QUAKERS
Canadian Friends Service Committee

This resource is for Friends and Quaker communities seeking to actively work towards the decolonization of Canada through actions including reparations.



Truth and reconciliation: Quakers and reparations

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"We have described for you a mountain, we have shown you the path to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing."

— Justice Murray Sinclair

This resource is for Friends and Quaker communities seeking to actively work towards the decolonization of Canada, to honour and promote Indigenous Peoples' human rights, and to participate with integrity in the process of truth and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Our hope is to encourage Friends with guidance and inspiration on the journey.

As a faith community, we take inspiration from the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) *Calls to Action*, the voices of Indigenous friends and partners, and the leadings of the Spirit to guide us in repairing damaged trust through concrete actions, building relationships based on respect and reciprocity, and working together to transform our society. While we believe all of us are called to reconciliation, what that looks like in each community and context will vary based on our relationships. So too will opportunities for reparations. We hope this document will provide some helpful touchstones for discernment on where reparations could be offered, and what forms reparations can take.

***Cover page photo**: Cowichan Elder T'uwahwiye' Philomena Williams and Nola Kulchyski learn techniques taught by the fish leather expert Janey Chang (not in the photo) during a workshop on the traditional uncreded territory of the Quw'utsun Mustinuhw (Cowichan People) on Vancouver Island. The workshop was funded by Canadian Friends Service Committee's Reconciliation Fund. Photo by G.R. Singleton.*

I. Truth, reconciliation, and reparations

The words we choose matter. They speak to our perspectives, biases, aspirations, and commitments in the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and settlers on these lands. Reconciliation is work for our time… and for generations. Starting with our understanding of truth, reconciliation, and reparations in this place and time grounds us for this work.

Truth

As Quakers, our actions reflect our commitment to truth to the truth of the Spirit, to being true to ourselves, and to being true to others. Being truth seekers means we value the truth of our history as a spiritual community on this continent and the responsibilities that stem from it. Canada was founded on the theft of lands and disruption of lifeways and languages through the physical, biological, and cultural genocide of colonial conquest.[1]

As a spiritual community that came to this continent from Europe, Friends have benefitted from this dispossession and conquest both individually and collectively. Like other settler groups, the livelihoods of early Quakers in the United States and Canada and their descendents benefitted from access to and resources derived from the displacement of Indigenous Peoples and occupation/seizure/negotiating away of Indigenous lands. Our Meeting houses have been built upon stolen lands.[2]

Although Quakers did not run residential schools with Indigenous children in Canada, the Religious Society of Friends did run "Indian Boarding Schools" in the United States. These schools sought to separate children from their families and Nations in order to eradicate the languages, knowledge systems, lifeways, and socio-political structures of Indigenous Peoples and assimilate them into the body politic of settler society.

In both countries, residential and boarding schools were the sites of widespread physical, emotional, and sexual abuse for students. Many experienced malnutrition, diseases like tuberculosis, forced physical labour, religious indoctrination, and in some cases, were the subjects of involuntary human experimentation. Thousands never made it home.[3]



Above: *Friends take a learning tour of the Secwepemc Museum and Heritage Park at the former site of Kamloops Indian Residential School, 2018.*

While further research is still required, in the 1800s Friends from Genesee Yearly Meeting—one of the three yearly meetings that went on to form Canadian Yearly Meeting—played a role in the operation of Quaker boarding schools for Indigenous students in the United States. This means that some of our spiritual forebearers participated in the activities we must reckon with today.[4] Looking back, it is clear that Indigenous children never should have been taken from their communities, or subjected to the atrocities of residential and boarding schools.

Some Friends have also been involved in Indigenous rights and reconciliation work since their first days on the continent. There are also Indigenous Quakers in some Meetings today. Since the 1980s, Canadian Friends have joined with the Innu Nation, Grassy Narrows First Nation, and the Lubicon Lake Nation when asked to stand with them in addressing the rights issues facing their communities.

Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) has actively worked behind the scenes at the UN for decades, convening conversations and correcting misinformation about Indigenous Peoples' human rights in the lengthy process of developing the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. CFSC was also instrumental in founding—and plays a continued role in coordinating—the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples to advocate for the full

implementation of the *UN Declaration* in Canada and around the world.[5]

Despite broadbased movement towards implementing the TRC *Calls to Action* and *UN Declaration*, systemic racism, denialism, and challenges to Indigenous Peoples' human rights remain. Indigenous people are disproportionately represented in Canadian carceral systems and more likely to face higher security sentences when they are imprisoned.

In many provinces, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students struggle in public education systems that do not adequately reflect Indigenous ways of knowing, substantive Indigenous content in curricula, and the truths of settler colonialism on these lands. At the same time, Indigenous education systems remain critically underfunded, resulting in lower educational attainment for Indigenous students.

In healthcare, Indigenous people face unequal health outcomes and inadequate access to the care they need. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children are still represented at much higher rates in child and family welfare systems, while Indigenous adults are overrepresented in social assistance programs. Many Indigenous communities still lack consistent access to clean drinking water today.

