

## **Moving Forward Together – In A Good Way**

original manuscript

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### ***“Home”: An Introduction***

The place called Quaker Oaks Farm is our ‘home’ even though neither of us lives there. As you will see, it is a place where people can get to know one another. It is a place to hear stories of the far and recent pasts, a place to write different stories for the present and future. It is also a place where we, Darlene and Melissa, children of families from very different backgrounds, are creating new stories together. We are characters in the stories and we are authors; we don’t know how the stories will go when we start or how they’ll end, we just know that it is our job to be part of them. It is the story of how I, Darlene, daughter of Martha and Tony Tapleras, and my family came to have access once again to the land, to gather and hold our ceremonies and how we made new friends along the way. It is the story of how I, Melissa, daughter of Quakers Beth and Bill Lovett, volunteered to help my aging parents decide what to do with the land they no longer wanted to privately own and found a personal leading far beyond my expectations. It is the unfolding story of what happens when non-Native and Native people together are willing to take the risk to engage with the uncomfortable conundrum of how to find a good way forward given all the historical and continuing injustices and of how native peoples, settlers’ descendants and newer immigrants might co-exist in true harmony.

Quaker Oaks Farm sits in the southern part of California’s Central Valley, a mostly-rural, mostly-poor and mostly-agricultural area, on 25 acres outside of the small city of Visalia. Adjacent to a 322 acre property known as Kaweah Oaks Preserve, in the shadow of the Sierra Nevada and within about 30 miles of the now-dry Tulare Lake (which was drained for agriculture by 19th- and 20th-century settlers and whose four contributing rivers were dammed), this place is also “*T'a Pa'an*,” that Land, a piece of the ancestral homeland of the Wukchumni Tribe.

Friends William and Elizabeth Lovett, known as “Bill and Beth,” moved to Visalia in 1966 when Bill began working with Self-Help Enterprises, a community development organization whose mission is “to work together with low-income families to build and sustain healthy homes and communities.” In 1979, Bill and Beth bought the land and named it after the giant Valley Oak near the new house they built. In 1984, their friend Martha Tapleras told them that the land was part of what had been a gathering place and village for her people, the Wukchumni. She asked permission for her family to use the land for ceremonies, and Bill and Beth happily agreed.

Others were also welcomed. Around 20 years ago a group of Mixtec immigrants, native people from Oaxaca, Mexico, were looking for land for a community garden. Bill and Beth

provided space, and the Mixtec garden continues to flourish today. Two acres were deeded to Visalia Friends Meeting to build a meeting house in 1991, and Unitarians and Seventh Day Adventists also now use it for worship. Others have come and gone. Quaker Oaks Farm has been a place where people of different faiths and backgrounds have come together to work on the land and create community.

Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM) was looking for a permanent site, and in 2001, the Lovetts offered their farm as a place a conference center could be built to accommodate PYM's annual session and be available for other groups year round. Dedicated Friends worked toward that vision for years until the Tulare County Planning Department made it clear the needed zoning change would not be forthcoming. Bill and Beth then decided to offer the land to Visalia Friends Meeting (VFM) to be a peace and environmental education center "where good things happen." VFM was concerned that the land would be too much for their small meeting to manage and would not accept the gift until a plan was in place that assured both physical and financial sustainability. In 2007, the Quaker Oaks Farm 501(c)3 Nonprofit Corporation was created for that purpose, and in April 2015 the land finally transferred from private ownership to the stewardship of VFM; the deed was explicitly written to give Native Americans indigenous to the area access to the land, even if the land is transferred to another organization in the future.

An educational non-profit, Quaker Oaks Farm now operates as a sustainable working farm and gathering place to learn and share the lessons of peace, social justice and sustainable living. It is a place to learn about the natural environment *and what the land has to teach us*: small scale environmentally sustainable food production, community gardening, economic justice, conflict resolution, alternatives to violence, and Native American culture, history and life skills.

### ***"Healing from Intergenerational Trauma": Darlene's Story***

"Yokutch." This is a word in our language that means "People". All the tribes in Central California's San Joaquin Valley have been lumped together and referred to as "Yokuts." At one time, there were over 30 dialects spoken here. I descend from people who spoke the dialects of Wukchumni, Yowlumni, Tachi, Yaudunchi, Bankalachi, Gavia, Machahai and Waksachi. Our women are known for making beautiful, fine woven, intricately designed and useful baskets from this earth. Our men were great hunters and knew how to communicate with the Animal People. We migrated to the mountains in the summer heat and came back down to the valley for the cold winters. We lived in harmony and in rhythm with the land. We found our healing with plants and sacred sites in and around the land. My people have been caretakers of this land for a very long time. Our stories teach us about the time when the world was created and about the life of our people on this very land. I have been to the actual physical place of our creation, where all the "Damadamach" (Animal People) gathered to create human beings. Because of these teachings and actions, I am deeply rooted to this land.

