

The Intermountain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) united on the following minute during our annual gathering in June of 2014. Study of the issue began with workshops provided in 2012 and has continued through out our four states for two years.

## **Minute to Affirm the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Friends who reside in the Inter-Mountain region of the United States are aware that we occupy lands that were recognized by treaties as the territories of many Indigenous Nations and then taken from them. Consciously or unconsciously, non-Indigenous people benefit from historical and ongoing injustices committed against the Native peoples of this land. This benefit comes at great human cost to all of us, indigenous and non-indigenous, in the loss of opportunities to grow in transformative understanding from other cultures. We commit ourselves to humble self-reflection, as individuals and as a community of faith, to align our actions with the practice of right relationship among all peoples.

In order to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples founded in equity and justice, we affirm our support for implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 2007 and endorsed by President Obama in 2010. It affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples to exist as unique cultural groups and to exercise self-determination and self-government. It seeks to ensure that Indigenous Peoples collectively and individually enjoy all the human rights and fundamental freedoms recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law. It establishes standards for equitable political, legal and social policies that can assist Indigenous Peoples in combating discrimination, marginalization, and oppression.

Just as Quakers played a role in promoting passage of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we acknowledge that we must labor to implement it. We call on our government to make necessary changes in U.S. laws and policies so that rights of Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians are fully supported, in conformity with the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As Friends, we will endeavor to learn how we can support the rights of Indigenous Peoples and take conscious steps toward living in right relationship.

For centuries, European policies, principles and legal constructs, grounded in the ethic of conquest and colonization, have been used to justify oppression of Indigenous Peoples throughout the world and denial of inalienable rights, both individual and in national and community existence. These justifications for conquest, occupation and exploitation have the common feature that they violate principles of international law which European peoples and settler states have claimed for themselves, widely accepted Christian teaching and our Quaker testimonies of equality, peace, integrity, community and stewardship. Throughout the centuries and even today, Indigenous Peoples attribute many forms of discrimination to these racist doctrines and their expression in contemporary law and policy.

In solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and guided by the requests from representatives of leading Indigenous rights organizations, including, among others, the International Indian Treaty Council, the North American Indigenous Caucus, and the American Indian Law Alliance, and in concert with a growing number of religious organizations, Intermountain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends utterly rejects any legal doctrine which accords less than full human and communal rights to any of the world's peoples or their members. We urge our governments at every level of our federal system and all of the world's states to review their laws, regulations, and policies impacting Indigenous Peoples and to repeal laws, regulations, and policies that reflect ethnocentric, feudal, and religious prejudices. We accept our own responsibility to work to change the economic, social, cultural and educational structures of privilege and injustice rooted in the historical regimes of discovery, occupation and colonization. We welcome the opportunity, in appropriate settings and to the extent freely offered by people themselves, for learning from each other about world views and cultural perspectives of Indigenous communities and persons.

We ask our constituent monthly meetings and worship groups to each take at least one action during the next year to educate themselves about the history of colonization and its current effects in our country and area and/or to consult with Native Americans in their area to build relationships.