Indigenous people—particularly women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people—are still disproportionately targets of violence, despite the National Inquiry (2016-2019) and resultant *Final report and calls for justice*.[6]

Recognizing all these truths is fundamental to understanding what is required for reconciliation, self-determined and decolonized systems, and substantive equality for Indigenous Peoples now.

Reconciliation

The TRC defines reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" between Indigenous and settler Peoples. As their *Final report* explains, "A critical part of this process involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations, and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change."[7]

While some people have rejected the term "reconciliation" outright, this rejection may stem from what author Jessie Sutherland characterises as the "false faces of reconciliation" that have been peddled to Indigenous Peoples to date. Reconciliation fails, she warns, if we approach it as a "hasty process," with only shallow attempts to address historical injustices without dismantling systems of oppression. We can't approach "reconciliation as a managed process," with those in power imposing solutions and determining when reconciliation has been "achieved."[8]

Real reconciliation requires humility to learn and courage to change. As one of CFSC's partners, lifelong human and land rights activist Katsi'tskwas Ellen Gabriel, says, "Reconciliation goes beyond apologies—it's an action that must signify that the words are sincere... and it must be led by Indigenous Peoples in a process that respects our rights and who we are as human beings."[9]

Reparations

Reparations are the transfer of resources from an individual or collective that has caused harm to individuals or communities that have been harmed. Sometimes this transfer is from a country to a particular group. Examples include Germany's payment to Israel following the Holocaust, South Africa's land redistribution efforts and payments to those who experienced human rights abuses at the hands of the Apartheid regime, and Canada's Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement with Indigenous Survivors.

Today, there are also grassroots movements for the payment of reparations to Indigenous Peoples from settler societies more broadly (e.g. Pay the Rent in Australia: https://PayTheRent.net.au and the Land Back Movement in North America: https://www.CBGLCollab.org/what-does-land-restitution-mean) and for payment of reparations to the descendents of formerly enslaved people in the United States (e.g. the Truth Telling Project https://TheTruthTellingProject.org/grc and the Reparation Education Project https://www.ReparationEducationProject.org).

People of faith and conscience are encouraged to participate in movements that demand accountability for the historic injustices and ongoing legacies of colonialism, slavery, genocide, and other mass atrocities.

Reparations can take many forms: land returns, financial compensation, investments in cultural revitalization, and other measures aimed at addressing systemic injustices and promoting reconciliation.

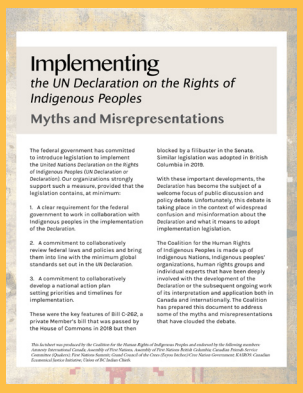
As the Executive Director of the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition, Sarah Augustine, writes, "To seek repair, one must identify the interests of the marginalized and share these in ways that those in the dominant culture can hear."[10]

It is the responsibility of individuals and communities that have benefited directly from settler colonialism and caused harm to Indigenous Peoples through residential schools and land theft to compensate for the damages these ancestors, governments, and communities have caused.

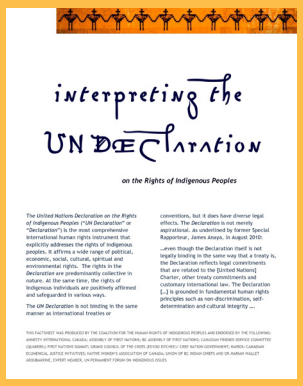
While reparations can take many forms, for them to be restorative, resources should be allocated based on the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples—not constrained by the prerogatives of settlers or settler institutions.



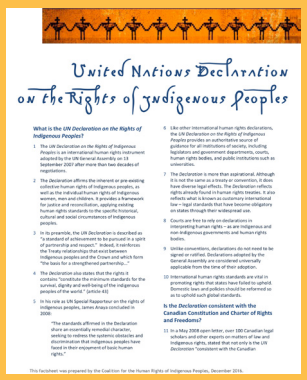
Above: *Residential school survivors lead a march for reconciliation. Ottawa, 2015. Photo by Ben Powless.*

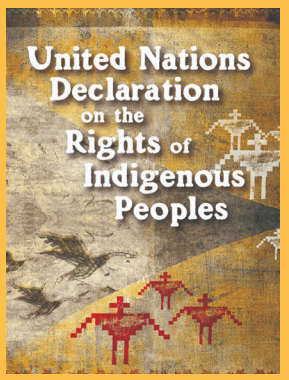

Implementing
the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Myths and Misrepresentations


BACKGROUNDER
Self-determination & Free, Prior and Informed Consent
Understanding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
February 1, 2021


interpreting the UN Declaration
on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples


free, prior & informed Consent


United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



"It is important to underline that Indigenous Peoples' rights are inherent or pre-existing. The *UN Declaration* does not create any new rights."—***Interpreting the* UN Declaration** *fact sheet*

Above: *For many years Canadian Friends Service Committee has been working alongside Indigenous partners and human rights organizations in the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Coalition makes statements at the United Nations, hosts off-the-record meetings with governments, and does a range of other education and advocacy work.*

