

Quakers' Concerns Regarding the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport Detention Center

A Statement of Accompaniment

This statement grew out of a concern lifted up by an attender at Fort Myers Monthly Meeting (FL)^{1,2}. The concern was shared with a number of Friends within Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends of Truth (Quakers) and another Friend, a member of Radnor Monthly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.³ A small group began meeting remotely during Twelfth Month (December) 2025 to discuss how Quakers might accompany the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida in its legal action regarding the State of Florida managed detention facility located at the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport.

Overview

Quakers have a history of championing human rights in the United States, dating back to the days before the country was established. Since the time of William Penn's landing, Quaker adherents have upheld the biblical values of human equality and the intrinsic value and dignity of human beings. Our pursuit of migrant justice and our objections to unjust treatment of the detained are grounded by generations of Quakers who, in the 17th and 18th centuries, were subjects of atrocities and forced migration.

Quaker influence in U.S. law includes such bedrocks of the system as jury trials, the allowable scope of indictments, and the requirement that all laws be written (the documentation of all laws). The elements of humane treatment in the U.S. prison system were established in large part by the Quakers.

Work in regard to human rights may be what people in the United States most readily associate with Quakers, however, we also unite with the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida regarding care for the environment. Quakers in Southeastern Yearly Meeting have a long-standing history and international recognition in environmental or, what we term as, Earthcare concerns. In addition to an Earthcare Committee and individual members serving as representatives to Quaker and environmental organizations, SEYM has employed a person to address Earthcare concerns since 2016. It is our understanding that this was the first such action by a Yearly Meeting. Our knowledge of the unique ecosystem of the Everglades, the Big Cypress National Preserve, and

¹ We acknowledge that these are the ancestral lands of the Calusa, Mascogo, Miccosukee, Seminole, and Taino.

² The Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups in Southeastern Yearly Meeting are on the unceded lands of many Indigenous peoples. Follow this link, <https://seymquakers.org/land-acknowledgement/>, to view the land acknowledgement.

³ Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends of Truth (Quakers) hereinafter referred to as SEYM.

the relationship of the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida to these lands have led members within our Yearly Meeting to accompany the Tribe in the efforts to sustain the ecosystem.

On 14 Seventh Month (July) 2025, the Miccosukee Tribe moved to intervene as an Intervenor-Plaintiff in the action styled *Friends of the Everglades, Inc., et al. v. Noem, et al.*, Case No. 25-CV-22896-JEM. The case seeks relief under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Administrative Procedure Act (APA); and provisions of Florida law, to stop construction of the federal detention facility at the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport.

In a Meeting for Worship with a Concern Business during Tenth Month (October) 2025, SEYM members expressed solidarity with the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians in Florida in calling for the immediate closure of the detention facility to preserve the air quality, drinking water supply, and the sacred ecological balance vital to the Miccosukee way of life. A number of members and attenders from Monthly Meetings within SEYM have participated in prayer vigils led by Betty Osceola, a member of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Panther Clan, outside the immigrant detention facility located at the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport known by the Miccosukee as “TNT”.

On 5 Twelfth Month 2025, five members and attenders of the Religious Society of Friends first met to “thresh” our concerns regarding the TNT Detention Center. Beverly Ward, SEYM Field Secretary for Earthcare, contacted Betty Osceola advising that we would like to explore the possibility of submitting an amicus brief in support of the Tribe’s intervention in this legal matter, given that Quakers are called, by our faith and practices, to “cultivate an active spirit of love and peace.” Betty Osceola advised that it would be a good step to file in support of the lawsuit and that it also [would] help to amplify the voice of the tribe and organizations...by sharing with our networks.

Quakers are asked to live in harmony with nature. This includes living in keeping with the spirit of unity, sacredness, and integrity of all creation and walking gently over the earth, seeing that of God in all of nature. We are advised to:

- Maintain in ourselves and encourage in others a sense of responsibility for the environment, both for the present and for future generations.
- Avoid amusements that stimulate destructive emotions, are detrimental to the health or tranquility of others, or are damaging to the natural environment.
- Show a loving consideration for all creatures, cherishing the beauty and wonder of all God’s creation.
- Share our sense of reverence and stewardship for the earth.⁴

It is imperative that we point out the environmental consequences of the state and federal government actions. This includes the impacts of up to 5,000 detainees and employees at the TNT detention center. We hold all in prayer and ministry.

⁴ SEYM, *Faith and Practice*, Chapter 5: Queries and Advices, 11. Care of the Natural World.

Quaker Meeting members and attenders will be impacted by the results of the present legal action. Quakers in SEYM are impacted morally and spiritually by the detention center and will face additional adverse impacts in all other places that attempt to replicate TNT. (In addition to the Everglades site, which began taking detainees in Seventh Month (July) 2025, the State has opened similar detention sites in the northeastern part of the state and is considering another in the Panhandle.) The adverse environmental impacts of the detention facility must be assessed.

Critical Concerns

It is unjustified that the State of Florida has established the immigration detention facility in Ochopee, on the lands of the Miccosukee Tribe. Moreover, the facility is an affront to humanitarian, spiritual, and environmental ethics.

