Quakers Reading

Background:

In 1681, William Penn transformed his debt from the English crown into a colonial charter for what would become the colony of Pennsylvania. A recently converted Quaker, Penn established the colony as a haven for members of this religious sect. What had started out as a refuge for Quakers, however, soon became a settlement for a diverse group seeking opportunity and tolerance in a new world. In addition to the lure of [cheap] land and the promise of religious freedom, Penn had to find other inducements (incentives) to populate his new colony. He wrote several letters back to friends in Europe, some of which ended up being published. These letters served as promotions for his new colony in America.

Penn had converted to the Society of Friends or Quakers, a religious group who rejected worldly and spiritual hierarchies, believing that all men and women share an “inner light”. The Quakers were given their nickname due to the violent ‘shaking’ that would occur when the spirit would move them; hence they would visibly ‘shake’ due to the spirit. [William Penn] turned an old debt...from the king, due to his father... into a charter for the proprietary colony called “Pennsylvania” (all the land between New Jersey and Maryland); [the] “...holy experiment” in brotherly love [was] a contrast to the Puritan concept of [John Winthrop’s] “City on a Hill”. Penn’s tract of land consisted of 45,000 square miles of land, an area almost as large as England itself. King Charles named the new colony, “Penn’s woods” in honor of the admiral. Penn called the capital city Philadelphia, meaning the “City of Brotherly Love,” to reflect his desire that his colony serve as a haven for Quakers and other oppressed Christians seeking religious freedom. Penn took great pains in setting up his colony; twenty drafts survive of his First Frame of Government, the colony’s 1682 constitution. Penn was determined to deal fairly and maintain friendly relations with the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians. He carefully planned the city of Philadelphia as well as organized other settlements and established the Free Society of Traders to control commerce with England.

From the mouth of Penn

“...I know what is said by the several admirers of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, which are the rule of one, a few, and many, and are the three common ideas of government, when men discourse on the subject. But I chuse [choose] to solve the controversy with this small distinction, and it belongs to all three: Any government is free to the people under it (whatever be the frame) where the laws rule, and the people are a party to those laws, and more than this is tyranny, oligarchy, or confusion.”

“...I, the said William Penn, have declared, granted, and confirmed, and by these presents, for me, my heirs and assigns, do declare, grant, and confirm unto all the freemen, planters and adventurers of, in and to the said province, these liberties, franchises, and properties, to be held, enjoyed and kept by the freemen, planters, and inhabitants of the said province of Pensilvania [Pennsylvania] for ever.”

Native Americans and Women in Pennsylvania:

Penn remained true...to his Quaker principles in his dealings with Native Americans [...]. Believing that all men should be treated with dignity, his fair-handed dealings with the Lenape and Native Americans in neighboring territories cemented decades of peace for Pennsylvanians. Benjamin West’s famous painting of Penn’s treaty with the Lenape, while containing historical inaccuracies, conveyed the sense of trust that existed between the Quakers and their new neighbors. Quakers were pacifists, who opposed war and violence. Determined to interact honestly and with goodwill towards Native Americans, Penn, albeit misguided at times, established a tradition of respect for humanity of Native Americans that would continue long after his death in 1718. In the last half of the eighteenth century, a number of Indian tribes requested that Quakers act as their advisors at treaty negotiations. With regard to women, Quakers believed that women were spiritually equal to men and therefore were active in the ministry of the colony.
Quakers Primary Source (or Enrichment) Documentation

Letter from Penn – 17th Century (more accurate account of Native Americans – Delaware)

***Read through letter and discuss Penn’s observation of the Indians*** (letter with additional information at the end of document)

For the letter, focus on the aspects that concerns Penn’s initial observations of the Native Americans → (1) how does he describe them? (2) As we progress through the documents, how do the accounts of Native Americans change and differ from the original letter’s observations (on-going discussion – comparison and changes over time)? (3) How does this differ from other colonial accounts? (4) What impact will the Quaker’s religious tolerance have on Native American/Colonial relations?