Together with partners, CFSC has helped to distribute hundreds of thousands of pocket-sized copies of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, *and ensured that these rights are broadly known and understoods through presentations and fact sheets like the ones above. All are available at* https://QuakerService.ca/Resources

II. Staying true to our words

In light of our history, Friends in Canada have spent time discerning our responsibilities for reconciliation. This discernment has led to the approval of several important minutes by CYM (all available at https://QuakerService.ca/CYMMinutes):

- Endorsing the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2009)
- Affirming the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2010)
- Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery (2013)
- Truth and reconciliation (2015)
- Truth and reconciliation (2016)

These minutes are worth returning to as a way of grounding our path forward. They also connect us with the recent discernment of Quakers globally at the 2024 Friends World Committee for Consultation gathering in South Africa. We encourage Friends to read these passages to support discernment of our collective responsibilities on the path to reconciliation. As we consider these words, our hope is that Friends are inspired to continue to match our commitments with concrete action.

2009 Minute on the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

This minute endorses the *Declaration* that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, and expresses concern with the Government of Canada's vote in opposition to it at the time of its passing.[11] It emphasizes that the *Declaration* does not create new rights, but elaborates on the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples worldwide, providing a principled framework for interpreting existing human rights instruments. It calls upon the federal government to endorse the *Declaration*, and encourages the activism of Friends to lobby all levels of government to support the *Declaration*.

2010 Minute of record on the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

In 2010 Friends celebrated the adoption of the *Declaration* by the United Nations General Assembly in a more formal way with a Minute of Record. The right to self-determination affirmed in *Article* 3 of the



Above: *CFSC's Indigenous Rights Program Coordinator Jennifer Preston facilitates a session at the closing ceremony of the TRC, Ottawa, 2015.*

Declaration was given special attention. It guarantees that Indigenous Peoples are free to make decisions on how to govern themselves and their territories. You may have heard the phrase, "nothing about us, without us. Payment of reparations must be considered in the context of the *Declaration*, paid not as a grant but as an affirmation of sovereignty.

2013 Minute on the Doctrine of Discovery

This minute repudiated the racist Doctrine of Discovery, which claimed that colonialism was justified because Indigenous Peoples were not Christians and therefore were not able to own land in accordance with Western legal principles. The minute represented our preemptive response to *Call to action 49* from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Final report*, released in 2015, calling on all churches to repudiate the doctrine. It states: "Canadian Yearly Meeting supports the process of building right relationships among Peoples in Canada and we ask ourselves what the process of bringing reconciliation and healing means to us and to how we proceed." As Friends have discerned this, we have begun to recognize the importance of reparations.

2015 Minute on truth and reconciliation

This minute recognized and gave thanks for the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as it

marked the formal closing event in June 2015. Once again, Friends made a commitment to: honour the painful truths embodied in the report by actively working for the reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada "We encourage Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups to engage with the material shared by [CFSC] and prayerfully consider what action they may take in working for reconciliation in their communities." Collective and individual payment of reparations is one such action.

2016 Minute on truth and reconciliation

This minute follows the one from the previous year, and reports on concrete steps Friends were taking to commit to reconciliation. Within you'll find the joint response to TRC *Call to action 48*, where Friends endorsed and committed to the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. This is also where Friends committed to making reports on their reconciliation work annually (see them at https://QuakerService.ca/Reconciliation).

2024 Friends World Committee for Consultation *Weaving* document

In August 2024, Friends from around the world gathered in South Africa for the annual plenary session of the Friends World Committee for Consultation. Alongside the epistle they produced there, Friends at this meeting shared a weaving document that commented on the thematic focuses of their time together. The document shares about the struggle and opportunity of reparations. "It is a long journey to heal and repair relationships in the light of historic and continuing injustices."[12]

"We call on [Yearly Meetings and FWCC] to begin by examining our own Quaker communities, to engage in dialogue across the FWCC Sections, to centre the voices of those who have endured pain, to take action with and alongside allies, to educate and train ourselves, and to share reports of what Friends are doing so that we can learn from one another."

When faced with a call to reparations, many of us can get caught up with feelings of individual guilt. Reflecting on this guilt, while tempting, can often lead us to focus more on our own emotions and perspectives than on responses required of us. Seeking repair, and discerning our responsibility to provide individual and collective reparations requires us to centre the rights of Indigenous Peoples. "Responses of white guilt and colonizers' guilt distract from what a real or ethical conversation about ongoing colonization and ongoing decolonization requires: preparedness, listening, reflection, and reparations."[13]

Our approach, therefore, might reflect this query from the *Reconciliation queries for Friends*, prepared by CFSC:

"How can we follow leadings of the Spirit, both individually and in our Meetings, to actively work towards the decolonization of Canada, recognition, promotion, and protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights, and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?"

III. From words to action

In 2015 as the *Final report* of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was being released, Justice Murray Sinclair spoke these words: "We have described for you a mountain, we have shown you the path to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing."

Justice Sinclair was one of the three commissioners on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. His words invite us to a journey. If reconciliation is like the climb up a mountain, it is worth considering where Friends are on that path, both as individuals and collectively.

