Hidden in Plain Sight: The American Indian Movement and the Revival of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, 1969-1982

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The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape are an American Indian tribe from the southern New Jersey, specifically the Cumberland and Salem counties. Their headquarters are based in Bridgeton, New Jersey. This tribe, resulting from the intermarriage of Lenape and Nanticoke people, currently advocates for the well-being of their people and Native Americans, in general, with great pride. With permanent seats on the New Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs and their very own Co-Chief acting as Commissioner Chair, this tribe works to "further understanding of New Jersey's American Indian history and culture."[1] They also aim to achieve this goal with their annual pow-wow, a Native American cultural festival, which is open to the public and in Woodstown, NJ.[2] In 2014, tribal members partnered with the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology to inform their "Native American Voices" exhibit and continue to promote the presence of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people.[3] However, this community's native identity had not always been fervently championed.

From the eighteenth century, tribes on the East Coast were forced westward and north, but the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people remained hidden in plain sight on their native lands, to which they had been tied to for over 10,000 years.[4] Parents taught their children to hide their native heritage in hopes that they would not be forced from their home as well. Generation after generation, fewer and fewer children were aware of their nativeness. The Lenape traditions, language, and cultural practices which had only been passed down orally were beginning to fade away. By the 1960's, what started off as a survival tactic to cope with white encroachment metamorphosed into an everyday part of life and as a result, this tight-knit community's Native identity had been displaced. Outside communities frequently placed the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape in the categories of colored or white, as the binary understanding of race during this time period allowed for nothing else. Within the community, their Native roots were ignored by some, kept a secret by others, and forgotten by many. Many people within the community did not know more than the fact that they were not black and that they were not white.

In the late 1960's and '70's, American Indian Movement, also known AIM, began to grab the attention of Americans across the country and spread the message that being Native American was something to be proud of, "with that pride, there was hope where there was little before."[5] While AIM is well-known for its dedication to the plight of Native people in the Western United States, the impact of this movement for tribes on the East Coast is often overlooked. The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribe was repressed by a problematic system of American binary racial attitudes; the movement, with its

encouragement of Native existence and pride, along with Pan-Indianism, unity amongst all tribes, acted as a driving factor in the revival of the Eastern Woodland tribe, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape. In the early 1970's, the few families that secretly acknowledged their Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape heritage worked to reverse the loss of their traditions and identity, reunify the community and retain a collective recognition of being Native American and a pride in that ancestry.[6] However, this revitalization would not have been possible if it were not for the political atmosphere of the time.

Scholarship regarding the American Indian Movement predominantly focuses on the organization in relation to its involvement and impact on the West Coast. This is not surprising as the founders of the organization were from the Western United States, and therefore had a major focus on and understood the plight of Native people in that area. There are some useful sources for this particular thesis, such as *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement* by Dennis Banks and *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* by Paul Chaat Smith. These sources discuss the driving factors of the American Indian Movement and the organization's greatest contributions to Indian Country, the general consensus being the resurrection of Native Pride. Still, the scope of AIM's influence is missing in historiography regarding AIM. Their advocacy for Native Pride resonated with many Eastern Woodland tribes, such as the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape.

What the general public and scholars know about the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people is limited, as they spent much of the 19th and 20th century in hiding. They largely kept their identities undisclosed in an effort to remain on their ancestral lands and avoid discrimination. There has been historiography regarding the Nanticoke tribe of Indian River Hundred, Delaware, a tribe related closely to the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape ancestrally, geographically, and therefore characteristically. However, scholarship regarding the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribe of New Jersey, especially their experience in the 20th century, is almost nonexistent. The most modern references come from the early 1980's. Further, much of what is documented about this tribe in the twentieth century was done from a present-day perspective. The experiences of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape were recounted as they were occurring, therefore, there have been no in-depth analyses of the events. This has been a major gap in historical scholarship as the cultural revitalization of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape is not uncommon among Native tribes, being quite prevalent on the East Coast.

Clinton Albert Weslager, better known as C.A. Weslager, was a Delawarean accountant turned historian who wrote extensively about the Lenape and Nanticoke tribes within Delaware. This tribe relates closely to the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape characteristically because of their close geographical and ancestral ties. Weslager is one of the few scholars to write about the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape of Bridgeton, NJ.

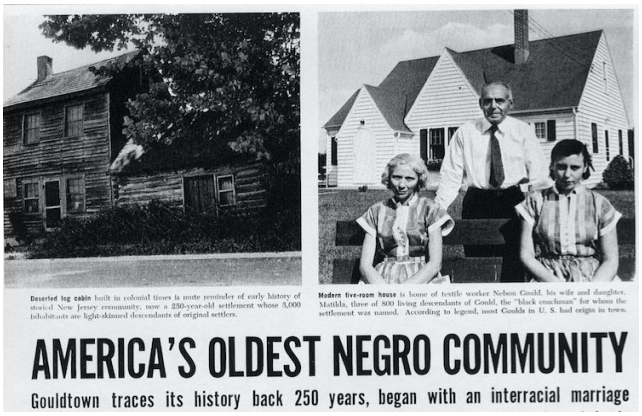
Weslager's *The Nanticoke Indians: Past and Present,* is an in-depth history of the Nanticoke tribe from their first encounter with John Smith in 1608, all the way to 1982, the author's present-day. Most importantly, Weslager briefly mentions the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape of New Jersey, the subject of this thesis, towards the end of his book. C.A. Weslager, even being invited to the tribe's second major gathering in July 1980, had a fairly close relationship to the community and recounts the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape's revival as a native community in the late 1970's and 1980's. This source provides specific details, such as the dates in which the community held gatherings, powwows, and meetings. This type of information was difficult to obtain through the oral sources for this thesis, as many interviewees have forgotten the exact dates of their actions and simply relay the order of events.

