

DRAMATIC MOMENT
... A Kind, Just, and Peaceable Life ...
(Primary Source)

William Penn wrote this letter to the chiefs of the Delaware Indians shortly after receiving the proprietorship of Pennsylvania. It began a remarkable experiment in tolerance and individual responsibility.

London, 18 October 1681

My Friends,

There is one great God and power that has made the world and all things therein, to whom you and I and all people owe their being and well-being, and to whom you and I must one day give an account for all that we do in this world. This great God has written his law in our hearts, by which we are taught and commanded to love and help and do good to one another, and not to do harm and mischief one unto another. Now this great God has been pleased to make me concerned in your parts of the world, and the king of the country where I live has given unto me a great province therein, but I desire to enjoy it with your friends, else what would the great God say to us, who has made us not to devour and destroy one another, but live soberly and kindly together in the world.

Now I would have you well observe, that I am very sensible of the unkindness and injustice that has been too much exercised towards you by the people of these parts of the world, who have sought themselves, and to make great advantages by you, rather than be examples of justice and goodness unto you; which I hear has been matter of trouble to you and caused great grudgings and animosities, sometimes to the shedding of blood, which has made the great god angry. But I am not such man as is well known in my own country. I have great love and regard toward you, and I desire to win and gain your love and friendship by a kind just, and peaceable life; and the people I send are of the same mind, and shall in all things behave themselves accordingly. And if in anything any shall offend you or your people, you shall have a full and speedy satisfaction for the same by an equal number of honest men on both sides, that by no means you may have just occasion of being offended against them.

I shall shortly come to you myself, at what time we may more largely and freely confer and discourse of these matters. In the meantime, I have sent my commissioners to treat with you about land a firm league of peace. Let me desire you to be kind to them and the people, and receive these presents and tokens

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which I have sent to you as a testimony of my good will to you and my resolution to live justly, peaceably, and friendly with you. I am your friend.

Wm. Penn

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