Maybe you are part of a Monthly Meeting or Worship Group that has a Peace and Social Action Committee or Reconciliation Committee engaged in this work. Maybe a different group has collaborated on reconciliation, as Friends or in your personal, professional, or educational community. Perhaps this is a new area of Spirit-led action for you. Consider what work you or your group have already undertaken on the path of reconciliation and what next steps might enliven you.

The headings below indicate some of the points on the path: learning; building relationships; providing reparations; and advocacy and activism. This is not an exhaustive list or a linear journey, but orienting on this path may help us reflect on our past experiences and inspire us to continue climbing the mountain together.

Learning the truth

Maybe you're at the start of the journey and aren't sure where to begin. Our list starts with learning as a basis for reconciliation action. As settlers, we cannot begin to work in collaboration and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples towards reconciliation if we are ignorant of the historic and ongoing harms of colonialism.

It is important to listen to Indigenous voices and read Indigenous authors who share their experiences of colonization to understand more about its impacts and the strength and resilience of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples have been practicing their laws and cultures since time immemorial and resisting colonization for many generations.

Learning more about these practices gives us a richer understanding of the history of the land we're on and



Above: *TRC Commissioners Chief Wilton Littlechild, Justice Murray Sinclair, and Marie Wilson at TRC closing ceremony, Ottawa, 2015. Photo by Ben Powless.*

the Nations that continue to exercise their rights and practice their lifeways. If you ever find yourself stuck on the reconciliation journey, learning is a great place to return to. There is a rapidly expanding body of inspiring Indigenous literature, memoirs, and non-fiction out there, and there is always more to learn.

Ideas:

- Take a look at https://NativeLands.ca, or https://whose.land to see whose territory you are on. After you've done so, take some time to learn about the Indigenous legal traditions, cultural practices, languages, and history of colonization where you are. Seek out Indigenous sources and perspectives wherever possible—like searching for the website of the First Nation whose land you are occupying or Indigenous perspectives on the Treaty territory you hold responsibilities in.
- Go to your local library, in person or online, and search for reading lists of books written by Indigenous authors, and public events where Indigenous speakers may share knowledge. Consider joining or starting a book club featuring Indigenous authors.
- Read the TRC *Calls to action* https://nctr.ca/publications-and-reports/reports and review the progress implementing the TRC *Calls to action*: https://www.cbc.ca/newsinteractives/beyond-94. Consider where you can contribute based on your knowledge and relationships.
- Review some of the reconciliation resources that

CFSC has developed:

- Land acknowledgement guide https://QuakerService.ca/LandAcknowledgment
- Reconciliation queries https://QuakerService.ca/ReconciliationQueries
- Reconciliation video series https://QuakerService.ca/IndigenousVoices

Relationship building

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reminds us, repairing relationships is at the core of reconciliation. Consider how you might build relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

Perhaps there are learning experiences at the local Friendship Centre, First Peoples' Centre at a nearby university/college, or public events at the First Nation nearest you. These events are great places to meet people and connect. Repeated attendance is valuable as it demonstrates a willingness to engage in deeper ways than a single event. Colonialism maintains its power by reinforcing the barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Reconciliation aims to break these down.

Ideas:

- Search for Indigenous organizations and Nations that regularly host public events.
- Visit exhibits and events at Indigenous Cultural Centres, museums, art galleries, etc. and watch for Indigenous artists, curators, and community representation in national and provincial spaces.
- Attend a Kairos Blanket Exercise https://KairosCanada.org/what-we-do/indigenous-rights/blanket-exercise or Mapping the Ground We Stand On activity in your community https://AlongsideHope.org/mapping-exercise; or if interested in learning more about the American context, join a Towards Right Relationships event such as their Roots of Injustice Seeds of Change https://FriendsPeaceTeams.org/upcoming-events.
- Remember the following dates and look for local events where you can show solidarity:
  - May 5 is the National Awareness Day for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two Spirit, and LGBTQ+ people. (There are also commemorative events on February 14 and October 4 in many communities).
  - June is National Indigenous History Month, which brings with it many public events all across the country.
  - June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day, a day recognizing and celebrating the cultures and contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.
  - September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Many also refer to it as Orange Shirt Day in reference to the story of Phylis Jack Webstad, whose orange shirt was taken from her as a child in residential school.
- Support Indigenous authors, knowledge holders, and communities economically by purchasing books and resources, attending workshops, participating in fundraisers, and purchasing goods from Indigenous makers and vendors—this is a direct way to invest in Indigenous livelihoods and contribute to the reconciliation economy as you build respectful relationships.
- Research whether there is a treaty or agreement governing the lands on which you live, work, worship, and play. If so, when is the affiliated Treaties Recognition Day or Week? What events are commemorating and/or calling for accountability in relation to this treaty/agreement?
- Consider how you might introduce yourself in circles and workshops in respectful ways. (How might you frame your ancestry and relationships with land and First Peoples? If you are a settler, how much space do you want to take up in the circle?)