Since secondary sources regarding the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape are limited, a multitude of oral histories from their tribal members have been absolutely essential to this thesis. The sources of these oral histories predominantly include leaders of the tribe's revival, as well as people within the tribal community who were not active in the movement but were made aware of their Native identity as a result of it. Local newspapers, such as the now discontinued *Bridgeton Evening News*, have also become an important primary resource. They have provided insight into the socio-political atmosphere within southern New Jersey, as well as evidence for the area's awareness of the American Indian Movement's activism.

The pressures of white encroachment, as well as the diseases that came as a result of European settlers like the Dutch, Swedes, and English quickly resulted in most Lenape people being pushed from their homelands. The area of southern New Jersey which the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape call home, Cumberland and Salem counties, is a flat, low-lying coastal territory, an ideal setting for their ancestors to fish, hunt, and farm.[7] Along with the land's rich resources, it was and still is sacred to the Lenape who have been tied to it for over 10,000 years. From the 18th century, many Native people saw no other choice but to go westward or north into Canada, yet some decided to remain on their ancestral grounds. Often referred to as "the keepers of the land," the Nanticoke-Lenni Lenape maintained a series of behavioral changes to protect themselves from removal and to cope with the racial discrimination and persecution often afforded to Indian people.[8] They did their best to assimilate to the increasingly dominant society, as a result, many began to hold their own individual tracts of land to farm as white settlers did around them. After generations of discrimination and persecution, most parents taught their children to keep to themselves, emphasized familial connections, and to the best of their ability remained separate from the surrounding society. Consequently, it became a societal transgression to marry "outsiders," although some people did so. The Nanticoke tribe of Indian River Hundred, Delaware, maintained a similar separation from the other communities living in southern Delaware. Their

separation was further widened by Whites' perception of them as mulatto or "mixed-bloods," in effect "they experienced the same cultural and spatial segregation and treatment accorded" to people of color.[9] Due to the similarities between this tribe and the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, it is quite possible that this phenomenon also created a divide between the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape and their surrounding white communities. The members of this tribe also avoided association with the black people in the surrounding area in order to avoid the hindrances and challenges that came with being labeled as Colored. Most importantly though, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people ensured their well-being by keeping their Indian identity a secret. Witnessing the removal and persecution of their close relatives, parents within the tribe protected their children by not discussing their heritage with them and in the next generation, those kids did the same to their children. "My grandmother was taught to be quiet and 'Don't talk that Indian talk.' So, ya know…. you learned to keep your mouth shut," tells Theo Braunskill of the nearby Lenape Tribe of Delaware, another community closely related to the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape.[10]

By not claiming an Indigenous identity, these community members were arbitrarily placed in a variety of racial categories throughout the early twentieth century. At this time, America was a biracial society, one could be White, Colored, or when offered as an option on an official document, one could be "Other." Tribal members with straighter hair and lighter skin often passed as White in hopes of economic prosperity and less racial discrimination. Much of the community knew they weren't white and were sure they weren't black, so when they were put in a situation where they had to choose a racial identity, they often just chose "Other." Colloquially, identifiers such as "Moor" and "Yellow" were occasionally used for the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape community, although the usage was much more prevalent in reference to their Lenape and Nanticoke relatives in Southern Delaware.[11] With the lack of a tribal organization in the Bridgetown area, it was quite common of census takers, school authorities and other government officials to record the people within the community as Negro or Colored. Often official documents such as birth and death certificates stated the same. It was quite uncommon for tribal members to challenge the labels decided upon by authorities.[12] Eventually, these labels led to a popular belief that the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribe was a colored community, the oldest colored community in America, in fact. In February of 1952, *Ebony* magazine released an article called, "America's Oldest Negro Community," detailing the history and interworkings of



Deserted log cabin built in colonial times is mute reminder of early history of storied New Jersey community, now a 250-year-old settlement whose 3,000 inhabitants are light-skinned descendants of original settlers.

Modern five-room house is home of textile worker Nelson Gould, his wife and daughter, Matilda, three of 800 living descendants of Gould, the "black cochman" for whom the settlement was named. According to legend, most Goulds in U. S. had origin in town.

AMERICA'S OLDEST NEGRO COMMUNITY

Gouldtown traces its history back 250 years, began with an interracial marriage

Gouldtown, NJ.

Figure : "America's Oldest Negro Community," Ebony, February 1952, 42.

