting and from Ft. Collins Friends Meeting. We have hybrid meetings once a month.

We seek to increase our understanding and appreciation of Indigenous peoples in order to support them in exercising their rights. As defined by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, these rights include exercising self-determination; maintaining their cultural identity and languages; protecting their territories, environment, and sacred sites; expressing their spiritual values and practices; and exercising sovereignty.

We are committed to continuing Friends' historic efforts to build right relationship with Native Americans. We are responsive to what is asked of us by Indigenous peoples rather than determining on our own what we believe we should do for their benefit. We undertake projects as we are led by the Spirit, within the constraints of our human and material resources.

We share information with our meeting and with IMYM, particularly requests from Native peoples to support them.

We collaborate in projects with the Arapaho and Cheyenne on whose land we live. For example, we were one of several allies who collaborated with them in supporting the successful effort to rename Mount Evans to Mount Blue Sky. (John Evans, an early territorial governor of Colorado, was responsible for the Sand Creek Massacre of Arapaho and Cheyenne people.)

Further afield, we joined with Quakers across the U.S. to enable the Nisenan Tribe to purchase 232 acres in California that had been their

traditional homeland. They have begun resettling the land that was stolen from them.

For a couple of years we've been writing letters, making calls and more in support of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act. More work remains to be done.

Two important organizations (Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples and Right Relationship Boulder) grew out of the early work of Paula Palmer and our Indigenous Peoples Concerns Committee.

Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples

[Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples](#) (TRR) became part of the BFM in 2013. In 2019 TRR became a program of [Friends Peace Teams](#). TRR's co-directors are Paula Palmer, a BFM member, and Jerilyn DeCoteau, an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

More than 60 TRR Indigenous and non-Native facilitators offer in-person and online workshops and webinars nationwide to the wider Quaker community, other faith and civic groups, schools and colleges. Paula also coordinates a Quaker Indigenous Boarding School research network and gives talks at many monthly and yearly meetings throughout the country, disseminating the research and encouraging Friends to collaborate with Native organizations to bring about healing.

Right Relationship Boulder

This local group of Indigenous and non-Native people grew out of the work of the Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples project. RRB works with local governments and organizations to help all Boulder Valley residents learn about the Native peoples who lived here historically and those who live here today. It is committed to building lasting relationships with Indigenous Peoples based on justice

and collaboration. RRB organizes public events to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day each October. It advocates for Land Return to the tribes that were forcibly removed from the Boulder Valley. It raises funds to support summer camps in the Colorado foothills where Arapaho and Cheyenne youth from Oklahoma and Wyoming experience life in their traditional Colorado homelands.

Financial Support

IPC provides modest financial support as one way of nourishing relationships. Financial support is given to TRR and RRB and to the following organizations from which we have learned a great deal:

People of the Sacred Land <https://peopleofthesacredland.org>

People of the Sacred Land is a 501c (3) nonprofit organization comprised of Native leaders, elders and concerned citizens who have spent two years researching the truth about the dispossession of their land and why Native people in Colorado were forced from their homelands.

They published a 700+ page report that calculated the economic losses suffered by tribes through treaty violations in Colorado. Donations to People of the Sacred Land benefit Indian people whose homelands are in Colorado, including those who live here today. Donations support programs that restore the rights of Indian people and help to preserve their cultures for seven generations to come. IPC has organized events, including BFM program hours, during which members of People of the Sacred Land shared their research findings and recommendations.

Kwiyagat Community Academy <https://coloradoleague.org/find-a-charter/kwiyagat-community-academy.html>

Kwiyagat Community Academy (KCA), which opened in September 2021, is Colorado's first charter school located on a Native reservation, the Ute Mountain Ute reservation. The school's mission is to keep the

Ute language and culture alive and also to strengthen the larger Ute community. The Ute live in the poorest zip code in Colorado, with 37% of families living below the poverty line. In addition to providing modest financial support, IPC members visit the school each year during the IMYM Gathering in Durango. We also have hosted Ute Mountain Ute leaders as speakers at IMYM and at BFM.

Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative, Native American Rights Fund

<https://narf.org/cases/indigenous-peacemaking-initiative/>

Historically, Native American communities had methods for dealing with disputes. The Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative (IPI) supports Native peoples in restoring sustainable peacemaking practices by implementing peacemaking practices for tribes, families and youth; policy advocacy to support traditional dispute resolution; conferences, trainings and technical assistance; and providing peacemaking models, examples, information, and guides. IPI is staffed by the Native American Rights Fund (NARF). FCNL, AFSC and Boulder Meeting all have decades-long relationships with NARF.

Arapaho Language and Culture Program

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma provide language training for both Cheyenne and Arapaho youth. Acknowledging that the Arapaho people were forcibly removed from the Boulder Valley and the Poudre Valley, including the land where Boulder and Fort Collins Meetings are now located, IPC supports the tribe's Arapaho Language and Culture Program. There are no longer any native Arapaho speakers in Oklahoma, so teaching Arapaho language to the youth is critical for the continuity of traditional knowledge and ceremony. The tribe's Arapaho Language and Culture program also collaborates with Right Relationship Boulder to send Arapaho youth to a summer language camp at Snow Mountain Ranch.

[National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#)

This coalition of Native American organizations promotes research on the historical and ongoing impacts of the Indian boarding schools on

Native children and their families. The coalition invited all the denominations (including Quakers) that collaborated with the federal government's policy of forced assimilation by means of the boarding schools to become affiliate members and to participate in truth and reconciliation processes.

QUESTIONS/. COMMENTS

If you have questions and/or comments, contact one of the following IPC members:

Chris Brown (Boulder Friends Meeting)

Amanda "Mena" Focken (Boulder Friends Meeting)

Patricia Hertzler (Boulder Friends Meeting)

Paula Palmer (Boulder Friends Meeting)

Bob Shively (co-convener) (Ft Collins Meeting)

Jane Westberg (co-convener) (Boulder Friends Meeting)

Diana Zweygardt (Ft Collins Meeting)