Providing individual and collective reparations

Maybe you've already developed relationships with Indigenous individuals or organizations nearby. Perhaps you are quite active in your reconciliation journey, participating in advocacy and activism alongside Indigenous Peoples. If so, this may be a good time to consider offering reparations either individually or with organizations you are involved in (Monthly Meetings or other Quaker bodies, workplaces, volunteer groups, etc.).

Providing reparations is often a process, as it requires conscious consideration of where reparations make sense. Your relationships with local Indigenous organizations and/or Nations may provide clear answers on where to begin.

For example, offering reparations to the People(s) on whose land your Meeting House sits is a tangible way to recognize the ways in which you've benefited from

your presence on that land. There is not one way to offer reparations, or one right Indigenous body to give these to. So much depends on the context of colonization and your individual or community's place-based relationships. If contemplating financial reparations, 1% of annual income is a common baseline. However, Friends may wish to consider more than that amount.

Ideas:

- Carefully consider the examples in the section below and reflect on what may be relevant to your local context. Learning from the experiences of other local faith bodies or organizations might also be helpful.
- Reparations should not be framed as 'charitable donations'—they're a form of restitution for historic and ongoing harm. It is not appropriate to ask for feedback or reporting after the provision of reparations. Funds are intended to be spent how the recipient sees fit.
- If you do move forward with offering reparations, please reach out to CFSC with any questions and tell us about your experience.

Advocacy and activism

Deeper involvement, including advocacy and activism, is a great way of sustaining your commitment to reconciliation. As you continue to attend events and stay connected with local Indigenous organizations or Nations, look for opportunities where you can get involved more concretely. Are there any calls for volunteers for events? What are the political challenges local Indigenous Peoples are facing? Join a protest or write letters as part of an advocacy campaign as these opportunities become available. As mentioned earlier, the reconciliation journey is not linear. Finding opportunities to support Indigenous Peoples near you can unfold organically. Settlers need to keep an eye out for these opportunities, and to remember to center Indigenous voices and calls to action.

Ideas:

- Based on your knowledge and relationships, consider where you feel led contribute to the rights and policy issues important to Indigenous Peoples:
  - What are the Indigenous rights issues facing the First Peoples nearest you? How are these Peoples calling for allyship in addressing these rights?
  - What are the largest Indigenous rights challenges across Canada today? How are Indigenous leaders asking individuals/groups to get involved in support of these issues now?
  - Research and, if so led, consider joining local Land Back and water rights causes that are open to the public where you can show solidarity in a meaningful way.
- Follow the newsletters, social media pages, and events pages where local Nations and organizations post. Calls for letter writing, protest, and solidarity are often shared there.
- Discern your/your group's capacity to participate in different types of actions. Many of them require sustained commitment and unique gifts:
- If you like organizing, you might help to coordinate meetings, track calls to action, and share important information with like-minded partners.
- If you're more energized by working within the system you might write letters, meet with MPs, or write submissions to public consultations.
- If you enjoy being more rebellious, you may choose to join opportunities to stand with Indigenous partners on the front lines of protests and other actions, honouring Indigenous leadership.
- Not sure where to start? We also have resources to help Friends engage in any type of advocacy. This short pamphlet https://QuakerService.ca/BeingAQuakerBeingAnActivist explores what it means to be a Quaker activist. It offers insights into historical and current challenges to Friendly activism, and how these have been overcome by Quakers in their work for justice and peace.


Reconciliation Queries for Friends

As Friends engage in the work of upholding Indigenous rights; actively pursuing the decolonization of Canadian society; and building practices of reconciliation, we are committed to grounding our actions in our spiritual practices, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and Principles of Reconciliation, and Quaker testimonies.

We honour the good work that Canadian Yearly Meeting[1] and Canadian Friends Service Committee[2] are undertaking on the path of Indigenous rights, decolonization, and reconciliation. In light of the legacies and continuity of colonization, this journey of listening, relationship-building, learning, and healing will continue for generations to come.

We offer a few queries for Friends. Overall, they ask:

How can we follow leadings of the Spirit, both individually and in our Meetings, to actively work towards the decolonization of Canada, recognition, promotion, and protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights, and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?

These queries are an invitation to challenge and inspire Friends individually and corporately as a faith body.

Queries

1. How am I learning about and building respectful relationships with Indigenous people in the communities in which I live, work, and/or worship? How am I building relationships of truth and understanding with non-Indigenous people in the communities in which I live, work, and/or worship?
2. What protocols or practices do we honour in our Monthly Meeting and collective gatherings to recognize Indigenous lands, waters, lifeways, and rights? How do we ensure these do not become tokenistic or rote over time?
3. How can we increase our awareness of the local history of colonization and reconciliation efforts in our faith community?
4. In what ways can I stand in solidarity with the current concerns and rights of Indigenous Peoples? What protocols and/or permissions may I need to seek in this process?
5. How do I relate to concepts of 'home' and 'belonging' in the context of settler colonialism?
6. Do my actions support Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty?
7. Am I doing my own work in educating myself about reconciliation and decolonization? Am I aware of my own areas of ignorance, bias, and discomfort? Reconciliation is work that settlers must do, being careful not to put the burden of this work onto Indigenous Peoples.
8. How are we doing our own work to decolonize and honour the rights of Indigenous Peoples as a faith community? How are we actively challenging the direct personal, structural, and cultural violence of settler colonialism where we encounter it? What does reconciliation require of us as Friends?