The author explains how Gouldtown has been called the oldest colored settlement in America, proudly claiming the unbroken continuity of the town's main families, like the Goulds and the Pierces, for 250 years.[13] Today, these family names are proudly claimed by the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribe.[14]

Being reclassified within an assortment of racial categories was a major factor in the loss of this community's Lenape identity. This was a common occurrence for tribal communities along the east coast, "Native American identity has been badly shattered and then rebuilt, as it were, along new (and often false) lines."[15] This became an issue that the American Indian Movement would later work to rectify, even with the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, using an East Coast-based project known as "The Resurrection of Indians on the East."[16]

By 1960, the Native identity of Nanticoke-Lenni Lenape had been shaken. Silence and racial miscategorization left many people within the community unaware of their heritage and wondering, "Who am I?" Unfortunately, discussion of identity became taboo in this community, as a result, that question was rarely asked out-loud. On occasion though, curiosity overpowered societal norms and someone, usually the youth, would query their identity. They were hardly ever met with an answer. Mark Gould, the present-day chief of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, had been left in the dark about his heritage for many years. As a child, he overheard his grandmother and great-aunts having a conversation about being Native American and the hardships that came along with it.

> "I asked my Grandma about being Native after I heard what she was saying with her sisters. She told me, 'You don't need to know, that's grown-folks talk.' So one of the things I did when I was growing up was when I saw Aunt Mary and Aunt Mable coming over, I would go hide on the steps. Just so I could listen. That was the only talk about being Indian of any kind."[17]

Terry Sammons, the spiritual leader of the nearby Lenape Tribe of Delaware, had similar experiences as a child. After learning about the Indian people native to Delaware in school, Sammons began to wonder about his own identity. "*Gee wiz,* they say that there are Indians in Cheswold, we're hearing people tell us all the time, that we don't look white and that we don't look black…Well, maybe were Indians." One evening at dinner he brought this inclination to his father and "*POP!* I got popped in the mouth," Terry recalls, "You don't speak that here at this table! I don't wanna hear it!" his father scolded.[18] It was quite common in this time for older generations to clam up when questioned about their identity; many people just emulated their parents and the way in which they would have handled similar questions. Others would suppress the conversation because they simply did not have an answer to give to their children.

Many families had long forgotten their Native heritage.

Still, there were some families that managed to hold onto their heritage. Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape spiritual leader, Urie Ridgeway, remembers going to Indian Head, Maryland from a very young age to join the Piscataway people in ceremonies. His parents, Rose and Raymond Ridgeway Jr., better known by their nicknames, Sweetsie and Jimmy Flicker, had a close relationship with the Piscataway tribe of Maryland and would bring young Urie there to learn more about his Native heritage. His grandmother, however, was deeply concerned, not wanting her family to become too vocal about their American Indian ancestry. "You can't do that!" she would say, "You can't--You can't tell them that you're Indian! They'll take everything!"[19] She had been taught that her well-being relied on her ability to hide her Indianness. Her fear for her family's well-being stemmed from those lessons. Despite these forewarnings, Sweetsie and Jimmy Flicker would become instrumental advocates for the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape cultural revival.

Dissent was a critical thread sewn through the fabric of the United States in the 1960's. This socio-political climate was the perfect atmosphere for the rise of an American Indian Rights Movement. Dennis Banks, Anishinaabe Ojibwa activist, was born on April 12, 1937, at Federal Dam on Leech Lake Indian Reservation.[20] Throughout his lifetime, he witnessed countless injustices to Native people. Growing up, he was no stranger to the poverty that ravaged Indian reservations or the boarding schools that tore children from their homes and traditional ways. As a young adult, he witnessed countless episodes of police brutality towards Indian people and the incredibly high numbers of Native people in the Minnesota prison system, eventually becoming an inmate himself. During his two years in prison, Banks spent his time researching American Indian civil rights issues, as well as the sociopolitical unrest occurring throughout the entire country. He began taking an in-depth look at movements like at the Students for a Democratic Society, the Black Panthers, and the Civil Rights Movement; it was there, inside the Minnesota State Prison, that Banks decided that there would be an Indian Movement, as well. On July 28th, 1968, Banks and his friend, George Mitchell, held a meeting in a church basement to discuss issues affecting Indian communities in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They only expected forty to fifty Native people to come to the meeting. To their surprise, almost 200 gathered to voice their frustrations. Dennis Banks passionately started the meeting off:

> "People are fighting battles in the streets of Chicago. They're fighting to stop the Vietnam war and bring about changes in the political party system. They're fighting in the streets of Alabama to change the situation for Blacks. The SDS movement is trying to change the whole structure of the universities. What the hell are we going to do?

> Are we going to sit here in Minnesota and not do a goddamn thing? Are we going to go on for another two hundred years, or even another five, the way we are without doing something for our Indian people?"[21]

Accepting the status quo was no longer an option. Banks' words of unification and change resonated with Native people that night, leading to the creation of the American Indian Movement, and a rise in Indian activism working to spread Native Pride throughout the nation.[22]

The activism of American Indian Movement became well-known to United States citizens throughout the country, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape included. On November 20th, 1969, seventy-eight Native American people of different tribal origins and some Native students from Berkeley came together to occupy the Alcatraz Island, which was closed by the federal government seven years earlier. AIM quickly became involved in the demonstration which symbolized, above all else, Native empowerment and the importance of unity among all Native people. "The 1969 takeover of Alcatraz was the continuation of that 'stand up' attitude for Indian empowerment," this bold and defiant occurrence sent a message to the entire world that the myth of the "vanished Indian" would be tolerated no more.[23] On the opposite side of the country, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people were hearing these messages of Native empowerment. About two-weeks into the occupation of Alcatraz Island, the local *Bridgetown Evening News* newspaper proclaimed, "*Alcatraz Viewed as a Step Forward for Indians*." "We have been silent and turned the other cheek too damn long," Lehman Brightman, Native American civil rights activist asserted, "this is the most important event since we actually stopped warfare with white men in 1889."[24] The silence that had long held Native American people was breaking. One could suspect that this article resonated with the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, who understood the silence Lehman Brightman referenced all too well. There was a shift in the nation, Indigenous people were choosing Native Pride over silence and in the coming years, this would be a choice made by the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, as well.

