



## Eelūnaapéewi Lahkéewiit Council

# REPORT

## LENAPE DELEGATION VISIT TO NEW YORK

April 24 – 28, 2019

### Purpose

Last Fall (2018), Council representatives were invited to New York for a seminar that would look to Eelūnaapéewi Lahkéewiit Council's participation with the New York-Newark Public Library History Project (NYN-PHP) that would look to recognizing the historic significance of oldest and original people of the Manhattan Island, Staten Island and, Long Island, the Hudson River and New Jersey regions. These areas are the ancestral homelands of the Lenape peoples.

Resulting from the Fall trip, the Council representatives indicated that we needed to return to the two sites where our Lenape ancestors were laid to rest and massacred, respectfully. During this recent trip from April 24-28, 2019, the Council delegation was to honour and acknowledge our ancestors by providing a pipe ceremony, singing and a feast for our ancestors at **Burial Ridge** in the Lunaapeew language. Then to **Pavonia** for some introspective time of smudging, laying tobacco and singing for our ancestors who were massacred at this site.



Photo taken from the Empire State Building in Manhattan, New York

### Ceremonies

As this was not an open public event, a pipe ceremony was held at Burial Ridge by our Lenape delegation and in the presence of representatives from the Ramapoo Lenaape Nation; the New York Newark – Public History Project representatives; and the Ward's Point Conservation Park staff.

All had stood around the circle while a small fire was lit and the preparations of getting the community pipe ready. The pipe acknowledged the four directions, the sky, mother earth and the heart. Then a youth assisted in passing the community pipe to each participant. During this portion of ceremony, the waves from the river came washing up onto the shore, the wind breezed through the trees and the birds started their songs. Each of us felt that the ancestors were telling us that they had heard and came to join us. Then the ancestors were feasted with strawberries, blueberries and the traditional white corn. To conclude, honour songs were done. Once cooled, the fire's ashes were collected to be brought back for future ceremonies to held at Burial Ridge.

## Day One Reflections

Amazing day started with bus ride to Park in New Jersey where many of our ancestors died in one way or another. There we meet a few other Lunaapeew from the area. An introduction was done in the main building with greetings delivered by Chief Stonefish about the purpose of our visit. We trekked through the trails to the burial place. Once there, we found a good spot and proceeded to set up for our ceremony. It was amazing our language students spoke to the lands and ancestors. We acknowledged and helped the ancestors, to ensure they got home as intended. We had a fire, a pipe ceremony and feast food and sang songs. It was super empowering.

“To be on the same land where our ancestors had lived, gathered, hunted, fished, played and died.” – Chief Denise Stonefish

“Going home is always a great experience. Every time I visit there is so much more to take in and learn. This journey was about our ancestors and our relationship.” – Councillor Gord Peters

This ceremony, at Burial Ridge, acknowledging our Lunaapeew ancestors was very emotional for everyone.



### **Eelünaapéewi Lakhéewiit Delegation and Ramapoo Lenaape Nation**

#### *Front Row, left to right*

Zander Stonefish; ??; ??; Angela Noah, *Language Student*; Sherry Huff, *Councillor*; Denise Stonefish, *Chief*; Gord Peters, *Councillor*; Kaylene Noah, *Language Student*.

#### *Back Row, left to right*

??; Vincent Man, *Turtle Clan Chief*; Brent Stonefish, *Councillor*; Greg Lynch

*Absent from pic:* Hannah Stonefish

## Wards Point Archaeological Site

It is located within the Ward’s Point Conservation Park on Staten Island. It is the most southern point of Staten Island. This site has been known since 1858, when human remains were first unearthed in the area. It is one of the largest and best-preserved sites for studying American Indian people (Lenape) in the New York area. This site is located in the Borough of Staten Island.

## Burial Ridge

This a Native American archaeological site and burial ground that was used by the Lenape dating from the Woodland period until relinquishing Staten Island to the Dutch. It is the largest pre-European burial ground in New York City.

This place is ideally located at the junction of the Raritan and the Mahicannituck, or Hudson River. Lenape came here every summer where the right mixture of land and waters had created the richest oyster beds in the world. It was a great place to gather together and to harvest oysters.