Have questions? Contact us at info@quakerservice.ca

To learn more about our peace and justice, click the link below.
QuakerService.ca/Reconciliation

1 See CYM Minutes on Truth and Reconciliation from 2015-08-03, 2016-08-30, and 2021-08-03.
2 See QuakerService.ca/Ressources for related CFSC resources.

Above: Reconciliation queries for Friends *is just one of the many resources available on the CFSC website to help Quakers take action on reconciliation.*

IV. Inspiration for the journey

The following are examples of reparations from faith communities that are "climbing the mountain." They represent a range of ways that individuals, Monthly Meetings, and other Quaker bodies (CYM, CFSC, Half-Yearly Meetings, Worship Groups, Camp NeeKauNis, etc.) can contribute to healing the harms of colonization in our communities.

Financial reparations

In light of the role that religious communities have played in residential and boarding schools across North America and a desire to genuinely contribute to reconciliation in tangible ways, faith groups are increasingly contemplating how to offer financial reparations to Indigenous Peoples harmed by colonization. Here are a few inspiring examples from Friends and beyond:

1. Winnipeg Monthly Meeting (WMM)

The first Monthly Meeting in Canada to embrace the payment of reparations was Winnipeg Monthly Meeting. In 2017, WMM's Peace and Social Action Committee formed a sub-committee to explore how to 'move from awareness and concern on reconciliation to concrete action.' The Meeting subsequently allocated 1% of annual donations to a Manitoba not-for-profit, Share the Gifts, Honour the Treaties https://HonourTheTreaties.ca. Through Indigenous oversight, these monies are distributed to First Nations in Manitoba Treaty territories or other areas chosen by Elders, where WMM gathers, on Treaty 1 Territory.

2. Sierra-Nevada Yearly Meeting and Alaska Friends Conference

In January 2024, Friends from Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting (SCYM) and Alaska Friends Conference (AFC) in the US provided $93,000 in financial reparations to Indigenous Alaskans. Quakers ran Boarding Schools in Kake Alaska from 1891-1912, and on Douglas Island from 1888-1902. In 2022, AFC formally apologized to Survivors and intergenerational Survivors for the harms they caused through the forced assimilation of Indigenous children at the schools. The funding has gone to support the establishment of an Indigenous Healing Centre in Kake.[14]



Above: *Friends visit Samson Cree Nation, 2016.*

3. Sterling Avenue Mennonite Church

Sterling Ave Mennonite Church in Waterloo, ON, made their first annual payment of $4,000 to Six Nations Polytechnic in July 2024.[15] This was the church's response to a covenant proposed by Elders from Six Nations of the Grand River between the Nations and the churches built on lands promised to the Nations in the Haldimand Proclamation.[16] As part of this process, the congregation added a line for Land justice to their annual budget, to honour their intent for this to become an ongoing commitment.[17] Dialogue between Six Nations leaders and other Mennonite churches in the Haldimand Tract continues about what reparative actions each congregation feels called to make on the path towards reconciliation. Mennonites were involved in the running of residential and day schools in Canada.

Land Back

Land Back is a grassroots Indigenous-led movement and rally cry built on generations of advocacy that may mean different things to different people. Literally, it calls for the return of Indigenous lands based on the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty, rights, and stewardship. Metaphorically, it also aims to address historical injustices from colonization, including the dispossession and/or forced relocation of Indigenous Peoples from their lands, and seeks Indigenous

self-determination over Indigenous territories and futures. It is not just about land, it is also about language, culture, and spiritual revitalization. Land Back does *not* mean that individual settlers are being asked to hand over the keys to their houses. Across Turtle Island, Land Back includes legal challenges and negotiations between Indigenous and settler governments. It can also include land purchases, stewardship and resource management agreements, and the *voluntary* return of lands to Indigenous Peoples from settler individuals and communities. Here are a couple examples from spiritual communities further south:

1. The Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe and Sierra Friends Center

In September 2024, Woolman at Sierra Friends Center/ College Park Friends Educational Association sold the 230-acre Camp in California to an Indigenous group that includes descendants of the area's original inhabitants. Huswej, a nonprofit directed by the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, raised over $2.5 million to purchase the property, including donations from many North American Friends.[18]

2. The Lac du Flambeau Band and Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

In October 2025, the Catholic group the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) sold the Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Centre in Wisconsin to the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe Nation. The price of the sale was $30,000—the same price the Sisters paid for the land in the 1960s, approximately 1% of its estimated value today. This land transfer was noted on the FSPA website as "an act of repair for colonization and residential boarding schools" [19] and lauded by the Tribal President John Johnson in an article by the Catholic News Agency as "an example of what true healing and partnership can look like."[20] This has been heralded as the first example of Catholics returning land to Indigenous Peoples.

In the Canadian context there is also a rapidly expanding collection of resources about and work towards Land Back, land rematriation, and the establishment of land trusts and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) with, for and by Indigenous Peoples.[21] The David Suzuki Foundation's *What is Land Back?* series (https://DavidSuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/what-is-land-back) offers a primer on how we can work together on this important issue.