As one of the first political pan-Indian movements in the country, the occupation of Alcatraz displayed how important unity would be in the strengthening of Native American tribes across the country.[25] Native people, split into isolated tribal groups, rarely came together to help each other or to create a better future for Indian Country, as a whole. Alcatraz symbolized a shift in that demeanor. The demonstration's emphasis on unity resonated in their name for themselves, "Indians of All Tribes," Native people unified and crossed tribal lines for the greater good of Indian Country.[26]

It was these messages of unity between all tribal nations, a brotherhood, that ultimately sparked the Piscataway Nation's Chief, Chief Billy Red Wing Tayac's involvement in the American Indian Movement. While Tayac was enjoying a

meal at a fast food restaurant in Washington D.C., a long-haired Native American man, clad in a leather jacket, headband, and choker, walked in and introduced himself to him. The man's name was Gene; he was a Wisconsinite of the Oneida Nation. "You're an Indian, aren't ya?" Gene said. Once Tayac confirmed his suspicion, Gene boldly responded, "Well then, I want you to buy me something to eat." [27]

"What the *hell* did you just say?!—Why should I buy you something to eat?"

"Because you're my brother, we're all related. I don't have any money to eat, I'm asking you as a brother to get me something to eat." Impressed by Gene's guts, Tayac bought him a meal. Together, the two ate their meals and started to chat. Gene was in D.C. volunteering with the American Indian Movement.

"Who the hell are they?" Tayac asked.

"They're the future, brother—It's about saving our people." Gene then invited him to George Washington University where George Mitchell, the co-founder of AIM, would be speaking the following evening. [28]

"*Man,* I don't have time for that jazz," Tayac responded. Although he liked what Gene had to say about the movement, he had work the next night, along with a wife and kids to provide for. Tayac gave Gene his business card, in case he was ever in town again, and the two went their separate ways. By chance, on the next night, Billy's scheduled appointments were canceled. He was just about to head home when Gene pulled up outside his job offering, once again, to bring Tayac to hear George Mitchell speak. This AIM activist's speech changed Tayac's life.

> "He said things I never heard said before in my life. He talked about the genocide of Indian people, he said there is not just only physical genocide but there is paper genocide. Where they take your identity on a piece of paper, a birth certificate, or driver's license, or whatever. People are being eradicated from history."[29]

Since then, Chief Tayac has been involved in countless AIM Movements, striving to reverse the eradication of Native identity on the East Coast. He soon would head an AIM program known as "Resurrection of Indians on the East," which aided "Indian remnant" communities from Massachusetts to Florida who, just like the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, had lost their Indigenous identity. Chief Tayac was able to successfully provide each tribal community with an emotional support system, information about their heritage, and emphasize messages of Native Pride. "Indians lied dormant. They never had anybody to fight," Tayac says, "The AIM movement came along and there was a sense of pride. There was a wind blowing and people got swept up in it. People really did their best to help other people." The same sense of unity and brotherhood that brought Chief Tayac to AIM, was also a huge factor in the revival of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape. People helped each other in hopes of bettering Indian Country, as a whole.[30]

Around 1970, a young man by the name of Mark Gould began having difficulty finding work as a carpenter in his hometown. As a result, he and his wife, Phyllis, temporarily moved to Maryland and eventually, Gould found himself in Piscataway territory. After attending some of their community dinners that he ran into Billy Tayac. “Mark, what are you doing for your people?” Tayac asked. It was then that Billy Tayac began to explain the ancestry of the Lenape, Nanticoke, and Piscataway people to him. They were all descendants of the Lenape; they were all related. Mark Gould was aware of the Nanticokes in Indian River Hundred, Delaware, but he had never ventured to the community. After learning more about his ancestry and close ties with the tribe, Mark Gould, his wife, Phyllis, along with her sister, Betty and her husband, Harry Jackson, ventured down to meet with the Nanticoke people. The members the Nanticoke Tribe quickly realized how closely they were related. As a result, they to the tribal rolls. Having a reputation of being quite closed off to outsiders, the Nanticoke tribe’s acceptance provided Mark Gould with the reassurance that he was on the right path and would not be in this process alone. Subsequently, where ever they could find space—each other’s basements, the Greenwich Firehouse or in local motorcycle clubs—a few Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape families began meeting with each together to discuss reviving their community’s collective recognition of their Indigenous heritage.

