

Aug 15<sup>th</sup> 2002  
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## Down by the river

### Lenape descendants journey down Delaware to Pennsbury Manor for new treaty signing

By PETRA CHESNER SCHLATTER

If you catch a glimpse of a canoe caravan of American Indians traveling down the Delaware River in the next few days, it's not your imagination.

As part of a two-week canoe caravan called "Rising Nation," Lenape Indian Tribe members are traveling 330 miles from the top of the Delaware River in lower New York state to Cape May, N.J. The group is expected to stop in Washington Crossing on August 15 where they will camp and then, sometime after that, pass by Lower Makefield, Yardley Borough and Morrisville.

The canoeists will pause for a treaty signing on August 24 at Pennsbury Manor in Falls Township, the former estate of William Penn. The tickets-only event will feature performers including Bill Miller, Mary Youngblood, Jim Beer and the River, The Ichy Dog Singers and The Red Hawk Singers.

Traditional Native American dances also will be performed. And there will be Native American elders who will speak as well as some Lenape chiefs, historians and environmental people.

Calling the journey an "historical event," Lenape spokesperson Jim Beer said the river journey is part of an effort to bring the Lenape together again.



Chief Bob Redhawk of the Eastern Lenape will make the journey down the river.

the river" Sunday, August 4 at Hancock, N.Y. said Beer, who is participating in the journey. The group will travel 20 miles per day.

After Pennsbury Manor, the journey will continue to Palmyra Cove Nature Park in New Jersey. The trip will end six miles from Penn Treaty Park in Philadelphia.

The journey and treaty signing at Pennsbury Manor, Beer said, "marks a new beginning of brotherhood between the Lenape and the people who neighbor the Delaware River

churches, historical societies and sincerely committed individuals who wish to actively support the Lenape culture and help to sustain the people, language and way of life, are invited to sign this historical treaty.

"The brotherhood that is being renewed," Beer said, "is that which existed between the Lenape people and the one the Lenape called brother - William Penn. William Penn's dealings with our people were good and fair."

The Lenape people,

# Lenape descendants prepare to sign new treaty

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agording to Beer, are the original inhabitants of Delaware, New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania and southern New York, and remain the stewards of those lands. They were the first tribe to sign a treaty with the United States, and the first tribe to have land set aside for them in New Jersey. Over a period of 250 years, many Lenape people were pushed west to Wisconsin, north to Canada, and south to Oklahoma. A large number of Lenape families remained in their homelands and continued the traditions of their ancestors.

"Today, the Lenape people from many parts of the country are coming together again...a Rising Nation," said Beer.

The treaty will symbolize "renewed brotherhood between the Lenape Indian Tribe and the Delaware River Greenway Partnership," according to Beer.

The Delaware River Greenway Partnership (DRGP), Rising Nation's sponsor, is a bi-state public/private cooperative partnership of more than 100 non-profit organizations, government agencies, as well as individual members "dedicated to promoting the stewardship of the Delaware River. The DRGP recognizes the importance of the Lenape as not only a part of our Pennsylvania history and America's history, but also a living culture today," said Beer.

Describing this as "a critical time for the tribe," Beer said "much of the existing culture is in peril."

Several dialects of the Lenape language still remain, yet as the elders who speak the language pass away, a precious aspect of the culture is in danger of being lost forever, he said.

Of equal importance are other aspects of their heritage - their oral history and historic accounts that have not been documented for the public.

In addition, many pre-Columbian sacred stoneworks and burial grounds, that have gone unrecognized by the academic community, need to be catalogued and preserved, said Beer.

"From this new beginning," Beer said, "projects and programs will emerge, such as the acquiring of land to

Who: The Lenape Indian Tribe and the Delaware River Greenway Partnership  
Where: Pennsylvania Manor  
When: Saturday, August 24

What: A treaty of renewed brotherhood will be signed  
Why: To mark a new beginning of brotherhood between the Lenape and the people of Pennsylvania

build a cultural center for education, theatrical and cultural productions regarding the Lenape people."

Also:

\*the preservation of sacred sites,

\*the implementation of Lenape-guided cultural tours along the Delaware River with the use of canoes,

\*the documenting of Lenape oral history and historical sites along the Delaware River with the publication of books and video material,

\*the Lenape would serve as hosts at the cultural center for other Indigenous People to share their artistic talents, musical achievements as well as spiritual understanding and healing practices.

Beer said Upper Bucks County is a "power place" for the Lenape. The Lenape are hoping to establish the Lenape cultural center in Upper Bucks.

Talking about the new treaty, Beer said "it's not been done in the way we're doing it. Treaties were signed before, but many of them were never upheld. So, hopefully that will be one big difference in this treaty. This treaty is good for four years."

"I don't think that will be a problem," Beer said about upholding the treaty, "because everybody is very excited about the treaty itself and about having an opportunity to do something like this. I think a lot of people are inspired

to move forward with this because of the wrong doing of many of their forefathers. They want to make good on what went bad and this is a silver opportunity."

A Sellersville resident, Beer lives "back in the country." He can trace his Lenape heritage back through marriage records kept by the Lutherans in Bucks County.

"My great-great-grandmother was full-blooded Lenape. She lived in the late 1700s or early 1800s," Beer said before he left for the canoe journey.

Although her age at death is not known, her name is. "She was called Morning Star," Beer said.

His great aunt started the Lenape Historical Society of Allentown, Pennsylvania, in the late '60s.

"That's how the culture was kept alive. We always lived in a modern way, but always had the teachings and the history."

Beer explained the motivation behind the canoe journey and the treaty.

"What I'm doing and what all of us who are Lenape are doing is we are making the struggles of our ancestors worthwhile. We are making sure the teachings of the old Lenape people are carried on. To us, that's our god-given responsibility. That's why we're doing what we're doing."

"The environment is a major concern for the Lenape. Even more so than tribally, the number-one goal of what we're doing is to preserve and protect the land. It's an environmental thing and to preserve sacred sights as well as geographically significant places, forest lands, river basins and open space. That's why we're working together with everybody because that's what we have in common, native or not native. That's the number one thing."