

1-13-1846

New Indian Territory in Oregon, &c., &c.  
Memorial of the Board of Managers of the  
American Indian Mission Association

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>

 Part of the [Indian and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

---

**Recommended Citation**

H.R. Doc. No. 73, 29th Cong., 1st Sess. (1846)

This House Document is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [darinfox@ou.edu](mailto:darinfox@ou.edu).

NEW INDIAN TERRITORY IN OREGON, &c., &c.

MEMORIAL

OF

THE BOARD OF MANAGERS

OF THE

AMERICAN INDIAN MISSION ASSOCIATION.

JANUARY 13, 1846.

Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

*The board of managers of the American Indian Mission Association, in the city of Louisville, and State of Kentucky, respectfully asks leave to present to the Congress of the United States, the following representations and requests:*

This association was organized in 1842, and was chartered by the legislature of Kentucky, in 1844. The objects of this association are solely of a benevolent character, as set forth in the second article of its constitution, as follows:

“The object of this association is the promotion of the spiritual and temporal interests of the aborigines of America, by the preaching of the gospel, and other religious instruction; by the establishment of schools, both male and female, from primary schools to those of the highest order, which the improving condition of the Indians may at any time require; and by promoting industry and civilization in general.”

The original inhabitants of America, doubtless, amounted to many millions, when first discovered by Europeans; and, although they are at present fewer by, perhaps, three-fourths of their original number, they are still supposed to amount to four or five millions in North America, including Mexico; and five or six millions in South America. Their lamentable decline, it is believed, has not occurred in consequence of any constitutional defect peculiar to the race—for, with such defect, they could not have increased from few to many, as they undoubtedly did prior to their acquaintance with white men. The inference, therefore, is irresistible, that the causes of their decline have emanated from their conquerors. These causes have been various, and too numerous to be stated in this place. Nevertheless, your memorialists believe that some favorable instances of improvement within the vast country inhabited by them, and within the period of our acquaintance with them, (which has been about three hundred and fifty years,) would have occurred had their circumstances been made such as to inspire them

with such hopes of prosperity as are necessary to awaken, or to keep alive, a spirit of improvement in any other people. Such hopes as these could not be indulged by the tribes near us, under the disabilities which had been fixed upon them, and by which they were excluded from participating in the privileges of other nations, from the possibility of uniting among themselves for mutual benefits, and from the right to a permanent residence.

The government having assigned to some fourteen or sixteen tribes, once resident east of the Mississippi, a country in the west, under promises that they should not be again disturbed, and where they might enjoy among themselves, and the tribes indigenous to that country, the advantages of law and other civil and religious institutions, the immigrant tribes (nine or ten of whom were, up to that time, tribes of *hunters*) have commenced a career of improvement surpassing any thing ever before known among the aboriginals. Your memorialists regard this measure of the government as the first step ever taken, by this or any other government, towards bringing into operation a feasible plan of Indian reform; and already the experiment has demonstrated that that waning race may be saved, and elevated to prosperity not inferior to their neighbors.

It is nevertheless perceived that existing efforts of benevolence, in behalf of the Indians, are inadequate to their wants—all other benevolent societies directing their attention chiefly to heathens in foreign lands; and hence this association has been organized specially for this purpose. But the affairs of the Indians within the territory of the United States being, in all points of importance in the case, under the management of the government, the association cannot carry out its benevolent designs without the favorable action of the government; and hence this appeal, respectfully, to your honorable body. They respectfully pray:

1st. That Congress will carry out the design which led to the settlement of the fourteen or sixteen tribes before mentioned, west of the States of Missouri and Arkansas.

Your memorialists would respectfully state that they understood that the passage of the act of the 28th of May, 1830, had settled the policy of government in regard to the permanent location of Indians within that territory. By that act the President was authorized to assign to the tribes lands which should be secured to them by a bona fide title.

In 1837, bills, which had been under consideration in Congress, for the organization of the Indian territory, (one of which had passed the Senate almost unanimously, but had not been definitively acted on in the House of Representatives,) were, by the direction of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, submitted to the consideration of eleven tribes, viz: the Shawnees, Delawares, Kickapoos, Pottawatomies, Sauks, Iowas, Kansas, Weas, Piankeshaws, Peorias and Kaskaskias, and Ottowas. Each of these tribes made a written communication to the government, expressing their satisfaction with the proposed plan, and desiring that it might be carried into effect.