With the American Indian Movement emphasizing the importance of unity amongst all tribal nations, the leaders within the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribe were in an ideal socio-political atmosphere to seek out assistance from other Native communities as they worked to revive their own. “We asked for help and it opened up a whole new world,” Mark Gould recalls. That aid often came from the people of the Piscataway Tribe of Maryland. “They knew a lot of our culture and they were able to preserve some of it and they taught us. We would then bring it back to our community, or they would come up and talk to people in the community,” the current Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Co-Chief, Sonny Pierce, remembers. Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape families began to travel to Maryland to learn more about their heritage, the Piscataway tribe having been born out of the Lenape centuries before. Billy Tayac had his own property there in Maryland, where they all could get together, sing, talk, and practice certain ceremonies without interference. This was also an ideal location for teaching certain Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people the ways of a spiritual leader. With the Chief of the Piscataway Nation, Billy Tayac, being an incredibly active member and fervent supporter of AIM, the movement also became a topic of frequent discussion. Many members of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape eventually became members of AIM, as well. The people of the Piscataway tribe would also travel to southern New Jersey. Their children could play together, while Piscataway tribal members shared their knowledge with the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape. An array of customs and traditions were discussed, such as sweat

lodges and the Sun Dance, a ceremony native to the Plains Indians but adopted all throughout Indian Country, as a result of the unification of Native peoples during the Red Power Movement. During their weekend visits, Piscataway tribal members would go to the homes of those Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people who were unaware of or afraid to claim their Native heritage. Over time, there was a visible increase in the interest to reunify throughout the community. This Piscataway Tribe was more than willing to do all they could to help them come together and to break the pattern of silence that had gripped the community for so long. The encouragement and aid of the Piscataway people were particularly helpful to the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribal revival.[31]

In an effort to learn more about their heritage, tribal members, such as Mark Gould and Sonny Pierce followed the trails their Lenape relations had previously trekked when they were pushed from their homelands in the 18th and 19th centuries. This journey led them to the Delaware Tribe of Indians in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, the name "Delaware" being a commonly used synonym for "Lenape." The tribes were like two estranged siblings reunited and unified after years of separation. While driving through Bartlesville, Mark Gould and Sonny Pierce were surprised to see Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape family names printed on various street signs in the area. "We saw Pierce, Jackson, Carney!" exclaimed Mark Gould, "They had almost all of our names." Beyond just sharing names, Sonny and Mark soon realized that there were many physical similarities between their people and the Delaware of Bartlesville. "Now this is the scary part," Mark Gould recalled, "When we went to Oklahoma, we went to a gathering. We were staring at this woman and we didn't even realize we were staring. So she came over and asked what we wanted. We told her, you look *just* like Sonny's sister!" The prevalence of shared family names and the similarities between their appearances made their ancestral connections ever more evident, reinforcing the unity between the two communities. This allowed for a more open sharing of sacred cultural practices. Having already been pushed from their ancestral lands, the people of Bartlesville could more openly claim their Lenape heritage without fear of "re-removal." For these reasons, they were commonly referred to as the "Keepers of the Tradition," whereas the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape were referred to as the "Keepers of the Land." The Oklahoma Delaware Tribe of Indians taught the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people traditional dances, various Lenape songs, as well as the art of crafting and playing the water-drum. After establishing a close relationship, the two tribes have continued to visit each other's communities and preserves close ties.[32]

The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape's will to revive their lost traditions also lead them to the Delaware Nation at Moravian 47 Indian Reserve in Chatham-Kent, Ontario, known simply as Moraviantown. On an Indian reserve, the people of Moraviantown were better able to preserve their Lenape ceremonies and cultural practice, hence they

were an ideal source of information for the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape. Upon their arrival, Mark Gould and Sonny Pierce were asked to join in a sweat lodge ceremony. It was there that they learned the extent of their common ancestry with the community. Family names that were prevalent in the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape community, such as Durham, were also quite common in Moravian 47 Indian Reserve. Once their close relationship was established, the two communities frequently invited one another to their tribal territories for gatherings where the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people could continue to learn from the Delaware people. "For at least forty years, people have been coming into our community specifically to bring stuff back," says Mark Gould.[33] The unity promoted by the American Indian Movement created a Pan-Indian cultural trading system. People of all different tribal origins were sharing their ceremonies, songs, language, and dances. This atmosphere was an ideal setting for the revival of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people, with a myriad of tribes openly supporting their "Indian brothers," the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape could revive their lost traditions, essential for creating pride amongst their people.

Many visiting tribes would travel throughout southern New Jersey and visit the homes of Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape families to educate those who were not aware of their Indigenous heritage. Families who did recognize their ancestry were persuaded to openly and pridefully discuss it, despite the fact that this discussion went against generations of teachings in the area. While this was successful to some extent, this area was steeped in societal norms that had caused them to be communally oriented and incredibly private. Therefore, it was important to have a trusted member from within the community to act as an educator, as well.

This role was filled by Raymond Ridgeway Jr, who owned a plumbing and heating supply business in Bridgeton. He was well-known and respected by many people in the area.[34] Ridgeway was known to all by his nickname, Jimmy Flicker. His occupation, master plumber, required him to frequent the homes of countless families within the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape community and as a result, Jimmy Flicker knew everyone and everyone knew him. Well-aware of the impact he could have, active participants of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape revival quickly sought out Jimmy Flicker to aid them. "They spoke to him and he agreed to go and speak to the families," his son, Urie Ridgeway says, "He knew everyone."

