



Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society

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Lancaster Roots 300

www.LancasterRoots300.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Government and religious leaders to honor Native Americans

- Representatives from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Amish, Mennonite, Presbyterian and Quaker Church will acknowledge historic wrongs committed against Native people in Lancaster County
- Statements will be formally received by Native Americans and Native groups representing both historic Pennsylvania tribes and Native people who now call Lancaster County home
- Morning program at First Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, will be followed by multicultural celebration at 1719 Herr House, Willow Street, including site dedication for a replica Native American longhouse

Lancaster, Pennsylvania, September 23, 2010— Pennsylvania government officials and representatives from Lancaster County’s Amish, Mennonite and Presbyterian Church and Quaker Meeting will honor Native American cultures and recognize the historic wrongs committed against local Native people at a “Public Acknowledgment & Commemoration of the Native American Legacy” at First Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, on Saturday, October 9 at 10:00 AM.

Their statements will be formally received by a wide cross-section of local and regional Native Americans and Native groups representing the Haudenosaunee, Lenape, Shawnee, Susquehannock and other tribes who once lived in the area, as well as the Native people from other regions who now call Lancaster County home.

“This is a Lancaster County event on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the first European settlers arriving here,” said Bob Doe, chair of the planning committee that includes Native American and church groups. “It’s a first step toward understanding our shared history and beginning to set things right between Native people and European immigrants.”

According to a committee statement, First Nations people resonated with William Penn’s vision of Pennsylvania as a place of peace and sanctuary. But settlers broke treaties Penn made with local Native tribes and ignored Pennsylvania law when it applied to Native grievances. In two separate incidents in 1763, an immigrant militia from Paxton Township destroyed the last village of the Conestoga tribe and massacred its inhabitants. Over a century later, Native children were systematically removed from their families and sent to government boarding schools designed to erase Native American culture.

Christians, government and the military were complicit in these offenses, the statement continues.

“This acknowledgment is a chance for religious groups to say, ‘We should have done a better job,’” said MaryAnn Robins, a Native American committee member representing Circle Legacy Center, a Lancaster non-profit organization that supports and empowers indigenous people.

“We had the same problems—religious persecution and being denied the freedom to live in peace. These religious groups had no sympathy or regard for us; they ignored what was happening to our people,” Robins said.

Lloyd Hoover, representing the Mennonite Church on the committee, said, “We, as Europeans, basically annihilated the Susquehannocks who were here, and to the rest of the tribes we committed acts that scattered them across the nation. Any way that I connect to that past as a European and a Mennonite and a Christian, I ask for forgiveness.”

“If our forefathers heard what we were talking about here, they’d be dancing with joy,” said GrayWolf, an Apache man.

First Presbyterian Church is located at 140 East Orange Street, Lancaster. Admission is free, but tickets are required. Contact the 1719 Hans Herr House at (717) 464-4438 for tickets.

The morning program will be followed by a free and public “Multicultural Celebration” at the 1719 Hans Herr House in Willow Street from 1:00–5:00 PM, including dedication of the site of a replica Native American longhouse at 2:00 PM. The Hans Herr House is located at 1849 Hans Herr Drive, Willow Street.

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For additional information, please contact:

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Circle Legacy Center

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Victoria Valentine, Executive Director

Honor and Healing our First Nations' Peoples Campaign Upcoming Honor and Healing Events

Saturday, October 9th, 2010

"Public Acknowledgement and Commemoration of Native American Legacy", in conjunction with the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society's Roots 300 Celebration http://www.lmhs.org/Home/Get_Involved/Lancaster_Roots_300/

Mission Statement: "Bringing forth a new beginning and healing to our First Nations' Peoples by honoring their native cultures and by restoring William Penn's and Chief Tamenend's original vision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be a place of peace and sanctuary for all."

This event is to be a first step in establishing an authentic relationship with Native Americans residing in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and was initiated by the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society who partnered with Circle Legacy Center, Native Americans, Mennonites, Amish, Quakers, Presbyterians and Lancaster County residents. The Catholic Church has been asked to join also.

