

A journey ends, and begins

Lenape Rising Nation River Journey contingent arrives by canoe and kayak this weekend in Cape May, wet but jubilant

By LAUREN BEAL
Cape May Star and Wave

It should have been one of the easiest parts of the trip — one last mile from Higbee Beach to Sunset Beach.

After all, the Rising Nation River Journey travelers had already kayaked and canoed nearly 330 miles down the Delaware River from Hancock, N.Y.

Yet for the crowd who turned out on Sunday afternoon to welcome the Lenape American Indian tribe members and supporters to Cape May, the mood was both excited and anxious.

As the wind whipped umbrellas in the air and the rain poured down, poncho-clad spectators huddled under cover and looked doubtfully at the choppy water.

"This place gets more of the wind," said Clara Hanjian, talking about the open water.

Clara and her husband John drove from Seaville to see the Native Americans land, waiting in the rain for nearly two hours.

The weather was forgotten,

though, at the first sight of a canoe in the distance.

Nearly 100 people were on the beach to greet Chiefs Mark Gould and Bart Cartwright, as they paddled their canoe onto shore.

Nine other canoes and kayaks soon followed, each one received with whoops and cheers of celebration as they landed. Delaware River Greenway Partnership president Richard McNutt, head of the environmental organization that partnered with the Lenape, paddled in the final canoe.

Cape May residents Janet Fox and her mother, Thelma MacNier, were some of the first to shake the travelers' hands. The rain wasn't a factor for them.

"We were already wet!" Fox said. "I told (MacNier), I'm going. We decided to come down to welcome our native people."

MacNier smiled as she pointed out the chiefs she had met.

"I got a big hug and kiss!"

The arrival at Sunset Beach marked the end of the Rising Nation River Journey, a 330-mile trip that started Aug. 4 in

Hancock, N.Y. Lenape tribe members and their supporters stopped in Philadelphia to sign a renewed treaty of brotherhood between the Lenape and local public and private organizations.

This treaty — as well as the completion of the river trip — was recognized Sunday in a congressional commendation from Assemblyman Jeff Van Drew, read aloud at Sunset Beach.

Though the weather prevented the travelers from celebrating with the planned tribal ceremony, they were still able to spread information about their culture — one of the main goals of the river trip.

As well wishers hugged Little Bear — a shaman — and shook his hand, he answered their questions about his ceremonial dress and his experiences on the river.

"It wasn't just a water trip, it was a trip through time ... a trip through a spiritual growth," he said.

Little Bear remarked on the quality of the river water —

Please see Journey, page A7



Courtesy of Leonard Sacher

Left, Bart Cartwright, a Lenape Native American and direct descendant of Chief Tameness who signed the original treaty on behalf of the Lenape people with William Penn, accepts an NJ Assembly citation from Dr. Richard Fellows, of Lower Township, on behalf of Assemblyman Jeff Van Drew. The citation was given to the Lenape people Sunday along with one to the Delaware Greenway, to commemorate the end in Cape May of a 330-mile journey by canoe and kayak down the Delaware River by members of the Lenape Nation and their supporters.