The word was spreading; a collective recognition of their Native heritage was becoming ever more prevalent for Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape families in the area. In effect, on August 7th, 1978, "The New Jersey people finally decided to organize formally and incorporate under the name of the Nanticoke-Lenni Lenape Indians of New Jersey, Inc."[35] The incorporators would be Mark Gould, Harry Jackson, Carol Gould, Marion Gould, and Edith Peirce. Along with the incorporation, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape also drafted bylaws and on December 16, 1978, they held an official

election in which tribal members chose nine officers, including the Tribal Chairman or Chief. The elected were as followed: [36]

Tribal Chairman: Mark Gould
Assistant Tribal Chairman: Harry S. Jackson
Secretary: Marion Gould
Treasurer: Carol Gould

Members at Large:
Mary Ward
Raymond Ridgeway
Phyllis Gould
Edith Pierce
Frank Munson

Efforts to revive the tribe were becoming increasingly organized, be that is it may, in order to truly come together and maintain a collective recognition of the Native heritage, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape would need a permanent location where they could meet, educate themselves and their children, and partake in various cultural activities. For this reason, the organization began to rent a small storefront on 28 E. Commerce Street, Bridgeton, NJ, which became their tribal headquarters. The location of the headquarters, on a main street in the center of Bridgeton, NJ, acted as an effective way of advertising the active Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribe. Many people passed it, came in to buy Native crafts or ask questions, and resultantly, became familiar with the Native community. To pay the rent, telephone bills, maintenance, and other expenses, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape relied mostly on donations and community fundraisers, such as cake sales.[37] According to C.A. Weslager's *The Nanticoke Indians—Past and Present,* the tribal community also began to benefit "from modest CETA funds administered by the Native American Cultural Center in Medford, New Jersey, the prime recipient of government grants to assist the New Jersey Indians."[38] A few years later, a dress shop down the street from 28 E. Commerce Street went for sale. The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape jumped at the opportunity to own their own building, paying $18,000 dollars for it on February 2nd, 1983. Much of the community was overjoyed to have finally attained a truly permanent tribal headquarters and storefront where they could meet and sell Native American art and crafts. Yet, volunteers from the tribe would have to spend quite some time fixing the leaky roof and installing new walls and floors before the building would be fully functional. This location, 18 E. Commerce Street, has been their tribal headquarters up to present day.[39]

In the summer of 1978, the American Indian Movement organized the "Longest Walk," a Treaties Rights' protest march symbolic of the forced removal of American Indians from their homelands. The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people, a number becoming members of AIM by this point, did all they could to support the event.[40] Various members opened up their homes to Native American activists in need of lodging during the Longest Walk. The protest, defending the rights of Indigenous people, also became a great way for the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape to build relationships and connections with tribal

communities and people throughout Indian Country, some of whom would become guests at the future Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape gatherings and pow-wows.

As the recognition of their Native heritage increased, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape began to institute tribal gatherings and public pow-wows for the purpose of educating their own community and the surrounding public about their existence and heritage. The gatherings were an ideal way to strengthen the feeling of community within the tribe and the pow-wows were a perfect platform to educate the surrounding public about the tribe. Their first major tribal gathering occurred on the weekend of June 20-22, 1979. Held on the property of a Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape couple, Lorraine and Carl Pierce, the gathering was attended by several hundred Native American people.[41] Attendees included Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribal members and many members from outside tribes, such as the Abenaki and Cherokee. Among the visitors was James Lone Bear Revey of the Cherokee and Delaware nations; he was a well-known advocate for Native people on the East Coast. By a large bonfire, which was kept alight for two days, Revey encouraged the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape to "keep alive the flame of an Indian consciousness in their families."[42] Lone Bear, incredibly knowledgeable on the subject of Lenape regalia, dances, and songs, also used this weekend to share such information with various Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribal members who were eager to learn. This gathering became a great opportunity for the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people and friends from outside tribes to come together, dance, sing, pray and learn from one another. The gathering was also a chance to have a good time. Once the sun set and the cultural festivities died down, some attendees would break out a bottle of corn liquor and a radio, partying together in the field until late in the evening.

One year later on July 19th and 20th, 1980, a second gathering was held, again, on the Pierce property near Quinton, New Jersey, a small town that is set between Bridgeton and Salem. The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape invited the mayor of Bridgeton, NJ to their gathering as a guest, here, the mayor promised, over a loudspeaker, to help the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribe gain state recognition. Historian, C.A. Weslager, was also a guest at this second gathering. He noted, "No one could have attended this gathering without being conscious of the admirable efforts being made by active members of the New Jersey organization to promote an interest in Indianism," they were even openly discussing plans for an annual powwow to occur in the coming years.[43] The tribe's enthusiasm and dedication are evident as the discussions of a pow-wow quickly metamorphosed into a bonafide event, held on October 3rd and 5th, 1981. Despite the unideal weather conditions, wet and chilly, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape's first pow-wow persevered with twenty-one Native American vendors set up booths to sell to visiting patrons.

The following year, on the weekend of October 2nd and 3rd, 1982, the Nanticoke

Lenni-Lenape held their second pow-wow at Cool Run Race Track off Route 49 in Quinton, Salem County, NJ. This event was much more successful than the first. The pow-wow, along with a craft fair and Fall festival, was advertised on a two-page spread titled "Craft Fair And Pow-Wow Highlight Weekend" in the *Bridgeton Evening News* newspaper on the day before the event. Despite the multitude of activities to choose from that weekend, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape's 2nd Annual Pow-Wow received a large number of patrons with almost 5,500 persons joining in the festivities, including tribal members. At 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, the pow-wow started with tribal dancing and drumming. There were a variety of crafters and vendors, showcasing everything from handmade beadwork to Native regalia-making to bow-drilling. There was clearly a strong focus on creating an educational and sociable experience for the southern New Jersey public, who were likely skeptical of the newly boisterous tribal community. The birth of Native American consciousness in this region "has come as a surprise to many non-Indians, who were taught as schoolchildren that Indians were either killed by European settlers or driven west to live on reservations."[44] Pow-wow organizers wanted to show that the Indigenous peoples were not like those in John Wayne Westerns. "We need to communicate with the non-Indian public that we're not the Indians they see on TV," said Mark Quiet Hawk Gould to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1984 while discussing the purpose of the tribe's annual pow-wow.[45] The pow-wow admission was free, likely to encourage more visitors. The program included an educational film about "American Indians Today," bonfires and story-telling, and Saturday afternoon chicken barbeque, which all facilitated understanding, discussion, and goodwill between the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people and the New Jersey public.[46]

