

***Truth and Healing: A Report on “Quakers Seeking Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples”
Conference at Pendle Hill – May 3-6, 2018***

By Rachel Yordy and Barbara Heather

Introduction

There are times in our lives when way opens for us to follow a leading that connects our Faith with our life’s work. Attending the Pendle Hill “Truth and Healing” Gathering was one such gift for the two of us. We wish to gratefully acknowledge Canadian Yearly Meeting’s Education and Outreach Committee for recognizing these leadings and generously supporting our respective registration or travel costs, and our home Meetings for their support. Our participation from Vancouver and Edmonton would not have been possible otherwise. In honouring our commitment to report back to Friends we have prepared this document. Rachel will also lead a Special Interest Group at the Sorrento Western Half-yearly Meeting over the May long weekend with issues and ideas raised from the event.

This document highlights the learning we have experienced from the “Truth and Healing” Conference. We have taken turns sharing our experiences, and provided editorial feedback on one another’s words to ensure that this reflects our collective impressions as much as possible. As Barb needed to catch an early flight on Sunday May 6th, the final section reflects only Rachel’s voice.

As per the Conference Purpose and Vision statement, the vision for the “Truth and Healing” Gathering was sixfold:

- To build a common awareness and understanding of the injuries inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples and the ongoing trauma to which Indigenous Peoples are subjected.
- To bring Quakers under the weight of the genocidal enterprise in which white settler Quakers actively participated, particularly in the United States as Indian agents and through Quaker-run Indian Boarding Schools.
- To inspire and enable Quaker conferees to carry this education and truth-telling into their meetings, Quaker organizations, and communities as a step on the road to healing justice.
- To consider together what the shared Truth of our history and the Truth of our common humanity calls us to do corporately toward healing justice in the various communities in which Quakers live.
- To imagine what next steps beyond acknowledging and apologizing might be in terms of healing justice with Indigenous Peoples.
- To prepare Quakers to move forward on healing steps at the local, yearly meeting, and Religious Society of Friends levels in relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

This was approached with a rich and intensely packed program, with speeches from local Lenape Chiefs, multi-media presentations by Quaker practitioners and Indigenous chiefs/scholars/ministers/TRC participants, worship sharing groups, experiential learning activities, film screenings and reflective communal processing. True to Quaker spirit, the sharing was rich both formally and informally among the approximately 70 participants. There were five participants representing five different provinces of Canada – four white settler Friends from Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia, and a Haudenosaunee scholar who teaches in Quebec. Pendle Hill was in full bloom for the event, and was a gorgeous sight to behold. It was the first time either of us had visited the campus and we were blown away by the beauty and serenity of the space. We were blessed with wonderful roommates, and made meaningful connections with a number of F/friends in attendance. This gathering was both inspiring and important for building unity in our understanding of and movement towards Right Relations with Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island. We would love to support a similar event in Canada.

May 3 Opening Evening Session – Lenape Chiefs

We want to start by acknowledging that the conference took place on the traditional territory of the Lenape people. We were grateful to be hosted and welcomed onto the territory by three tribal Chiefs. Barb, who has researched the relationship between Penn, his son Thomas, and the Pennsylvania government with the Lenni-Lenape, had thought them all long gone, especially since she had read about the Paxton Boys murders, and a book purporting to be about the “last of the Lenape.” She was excited to hear they have survived!

Chief Dennis Coker, Chief Dwaine Perry and Chief Mark Gould each spoke to elements of their community’s struggles for existence (past and present), shared teachings of their people about family and survival, and invited us to join them in their ongoing quest to defend rights and resources. Chief Coker shared about his tribe’s successful fight for state and federal recognition in Delaware in 2010, which now protect the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware’s claim to a continuous presence on their lands. Chief Perry spoke to the Ramapough Lenape Nation’s ongoing fight for legal status amidst a pipeline proposal that seeks to intersect with sacred sites on their lands and adversarial relations with local and federal governments (see <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/14/nyregion/ramapough-tribe-fights-pipeline.html> for more). Chief Gould spoke on a more personal level about the deep family ties that bind his nation together, how they went underground with their language and culture for a long time because of the intense discrimination they faced in New Jersey, and how the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation are revitalizing them now. We were struck by the devastating impacts of colonization on their peoples, perhaps particularly because they have such a long history of contact with Europeans, and they were so forcefully pushed off their lands or forced to hide their identities to survive. There is still so much that remains to be healed from racism to internal conflict surrounding blood quantum, and the struggle for cultural preservation in a still-colonizing and appropriating world.

