

THE MORNING CALL

SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2002

Groups pledge faith to Lenape

Brotherhood Treaty is signed to promote natives' culture.

By Christine Schiavo
Of The Morning Call

In good faith and good feelings, amid beating drums and burning sage, Lenape Indians and Delaware River stewards renewed a 300-year-old commitment to friendship Saturday on the historic spot where William Penn and Chief Tamenend made the original promise.

About two dozen people signed a Treaty of Renewed Brotherhood under an elm tree at Pennsbury Manor, Penn's Bucks County estate in Falls Township, promising to maintain and promote the Lenape culture.

"We're in a new life with the Lenape people," said Richard McNutt, president of the Delaware River Greenway Partnership, an umbrella organization of more than 100 environmental groups. "We're going to go long and we're going to go far. Wanishi [thank you]. Wanishi. Wanishi to everyone here."

The signing occurred three weeks after a group of river stewards started a monthlong canoe journey down the Delaware in Hancock, N.Y., that will end next Sunday in Cape May, N.J. Their history tied to the river, the Lenape (also known as the Delaware Indians) have teamed with environmental groups, churches, historical societies and others



Stew Schrauger Special to The Morning Call
JOHN CILMI of Unity Church of Sussex County, N.J., signs the Treaty of Renewed Brotherhood with the Lenape Nation Saturday.

of Allentown did so on behalf of her parents, Ed and MaryAnn Kobble of Phillipsburg, who have been active in preserving the river.

Jeffrey Schmoyer, owner of Bachmann Publik House in Easton, also signed. Schmoyer's wife, Cherie, is a descendent of the Lenape. But Schmoyer's signing had more to do with his business, which, he said, is the only tavern still standing in Northampton County where treaties were signed during the French and Indian War.

Valid until 2006, the Brotherhood Treaty requires a periodic recommitment of its principles. Each generation will get several chances to sign the document and to remember its mission, McNutt said.

The treaty calls for recogni-

It also calls for the creation of a Lenape cultural center, the continuation of the Lenape language and customs and a commitment to protect the tribe's sacred land sites.

"We want to give our children something strong to grab onto, instead of grabbing at threads to try to figure out who they are," said Jim Beer, Lenape spokesman.

The treaty is a big first step for the tribe, which has traditionally kept its practices private. Chief Robert Redhawk of Norristown noted that popular culture has chipped away at Lenape traditions, leaving fewer tribal people who speak the language and understand the symbols.

Wearing a bear-tooth necklace around his Ralph Lauren Polo shirt, braided hair and

TREATY
FROM PAGE B3

Groups honor friendship with treaty

modern. With the treaty, the tribe has opened its society to the non-Lenape in the hopes that they will work together to keep the Lenape culture alive.

Some are skeptical. Tribal councilman Wayne Standing Wolf Posten of Southampton noted that all of the 22 treaties signed by the Lenape have been broken.

In taking up the pen, Poste said, "Today, with a little skepticism, I hope that this treaty never gets broken."

The Lenape have a right to be cautious. Many would say they were robbed in the so-called Walking Purchase of 1737, where the tribe lost nearly 1,200 square miles through the scheming of Penn's son, Thomas. The loss occurred when the Lenape reluctantly agreed to abide by the terms of a suspiciously written treaty that had Penn acquiring all the land that could be covered in a day and a half's walk. Penn hired runners to cover the territory, surprising the Indians, who had expected them to walk and stop for meals. The runners snatched much of Pike, Carbon, Monroe, Northampton and Bucks counties for Penn.

The event strained relations between whites and Indians and splintered the Lenape tribe.

Putting the past behind them, those who renewed the Brotherhood Treaty spoke of new era of good feelings between Lenape and non-Lenape.

McNutt vowed, "I'll honor the treaty until my heart stops beating."