Yet, it must also be acknowledged that for individuals and communities seeking to return land in Canada, there is still a complex colonial legal apparatus around land title that needs to be considered, and this can take time—even decades!

The *TVO* article *How to transfer your land to Indigenous Peoples* (https://www.tvo.org/article/how-to-transfer-your-land-to-indigenous-peoples) emphasizes both the opportunities and challenges of rematriating land and the importance of Indigenous leadership in deciding whether, when, and how lands could best be returned to their original stewards without creating an administrative or financial burden in the process.

If you/your Meeting is not in an immediate position to contemplate Land Back directly, you can also invest in work that contributes to Indigenous land access, stewardship, and return by donating to Indigenous place-based projects and organizations, such as:

- In Nova Scotia: Land Rematriation via https://www.tatacentre.ca/land-rematriation
- In Nova Scotia: Ulnooweg Education Centre via https://ulnoowegeducation.ca
- In Ontario: All Our Relations Land Trust via https://www.aorlt.ca
- In Ontario: the Wasanay Mnising Land Back Initiative via https://sicanada.org/2025/09/26/advancing-land-back-and-reconciliation-the-wasanay-mnising-rematriation-initiative
- In Ontario: an Indigenous Not-for-profit seeking a land-based arts studio complex via https://lodgepolearts.ca
- In the Prairies: Land Access and Land Sharing via https://treatylandsharingnetwork.ca
- In BC: Reciprocity payments to First Nations via https://reciprocitytrusts.ca
- On Vancouver Island: the Rematriate Stewardship Project of the XAXE TENEW Sacred Land Society via https://xaxe.ca/rematriate-stewardship

This list isn't exhaustive, and will expand and evolve over time. However, these Indigenous-led projects provide inspiration for what is possible in the realm of Land Back!

Investing in Indigenous livelihoods, languages, and lifeways

Another way Friends and Meetings may contribute

to reparations directly is through investing in the revitalization of Indigenous cultures and economies. Whether supporting the work of Indigenous artisans and entrepreneurs or donating a portion of your/your Meeting's annual income to projects or organizations that support the continuity of Indigenous languages and lifeways, we can contribute to Indigenous prosperity through partnerships that respect self-determination and enhance Indigenous social, environmental, and cultural wellbeing.

Maybe your Meeting House will commission art from a member of the Nation on whose territory you gather as a recognition of relationships. Perhaps a portion of your Monthly Meeting's income will go to an Indigenous organization serving urban Indigenous people in your community like a Friendship Centre or Indigenous women's shelter.

As opportunities vary significantly in each place, we offer one Friendly example that supports Indigenous cultural revitalization through micro-projects across Canada.

1. CFSC's Reconciliation Fund

The CFSC Reconciliation Fund was established in 2017 in response to an individual Friend's leading to contribute to reconciliation by donating a portion of his annual income to reconciliation initiatives. The purpose of the Fund is to support the grassroots, community-based efforts of Indigenous people in Canada who are working on cultural and language revitalization, and other projects such as Indigenous Peoples' human rights work.[24] The fund operates with an Indigenous Grant Advisory Committee, and provides grants of up to $2,500 for Indigenous individuals or groups.

Conclusion

We hope this resource has illustrated a range of possibilities for Friends to build respectful relationships with, pursue reconcili-action alongside, and offer reparations to Indigenous Peoples.

On the collective level, it is important that Monthly Meetings and Quaker bodies start movement towards reparations with internal work to discern who reparations should go to and what form(s) resources should take. Factors impacting these decisions and the process of coming to unity as a community about them will vary from Meeting to Meeting based on the history of colonization and context of current relationships with Indigenous communities in each setting. However, this work is foundational for reparative actions that do not cause further harm.

We are excited for all the ways Friends may be inspired to climb the mountain with Indigenous Peoples now. Our final advice to you on the journey is fourfold:

- The process of building relationships with the Indigenous Peoples/organizations that will receive reparations is as important as the outcome of remitting a percentage of annual income/paying rent/returning land. Indigenous governments and organizations often have many pressing demands on their time and resources, and may have limited availability despite your Meeting's desire to connect. Allowing relationships to evolve organically, honouring a People's communications protocols insofar as you understand them, and inviting the Indigenous parties to set the timelines for consultation demonstrates respect for the relationship and work together.
- Resources are best given without expectations (of forgiveness, healed relationships, trust, or a desire for deepening relationships) and with no strings attached. It is not for Friends to control how Indigenous Peoples use these financial resources or returned land, and this does not erase past harms.
- Land Back requires a significant commitment of time and resources and careful discernment within families/communities in partnership with Indigenous communities.
  - Consideration must be given to what form of transfer will work best for the Indigenous government/community based on the location of the land and what is in the best interests of the Nation/People. Indigenous leadership of this discernment is imperative!
  - It is also important to be mindful of what taxation and/or legal fees could accompany the land transfer process to prevent/minimize economic burdens to the Indigenous community in the transfer process this can take 5-15 years!
  - It is also possible to donate to Indigenous Land Trusts/Projects that are doing this work under the leadership of Indigenous Peoples
- Friends may wish to integrate cycles of review for reparations decisions to ensure that the relationships with Indigenous organizations and governments receiving reparations are active and covenants renewed. Just as we do not want land

acknowledgments to become rote, we do not want practices of restitution to merely become line items in a budget, but a reflection of our convictions and commitments to partnerships that heal the harms of colonization over time.

