

Indian Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Report for October 2018 through September 2019

During the Fiscal Year 2018-19 nine individuals were active as Members and Attenders at nine meetings held during the year.

Grant Requests Funded

The Committee approved a grant of \$1,000 of \$2,000 requested by Tailinh Agoyo, director of We Are the Seeds Culture Trust, for an event in Philadelphia in February 2019 that would include a Youth Art Workshop, songs, and storytelling by Indigenous artists. This took place at Taller Puertorriqueno's cultural center in the Fairhill section of North Philadelphia, making it accessible to the large Puerto Rican community. The grant was for fees for three artists. (October 13, 2018)

The Committee approved a grant of \$500 of \$2,005.95 requested by David George-Shongo, Director, of the Seneca-Iroquois National Museum (Onöhsagwë:dë' Culture Center) in Salamanca, New York. This would go towards the purchase of equipment to improve technology to better present exhibits, enhance visitor and off-site access to collections and archives, and maintain collections. (October 13, 2018)

The Committee approved a grant request from Joe Brings Plenty of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe (South Dakota) for \$1,920.50 for the purchase and shipping of a teepee to be used for a Sundance ceremony during the summer. This is part of programs for youth to teach Lakota cultural practices. Youth (both boys and girls) have been engaged in the Wolves Den Boxing Club which is a springboard for other activities. (February 9, 2019)

The Committee approved a grant of \$2,500 of \$3,000 requested for Indigenous Peoples' Day Philly Inc. The grant request was to help cover honorariums for a drum-group and dancers, a Taino and Aztec dance group, and the purchase of eight canopies and production supplies. The Committee liked the positive nature of this event for Indigenous Peoples' Day (also known as Columbus Day) to be held October 12 at Penn Treaty Park and the collaboration of different groups of Philadelphia (Indigenous Peoples in Philadelphia, Indigenous 215 Collective, Taino Cultural Workshops and We Are the Seeds). And we liked the fact that efforts are made to emphasize the history and presence of Lenape in this area and to include them in programming. The Committee requested that our grant be used for tents/canopies and supplies that would be investments for future programs. (September 14, 2019)

The Committee approved the purchase of Audrey Geyer's (Visions) documentary "Our Fires Still Burn: The Native American Experience" which includes rights for unlimited use. While the \$300 for the purchase was sent to Audrey Geyer, the Committee worked on a request to the Quaker Life Council for outreach funds to reimburse this cost. The film was shown at annual sessions at residential Yearly Meeting July 24-28 at the College of New Jersey in Ewing, and several monthly meetings have borrowed it for showing.

Other Actions, Ongoing Education and Sharing

The Committee gave its permission to Haverford Quaker Collections to copy the 1937 video "A Weekend at Tunesassa School" for relatives of Seneca people who appear in the film. (October 13, 2018)

Indian Committee Members attended and shared positive impressions of Indigenous Peoples' Day 2018 held in Philadelphia on October 12, 2018. This included presentations by Reverend Norwood of the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape and Chief Chester Brooks of the Lenape, Delaware in Oklahoma. Christine Gonzalez spoke about the Taino, and a short film "First Light" by the Maine Indigenous Upstander Project was shown. Community activity was discussed by Yakama Felicia Teter, and Richie Olivera performed Peruvian music. Several Indian Committee members also attended the Mini Powwow in Hunting Park, East Oak Lane, after the meeting which is the second part of this event.

Throughout the year the Committee discussed how we might address the Doctrine of Discovery and with how legal systems (England and the United States) have used the Doctrine to establish legal precedents which still have an impact today. An epistle on the Doctrine of Discovery is being drafted to be shared with PYM when completed.

Other issues considered by the Committee included the ongoing controversy surrounding the use by Neshaminy High School of a “redskins” mascot, the need to recognize that Quaker Meetinghouses sit on Native land and to possibly return land on which inactive Quaker meetings currently sit including burial grounds which include Native Americans, support for FCNL’s work to push for reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and its expansion for tribal protections.

A Committee Member contributed to Germantown Monthly Meeting’s discussion of the planting of a treaty elm offspring and plans for an associated plaque helping them to become more aware of the ongoing relationship with Lenape and a living covenant with Native peoples that the tree represents.

Presence of the Indian Committee Wampum Belt

The Committee established guidelines for the care and transfer of the replica wampum belt which is being held at Swarthmore College library. Efforts were made to keep the belt as accessible as possible for our use in balance with its respectful and safe care. Throughout the year the wampum belt was present at a number of events and Committee Members were taught how to handle it respectfully.

Events included a celebration in January 2019 by the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape to mark the reaffirmation of official recognition of the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Tribal Nation by New Jersey in November 2018. The belt underwent spiritual cleansing via smudging at a Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Gathering. It was also presented at the close of a meeting of the Interfaith Visionary Women of Philadelphia meeting held at Friends Center. And, the belt was presented during a break in a workshop held at London Grove Meeting on “Toward Right Relationships with Native Peoples.”

The belt was also present at PYM Annual Sessions for the Indian Committee’s showing of the film “Our Fires Still Burn” and for the First Contact Reconciliation Collaborative’s showing of a film by Jeremy Newman of the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape as they worked for New Jersey State recognition.

The belt was also appreciated at a presentation given by an Indian Committee Member for Haverford middle school children.

The Committee discussed the transition of collections from the Atwater Kent/Philadelphia History Museum to Drexel University. Included in this collection is the original William Penn wampum belt. The Committee agreed that we need to express our concerns to Drexel University that the belt be treated with respect and that its fragile condition would be considered.

Relations with PYM

The Committee drafted a minute of appreciation for Carol Walz who retired at the end of March 2019. It was noted that she has been extremely supportive of our granting work. This was presented at the Grantmakers luncheon on March 9, 2019, when we had the opportunity to meet Nick Gutowski, the new PYM Director of Grantmaking.

The Committee’s Treasurer researched and worked with PYM’s Finance Committee on the potential of moving funds to the Native American Bank. Use of the Fiduciary reinvestment fund now being set up which would allow for reparations to African Americans and Native Americans may be considered for the future.

The Committee continued to welcome and benefit from the presence of Tom Armstrong, our liaison with the PYM Granting Committee, at our meetings for business.

Respectfully submitted,
Lois Kuter
January 14, 2020