Note: politically correct lexicon for Indigenous people is different in the U.S. and Canada. Throughout the report we have opted for the same terminology as the presenters (often reflecting Tribe/Nation, Native/Indian in the U.S. vs. First Nations/Metis/Inuit, Indigenous, and Band/Nation in Canada).

May 4 – Morning Session – Mark Charles

Our next session featured the Navajo former pastor, and speaker/writer/consultant, Mark Charles. This charismatic man systematically took us through the history of Christendom, the founding documents of the United States, and the history and mythology of colonization that lead to its continuation in America today. He offered some bitter medicine, but important truth to understand the context of white supremacy that needs to be faced in order for us to truly work towards right relations. This was a powerful history lesson for us Canadians and provided tools for our own analysis north of the 49th.

As a Christian, Mark started us off with a grounding in Christ’s message of radical inclusion. Born in an era of Jewish oppression under Roman rule, Jesus grew up as a humble refugee in Egypt. He came not only as a Messiah for his people, Mark preached, but for all – those marginalized by society, those from other Nations, those ready to embrace his message of love. Jesus was anti-empire; he didn’t come to be King of the Jews and rule the nations – his kingdom was in Heaven, his power from God. This is what he died for. Yet, Mark explained that this message became twisted over time, as Constantine embraced Christianity, and it became the religion of empire. Since that time it has been used to justify war, kill in the name of God, and colonize or enslave non-Christian ‘infidels’ and pagans. He locates this as the beginning of an overtly white supremacist doctrine in the three Papal Bulls that make up the Doctrine of Discovery. He calls this ‘the fruit of the church that has prostituted itself to empire’.

Next, Mark looked at the founding texts of the United States: the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the 13th Amendment – to share how they actually present the bedrock of a white supremacist agenda. While the Declaration suggests that ‘all men are created equal’, it also calls Indians savages (excluding them from citizenship and equality). The Constitution specifically excludes Indigenous peoples and women, and counts black people as worth 3/5 of a person for state representation. The 13th Amendment, rather than completely abolishing slavery actually shifts it to only those convicted of a crime. It’s no coincidence that people of colour are disproportionately represented in prison, and that the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world – Mark suggests this is proof that the Constitution is doing its job in a white supremacist system. (This is also reflected in a fascinating documentary called the 13th). He also suggested that the reason we have Black Lives Matter today is that we did not grapple deeply enough with the White Supremacist foundations of our Nation in the Civil Rights Movement. Nothing short of this structural transformation will create the ‘more perfect union’, in which the rights of all people are realized.

Mark then turned to the history of Indigenous-settler relations in the United States, from the Indian Removal Act of 1830 to the mass execution of the Dakota 38 and massacres of the mid to late 1800s, to the creation of Indian Boarding Schools from the 1870s-1980s, congressional awards given for fighting Indians in the nineteenth century, money for scalps offered, up to Obama’s buried apology of 2009 (and its disclaimer that nothing is legally binding even with the apology). Taken together, this history shows the persistence of a white supremacist policy of ‘discovery, equality, expansion, exceptionalism and liberty and justice for all’ as a practice of ‘dehumanization, equality for a select few, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and liberty and justice for all white male landholders within American Christendom’. Turning his analytic lens on Lincoln, he suggests his status as the ‘greatest American President’ for ending slavery is built on mythology, recounting campaign speeches and actions over the course of his presidency to show how Lincoln’s real motives were to protect the union at all costs, regardless of the implications on black lives. The challenge is that the winners write the history books. He asked what the difference between Hitler and Lincoln was – Lincoln shows us when a genocidal leader ‘wins the war’. Today his face is carved into one of the most sacred mountains of the Lakota people.

Finally, Mark spoke about what is needed for change. Quoting George Erasmus, he suggested "Where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created." He called for a national dialogue on race and gender – hopefully in the form of a Truth and Conciliation Commission by 2021 - in order to create a common memory about the past and new trajectory for the future.