Native-European Contact Primary Reading

**Excerpt, Letter From William Penn to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders, 1683**

*Seeking to populate his new colony, William Penn published accounts of life in Pennsylvania aimed at encouraging immigration and settlement. These pamphlets were published in several European languages and provided detailed descriptions of the land, people, flora, and fauna of the new world. This section of the pamphlet describes the appearance and lifeways of the Lenni Lenape, or Delawares.*

XI. The Natives I shall consider in their Persons, Language, Manners, Religion and Government, with my sense of their Original. For their Persons, they are generally tall, straight, well-built, and of singular Proportion; they tread strong and clever, and mostly walk with a lofty Chin: Of Complexion, Black, but by design, as the Gypsies in England: They grease themselves with Bears-fat clarified, and using no defence against Sun or Weather, their skins must needs be swarthy; Their Eye is little and black, not unlike a straighy-looking Jew: The thick Lip and flat Nose, so frequent with the East-Indians and Blacks, are not common to them; for I have seen as comely European-like faces among them of both, as on your side the Sea; and truly an Italian Complexion hath not much more of the White, and the Noses of several of them have as much of the Roman.

XV. Their Houses are Mats, or Barks of Trees set on Poles, in the fashion of an English Barn, but out of the power of the Winds, for they are hardly higher than a Man; they lie on Reeds or Grass. In Travel they lodge in the Woods about a great Fire, with the Mantle of Duffills they wear by day, wrapt about them, and a few Boughs stuck round them.

XVI. Their Diet is Maze, or Indian Corn, divers ways prepared: sometimes Roasted in the Ashes, sometimes beaten and Boyled with Water, which they call Homine; they also make Cakes, not unpleasant to eat: They have likewise several sorts of Beans and Pease that are good Nourishment; and the Woods and Rivers are their Larder.

XIX. But in Liberality they excell, nothing is too good for their friend; give them a fine Gun, Coat or other thing, it may pass twenty hands, before it sticks; light of Heart, strong Affections, but so spent; the most merry Creatures that live, Feast, and Dance perpetually; they never have much, nor want much: Wealth circulateth like the Blood, all parts partake; and though none shall want another hath, yet exact Observers of Property... They care little, because they want but little; and the Reason is, a little contents them: In this they are sufficiently revenged on us; If they are ignorant of our Pleasures, they are also free from our Pains. They are not disquieted with Bills of Lading and Exchange, nor perplexed with Chancery-Suits and Exchequer-Reckonings... Since the European came into these parts, they are grown great lovers of strong Liquors, Rum especially, and for it, exchange the richest of their Skins and Furs: If they are heated with Liquors, they are restless till they have enough to sleep; that is their cry, Some more, and I will go to sleep; but when Drunk, one of the most wretched Spectacles in the world.

(***may want to omit parts of XXI → teacher preference***)


XXI. These poor People are under a dark Night in things relating to Religion, to be sure, the Tradition of it; yet they believe a God and Immortality, without the help of Metaphysick; for they say, There is a great King that made them, who dwells in a glorious Country to the Southward of them, and that the Souls of the good shall go thither, where they shall live again. Their Sacrifice is their first Fruits; the first and fattest Buck they can kill, goeth to the fire, where he is all burnt with a Mournful Ditty of him that performeth the Ceremony, both with such marvellous Fervency and Labour of Body that he will even sweat to a foam. The other part is their Cantico, performed by round-Dances, sometimes Words, sometimes Songs, then Shouts, two being in the middle that begin, and by Singing and Drumming on a Board direct the Chorus: Their Postures in the Dance are very Antick and differing, but all keep measure. This is done with equal Earnestness and Labour, but great appearance of Joy. In the Fall, when the Corn cometh in, they begin to feast one another; there have been two great Festivals already, to which all come that will: I was at one my self; their Entertainment was a green Seat by a Spring, under some shady Trees, and twenty Bucks with hot Cakes of new Corn, both Wheat and Beans, which they make up in a square form, in the leaves of the Stem, and bake them in the Ashes: And after that they fell to Dance, But they that go, must carry a small Present in their Money, it may be six Pence, which is made of the Bone of a Fish; the black is with them as Gold, the white, Silver; they call it all Wampum.

XXV. We have agreed, that in all Differences between us, Six of each side shall end the matter: Don’t abuse them, but let them have Justice, and you win them: The worst is, that they are the worse for the Christians, who have propagated their Vices, and yielded them Tradition for ill, and not for good things. But as low an Ebb as they are at, and as glorious as their Condition looks, the Christians have not out-lv’d their sight with all their Pretensions to an higher Manifestation: What good then might not a good People graft, where there is so distinct a Knowledge left between Good and Evil? I beseech God to incline the Hearts of all that come into these parts, to out-live the Knowledge of the Natives, but a fxt obedience to their greater Knowledge of the Will of God, for it were miserable indeed for us to fall under the just censure of the poor Indian Conscience, while we make profession of things so far transcending.