Notes

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future.* https://nctr.ca/publications-and-reports/reports, p.1

2. What do we mean by the "theft of lands" and "stolen lands"? As the TRC's *Final report* explains, "In some locations, Canada negotiated Treaties with First Nations; in others, the land was simply occupied or seized. The negotiation of Treaties, while seemingly honourable and legal, was often marked by fraud and coercion, and Canada was, and remains, slow to implement their provisions and intent" (p. 1). The history of genocide, broken treaties, and land seizures is also harrowing in the US. Sites like the Toward Right Relationship resource page offer more about this context: https://friendspeaceteams.org/trr/#trrresources

3. For more information see the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *Final reports* (2015); the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, https://BoardingSchoolHealing.org; Palmer, P. (Oct 1, 2016). "Quaker Indian boarding schools: facing our history and ourselves." *Friends Journal.* https://www.friendsjournal.org/quaker-indian-boarding-schools

4. For more information about American Friends grappling with this issue in the US, watch the presentation at Beacon Hill Friends House. (Apr 15, 2025). "Taking reparative actions for the harms of Quaker boarding schools." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpAtN6mcP9A

5. Legge, M. (2025). "Reparations and the hard work of reconciliation." *Quaker Concern.* https://QuakerConcern.ca/reparations-and-the-hard-work-of-reconciliation

6. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Canada). https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca; MMIWG (2019). *Calls for Justice.* https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls_for_Justice.pdf

7. *Final report*, p. 190.

8. Sutherland, J. (2005). *Worldview skills: Transforming conflict from the inside out.* Worldview Skills. p.25.

9. Sutherland, 2005, p.25.

10. "A White settler learns to be a bridge." *Anabaptist World.* https://anabaptistworld.org/a-white-settler-learns-to-be-a-bridge

11. Canada was one of only four countries that voted against the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.* In 2010 Canada changed its position to endorse. Canada later further endorsed the *Declaration* without condition in 2016.

12. "World plenary meeting epistle and weaving document." (Aug 12, 2024). Friends World Committee for Consultation. https://fwccemes.org/news/world-plenary-meeting-epistle-and-weaving-document

13. Tuck, E. and Fine, M. (2007). "Inner Angles: A range of ethical responses to/with Indigenous decolonizing theories" in *Decolonizing the Politics of Knowledge.* Denzin, N. and Giardina, M. eds. University of Chicago Press. pp 145-167.

14. Kunze, J. (Feb 5, 2024). "Quaker groups pays Alaska Native Village $93,000 in reparations for its part in forced assimilation." *Native News Online.* https://NativeNewsOnline.net/sovereignty/quaker-groups-pays-alaska-native-village-93-000-in-reparations-for-its-part-in-forced-assimilation

15. Brown, D. (Sep 29, 2024). "This Kitchener, Ont., church uses portion of its budget for Indigenous reparations for 'harm done'." *CBC.* https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/indigenous-reparations-kitchener-stirling-mennonite-church-1.7333661

16. The *Haldimand Proclamation* promised an area six miles deep on either side of the Grand River for the entire watershed to Six Nations for siding with the British during the American Revolution. https://TheCanadianEncyclopedia.ca/en/article/haldimand-proclamation

17. Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church (Jun, 2024). "Spiritual covenant with Six Nations." https://StirlingMennonite.com/SpiritualCovenant-21

18. For more information see Brinker, H. and Wood, N. (Aug 23, 2024). "A call to homeland return." *Friends Journal.* https://www.friendsjournal.org/a-call-to-homeland-return or the Huswej website: https://www.huswej.org/HomelandReturn

19. Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (Nov 11, 2025). "A historic act of restoration: FSPA returns Arbor Vitae property to Lac du Flambeau Tribe." https://www.fspa.org/news/a-historic-act-of-restoration-fspa-returns-arbor-vitae-property-to-lac-du-flambeau-tribe

20. Payne, D. *EWTN News* (Nov 7, 2025). "Religious sisters announce historic land return to Wisconsin Native American tribe." https://www.ewtnnews.com/world/us/religious-sisters-announce-historic-land-return-to-wisconsin-native-american-tribe

21. See Leora Gansworth, K. (May, 2024). "Land trusts and Indigenous Peoples: the Canadian context." https://IPCAKnowledgeBasket.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Land-Trusts_v06.pdf and "What are Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)? https://IPCAKnowledgeBasket.ca/faq-items/what-are-indigenous-protected-and-conserved-areas-ipcas

22. For a history of the Reconciliation Fund, see McQuail, T. (2019). "Why I support the CFSC Reconciliation Fund." *Quaker Concern.* https://QuakerConcern.ca/why-i-support-cfscs-reconciliation-fund



Happy climbing!

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