For American society to be ready for this, he argued that we need to prepare four distinct audiences: (white) Christians, people of colour, Indigenous people and Millennials. Speaking to a predominantly white, religious audience he suggested that we need a season of lamentation to grieve the 500 years of dead bodies and wait for God to show up to guide us to remorseful change. Speaking to communities of colour, he called for trauma-awareness in moving into these discussions of white supremacy. He theorized that trauma can manifest on individual and collective levels and be passed from generation to generation. He also suggested that not only is there PTSD on the side of those enslaved/colonized, there is also Perpetrator Induced Traumatic Stress (PITS), with intergenerational impacts that lead to white shock and denial, problematic mythologies, and shame triggers that can shut down productive conversation. Rather than shying away from trauma, he claimed that understanding trauma creates a framework for addressing it. This message was also for his Native audience as well, but he suggested that Indigenous peoples need to reclaim their role as hosts and turn power relations on their head, instead of perpetuating roles of victimhood. We ran out of time to discuss the work needed with Millennials but more of Mark’s perspectives can be found on his [website](#), and in his upcoming book.

May 4 – Afternoon Session - Paula Palmer

Paula Palmer is a sociologist and activist, as well as member and director of “Toward Right relationship with Native Peoples”, a project of Boulder Friends Meeting. Through this organization she created and facilitates workshops titled “Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change: Toward Right Relationship with America’s Native Peoples” for adults, and a second workshop for middle and high schools (for more information see: www.boulderfriendsmeeting.org/ipc-right-relationship). Paula’s presentation focused on research she has conducted over the past two years on Quaker Boarding Schools across the United States. This research was undertaken in response to a call by the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition for faith communities to know their histories as they build towards a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and because she believes that the first step in truth and conciliation is truth telling. (Re-conciliation suggests a pre-existing ‘conciliation’, which arguably never existed. Several presenters preferred “conciliation”). Paula visited 11 boarding schools and explored written records at Swarthmore and Haverford. She acknowledged that the voices of Native peoples are missing from her report, mainly due to the uncertainties of language translation and distance from Indigenous survivors.

Paula began by reminding us that the [National Native American Boarding Schools Healing Coalition](http://www.nnaahc.org) is working for the establishment of a healing process such as the TRC in Canada. The process would include truth telling with church participation, a space for the students and their families, and psychological/scientific studies of trauma, including its genetic effects. They also wish to establish a foundation for justice, truth and healing that will continue beyond the mandate of a Commission.

Paula’s presentation “lifted a mirror to Quakers today” because Quakers were directly involved in the genocidal policies of Indian Boarding and Day schools in the United States. Quakers were among the strongest promoters of the federal government’s policy aimed at assimilation. Specifically, Quaker involvement in Boarding and Day Schools was aimed at removing the Indian from the child, and included the denigration and destruction of Native cultures. Where other denominations were intent on the Christianization of Native peoples, Quakers focused on ‘civilization’, changing Native customs from birth to death. They believed assimilation was the Indians’ only route to survival. This meant less time spent on language acquisition and more on practical tasks. Both Orthodox and Hicksite Friends introduced manual labour for part of the school day, with the aim of teaching useful skills such as farming (men) or domestic labour (women). But this violated gender roles, a forced transition difficult for men to accept. While Quakers fought against forced removals of Natives from their lands, they paternalistically believed the schools would educate Natives so they could protect themselves from dominant society and sought to ‘prepare the ground’ for Christianization so the seeds of Native faith could grow in fertile soil.

Paula identified three periods of Quaker involvement in Native education: before the administration of Ulysses Grant (beginning around 1791 - 1869), during Grant’s “peace” or “Quaker” administration (1869-1877) and post Grant (1878), when most resigned due to the policies of President Hayes. It all began in 1791, when Chief Cornplanter wrote to Quakers requesting education for his children. They started by opening day schools in an Oneida community, later moving to Cornplanter’s Seneca village and opening a day school there. Irregular attendance at Day Schools and the long distances many children had to travel led to the opening of Boarding Schools, (about 30 in all, depending on the definition of ‘school’). Some were located on the reservations and others off reservation. Tunessasa, which opened in 1851, was the longest standing of these schools. Under Grant’s policy, Quaker and other Christian denominations spread out across America. When the schools were set up, Grant moved administration away from the military, and called back army presence wherever Indian communities agreed to the reservations. Quakers hired Quaker teachers and built schools in the areas assigned them by Grant. Voluntary attendance was sporadic, however, and they requested a more forceful policy regarding attendance.