The gatherings and pow-wows also provided an opportunity to involve the tribal youth. In an effort to pique their interests, a tribal princess competition was put in place in which young women, ages fifteen to twenty, would compete for the title of Miss Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape. Other tribes had seen a lot of success with youth activities such as these and passed the idea on to the people of southern New Jersey, yet another example of the pan-Indian unity, a willingness to help and support other Native communities, that was prevalent in the years of the Red Power Movement.[47] In 1980, the first year the program was instituted, Miss Natalyn Ridgway was crowned at that year's gathering; four other teenage girls acted as her "court." Every year since, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribe has continued their Tribal Royalty Program, eventually incorporating young men as well, with a "Tribal Warrior" title. In 1981, the current Miss Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, Miss Linda Reed, proudly represented the tribe while riding on a float during the Deerfield Township Harvest Festival Parade. The *Jersey Life* section of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* would later compliment Miss Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, "looking like a true Indian Princess," for her cheeriness.[48] It

is clear that the program's goal of instilling the youth with an interest in their heritage and a sense of Native Pride was quite successful by this point. Other programs included holiday parties and dance practices which were held at the tribal headquarters. Here, the children ages twelve and under would learn a multitude of Native dances, some of which they could then participate in during the annual pow-wow. There was a separate practice for adults and young adults.[49]

The annual pow-wow was not the only way the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape worked to inform local southern New Jerseyans about Indigenous people. Tribal members such as Betty Jackson "volunteered her time presenting programs to public schools, church groups, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, etc."[50] The tribe also participated in the second annual Bridgeton Cultural Awareness Festival performing dances such as the rabbit dance and a "welcoming dance," while dressed in traditional Lenape regalia. While reporting the event, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* cited this occurrence:

> So when long lines of Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians, dressed in costumes of fringed leather, shuffled up to the stage to do what they said was a "welcoming dance," Paula Stewart, 16, of Bridgeton muttered fervently: "Just don't do a rain dance."[51]

While this presumably was a light-hearted joke in reference to the impending rainstorm that day, this "rain dance" comment still gives light to the stereotypical view of Indigenous people prevalent in the area at this time. It was stereotypes and generalizations like, "All Native Americans do rain dances" or the image of the "Hollywood Indian" that Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape public programming and pow-wows worked against.

The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape fervently worked to break the silence that had held their community for so many generations and they were heard. Tribal members who had long been afraid to claim their ancestry began to proudly participate in tribal functions. Local southern New Jerseyans were becoming increasingly aware of the communities, as were New Jersey state officials. On December of 1982, "the New Jersey state legislature adopted a resolution officially naming the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape as a bona fide state-recognized tribe."[52] It is important to note that this tribe's Native identity does not rely on New Jersey's provision of state recognition. This moment does not mark the day that the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape became "official" Native Americans, for they had been an Indigenous community long before this moment. Instead, the state's acknowledgment is symbolic of the tribe's transition away from a community hidden in plain sight to a proud Tribal Nation who stood up and said, "We Are Still Here."

This revitalization and recognition could not have occurred without the American Indian Movement which invigorated a sense of Native Pride which had been lost in many Native communities like the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people.

This pride spread like wildfire. Along with it came a sense of unity throughout Indian Country. In order for the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians of New Jersey to unify and proudly proclaim their existence as Native Americans, it was essential to have a nationwide movement, like AIM, which encouraged and inspired them to break away from their societal norms. The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape's revival also depended on the willingness of other tribal communities to support them and help them to bring their traditional ways back to consciousness. With the American Indian Movement's strong support for unity amongst all tribes, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people were in the perfect sociopolitical climate to ask for assistance and to receive it. Hence, AIM became a driving factor in the revival of this small tribal community on the East Coast, showing that the movement's impact reached much further than recent historiography suggests.

NOTES

[1] "New Jersey Commission on America Indian Affairs," NJ.gov, January 2018, http://www.nj.gov/state/programs/dos_program_njcaia.html.

[2] "The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape: An American Indian Tribe," Nanticoke-lenape.info, 2007, http://www.nanticoke-lenape.info/community.htm.

[3] "*Native American Voices: The People-Here and Now*-Principal Contributors," Penn Museum, 2018, https://www.penn.museum/sites/nativeamericanvoices/contributors.php#navadv.

[4] "The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape: An American Indian Tribe," Nanticoke-lenape.info, 2007.

[5] Kenneth S. Stern, *Loud Hawk: The United States Versus The American Indian Movement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), vii.

[6] C.A. Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1983), 245-259; Frank W. Porter III, *Strategies for Survival: American Indians in the Eastern United States* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 139-172.

[7] Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present,* 250-251.

[8] "The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape: An American Indian Tribe," Nanticoke-lenape.info, 2007.

[9] Frank W. Porter III, *Strategies for Survival: American Indians in the Eastern United States,* 140.