The Dutch attacked the Lenape in 1640 and took the lands. The colonists started to block the traditional Lenape trails to the seaside. Even the British colonial governors deeded a thousand acres to a Christopher Billops in 1667. By European law, the lands, waters and the oysters were the private property of the Dutch and English.

***Shell Midden*** - This archaeological feature consists of oyster shells. Some shell middens are directly associated with villages because they relate to day-to-day human life. Oysters which were an important food source for the Lenape.

John Kilcullen, the current NYC Park Ranger has kept both the Archaeological and Burial Ridge from “pot hunters” (pottery) and is wanting to honour the Lenape here. Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing how many recreational diggers that have broken ground here, nor is there any idea of the extent of the burials located here.

A suggestion such as building a Lenape long house for educational purposes and has the support of both John and his Staten Island NYC Parks Supervisor. Another suggestion is to find a way to have this area designated as a national historical landmarks site through the U.S. National Park Service. A designation such as this could protect the site and limit any developments; or the preservation of historical cemeteries.

## Kieft’s War

The colonists had lived in piece with the Native Americans for nearly two decades and in doing so, became friends, business partners (fur trading). These colonists disagreed and resisted Kieft’s Indian initiatives.

Resulting from New Netherland not being profitable for the Dutch West India Company, Kieft tried to reduce costs by soliciting more goods (tribute) from the Lenape and they had refused. In retaliation, Kieft charged the Lenape with a crime of stealing pigs and sent a troop of 100 men to Pavonia.

During Kieft's administration, his personal genocidal war against Native Americans saw more than a thousand massacred men, women and children.

### **Pavonia Massacre**

Governor Willem Kieft launched a preemptive attack against the Lenape camping at Pavonia and indiscriminately slaughtered Lenape women, children, elders while sleeping. Approximately, 100 – 120 Lenape died at the hands of the Dutch here in Pavonia. This night time attack united the tribes of New Jersey, the Hudson River and Long Island against the Dutch settlers. This also was the start of Kieft's War.



This massacred site is presently located in Liberty State Park (Staten Island).

*As seen from One World Observatory – June 2015 (By MusikAnimal – Own work, CC by-SA 4.0)*

### ***Day Two Reflections***

We traveled to Pavonia, the site where more than a hundred of women children and men were slaughtered by the Dutch. Here we lit a smudge burned tobacco and sang songs to honour our peoples and let them know they will never be forgotten by their relatives. It was both a mix of emotionally hurtful and commitment.

Jack Tchen, from Rutgers University, told us the story of what happened and provided some information for further study.

### **New York-Newark Public Library History Project**

This potential five-year project will plan and build a base that will collaborate with the widely dispersed original people of the region. Some of the Lenape still remain in the area, but centuries of long relocations and war have Lenape living in Ontario, Wisconsin, Oklahoma and elsewhere.

This project will gather Lenape back to the homeland to share their history of being dispossessed of their homeland; their stories of colonialism and enslavement; their relationship to this territory today; and etc. By doing this, the project will:

- a) recognize the sovereignty and the deep connections to the homelands
- b) recognize our continuing presence

- c) recognize the need for a truth, acknowledgement, reparation and reckoning process
- d) research the ongoing impacts of dispossession, enslavement and ecological trauma
- e) address the ongoing public struggle for equitable true stories (past and future)

As a part of the NYN-PHP goals, it was to also seek understanding of the 500 years of human and environmental costs exacted by dispossession and enslavement; trade and extraction; settler colonialism and violence; and, to understand the unresolved legacy of post-contact regional metropolis building and ecological havoc.



**New York-Newark Public History Project  
representatives:**

Along with Chief Denise Stonefish, (*left to right*)

Noa Fuller, *co-teaches the Lenape Way Course at Rutgers-Newark University*

Kerry Hardy, *independent researcher, mapper for NY-NPHP project*

Jack Tchen, *historian, curator and writer*

Jessica Hernandez, *Rutgers alumni, administrative support for NY-NPHP*

The Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewit Delegation were taken to the following sites listed below (except for Corlears Hook Park).

**Collect Pond**

This pond was an inland freshwater source that was a 60-foot deep pool that was fed by an underground spring. The southwestern shore of the Collect Pond was the settlement of a small Munsee (Lenape) and until the establishment of the Dutch settlement, New Amsterdam.