In contrast with other Indian Boarding Schools, Paula suggested there is no evidence of physical or sexual abuse in Quaker Boarding Schools, to date. She also indicated that unlike other schools, parents were allowed to visit their children any time. However Quaker Boarding Schools were still intent on assimilation and erasure. Throughout her presentation she incorporated quotations from Quakers involved in Indian Boarding Schools as well as the voices of Native students to capture the racist paternalism of the times. She also reflected that there is only one documented Quaker voice that opposed the schools for the devastating impacts they were having on Indigenous cultures. In other words, Friends were swimming in the same ocean of racist Darwinism as the rest of society. An article Paula has written about her research, with some of these same quotations, is available here:

<https://www.friendsjournal.org/quaker-indian-boarding-schools/>

Paula suggested that Quakers have to find ways to talk to other Quakers about this truth without raising defensiveness. We need to be able to acknowledge that our spiritual forebears were perpetrators of colonialism in the Schools, as well as through the lands we settled. Addressing injustices means establishing respectful relationships and trying not to perpetuate power imbalances in building them. Quakers have to begin by acknowledging the harm that was done without internalizing shame. We also need to acknowledge the harm that we did might still be embedded in our Quaker culture. Paula left us with queries for contemplation, which we believe are helpful for any Friends exposed to her research:

- What does this history mean for us as Quakers today?
- How can we respond to this history with integrity?
- In addressing injustice today, how can we avoid the mistakes our Quaker forbearers made?
- Native people say that the first step on the path toward healing is acknowledging the harm that has been done. How can Friends take this first step?

May 4 – Afternoon Session – Dr. Denise Lajimodere

Dr. Denise Lajimodere spoke to us about the research she has been engaged in over the past decade, studying Indian Boarding schools across the United States and connecting with survivors. To date she has found 349 schools, but believes the final number will be even higher. Denise is also researching the intergenerational impacts of historical trauma – looking at soul wounds that were created by the cultural genocide of the schools and how these have led to high abuse rates, a loss of parenting skills (often including stricter disciplinary styles and obsessive cleanliness within the home), drug and alcohol addictions, and a diminished ability to show love and affection. She wove the stories of her own family members, particularly her father, into her presentation and shared poetry as well as the heavy facts of intergenerational trauma.

Denise also focused on what healing looks like, suggesting that we need to start with an apology from each of the involved religious communities, develop a national curriculum about residential schools for all levels of education, and look towards the Canadian healing model with native professionals in counseling and holistic healing roles to support their people. She believes healing is needed surrounding language, ceremonies, and native spirituality (as these were taken away by the schools), and through a broad-based strategy of decolonization and indigenization. According to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (a Canadian body established in 1998 to respond to the legacies of Residential schools here) it takes 10 years of continuous and community-wide healing efforts before a community is securely established in healing from boarding school trauma. If we see an Indigenous person on the streets she invited us to ask them “What boarding school did you go to?” or “What boarding school did your parents go to?” as a way of dispelling prejudice and understanding the deep signs of trauma underlying their location and behaviour.

Following Denise's session, conference goers were broken up into small groups for worship-sharing. This was a meaningful opportunity to process our feelings and get to know others on a deeper level.

May 4 – Evening – Americanized Blanket Exercise

Our evening activity consisted of an interactive exercise with Chief Dennis Coker, Kaye Edwards, Jane Westburg, Ava Hamilton, Sandra Boone-Murphy, John Meyer and Paula Palmer, entitled "Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change". Using an adapted version of the KAIROS Blanket Exercise for the American context, it demonstrates how the colonizers took Indian lands and tried to destroy Indian culture. The exercise uses embodied experiential learning to forcefully demonstrate extent of the land grab and destruction of Native people's lives. Participants were given a coloured card and invited to stand upon blankets which represented the lands of Turtle Island. Narrators and European settlers took us through the 500 years of contact between settler and Indigenous peoples, which have resulted in bloody conflicts (both wars and massacres wiping out Indigenous peoples), the forced displacement of Natives from their homelands, devastating diseases that decimated Native communities, the indoctrination and cultural genocide of boarding schools, and the broad-based adoption out of native children (severing their connections to their lifeways). This was followed by a group debrief.