In the 1700s the Catholic Missionaries started to build missions in California. It was a big disruption to the life of the indigenous people, animals and earth. Although the California Missions were established along the Pacific Coast, not only were our coastal relations affected, but many of our valley natives were also kidnapped and enslaved at the missions where the Spanish priests had taken them to be "saved." Life at a Mission was so foreign to our people. Confusion set in. They did not understand the Catholic religion forced upon them and they were brutally intimidated and treated like slaves to build the missions. Diseases were introduced and although many ran away, many, many more, lost their lives at these missions. I believe this was the onset of our "Intergenerational Trauma" ... And we are still dealing with it today.

In the 1800s, California became part of the United States. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe, the US promised Mexico that the California Natives would be taken care of. In the 1850s, treaties were signed by California tribes and the US Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) representatives. But the Gold Rush broke out and these 18 treaties were hidden and never ratified. They were uncovered in 1906, but by that time, many, many damages to our people had already happened. During that time, 1.5 million dollars was paid out by the State of California in bounty money for the scalps or severed heads of California Native people, who were in the way of the Gold Rush miners. Payments ranged from 25 cents to \$5. Another form of "Intergenerational Trauma" we are still dealing with today.

The US' motto in dealing with us was "Kill the Indian, Save the Man." This meant: If the Native ways were destroyed, they would "Kill" the Indian, but they would "Save" the physical Man by assimilation of our children. Boarding schools for Indian children were established throughout the country. Children were taken from their homes, hair was cut, uniforms enforced, beatings given for speaking our languages and physical and sexual abuse was rampant. For the majority, this was a terrible time in our history and yet another form of "Intergenerational Trauma" we are still dealing with today.

From the 1850s to the early 1900s, reservations and rancherias were established and families were moved from homelands to smaller areas and even mixed with other tribes. Under the Dawes Act, some native families received Indian Trust Land Allotments of 40-160 acres. Fences went up, other people moved in, and our hunting, gathering and sacred sites were no longer accessible to our people. Alcohol was introduced. Our cultural lives changed forever. More "Intergenerational Trauma" we are still dealing with today.

My tribe, the Wukchumni, does not have a reservation. We are not federally recognized as a tribe. However, my family members have BIA enrollment numbers. The BIA is a branch of the US Federal Government, and they recognize me as an individual but don't recognize my tribe. It doesn't really make sense. Many of our people have identity issues. But this was all in the overall assimilation plan: "Intergenerational Trauma" that we are still dealing with today.

In the 1930s, my grandpa, Alex Wilcox, was forced to change the way he provided for his family. No longer was he allowed to hunt freely. He was forced to take jobs working on

ranches and farms. In a sense, this change tore at his masculinity and how he was raised. He lived away from his family for work and returned home on his days off. He, like many others, became an alcoholic. The tragedies and changes in lifestyles consumed him. I loved and respected my grandpa, but I know now that he became an alcoholic, a “drunk,” and it killed him. Another form of “Intergenerational Trauma” and unfortunately, we are still dealing with it today.

My mom, Martha Wilcox Tapleras, was born in 1928. She was the eldest daughter of Alex and Beatrice Francisco Wilcox (Arancis), my grandma. During the depression, and because my Grandpa Alex could no longer provide enough to feed his family, as a 10 year old, my mom went to Indian boarding school in Carson City, NV and Sherman Institute in Riverside, CA. I grew up knowing that my mom had gone to Indian boarding schools, but she did not talk about it too much. It wasn’t until I was an adult that she found the courage to share about the atrocities that she dealt with at these awful schools. My mom is a survivor of the Boarding Schools, another form of “Intergenerational Trauma” that we must still deal with today.

In the 1940s, my mom and dad started their family and had eight children. My mom’s first language was Wukchumni and my dad’s first language was Filipino. They made sure we spoke English, graduated from high school and went to college. They wanted to help us fit in with the dominant society and improve our lives as compared to theirs. We were always taught to be proud of who we were and where we came from. I have many fond memories of spending time with my Grandma Bea. I used to help her gather and prepare her basket making materials. She used to talk to me in Yowlumni and tell me stories of our people. I felt so connected to my ancestors, and I craved to have ceremonies and to know more about my people. But my parents were trying to protect us and better our lives, and I was not given the ceremonies of my mom and grandma’s generations. And for that, I missed out. This is “Intergenerational Trauma” I am still dealing with today.