The morning ceremony "**Acknowledgement & Apology to Native Peoples**" event will occur at the First Presbyterian Church, 140 East Orange Street, Lancaster, PA., 10 am to 12 noon. A Statement of "Acknowledgement & Apology to Native Peoples" will be read and religious (Mennonite, Amish, Presbyterian and Quaker), local and state government and Native American representatives will respond. While event is free; because of limited seating space at the Church, advanced tickets must be obtained. If you are interested in attending this event, please contact Circle Legacy Center. In the afternoon, there will be a Multi-Cultural Celebration (Native American, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Quaker, Amish) at the Hans Herr House, 1849 Hans Herr Drive, Willow Street, PA, 17584; 1: 00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. At 2:00 p.m. is the dedication of the site where a Native American long house will be built. The event is free and open to the public. There will be multi-cultural music and dance, cultural & historical exhibits, and food vendors.

Sunday, October 10th, 2010

Honor and Healing our First Nations' Peoples Campaign Roundtable

This Roundtable is a closed door event (only 30 seats) – attended by invitation only. It will be held at Millersville University, Millersville, PA. This event will bring together those interested in implementing a national "Honor and Healing our First Nations' Peoples Campaign", including respected Native Americans to give some insight to U.S. federal Indian law and policy, disavowing the Doctrine of Discovery, and how this campaign can best benefit First Nations' People. We will also invite some church representatives who are interested in implementing their own regional Honor and Healing campaigns. The Roundtable is organized by Circle Legacy Center.

These Honor and Healing events are Post Parliament of the World's Religions Events. <http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm>

If you are interested in attending these upcoming events, please contact us!

Honor and Healing our First Nations' Peoples Campaign

www.circlelegacycenter.org/honorandhealing

The Circle Legacy Center has implemented an "Honor and Healing our First Nations' Peoples Campaign," by creating a network of primarily religious and educational institutions interested in rebalancing injustices of the past with the First Nations' Peoples.

Recently several churches have come forward publicly and disavowed the Christian Doctrine of Discovery which has been an important step in healing the collective trauma of Native Americans today. This doctrine gave Christian/Catholic Europeans the right to claim the lands of non-Christian peoples, and sanctioned the genocide, dehumanization, and domination of indigenous peoples in the "New World." This doctrine continues to have influence today, as it is embedded in U.S. law through Congress' assumption of plenary power over Indian nations. The United States government still uses this archaic doctrine to deny the rights of Native Americans.

There are several first steps that can be included in a national campaign that could have major implications for Native Americans, including advocating for the U.S. to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This declaration was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2007; it establishes a framework of standards for the survival, health, safety, dignity, and basic rights of the indigenous peoples of the world. A national campaign can advance this process and create an outreach to religious and educational institutions to educate them about the significance of these Indigenous Peoples' issues and how they can be a collective force for positive reform and healing.

Why is Honor and Healing Needed?

There has never been a formal honor and healing campaign in the U.S. as there has been in other parts of the colonized world (often called healing and reconciliation). There are many actions that could begin to heal the collective trauma that still negatively impacts Native Americans today as a result of a legacy of atrocities and a history of dominance in U.S. law and policy. Here in the U.S., First Nations' Peoples remain severely marginalized and continue to strive to revitalize their cultures and communities and maintain sovereignty often in the face of substandard living conditions, dire poverty, lack of employment, inferior educational facilities, inadequate health care, as well as exploitation of their spirituality and culture. These are some issues that prolong the collective trauma of the First Nations' Peoples. Many Native American youth feel a sense of hopelessness, isolation, and powerlessness. This is evident in the current tragic suicide epidemic among Native American youth. Honoring and Healing campaigns can create awareness of the challenges that Native people face, and educate about the many contributions that Indigenous people have made and will continue make to the world.

Despite the odds, Indigenous Peoples worldwide are a testimony to the resilience of their people and their ancestors to survive as a distinct and unique culture. It is time to honor the First Nations' Peoples and their many gifts to the circle of humanity, and begin to heal and bring balance to the profound neglect on the part of our society. In order to move forward as brothers and sisters with mutual respect and dignity, and to begin the healing, there must be an acknowledgement of the genocide and the profound loss of life, homeland, and liberty that Indigenous Peoples have suffered.

If you are interested in joining this Campaign, please contact us!