Sacred Land

The Miccosukee Tribe of Florida is a federal and state recognized tribe. The history of the Miccosukee people in the area known as the Big Cypress National Preserve (the “Preserve”) extends back across many centuries. Warfare and relocation, however, have reduced the Tribe’s use of the land to perpetual lease rights along the eastern boundary of the Preserve and the TNT site; Tribal rights within the Water Conservation Area 3-A; special-use permits within the Everglades National Park; and, the Miccosukee Reserved Area.

The significance of the Preserve to the Tribe is best understood by a description of how the Tribe lives in this area. According to court documents,

all of the Tribe’s active ceremonial sites and a significant majority of the Tribe’s traditional villages...are located within the Preserve. Indeed, the Tribe played a significant role in the creation of the Preserve as part of the sustained campaign to prevent the further development of the TNT Site...[T]he Big Cypress Enabling Act, which created the Preserve and specifically recognized the Tribe’s rights to use and occupy the land therein.

There are fifteen traditional villages in the Preserve, home to Tribal families. The villages, and their precursors, existed in the Preserve for at least a century before the legislation was enacted to create the Preserve. This presence of the villages includes the Tribe’s sacred cultural sites, ceremonial grounds, and burial grounds within or adjacent to the Preserve. The use and occupancy rights means access to these and other sites in order to practice traditional ceremonies. There also are other sites and villages located on Tribal lands west of the TNT site and adjacent to the Preserve which Tribal members and village residents rely on and exercise their rights to hunt, fish, and trap for subsistence.

The Tribe works to preserve its members’ rights, including those who reside within the Preserve. This includes defending members’ statutory interests, safety, subsistence, and community health. Over the past decade, the Tribal administration estimates that at least \$2 million has been spent on infrastructure within the Preserve. The investments have been made to improve Tribal residences and maintain or enhance accessibility to traditional sites, in a manner that protects the Preserve’s fragile environment.

Unidentified Impacts of the Detention Facility

The TNT facility is located within the Preserve or on lands perpetually leased to the Tribe. The proximity of the facility to the Tribe’s villages, sacred and ceremonial sites, hunting grounds,

and other lands has raised concerns among its members in regard to environmental degradation and potential adverse impacts caused by the construction and operation of the detention facility. The last environmental impact study conducted in 1974 found that additional airstrip infrastructure in the area would have significant negative impacts on the Everglades, which includes the Preserve, ecosystem. There have been no environmental impact studies conducted regarding the construction and operation of the detention facility or its effects on the ecosystem.

The 1,000 to 5,000 occupants at the facility more than doubles the population density in the area. There have been no studies or analyses to assess the impacts of the detention facility at the TNT site on the residents of nearby tribal villages or community members who live and work on the Miccosukee Reserved Area, including students attending the Miccosukee Indian School. Potential impacts may include impaired use of the Preserve by tribal members for traditional and ceremonial purposes, including hunting, fishing, and trapping within the immediate vicinity of the TNT site. Specifically, adverse impacts may include, but are not limited to:

- Potential contamination or pollution from the facility on potable water quality for residents and the surrounding environment;
- Interruption to endangered Florida panther and Florida bonneted bat habitat;
- Increased traffic, and the resulting water quality, health and safety, and subsistence impacts;
- Declines in the number and quality of game and/or fish stocks within the Tribe's traditional rights – guaranteed by federal and state law; and
- Reduced access to the two-lane Tamiami Trail, the evacuation route during inclement weather or wildfire.

The purpose of this statement is to address the relationship between the Tribe and the land, specifically the Preserve, and the potential adverse impacts of the detention facility. As mentioned earlier, we hold in prayer and ministry the detainees and employees. We limit further comments on the conditions within the facility in this statement, as we seek to accompany the Tribe.

Accompaniment

To summarize, we find the following conditions as set out in the Tribe's motion to intervene:

- The Miccosukee Tribe of Florida has a relationship with the land known as the Preserve that predates the establishment of the Preserve. This relationship includes residential, sacred, and subsistence practices;
- A 1974 environmental impact study found that additional airstrip infrastructure in the area would have significant adverse impacts on the Everglades, which includes the Preserve, ecosystem.
- The 1,000 to 5,000 occupants at the TNT facility will at least double the residential density in the area;

- There have been no studies or analyses to determine if constructing and operating the detention site will harm residents of nearby tribal villages or community members who live and work on the Miccosukee Reserved Area, including students attending the Miccosukee Indian School downstream of the TNT site.
- There have been no studies or analyses conducted regarding the effects on the number and quality of game and/or fish stocks guaranteed by federal and state law.
- Desecration of the land and human beings sets an example for other areas in the State of Florida and beyond to replicate.

This statement is shared in support of the Tribe's motion to intervene as Intervenor-Plaintiff in the action styled *Friends of the Everglades, Inc., et al. v. Noem, et al.*, Case No. 25-CV-22896-JEM. We ask others to join us in support of the motion by sharing this statement and otherwise holding all in prayer and ministry.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends of Truth approved this statement on 24 First Month (January) 2026.

In Love and Peace,

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