The spring of 1984 was a very exciting and challenging time of my life. I was preparing to give birth to the first of my three children. As many new parents do, my husband, Lalo, and I were busy arranging our lives to be the best possible parents we could be. What could we do to make this child’s world better than ours? We were asked, “Are you hoping for a boy or a girl?” “What will you name him/her?” Our response to that last inquiry took many by surprise.

We had already decided that we would bring back a tradition of my Wukchumni people where the maternal grandmother receives and names the babies. When it was confirmed that I was pregnant, we presented gifts to my mom and asked if she would honor us and our baby by blessing him his “*hoyowish*” (name). The moment was priceless and endearing. She was honored, elated, tearful and grateful. It brought back so many memories of her younger life and the adoring relationship she had with her own grandparents. Of course she accepted the gifts and the honor of bringing this tradition back to our people. The world around us was changing, and my mom was now more confident to help us revive our native customs. She knew this was the key to our survival.

We knew that his name would be in our Wukchumni language; we also knew that we would need to be patient and wait for the time when his grandma was ready to have ceremony. We were reversing time and reviving our cultural ways. Many people were not ready for it! The hospital wanted a name for the birth certificate. Others wanted to know what he would be called when he went to school. What if people couldn't pronounce his name? What if it wasn't a good name? and on and on....

Well, we had his naming ceremony when he was 2 weeks old. It was a beautiful and historic moment. He was named Lahoci Anthony Franco. Lahoci was the name of my mom's paternal grandpa. It translates to "Happiness." She also gave him an English name, after my dad, who was called Tony. These two men were very influential in my mom's life, and she was moved to give these names to our newborn son as an honoring to his ancestors, praying that their goodness would live within him.

This ceremony was held at Cutler Park in Visalia. It is a public park, near where my mom was born. Our elders and our ancestors welcomed to this world our son Lahoci. It was a very joyous occasion and a historic reversal for reviving our ceremonies. Before Lahoci was born, we were in search of places we could practice ceremonies. Many of our sacred sites were now "owned" by private landowners. There were places we were welcomed, but we always had to move out and be on our way as soon as a ceremony ended.

My mom had worked with Bill Lovett when my sister Susan's family built their Self-Help home. I had gone to school with Melissa, Bill and Beth's daughter, from 7th-12th grade. Not long after the Lovett family moved in, my mom, Susan, Lalo and I went to visit with the Lovetts. My mom told Bill that the preserve and the farm were part of an area she used to pass through as a child on her travels with her grandma and grandpa. She asked if we could resume ceremonies that used to be held on that Land, "T'a Pa'an." The Lovetts welcomed us. After Lahoci was born, Grandma Jennie Franco and Uncle Johnny came the 50 miles down from Tule River Reservation to help us get started with our ceremonies. We started small with about 10-15 participants and over the years have grown to often having between 100 and 200 people joining in. Our Wukchumni people continue to gather and hold ceremonies each Spring and Fall. We welcome all who wish to celebrate with us.

When Bill and Beth were deciding what to do with the land and the Visalia Friends were reluctant to accept this gift, our Tribe expressed our interest in becoming the legal owners. Our tribe has no land base and our tribal members are scattered throughout Tulare and Fresno counties. Although we have had access to use the land for over 30 years, we were fearful that once Bill and Beth no longer owned the property, our relationship would change.

The Visalia Friends gave us the opportunity to share and participate in the Quaker threshing process. This was a very educational and emotional process for our tribal people. We were surprised, enlightened and uplifted to see so many people work together and come to consensus, as our people once did. It was refreshing not to see the "greed" that is so dominant in today's society. How many organizations or people would just quickly jump

on this opportunity and accept a generous gift of precious land? Not the Visalia Friends, we soon learned. No, this decision was not a hasty one, there was much discussion and understanding to be made. Through this process, we got to know each other better, and we learned about our relationships to this land and our decision making processes.

