

Preface

Much more can be said, and has been said, about the history of the Nanticoke and Lenape people who are now spread throughout North America. However, my task is to provide a brief, but comprehensive, summary of the historical information pertaining to the Nanticoke and Lenape people remaining in three interrelated tribal communities in Southern New Jersey and Delaware, with particular emphasis on how the legacy of the Lenape and Nanticoke ancestors in each community continues among the people called "Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians" in New Jersey. All too often, remnant tribal communities along the eastern seaboard have been overlooked and forgotten after the main body of their people migrated away.

A lack of awareness of the history of such tribal communities is not merely unfortunate; frequently, it results in their being oppressed, mislabeled, and isolated. There is a persistent resistance to merely accepting their ongoing existence. Such opposition is sometimes for political and economic reasons; but, often it is because of racial bias and institutional arrogance based upon ignorance.

I have attempted to bring a chorus of witnesses to the pages of this work so that it is not merely my voice, but the testimony of history that upholds the legitimacy of these surviving American Indian communities. I am indebted to the work of tribal historians and researchers, both Native and non-Native, for all that they have preserved and shared. I am grateful for the support and resources provided by the Nanticoke and Lenape people in each of the three tribal communities of my relatives. Finally, for her patience, prayers, and loving assistance, I thank my wife and soul mate, who is constantly at my side and for whom I am truly grateful.

The saga of the Tribe is reflected in my personal story as well. As I struggled with issues of the affirmation of identity and heritage amid social mislabeling and misunderstanding, there were those family elders who would quietly whisper, "Don't ever forget who you are." I know the difficulty of confronting zealously stated erroneous assumptions. I know the struggle and pain of social invisibility. And now, I have been blessed to see my own children growing up with a sense of pride and the ability to assertively address misguided stereotypes. I have heard it said that, "the Indian Wars never ended, they merely changed venue." I pray that future generations will not have to fight these same old battles.

Much more information testifying to the American Indian identity and continuous tribal history of the three communities is available. Even while completing this booklet, plans for to publish a full volume in 2008 were put in motion. To all who read this booklet, please share it with others so that the word may get out and ring clear... We Are Still Here!

The Rev. Dr. John R. Norwood
Kaakluksit Pedhakquon(m)achk(w)
[Smiling Thunderbear]

October 9, 2007
New Jersey