



# IAQ : Indigenous Affairs Quarterly

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## An Update from the Baltimore Yearly Meeting IA Committee

*Greetings! If you are receiving this Quarterly as the contact for your monthly meeting or committee, the Indigenous Affairs hopes that you will **distribute it to the entire meeting or committee** so that everyone has a chance to keep up with current issues and discover new resources. Thank you!*

### **In the News**

The Navajo Nation National Office's *Waashindoon Weekly* (June 10) notes that "this year marks the centennial of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, which gave citizenship to 'all non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States.' When this act was established, over a third of Native Americans weren't considered citizens in the United States. In fact, prior to the Act, the only way for most Native Americans to become a citizen was through enlistment in the armed forces or land allotment." However, the *Weekly* goes on to observe that "despite it being a constitutional right of all citizens, Indigenous communities continue to face challenges that prevent them from voting. Advocates are actively fighting to remove these barriers so future generations can exercise their right to vote without issue."

Lisa Goree took the helm of the Shinnecock Nation in April, as the Long Island tribe elected its first female tribal leader since 1792. According to the *New York Times*, female Native American chiefs are not rare. The Shinnecocks had female tribal leaders until that date, when – no doubt under the influence of patriarchal white colonists – they adopted an all-male governing structure. The *Times* reports that the new Chief's supporters are "touting her election as a return to [the tribe's] matriarchal leadership roots and a departure from centuries of male leadership sometimes marked by internal division and antagonism with local, state and federal government officials."

### **What We're Learning**

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholic church issued its "Doctrine of Discovery," a policy that proclaimed the right of Christian nations to take possession of the lands of non-Christians in the interest of saving their souls. Non-Christians were not recognized as legitimate landowners, and any lands "discovered" by Christian explorers were claimed as the property of the discoverers' nation. This pernicious Doctrine was recognized as legitimate by the United States Supreme Court in 1823 and has become deeply embedded in U.S. law, diminishing the right of self-government by native Tribes and justifying seizure of their land. The Vatican released a statement rejecting the Doctrine in 2023, and some religion groups (including Baltimore Yearly Meeting) have done the same. However, the best approach to removing the doctrine as a

legitimate precedent for future decisions (let alone repairing a fraction of the damage done under its supposed authority) is far from clear, despite a growing interest in doing so.

## **Resources**

The National Museum of the American Indian has developed a [website](#) chock-full of educational materials to help us all learn. The 360 degrees Education Initiative offers lessons and resources for teachers, workshops, webinars, and teach-ins. Check it out!

## **Special Events**

Every year, the Smithsonian Institution puts on a Folklife Festival on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The family-friendly festival features demonstrations, workshops, performance, crafts, and cooking. This year, the dates are June 26-July 1 and the focus is on a celebration of the National Museum of the American Indian. “Indigenous artists and makers, professional chefs and home cooks, musicians, dancers, athletes, and storytellers will demonstrate the depth of multigenerational traditions as well as new, innovative approaches to cultural expression.” Check out the festival [website](#) and come if you can! It’s a rare chance to learn from indigenous people about their present lives and their heritage.

## **Opportunities to Partner**

The BYM Indigenous Affairs Committee requested at June's Interim Meeting that \$10,000 be made available from the BYM budget to the Pawnee Nation to ameliorate the harm caused by BYM personnel who insisted that Native children in their Day school must speak only English, thereby denying them access to their heritage and culture.

This proposal will be discussed in greater detail at Annual Session. It is already supported by the BYM Reparations Action Working Group (RAWG) as a way of making restitution for the actions of our predecessors who, even if their intentions were good, were responsible for a generation of children being alienated from their families and their culture, causing trauma that remains today.

In last quarter’s IAQ, we reported that the Nisenan Tribe plans to purchase 232 acres of land that once belonged to their tribe and was in Quaker hands (the site of the Woolman School). We are joyful to report that in 12 weeks enough money was donated for the land purchase price. However, donations are still needed. You can find the [Homeland Return Fund](#) here!