The views and action of these tribes, in reference to this, may be inferred from their communications, a specimen of which is here respectfully inserted, as follows:

“SHAWNEE COUNCIL HOUSE, INDIAN TERRITORY,  
July 12, 1837.

“SIR: We, the undersigned chiefs and head men of the Shawnees, met in council, have heard read to us, by Isaac McCoy, a paper which you had sent

to him, and which has been under consideration in Congress, for the benefit of the Indian tribes within this western country, to which, through the same person, we now return our answer, which we request you to lay before Congress.

"The substance of the paper to which we allude, we understand to be as follows, viz :

"1st. The country between the Puncáh and Red rivers, and southwest of the Missouri river, and west of the States of Missouri and Arkansas, to the distance of two or three hundred miles, is to be set apart exclusively for the use of Indians, excepting the amount necessary for military posts, roads, and public highways, and for the residence of such persons as may be allowed to reside in the Indian country, by the laws regulating intercourse with the Indian tribes; and that the lands granted to the tribes, severally, shall be secured to them by patents from the government of the United States, under such restrictions as shall secure the lands from becoming the property of an adjoining State or Territory, or of either individuals or companies of white persons.

"2d. That the superintendent of the Indian district shall call into general council, once a year, or oftener, a prescribed number of chiefs, or principal men. That, in this council, the tribes, by their representatives, shall unite for purposes of peace and friendship; and shall make such regulations for the benefit of the confederacy as may, from time to time, appear necessary: the said regulations to be submitted to the consideration of the President of the United States, and not to take effect until approved by him. That all tribes within the district be at liberty to join the confederacy, and that none be required to do it without its consent; and that each tribe may make its own internal regulations, consistently with those of a general nature.

"3d. That the confederación shall send an Indian, as its delegate, to Washington city, to remain during each session of Congress, to attend to such matters as the interests of the confederation or of the tribes and individuals severally require, whose pay and emoluments shall be equal to those of a member of Congress.

"With the foregoing propositions we are well pleased, and we do earnestly request the President and Congress of the United States to carry them into effect as soon as practicable.

"Hon. C. A. HARRIS,

*"Commissioner of Indian Affairs."*

Your memorialists respectfully pray that the scheme set forth in the above communication be carried into effect, or, at least, so much of it as will establish the boundaries of their territory, encourage them to unite in a general council, and allow the confederacy a representation at Washington during the sessions of Congress.

The oft-repeated promises of the government to the tribes within the limits above described, that they should be secured in their possessions, and the enjoyment of privileges as above set forth, have been strengthened by various acts of government; one of which was the setting apart of a tract of land for the seat of government of the Indian territory. This tract of land was located and surveyed by Mr. McCoy, in 1837, in a central part of the territory, and is in extent about seven miles square. It has, consequently, not

been granted to any tribe, but it remains for the above public purposes, for the benefit of all.

Those tribes are rapidly losing sight of the real or supposed wrongs which they have suffered, and are daily becoming more and more attached to our nation. Already they form, for our frontier settlements, a line of defence against distant marauding bands, of some four hundred miles. It seems to your memorialists that nothing ought to occasion deeper regret than any occurrence or delay which would cause those tribes to doubt the sincerity and stability of the promises of government that they should remain there, forever undisturbed, under the institutions suited to their condition. They, at this time, unquestionably embody among them such knowledge of jurisprudence, and such general intelligence and virtue, as eminently to qualify them for the exercise of all the powers, and the enjoyment of all the privileges, prayed for by your memorialists.

The spirit of nationality which has grown up among each of the three southern tribes, viz: the Cherokees, the Creeks, and the united Choctaws and Chickasaws, might possibly suggest something slightly differing, in practical application, from what has been presented above; but your memorialists feel assured that the essentials of their prayer will be found to be in accordance with the desires of all.

2d. Your memorialists further respectfully ask that appropriations for purposes of education among the tribes within the Indian territory be increased.

3d. The association, in conformity with the design in which it originated, is anxious to extend its operations into other parts, and therefore respectfully prays that measures may be adopted preliminary to the establishment of *another Indian territory*, upon principles similar to those of the present, west of the Rocky mountains.