The gift was finally accepted by the Visalia Friends this year. In the land transfer, it is written that our people shall continue to have access to use and take care of specific parts of the land. However, in the deed, it is specified that if the Visalia Friends can no longer carry out the specifications of the gift, the land would be transferred to the Sequoia Riverlands Trust (which manages Kaweah Oaks Preserve). We were disappointed that we were not named as the successor. We went through this process with the Visalia Friends and have confidence that they understand our connection to this land. It is scary to think of what could happen, should new owners take over. But, as history shows, we are survivors of historical trauma, and we will endure.

Although our people have survived multiple attempts of genocide and had horrendous atrocities inflicted upon us, we continue to live life in a good way. As our creation stories teach us, we were put here to be caretakers of this "*Pa'an*." We have that connection, right here. We pray for All our Relations, "*K' umoi Mai'ihn Yo' kutch*," human and animal people, our world, water, fire, air and earth. We may not be perfect, but we strive to do things "In A Good Way."

Our people are greatly honored to have the Lovett family open their arms and support our cultural revitalization. Because they found it in their hearts to see the broader picture, we have formed a long lasting and endearing relationship with them and the Visalia Friends. Bill has often told me, "I don't believe in owning the land, I believe the land owns us." On behalf of my mom and my people, I say to the Lovett family, "*Na enesha min kho hin*." I am wishing good things for you always.

### ***"Awakening": Melissa's Story***

The temperature began to climb as hot rocks were brought into the sweat lodge we had helped to build earlier that day. It was the spring new year ceremonies this April, and Lahoci, our sweat leader, told stories of the origin of the Wukchumni People and explained the process as we settled in anticipation. Before closing the flap and sending us into darkness, he asked how many were sweating for the first time. About half the group of almost 20 raised their hands. Native and Quaker together, we joined our voices in song and prayer for ourselves, the people, the land, the animals and universe. Feeling cool Mother Earth under me, breathing the hot moist air, and praying for healing for myself and the planet, I awoke to the significance and power of the work I am honored to be a part of.

It did not start out that way. For years I did not understand the importance of this place. I moved away around 1980 shortly after my parents, Bill and Beth Lovett, bought the land. It was their retirement project. Always hard workers, they poured their energy into building

a home and creating beautiful gardens around it. Part of the property was riparian oak woodland and another part was wetland. They loved the natural spaces as well as the cultivated. Organically grown produce, walnuts, sheep and cut-your-own Christmas trees were cultivated over the years.

In time my sisters and I made homes far away. Every year we would gather at the Farm at Easter and Thanksgiving to enjoy time with family. My children and their cousins loved the Farm and would be off on adventures the entire visit. We knew the "Indians" were also meeting on the land those weekends, but our paths seldom crossed. We respectfully stayed clear of the space they used for their sweat lodge. Occasionally, an encounter led to a casual invitation to join them. I considered it but didn't go, partly because time with family was limited, but honestly it was a little scary to step into their world. I did not know what to expect, was not sure how I would be welcomed and was fearful I might offend in some unknown way. It felt much safer to keep a respectful distance. We were all using the land, but we did not really know one another.

The Farm is a testament to my parents' Quaker values. Their lives were spent in service to others, working for peace and social justice and living in harmony with the land. What would happen to the land when they were gone? We loved to visit, but none of the Lovett children wanted to live there again. Bill and Beth believed the well established organizational and decision-making structure of Quakers would provide the best chance for a stable organization that could carry their vision forward. They understood the importance of the land to the Wukchumni People and wanted to ensure continued access but felt the land should not belong to any one group. They saw so much good work still to be done to address inequities and environmental degradation in the Valley. They believed Quakers, with their long history of inclusion and service to others, would ensure the property continued to serve many.

Despite the good work of many dedicated people, still in 2012 progress toward a viable plan for the land seemed to be at a standstill. My parents were aging, and my father's memory was failing. If their dream for this land were to become a reality in their lifetime, it needed to happen soon. Somewhat reluctantly, I offered to serve on the Board of Directors of Quaker Oaks Farm. For me this was one thing I could do to help my parents, one final attempt to get a plan in place and the land transferred to Visalia Friends. I told myself I would give it three years: if we could not make it happen in that time, the family would look for another option.

Through this work, I reunited with my old friend and now fellow board member, Darlene Franco. As our work progressed, Darlene began to share the story of her people, their ancient ties to the land and the importance of having access to the land for ceremonies and revitalization of traditions and language. I began to see the land as a vital component of the cultural survival of my friend and her people.