Letter From William Penn to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders (2)
Duval Painting – 19th Century (image below)

- How is Penn portrayed(depicted in this painting? How does it differ from the previous images? Significance?
- How are the Native Americans portrayed? How does this differ from the previous images?
William Penn – 20th Century

- How is Penn depicted in this 20th century painting? How does this differ from the previous images? What does this depiction say about Penn’s importance in the colony?

- How are the Native Americans portrayed? How does this differ from the previous images? What is the significance of this depiction?
The Air is Sweet and Clear, the Heavens Serene, like the South Parts of France*: William Penn Advertises for Colonists for Pennsylvania, 1683.

by William Penn

William Penn, a well placed English gentlemen and a Quaker, turned an old debt into a charter for the proprietary colony called "Pennsylvania," (all the land between New Jersey and Maryland) Penn took great pains in setting up his colony; twenty drafts survive of his First Frame of Government, the colony’s 1682 constitution. Penn was determined to deal fairly and maintain friendly relations with the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians. He laid out in great detail the city of Philadelphia as well as organized other settlements and established the Free Society of Traders to control commerce with England. He sent back glowing accounts of the colony to his English friends and patrons. This Letter to the Free Society of Traders, published in 1683, has been recognized as the most effective of his promotional tracts. And it proved successful; by 1700 Pennsylvania’s population reached 21,000.

For the Province, the general condition of it, take as follows:

I. The country itself in its soil, air, water, seasons, and produce, both natural and artificial, is not to be despised. The land contains divers sorts of earth, as sand, yellow and black, poor and rich; also gravel, both loamy and dusty; and in some places a fast fat earth, like to our best vales in England, especially by inland brooks and rivers. God in His wisdom having ordered it so, that the advantages of the country are divided, the back lands being generally three to one richer than those that lie by navigable waters. We have much of another soil, and that is a black hazel mold upon a stony or rocky bottom.

V. The natural produce of the country, of vegetables, is trees, fruits, plants, flowers.

VI. The artificial produce of the country is wheat, barley, oats, rye, peas, beans, squashes, pumpkins, watermelons, muskmelons, and all herbs and roots that our gardens in England usually bring forth.

XI. The NATIVES I shall consider in their persons, language, manners, religion, and government, with my sense of their original. For their persons, they are generally tall, straight, well built, and of singular proportion; they tread strong and clever, and mostly walk with a lofty chin. Of complexion black, but by design, as the gypsies in England. They grease themselves with bear's fat clarified, and using no defense against sun or weather, their skins must needs be swarthy. Their eye is little and black, not unlike a straight-looked Jew....

XIII. Of their customs and manners there is much to be said. I will begin with children. So soon as they are born they wash them in water, and while very young, and in cold weather to choose, they plunge them in the rivers to harden and embolden them....

XVII. If a European comes to see them, or calls for lodging at their house or wigwam, they give him the best place and first cut. If they come to visit us, they salute us with an iah, which is as much as to say "Good be to you," and set them down, which is mostly on the ground, close to their heels, their legs upright. [It] may be they speak not a word more, but ob serve all passages. If you give them anything to eat or drink, [that is] well, for they will not ask; and, be it little or much, if it be with kindness, they are well pleased, else they go away sullen, but say nothing....

XIX. But in liberality they excel; nothing is too good for their friend. Give them a fine gun, coat, or other thing, it may pass twenty hands before it sticks; light of heart, strong affections, but soon spent, the most merry creatures that live. [They] feast and dance perpetually; they never have much, nor want much. Wealth circulates like the blood, all parts partake; and though none shall want what another has, yet [they are] exact observers of property....

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good people graft, where there is so distinct a knowledge left between good and evil? I beseech God to incline the hearts of all
that come into these parts to outlive the knowledge of the natives, by a fixed obedience to their greater knowledge of the will of
God. For it were miserable indeed for us to fall under the just censure of the poor Indian conscience, while we make profession
of things so far transcending....

XXXI. ....And for the well government of the said counties, courts of justice are established in every county, with proper officers,
as justices, sheriffs, clerks, constables, etc.; which courts are held every two months. But to prevent lawsuits, there are three
peacemakers chosen by every county court, in the nature of common arbitrators, to hear and end differences betwixt man and
man. And spring and fall there is an orphan's court in each county, to inspect and regulate the affairs of orphans and widows....

Your kind cordial friend, William Penn