In favor of this design, your memorialists would respectfully offer the following considerations:

The arrangements for the organization of the present Indian territory, though incomplete, have, nevertheless, awakened, among most of the tribes therein, a spirit of enterprise and improvement before unknown among Indians. As one convincing evidence of the obvious success of the experiment, your memorialists would refer to the design of the Secretary of War, about five years since, to organize a second Indian territory on the upper western waters of the Mississippi; for which purpose negotiations were held with the Sioux for the extinguishment of their claims to a large tract of country. In a word, your memorialists cannot hope for the success of any other plan of Indian reform than the one under consideration; and in this plan they have entire confidence; and, therefore, earnestly desire that it may be adopted in favor of tribes in other places.

The tribes west of the Rocky mountains are deplorably poor, and ignorant, and wretched; and unless measures for their relief be speedily adopted, their condition will soon become much worse, by the proximity of white settlements, which are forming in those regions. The remote tribes (especially those near a line which divides the territories claimed by different civilized governments) are not unfrequently injured by jealousies, fomented by traders, and others, belonging to, and deeply interested in, those governments respectively. The consequences too often are, hostilities and much suffering. If the tribes within the Oregon regions could be collected in a central part, not on the sea-coast, nor adjoining either the northern or

the southern boundaries of the territory of the United States, under the influence of *law*, and other suitable regulations, and the instructions of their literary and religious teachers, they would not be subject to the malign influences to which their present situation exposes them; and instead of annoying the citizens of the United States, who are settling in that country, they would become peaceable neighbors. This concentration of those tribes would draw off those rude and troublesome bands from the infant white settlements, greatly to the advantage of the latter; the growth and improvement of which would, in turn, furnish facilities to the operations for the benefit of the Indian territory. Indians, while they remain in lawless bands, can easily be induced to commit depredations upon fellow Indians, or upon the whites. But when the reckless, and worthless, and wicked are brought under the restraints of the sensible and well-disposed, and these latter become subject to the genial influences here proposed, ill-disposed Indians will be restrained from acts of violence and public crime.

From what has been suggested, your honorable body will perceive that your memorialists are well aware that it is alone the province of the government to take the preliminary steps towards forming the desired Indian settlements under consideration. Of the nature of these preliminary measures your memorialists would speak with delicacy; yet they would, with great deference to the wisdom of those whom they now respectfully address, suggest a few considerations.

They would respectfully recommend that a law be passed, authorizing the President of the United States to take measures for collecting, into one community, the Indian tribes within the Oregon regions, and placing them under a proper agency, or superintendency, in a part of that country which would not bring the Indian settlements, thus formed, in contact with any boundary of the United States territory. Let the tribes which should consent to settle there, have their possessions *secured* to them—excluding white population, excepting such as should be necessary for beneficial purposes for the Indians. Let the President of the United States be authorized to apply a portion of the “funds for the civilization of the Indians” to the promotion of schools which may be there established by benevolent societies, and, through the agency, or superintendency, invite the Indian tribes within those regions to avail themselves of the advantages offered by this new settlement; and let the President direct an examination of that country to be made, sufficient to enable him to make a judicious selection of the place for forming the nucleus of those settlements.

This done, government would find no difficulty in peopling this new territory; for the benevolent, employed in Indian reform, would immediately lead off bands to form settlements therein; the improving and comfortable condition of which would strongly attract others.

It is known that some unfortunate feuds were created among some of the tribes within the existing Indian territory, prior to their removal west, which have not, even yet, wholly disappeared. It is believed that some of those discontented persons would readily embrace so favorable an opportunity as this scheme affords, of getting rid of animosity; and that they would at once avail themselves of the advantages which they might hope for, as early settlers in the new territory. They would perceive that they would have the choice of locations, and, with their knowledge of the arts of civilized life, they would occupy important, profitable, and useful spheres among those who would come in afterwards. Therefore, without injury

to the present Indian territory, a few, it is believed, of civilized natives would be ready to form a nucleus to the settlements within the territory contemplated.

As in duty bound, your memorialists subscribe, most respectfully,  
WM. C. BUCK, *Pres't.*

ISAAC McCOY,  
*Corresponding Secretary.*

Louisvil'e, Kentucky, December 13, 1845.