In our experience, the blanket exercise allowed for a discussion of oppression without shaming or raising defensive responses because we literally stepped into the shoes of Indigenous peoples to gain a broader perspective of their realities. The harms of colonization need to be acknowledged fully, and recognition of how its roots live on in settler and Quaker cultures have to be made. In our debrief, the point was also raised that differences between intent and impact must be clarified, otherwise impulses to help and reform can be unhelpful – the example given was Quaker promotion of penitentiaries. Acceptance of 'the Other' may be a first step. Colonizers' fear of the 'Other' have cost the Native people so much.

May 5 – Morning session – Elaine Bishop

This session with long-time Quaker activist, Elaine Bishop, offered Friends (particularly our American colleagues) insight into the history of colonization in Canada, the unfoldment of the [Truth and Reconciliation process](#), and the ongoing challenges in decolonization and healing. Elaine lives in Treaty 1 territory, so was able to provide some context into treaty relationships in Canada. Elaine also lived and worked with Lubicon Lake Nation for four years back in the 1980s and has been involved in indigenous rights and justice issues ever since. She is now retired, but recently ran a women's centre in a low-income neighbourhood in Winnipeg. A touching article about her life's work is available here: <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/fyi/the-conscience-of-the-core-158288415.html>

Elaine started her presentation by talking us through a few important historical landmarks. First, as in the United States, Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples has been founded on the Doctrine of Discovery. In contrast with its southern neighbour, however, during the early years of colonization, many Settlers and Indigenous Peoples (arguably) co-existed in a friendly manner. Once settlers began wanting more and more land, the Treaties were 'lost sight of' or used as mechanisms to grab land. Through the Royal Proclamation, numbered Treaties, and Section 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act, however, there are accountabilities to call settler society back to as treaty partners.

1776-1783 saw the Canadian divorce from the US (aka the American Revolutionary War), and the first influx of Quaker immigration north. Canadian Confederation in 1867 left the responsibility for Indigenous peoples to the Federal Government, (services such as healthcare and education were otherwise the responsibility of the provinces). Federal responsibilities were further enshrined in the

Indian Act of 1876, which influenced all aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives from birth to death, and resulted in the creation of reserves, Residential Schools, a pass system, and even the illegalization of cultural practices and Indigenous access to lawyers from 1927-1951. Indigenous people only got the right to vote in 1960. With some modifications, the Indian Act continues to govern all elements of life for Status Indians on Reserve lands to this day. In 1969, Trudeau tried to assimilate Indigenous peoples by abolishing the Indian Act and replacing it with a race-specific Act ironically called the 'White Paper'. This Galvanised Indigenous resistance into a 'Red paper', which led the Paper to be repealed. We need to honor this resistance that has been there since the beginning and is now responsible for bringing back Indigenous languages and traditions.

In 1982 Trudeau repatriated, our Constitution, and enshrined the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The first treaties were signed with the Queen, so complaints had to go to England for resolution. When the Constitution was repatriated it incorporated the British North America Act (made at the time of confederation), and created Section 35 to protect treaty rights. It is important to note that this did not create Aboriginal rights, it recognized them as inherent and pre-existing. It also did not define them. That they are in the Constitution Act at all is again a testament to the activism of Indigenous people. Unlike the in the US, our Constitution has the capacity to grow the law. Consequently, Treaty rights are now constitutionally respected by the Supreme Court (although not always by the Federal government). This is important because it gives Indigenous people a legal framework to address grievances related to the numbered treaties, as well as any new treaties that are established. As much of British Columbia is unceded Indigenous lands, this creates a powerful foundation for contemporary treaty negotiations.

Indigenous advocacy, resistance, and resurgence continues to this day. Elaine briefly described the Mohawk Kanehsatà:ke land dispute of 1990 (also known as the Oka Crisis) to fight the development of a sacred burial ground (which was part of a longstanding land dispute) for a private golf course. After the police and military were called in and protests escalated to violence, the land was eventually purchased by the Crown and golf course expansion abandoned. In the wake of the incident the government established a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to investigate the relationship between Indigenous peoples, the government of Canada and Canadian society at large. After convening a series of public hearings and visiting nearly 100 nations, it produced a 4000 report with sweeping recommendations for change and a twenty year implementation plan. It had the potential for real Nation to Nation relations, but the government shelved it. It has taken ongoing activism of Indigenous peoples to push this further.

