



Bolivian Quaker
Education Fund

January, 2024 - June, 2025



Year in Review

This has been a time of transition, learning, and growth for BQEF. In January, 2024, Vicky Kaiser, BQEF Coordinator of 17 years, retired and Rebecca Cutter, of Ithaca, NY became the new Coordinator. Rebecca brings 27 years of nonprofit work in Latin America to BQEF.

In Bolivia, Bernabe Yujura, Newton Garver's friend and co-founder of BQEF's sister organization, Fundación Quákera de Educación en Bolivia, FQEB retired after 22 years of service. A new voluntary board of directors, composed of five graduates from the BQEF scholarship program have stepped in to take on the work of Bernabe, overseeing the organization's governance, coordinating with staff on the ground and motivating this year's cohort of scholarship students with their presence at workshops, student gatherings, and online Student-led Conferences.

On the state side, two of our long-standing BQEF board members and supporters, Jens Braun and Hellen Hebben, stepped down from the board. Jens, who first introduced the Alternatives to Violence Project, AVP workshops to Bolivia in the early 2000s, worked closely with Rebecca in 2024 to pass on important historical memory and insights into working with Quakers in Bolivia and in the US. Fortunately, BrendaRose Simkin, daughter of former board member Jane Simkin, joined the board as Hellen stepped down.

In the past year, BQEF, considering the changing landscape of international nonprofit work, and Quaker Testimonies in action, has coalesced around a plan for moving forward with these priorities.

1) Be an organization that reflects Quaker values, embracing multiculturalism and exploring the decolonization of our work. This has led us to greater collaboration with other Quaker organizations working in Bolivia, and with graduates from the BQEF scholarship program whose work is a living testament to Quaker Testimonies.

We made the decision to replace the 1:1 Sponsorship Model with a Scholarship Program. This decision was influenced by our participation in the Transforming White Organizational Culture training, hosted by WPC and NYYM. Our idea is to strengthen the multicultural work of BQEF by building authentic relationships of mutual learning, respect the autonomy of our partners, and develop awareness of any lingering attitudes or ways of working that further the colonial legacies of development. Students now address their monthly updates to a broader audience, including their peers, and BQEF is sending monthly e-newsletter reports from students to all of our supporters.

2) Improve our organization's communication and collaboration with and between Quakers in the North and South. We provided a grant to AVP/PAV Bolivia (Magaly Quispe) to offer AVP workshops to our scholars and graduates this year. The first workshop was a resounding success, with students and graduates feeling more connected to each other and to the expression of Quaker values. We plan to continue this collaboration in 2026.

In July, 2024, BQEF led a Quaker Study Tour (QST) with a focus on Climate Change. Jenny Ratcliffe supported the group with guidance around the use of her book, "Nothing Lowely," as spiritual framing of the current climate crisis. Two participants from the QST, Penny Thorn-Webber of Colorado, and Charley Basham of Alaska became new BQEF board members as a result of their experiences in Bolivia.

BQEF has an active board, with nine members organized into four committees. We also have a new website, and have begun using social media to publish updates from students. We continue to mail a spring and a fall print newsletter to our supporters and now send monthly e-newsletters with news and stories from our current scholarship students. We have included links to all of these reports and social media sites.

Summary Report from the Bolivian Quaker Education Fund

Thank you for your ongoing support. BQEF currently provides stipends to 20 Bolivian Quaker students in fields as diverse as medicine, agriculture and education through our Bolivian partner organization, FQEB, and other Bolivian organizations contracted to provide enrichment programs, like AVP workshops. As our scholars graduate in June and December, we continue to offer new scholarships. This July we have five new students entering the program. .

Conditions in Bolivia have been chaotic this past year, with an energy crisis, high inflation and political disruptions. Transportation was especially affected and our student reports* frequently refer to the increased difficulty getting to classes and internships. We increased our stipend by 1/3 in 2025. Our support for the students this year was augmented beginning AVP training in January, to be followed by second level AVP training during the summer and a third, Training of Trainers in December. We have also modernized our efforts to communicate with donors by moving away from periodic student report letters in the direction of online conferences that give the students an opportunity to share important aspects of their learning experiences with our supporters, and by modernizing our website to include more reports from the students.

We hope you will find this report helpful. Please let us know if you need any additional information.

In Gratitude and Peace,

BQEF Board of Directors and Coordinator.

[BQEF Spring, 2025 Newsletter](https://tinyurl.com/bdpkz6cf), <https://tinyurl.com/bdpkz6cf>

Student Reports

[February, 2025](#)

[May, 2025](#) - Invitation to the next Student-Led Online Conference, June 29th 6-8pm EST.

[Website](#)

[Facebook Page](#)

[Instagram](#)