In my quest to understand, I started reading more about the history of California's indigenous people. The benevolent picture I (and even my own children, decades later) had

been taught in 4<sup>th</sup> grade California history lessons was strikingly different from the stories of enslavement and oppression told by California Natives themselves and other more honest historians. I had never before heard of the lost treaties of 1850 and the atrocities during the Gold Rush. I was not aware of the Quaker role in the Indian Boarding Schools. Walter Echo-Hawk's book, In the Light of Justice provides some perspective on the devastation:

*"In 1492 at least five million American Indians inhabited the land now comprising the United States. By 1900 only 250,000 were left alive. ....The human race has experienced staggering die-offs due to calamity and genocide....Rwanda suffered a sudden death toll in 1994 due to genocide when 11 percent of the population was killed and only 29 percent of the Tutsi population survived... In Europe only 37 percent of the Jewish population survived the Holocaust. As terrifying as those numbers are, only 5 percent of the American Indians survived to 1900.... Acute human suffering of this nature and magnitude has a name. Social Science researchers describe the chronic aftereffects of severe trauma observed in human survivor populations as ... Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) ... The trauma that pervades the cataclysmic histories experienced by American Indian populations is deposited by intergenerational transfer of unresolved grief into the survivors' offspring."* (pp. 100-101, my emphasis)

As I learned more of the sad story of loss, my initial response was outrage at the injustice and brutality. I was amazed that the Native Americans I was working with did not meet me with anger and resentment, rather greeting me only with what felt like acceptance. To know the truth is the beginning of healing. We need to understand what happened and the continued effects on survivors today.

My experience at Quaker Oaks Farm has moved me deeply and awakened me to the importance of this land and the people who share it. We have started to break down barriers and are learning how to open the doors of friendship and understanding among all who come to Quaker Oaks Farm.

### ***"Moving Forward, Together": The Creation of the Spring Youth Camps***

One of the stories we have found ourselves riding, more than writing, is the newly created Spring Youth Service Learning Camp for teens we've now held twice. Formed in collaboration with the PYM Youth Programs Coordinating Committee, at first Melissa and the Friends on the planning committee envisioned a week modeled on other Friends Camps to bring Quaker youth to the Farm and get their input into its future, since by that time it was clear that the Farm would not become the new site for PYM annual session and the Lovetts still hoped for stronger involvement of PYM Friends on the land. The first camp was scheduled in 2013 for the week before Easter to coincide conveniently with the Visalia school district and other schools' spring breaks. That also happened to be the week of the Wukchumni Spring Ceremony, "Tihsha'a", and Darlene offered to include the campers.

During our planning process, the Tribe was also inspired to begin a cultural learning day camp for the younger Wukchumni children the same week. Instead of being the Quaker Camp the committee first envisioned, Way opened for the teen camp to bring together 4 Quaker, 3 Mixtec and 5 Wukchumni youth to learn about the land and each other. The campers were amazed by all the similarities in beliefs and practices of our cultures. Many participated in rebuilding the sweat lodge for the new year, a sweat, and the dancing and naming ceremonies.

For the 2015 camp, we were clear now that it should be multicultural and equally co-created and co-operated by the Wukchumni Tribe and Friends. We decided to focus on learning California Native American history, a history even many Native youth have not been taught, and on the living cultures of today. As a planning team we recognized that trauma and grief would need to be acknowledged and addressed. Darlene proposed using the Gathering of Native Americans (GONA) curriculum and asking for facilitation help from her friends at the Fresno American Indian Health Project (FAIHP). Fifteen Native and three Quaker teens came together with a staff of Native and [non-Native] Quaker adults. Eight tribes were represented (Wukchumni, Pomo, Tongva, Kumeyaay, Toho'ono Odom, Chukchansi, Yacqui, Mono), as the participants from FAIHP come from many tribes. We explored the essential questions present in the GONA curriculum within a framework of Belonging, Interdependence & Healing, Mastery and Generosity: *Who are we? What tore our world apart? What brings it back together? What is my gift to the world?*

We aimed to make an inclusive, healing camp structure to create sense of community and safety for sharing deeply. Healthy risk taking in the group such as volunteering to go first in a challenging activity or sharing something personal was recognized and celebrated, encouraging engagement and participation. Young people told their stories of family and personal loss, confusion and conflict, as well as the pride and healing they have experienced from connecting with their histories and cultures. Non-Native youth remarked how much more they had learned in a few days of camp than in all of their schooling and how they could see a part for themselves in the healing process. Humor and risk taking broke down barriers and created a sense of connection. The laughter and friendships formed needed no translation.