The work towards truth and reconciliation in Canada was initiated by Residential School Survivors who filed a class action suit against the Federal Government and the churches that had run the schools between 1879 and 1996. The government decided it was easier to negotiate a settlement than to go through the courts for the roughly 86,000 survivors. The settlement agreement, reached in 2006, was the largest in Canadian history. We all owe a debt of gratitude to survivors, Elaine pointed out, for forcing us to face the Truth – an uncomfortable gift. The settlement agreement had five main components: a 'Common Experience Payment' to all survivors based on the number of years they attended a Residential School; an Independent Assessment Process to adjudicate and provide compensation for more serious experiences of physical and sexual abuse in the schools; the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (at the demands of survivors); health and healing services; and a commemoration fund. The TRC was an imperfect process: the first three Commissioners resigned over conflicts. The second set of Commissioners were Justice Murray Sinclair, Chief Willie Littlechild and Marie Wilson. They organised a series of regional gatherings, many of them very intense. In Manitoba, the bad weather throughout the TRC sessions was used as an analogy for the experience. On the last day, as a healing ceremony took place at the Forks, the sun came out. During the grand entry an eagle circled overhead. Eagles had not been seen at this gathering spot in generations.

Elaine was also among the thousands marching in Ottawa when the TRC Recommendations were ceremonially handed to the government in 2015. Thousands marched from Gatineau to Ottawa, passed what she described as a 'very closed Parliament' to City Hall for the ceremony. The RCMP had also been called, in case marchers got rowdy. It struck Elaine as incredibly symbolic of how the Harper government was receiving the TRC report – at City Hall as opposed to being embraced by our Federal offices. Since the TRC process has come to its end, a [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#) has been established at the University of Winnipeg. This houses the extensive research archives, and survivor testimonies as permission has been granted. The Final Report from the TRC process included [94 Calls to Action](#) for a variety of stakeholders in Canada. A CBC website "[Beyond 94](#)" has recently been launched to track what is happening in TRC recommendations. While some of the progress has been superficial (Elaine called the CBC reporting "exceedingly generous!"), other important milestones, such as the full adoption of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) by the Trudeau Government have significant legal implications.

Connecting the TRC process with our own Quaker history, Elaine shared briefly about some of the things she learned while living up in northern Alberta with Lubicon Lake Nation. While there is no official record of Quaker schools in Canada, the first school in their community, a day school, was apparently established by Quakers at the invitation of the Lubicon. However Elaine reflected that even this school had a significant impact on Indigenous lifeways, leading mothers with young children to stop following the seasonal harvesting camps to stay in the main village where the school was located. Quakers also taught in English, not spoken by the elders, which created a linguistic divide that interrupted the transmission of knowledge. Even when providing 'education' at the request of Indigenous peoples, Western practices have eroded Indigenous cultures.

Finally, the session provided participants with an opportunity to assess what makes for an effective apology through small group work. Based on her research, Elaine suggested that there are four parts to an effective apology: an acknowledgment of the offence; a truthful explanation (but not justification – this is delicate!); expressions of remorse, shame, humility and regret; and reparations. Using some of the Canadian faith community apologies for their roles in running Residential Schools and the apology by Stephen Harper as Prime Minister of Canada, our small groups analyzed the statements for these elements and reported back to the group. This helped us understand what may be required for American Friends to craft a powerful apology for Quaker involvement in Indian Boarding Schools as momentum builds for a thoughtful and meaningful atonement and TRC in the U.S.

Elaine concluded her presentation by speaking briefly to the changes happening across Canada in an 'era of Reconciliation' now, including Quaker actions to support work towards right relations with [Canadian Friends Service Committee](#) and her own budding collaboration in Winnipeg "Share the Gifts – Honour the Treaties", looking at white privilege and reparations. In particular, work to support the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People within 20 years through [Private Member's Bill C262](#) is significant, and being championed by people of Faith in a wide range of events. And yet, she also mentioned the ongoing challenges in protecting Indigenous land rights due to conflicts over natural resource development. While the UN Declaration calls for 'Free Prior and Informed Consent', authentic consultations have not happened in the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion which is now being protested by Tsleil-Waututh Nation and other land and water defenders through the '[Protect the Inlet](#)' movement in British Columbia. (Quakers are also actively involved in this grassroots resistance, and a few from Vancouver Monthly Meeting have been arrested in solidarity). There are also concerns that the TRC did not go far enough, which is why Indigenous people filed class action lawsuits to address those excluded by the TRC in Newfoundland and Labrador schools, Day Schools, racism in the Child Welfare System, segregated Indian Hospitals, the list goes on. The TRC is but the beginning of a much deeper struggle to honour the treaties and address the harms of colonization.