[10] Theo Braunskill, interview by Ashton Dunkley, September 23, 2017, Discussion 4.

[11] Weslager, *Delaware's Forgotten Folk: The Story of the Moors & Nanticokes,* 128-154.

[12] Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present,* 254.

[13] "America's Oldest Negro Community," *Ebony,* February 1952, 42.

[14] Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present,* 256.

[15] Jack D, Forbes. The Use of Racial and Ethnic Terms in America: Management by Manipulation." *Wicazo Sa Review* 11, no. 2 (1995), 62.

[16] Chief Billy Red Wing Tayac, interview by Ashton Dunkley, February 10, 2018, Chief Tayac Interview; Chief Billy Red Wing Tayac, interview by Ashton Dunkley, March 20, 2018, Chief Tayac Interview 2.

[17] Chief Mark Quiet Hawk Gould, interview by Ashton Dunkley, November 27, 2017, Chief Mark Gould Interview

[18] Terry Sammons, interview by Ashton Dunkley, September 23, 2017, Discussion 4.

[19] Urie Ridgeway, interview by Ashton Dunkley, January 6, 2018, Urie Ridgeway Interview.

[20] Dennis Banks and Richard Erdoes, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 12.

[21] Dennis Banks and Richard Erdoes, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement,* 62.

[22] Ibid, 12-66.

[23] Ibid, 106.

[24] Robert Strand (December 5, 1969). "Alcatraz Viewed as a Step Forward for Indians." Bridgeton Evening News, page 2. B-230, November-December 1969, Bridgeton Free Public Library Central Library.

[25] Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 26.

[26] Ibid, 27.

[27] Chief Billy Red Wing Tayac, interview by Ashton Dunkley, February 10, 2018, Chief Tayac Interview.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid; Chief Billy Red Wing Tayac, interview by Ashton Dunkley, March 20, 2018, Chief Tayac Interview 2.

[31] Chief Billy Red Wing Tayac, interview by Ashton Dunkley, February 10, 2018, Chief Tayac Interview; Chief Mark Quiet Hawk Gould, interview by Ashton Dunkley, November 27, 2017, Chief Mark Gould Interview; Edith Little Swallow Pierce, interview by Ashton Dunkley, December 3, 2017, Sonny and Edie Pierce Interview; Lewis Grey Squirrel Pierce Sr., interview by Ashton Dunkley, December 3, 2017, Sonny and Edie Pierce Interview.

[32] Chief Mark Quiet Hawk Gould, interview by Ashton Dunkley, November 27, 2017, Chief Mark Gould Interview; "The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape: An American Indian Tribe," Nanticoke-lenape.info, 2007.

[33] Chief Mark Quiet Hawk Gould, interview by Ashton Dunkley, November 27, 2017, Chief Mark Gould Interview.

[34] Marc Duvoisin (May 21, 1984). "Making the urban land their land." Philadelphia

[35] Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present,* 255.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Chief Mark Quiet Hawk Gould, interview by Ashton Dunkley, March 20, 2018, Chief Mark Gould Interview 2; "Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians: Newsletter" (April 1982). Newsletter, page 1-2. Newsletter [Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians of New Jersey], The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[38] Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present,* 256.

[39] Marc Duvoisin (May 21, 1984). "Making the urban land their land." Philadelphia

[40] Edith Little Swallow Pierce, interview by Ashton Dunkley, December 3, 2017, Sonny and Edie Pierce Interview; Lewis Grey Squirrel Pierce Sr., interview by Ashton Dunkley, December 3, 2017, Sonny and Edie Pierce Interview.

[41] Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present,* 257.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid, 258.

[44] Marc Duvoisin (May 21, 1984). "Making the urban land their land." Philadelphia

[45] Patrisia Gonzales (October 1, 1984). "Powwow: Indians display culture and dispel an image." Philadelphia Inquirer, page 3-B. Philadelphia Inquirer 1969-2010, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Philadelphia Inquirer.

[46] Donna Musso (October 1, 1982). "Craft Fair and Pow-Wow Highlight Weekend." Bridgeton Evening News, page 7. B-307, September-October 1982, Bridgeton Free Public Library Central Library; Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present,* 258-259.

[47] Chief Mark Quiet Hawk Gould, interview by Ashton Dunkley, March 20, 2018, Chief Mark Gould Interview 2.

[48] Eye/Ear (October 18, 1981). "A spirited salute to those who till the soil." Philadelphia Inquirer, page 2-J. Philadelphia Inquirer 1969-2010, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Philadelphia Inquirer; Rose Ridgway, Linda Reed, and Carnellia. (November 1981). "Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians: Newsletter." Newsletter, page 3. Newsletter [Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians of New Jersey], The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The Newsletter listed three editors by their first names. While the last names of other editors, Rose Ridgway and Linda Reed, could be inferred based on other sources, reference to Carnellia was not found. For this reason, she is listed with no last name.

[49] Rose Ridgway, Linda Reed, and Carnellia. (November 1981). "Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians: Newsletter." Newsletter, page 3. Newsletter [Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians of New Jersey], The Historical Society of Pennsylvania; "Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians: Newsletter" (April 1982). Newsletter, page 1-2. Newsletter [Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians of New Jersey], The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[50] Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present,* 260.

[51] Eye/Ear (June 8, 1980). "They came, they saw, they pondered a plunger." Philadelphia

[52] Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present,* 259.