One particular highlight was our field trip to Kings Canyon National Park to see the Giant Sequoias. Evidence and memory of historic Native presence in what is now the park stood in contrast to the fact that many of these youth live within an hour of the park but were visiting for the first time. There in a group dominated in size by Native youth and adults, it seemed so odd that the park's interpretive materials mainly presented Natives and their relationship to this land only as a thing of the past. Singing an old song to the Ancestor Trees and walking among them felt so healing after having spent the previous day learning about past atrocities and ongoing challenges like alcohol abuse and landlessness.

Another highlight was rebuilding the Wukchumni sweat lodge again for this new year and participating in the sacred ceremony of sweating. Melissa was surprised by how many of the adult Native American facilitators from Fresno were among that number in the sweat

lodge that had never had the opportunity to experience a sweat, a central part of their cultural traditions. The Wukchumni generosity has opened this experience to both Native and non-Native, creating an extraordinary opportunity for other Native people who may have no place else to practice these ceremonies and traditions.

Again this year, the Tribe held a day camp for elementary age youth in parallel with the teen camp, this time explicitly inviting non-Native children and families. Thirty-five to forty young people came each day from the Tribe, Visalia Friends, the Mixtec gardening families and others in the area. There seems to be a hunger for this kind of land based cultural learning which provides a place for friendships, respect and understanding to grow. Based on these successes, the Farm's board is expanding its programming to offer some day-long workshops throughout the year. While the youth camps are only a part of the work of Quaker Oaks Farm, there seems to be something very important about including young people in this work, and we look forward to seeing how we are lead to proceed.

In some ways the GONA process is very similar to Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), a curriculum familiar to many Friends, even sharing some games in common. Together GONA and AVP might form a two-way entry into exploring the deep, challenging questions before us. We also saw that Quakers have something pretty special when it comes to ways of engaging youth in group process, leadership and decision making. We are excited by the possibilities for moving forward in ways that honor both Native and Quaker traditions and strengths.

### ***"In a Good Way": Reflection Questions from Melissa to Friends Everywhere***

I have learned so much over the past three years and recognize that, like layers of an onion, there is much more still to be revealed. Here are a few of the insights I have gained and questions for Friends as we think about how we relate to others.

- The Wukchumni people, the Lovett family, Quakers and Mixtec families all shared this land for years and yet remained largely unknown to each other. In what ways do we live that separate us from our neighbors? How could we get to know each other better?
- To know each other, all parties must be willing to share their personal experiences and wisdom as well as listen and learn from the other. I was struck by how welcoming and safe it felt when the Wukchumni explained what to expect when sweating. On the other hand, when we invited the Wukchumni to Quaker meeting, we offered little information to help them understand what we were doing or why. How could we minimize barriers and make it safe to take that scary first step toward understanding another group? How can we enter into another's world to learn from them? How can we make Quaker meeting accessible to those for whom it may seem foreign?
- Native people are often invisible in the U.S. settler society. Like Quakers, Natives are few in number and are often thought of only as romanticized images, people from

long ago who have little resemblance to the living, breathing people today. How can we unlearn stereotypes and learn to see each person as both an individual and a member of their culture(s) or tribe(s)?

- The traumas of past generations continue to impact people today in emotional, spiritual and other concrete ways, such as poverty, physical health and barriers to accessing many sorts of resources, places and opportunities. What barriers could we dismantle, and what bridges could we build? How can we address barriers such as financial constraints that limit who can participate in an experience? How can we respond sensitively to the impacts of substance use and abuse on individuals and groups?
- Reconnecting with our cultural heritages and histories can heal and provide a sense of identity. Creating a sense of tribe can bring new people into the fold and provide support for learning new skills and working together. Does my fear of vulnerability and of not knowing keep me from asking questions that will help me understand? How do we create a sense of belonging in diverse groups? How could learning more about my own heritage(s) help me connect with others?
- What can other faith and cultural traditions teach us about our place on the Earth and relation to other creatures? My experience in the sweat opened a new and visceral connection to the Earth for me. How could we harness this sort of experiential learning to increase understanding of the world and our places in it, together, “in a good way”?

*Darlene Franco (Chairwoman, Wukchumni Tribe) and Melissa Lovett-Adair (Central Coast Friends Meeting, PYM) first met in middle school in Visalia, CA. Now they serve together on the board of Quaker Oaks Farm nonprofit, conspiring to make the world a better place. For more information, please visit [QuakerOaksFarm.org](http://QuakerOaksFarm.org). They thank Alyssa Nelson (PYM Youth Programs Coordinator) for her editorial support in building their stories into an article.*