May 5 – Afternoon Session: The Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare TRC and film Dawnland

Building on the momentum of TRCs, the next presentation began with the newly-released documentary [Dawnland](#) about the Maine-Wabanaki State Child Welfare TRC, and was followed by a discussion with Esther Attean and Denise Altwater, two of the key Indigenous welfare workers affiliated with Maine-Wabanaki REACH who participated in the TRC process. This session provided Friends with a heart-wrenching understanding about the structural racism that has led children to be adopted out of Native communities and their devastating impacts, despite the passing of the Indian Child Welfare Act by the Federal Government in 1978. This TRC was the first of its kind in the United States, and the film and discussion showed the years of dedicated work required to even establish the TRC, the beauty and challenges in the process, and the ongoing struggles for justice and healing in Maine. The TRC report is available here: <http://www.mainewabanakitrc.org/report/> and more about Maine-Wabanaki REACH here: <http://www.mainewabanakireach.org/>. Since the conclusion of the TRC, Maine-Wabanaki REACH has incorporated as an independent organisation. Their work has also changed since the TRC to focus on Restorative Justice. REACH has also developed a day-long ally training and raised issues of what allies 'do'. Trainers worked around issues such as race and a tendency to jump into reconciliation issues with little recognition of the effects of colonization. Esther closed by offering Friends a series of Queries to guide our discernment processes around creating a TRC:

- What do Quakers want a TRC around?
- Whose truth needs to be told?
- Will Quakers submit to those they impacted (and allow them to lead the process)?
- What will the process be?
- Do Quakers want reconciliation or do they just want truth telling and from who about what?

These were helpful for Friends individually, and also fed into a collective discernment process later in the evening.

May 5 – Afternoon Group Processes – Open floor for Short Presentations and Collective Discernment

This session gave a variety of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants a chance to present what they are doing in their local communities. Friends Buffy Curtis and Liseli Haines from New York presented on their collaboration with Haudenosaunee communities on the [Two Row On the Grand](#) paddling journey, Paula Palmer and Ava Hamilton shared work they are doing with Right Relations Boulder; Friend Judith Brown shared about the [Pilgrimage for Indigenous Rights](#) she joined and her commitment to be present for the journey of Private Member's Bill C262 as it passes through parliament in Canada; Friends and Wukchumni youth presented on their work at [Quaker Oaks Farm](#) and camp in California; Friend Ruthann Purchase shared about her work with language revitalization and participatory cultural mapping as she embraces her Lenape heritage; Friend Ruth Flower shared about a draft [study, reflection and action guide](#) she has put together for healing relationships; Friend Dove John spoke to work of the Northwest Indian Committee (formerly AFSC's Seattle Indian program that was laid down), and Friend Rachel Yordy shared about her Masters research on the [Returning to Spirit](#) and Stronger Together Reconciliation programs in Canada among others.

Following dinner, there was also space for group worship and discussion surrounding some of the emerging queries and leadings in the group. Participants reflected back on Esther's queries for the group about what the goals of a Quaker Truth Commission would be and who it was really for. Friends reflected upon our readiness to move forward with apologies and what a good apology really requires to be meaningful and sincere. Friends also reflected upon what actions could flow from the conference

within our local communities as well as broader Quaker bodies. It was also decided that, among other things, a google group would be established to enable Friends to stay in touch. This has now been created so Friends who would like to join can request via: <https://groups.google.com/group/FriendsRR>. There was some good work done on an epistle but committee members struggled to come to unity as some felt uncomfortable writing next steps on behalf of our diverse group. This may yet emerge as a statement or compilation of queries post-conference.