Prior to the American Revolution, this was the main freshwater supply. Then, New Amsterdam built various commercial enterprises along the shores of the pond. Such as slaughterhouses, breweries, tanneries and pottery work. These businesses contributed to the pollution of the pond (which included dumping of dead animals) by the contaminated wastewater flowed back into the pond.

The pond no longer exists as it was filled in (1810) and homes were built on this reclaimed land. In 1960, a portion of the former site of Collect Pond was converted into a park.

Presently, it is a city park called "Collect Pond Park" and is located within Chinatown.

**African Burial Ground & Museum**

A research excavation found intact human skeletal remains located 30 feet below the city's street level on Broadway. These skeletal remains were of enslaved and free Africans who lived and worked in colonial New York. This burial ground altered the understanding surrounding enslavement and its contribution to constructing New York City. This burial ground dates from middle 1630s to 1795.

The enslaved Africans provided essential labour for the growth and development of New Amsterdam's city infrastructure. Broadway, once an indigenous trail, was cleared and widened. Houses, municipal buildings, and fortifications were constructed. Current day Wall Street was a stockade built from the East River to the Hudson River with work from enslaved labor. Enslaved Africans cut timber, worked on farms and protected the colony. Current Stone Street situated in Lower Manhattan was the first street in the new colony constructed of paving stones by the work of enslaved Africans.

Located just off of Broadway, between Dean and Reade Street.

### **Museum of Chinese in America**

This museum is organized chronologically and starting with the earliest documented arrivals of voluntary or forced Chinese immigrants in New York City throughout the 1800s and had settled in Lower Manhattan. It takes you through the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Civil Rights era and the immigration reform of 1965. Visitors are taken through the marginalization of a class of citizens whereby the path to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was made difficult for Chinese Americans, even after they were granted citizenship.

### **Corlears Hook Park**

While the Lenape delegation did not get to visit Corlears Hook Park, this area was originally marshland that was used by the Lenape to land their canoes off of the East River. This park is named after a Dutch family that owned the land in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the area became the home to shipbuilders.

## ***Day Three Reflections***

We trekked to place in the city that was once a huge Lake and the source of water and food for our peoples. As more Europeans arrived, they gradually started to negatively impact the lake. After the Dutch attacks, they built a wall to protect themselves. Meanwhile the lake was getting more polluted.

After the British arrived, they tore down the wall thereby creating Wall Street. This paved the way for industry to pollute while residents threw garbage and dead animals in the lake. As it was no longer viable the City decided to fill in the lake, starting with fresh fill and eventually anything they had. Today, it's called the Collect Pond Park.

We also went to the African-American museum that told of the slave era in New York. Next, we visited an interactive facility that showed the evolution of the Chinese in America.

Both the blacks and Chinese are natural allies in our work to bring greater attention to our place in our homelands.

## Conclusion

In regards to the New York-Newark History Project, the documentation of the Lenape history of our removal from our traditional homelands will be archived, either via “the cloud” or physically housed at the Rutgers University or at a Lenape specific building in Manhattan.

The Eelūnaapéewi Lahkéewiit Council agreed to participate in this project so that the Lenape peoples can once again have a voice and a presence in their original homelands. So that “We, the Lenape People have not disappeared but are back!! (*George Stonefish Willis*)”.

In visiting the different museums, it provided us with a visual as to how our future interpretative centre can be set up.

Overall, the visit to the traditional homelands of the Eelūnaapéewi Lahkéewiit to honour and acknowledge our ancestors through ceremony was marked with different emotional observations. This could be viewed as bringing into harmony with ourselves, our Ramapoo Lenape brothers and sisters, our Eelūnaapéewi Lahkéewiit, the land and the re-connection to our ancestors. It was indicated that there will be a return for ceremonies for the land and waters.

Many anushiiks to the representatives of the New York-Newark Public History Project representatives who arranged our transportation to the aforementioned sites and for the Malaysian meal.

## Final Reflection

This journey was enjoyed immensely by all and know the diligence by our Community to strengthen our place. Language is a key factor that absolutely must not only continue . . . but, advanced as a priority for the children and families alike.

Anushiik to Councillor Gord Peters for providing the Reflections.

On behalf of the Eelūnaapéewi Lahkéewiit Delegation,

Denise Stonefish  
Kihkay (Chief)