

John Muir and Native American activist Charles Lummis by Robert Hanna

Facebook Post on "John Muir Fans" Group - April 6, 2019



Muir was very good friends with the famous Native American activist, Charles Lummis. In 1902 Lummis formed one of California's earliest Native American rights group called "The Sequoya League". The organization was dedicated to protecting Indian rights as well as to fight for "the betterment of Indian conditions". Alongside the many leading experts on Native American Advocacy and the West that Lummis enlisted onto the organization's Board of Directors & Advisory Board, Muir himself joined the Sequoya League, sending in generous donations and dues for both himself and his daughter Helen.

An early effort of the League led to Lummis finding a home with suitable irrigation for farming for a small group of Indians who had been evicted by a rancher in the Palm Springs, California area.

The organization fought vigorously in protecting Indian rights, opposing the federal policy that permitted federal Bureau of Indian Affairs officials to remove Indian children from their reservations and send them to far-away boarding schools against the wishes of their parents. These practices cut off hundreds of children from their families, and even prevented from returning home even during summer vacations. Lummis came to regard the U.S. government's Indian education policies as an abomination.

The Sequoya League later battled against Indian Agent Charles Burton, accusing him of imposing a "reign of terror" on the Hopi pueblo in Oraibi by forcibly requiring Hopi men to cut their long hair. The League further opposed policies the Office of Indian Affairs attempted to enact prohibiting Native Americans from "wearing Indian costume and blanket" and from engaging in "Indian dances and so-called Indian feasts."

There are many letters between Muir & Lummis that reveal their deep friendship and Muir's steadfast support in assisting in Lummis' work and efforts. Here are just a few where they're working together in connection with the Sequoya League.

Martinez, March 18, 1902
My dear Sumner:
Here is ten dollars for
you from Indians. I feel
~~sure that you something~~
sensible & brotherly will be
done for them
How kindly you noticed my
little outdoor book! Such
words of sympathy & insight
from one who can write
means something real &
fine Many thanks
Remember me to the little
wild lassie & Helen
in every sincerely yours
John Muir

Martinez, Cal., April 8/05.

Dear Mr. Lumsden:-

Please find inclosed four dollars for
my own dues and a year's subscription for Helen
Muir who wishes to become a member of The Sequoia
League.

Thanking you for the noble work you are
doing for our unfortunate fellow-creatures, and
wishing you Godspeed I am

faithfully yours,

John Muir

Apr. 11th 5

Dear Muir:

It is a great pleasure to have your
faithful co-operation in the work we are trying to
do; and I thank you heartily for it. It is mighty
nice too, to have Helen take membership in the
Sequoia League. I enclose receipt.

You will be glad to know that the work
is going ahead at least as fast as we have any
right to expect. Congress is always slow and stu-
pid; and it has knocked out the appropriation for
a commission. But I think that Commissioner Leupp
who is a good man, will stop here to visit the
worst of the reservations with me in June; and
Senator Flint has promised to do the same. I sup-
pose that we shall have to feed these Indians again
next winter; but our people will, I am sure, glad-