May 5 – Evening - Two Rivers Film:

The final capstone on an intense and meaningful day was a screening of the documentary Two Rivers. Two Rivers tells the story of an American couple who moved from a multiethnic community to one that was largely homogeneous and white. They went looking for the “Other(s)” and found a Native American community. Over time they developed neighbourhood get-togethers and eventually ran a jointly organised and highly successful Pow Wow. This has been repeated annually and the idea is spreading to other communities. For more information about the movie: <http://www.tworiversfilm.com/index.htm>

May 6 - Closing Session

In our final session together, Friends had an opportunity to hear from Indigenous participants about their impressions of the conference and then reflect on what commitments we are prepared to make as we take these messages back to our local Meetings and broader Quaker bodies. Indigenous participants shared a range of observations. Some felt incredibly supported and safe to share their traumatic and vulnerable stories. While the process of sharing stories often takes a heavy emotional toll on speakers as they relive memories, one participant in particular indicated that she felt stronger and slept well because of the ways she was cared for by the group after her presentation. On the other hand, other participants felt unsafe by things that arose from the conference. In particular issues of cultural appropriation came to the fore as it became known to them that one non-Indigenous conference participant has been practicing sweat lodges and smudging in exclusively non-Indigenous settings. There was a Clearness Committee with this person after Indigenous presenters and guests spoke to conveners about their concerns about this issue. However, questions about who the teachings are meant to be shared with and what settings they are appropriate to be shared in remain. The impact was that there was significant discussion about cultural appropriation in the final feedback from Indigenous participants. On a lighter note, Indigenous participants also gifted the gathering with a song, and encouraged Friends to continue their truth telling and healing work within their spiritual communities in order to move towards an apology for their roles in running Indian Boarding Schools.

Finally, it was powerful to close the gathering with public commitments of what Friends will each do to live towards Right Relations with Indigenous Peoples as we return to our respective communities. Commitments were as diverse as the group gathered together – some Friends committing to personal actions that reconnect them with the truth of their family’s history with the land or pilgrimages to their ‘homelands’ in Europe; others to actions with their Meetings and Yearly Meetings; others to activism and relationship-building with Indigenous peoples; and others to work towards apologies and systemic changes. The organizing committee sought to write notes of these commitments and may compile them into a report that is later circulated to conference attenders. In the meantime, in the spirit of direct accountability to ourselves, our Meetings, and Canadian Friends, here are our personal lists:

Rachel

- I commit to continuing to decolonize myself – in what I understand is a lifelong process
- I commit to facilitating a Special Interest Group about this experience for Canadian friends at Western-Half Yearly Meeting this May, and reporting back to Friends in Vancouver Monthly Meeting
- I commit to collaborating with other Canadian participants from the Truth and Healing Conference to explore next steps towards right relations for Friends in Canada
- I commit to collaborating with the Vancouver Quaker Reconciliation Committee on activities for our decolonization and for building right relations with Indigenous peoples
- I commit to continue standing with Tsleil-Waututh Nation to Protect the Inlet
- I commit to contributing to the work of reconciliation on the Sunshine Coast through collaborating with the shíshálh people as I am welcomed
- I commit to consulting with Haudenosaunee colleagues at Six Nations Polytechnic regarding the Two Row Reconciliation Framework and Indigenous perspectives on Transformation and Learning to prevent cultural appropriation and honour protocols regarding knowledge sharing
- I commit to pursuing Returning to Spirit Facilitator Training as I am welcomed
- I commit to holding space for and speaking loving truth to other settlers along the spectrum of awareness and belief

Barb

- I commit to continuing to decolonize myself alone and with Friends from Edmonton Monthly Meeting in a process already begun, and to explore the potential for 1:1 contact with local Indigenous people as well as attendance, when invited, at local Indigenous events.
- I commit to collaborating with other Canadian participants from the Truth and Healing Conference to explore next steps towards right relations for Friends in Canada
- I commit to continuing to explore activity and events among Treaty 6 Nations in Edmonton and areas with a view to establishing decolonization exercises for myself and to establish an acceptable way to reach out as an ally.
- I commit to include Indigenous perspectives on Transformation and Learning to prevent cultural appropriation in my work, and honour protocols regarding knowledge sharing
- I commit to looking into Returning to Spirit programs locally
- I commit to holding space for and speaking loving truth to other settlers along the spectrum of awareness and belief

Thank you again for the powerful opportunity to be present for this historic Gathering. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with Friends across Turtle Island on issues of Indigenous Rights and Right Relations with the Original Peoples of this land.

Rachel and Barb