

## **Fulfilling a Prophecy: The Past and Present of the Lenape in Pennsylvania**

September 2, 2011

### **A New Exhibition Opening 16 October 2011 at the Lenape Nation Cultural Center in the Bachmann Publik House, Easton, PA Tells the Long-Unspoken Story of the Region's Local Native Americans**

**September 2, 2011, Easton , PA**—Conventional histories of Pennsylvania declare that all but a few elderly Lenape people left the state by the opening of the 19th century. Many Lenape were indeed driven westward, and ultimately established communities in Oklahoma, Kansas, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and in other parts of the United States and Canada. Yet, many remained here in secret. Children of the little known Lenape-European marriages of the 1700s stayed on the Lenape homelands (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, northern Delaware and southern New York) and continued to practice their traditions covertly. Hiding their Lenape heritage, they avoided discovery by both the government and their neighbors for more than two hundred years. Now, the descendants of these people have come forward to tell their story.

**Fulfilling a Prophecy: The Past and Present of the Lenape in Pennsylvania.** The exhibition opens at 10:00 AM with a public celebration on 16 October 2011. The exhibition tells this long-hidden story—one of courage, commitment, and cultural continuity in the face of long oppression. Curated by Chief Robert Red Hawk Ruth and Shelley DePaul, both of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, and by University of Pennsylvania anthropology student Abigail Seldin, the exhibition relates the history of the state's secret Lenape in their own words. The exhibition draws upon oral histories documented by Chief Red Hawk, Ms. DePaul, and other members of the Lenape Nation as part of their ongoing Family History Project and upon anthropological research conducted by the University of Pennsylvania.

A collaboration between the Penn Museum and the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, the exhibition showcases never-before displayed objects and photographs from the private collections of Lenape people in Pennsylvania together with archaeological objects from the collections of the Lenape Nation Archives. Ancient masks, corn husk dolls, jewelry, a traditional "wedding stick," a beaded umbilical cord bag, beaded moccasins, a large ceremonial drum and other traditional arts are displayed in **Fulfilling a Prophecy**, as well as a number of once-secret family heirlooms rich with hidden Lenape symbolism, dating from the early 19th century.

The curatorial team recounts this history through "The Prophecy of the Fourth Crow," a traditional story of the Lenape. Handed down over countless generations, the story speaks of time passing through the flights of four different crows. Chief Red Hawk summarizes the current interpretation of the Prophecy in the following way: "We now know that the First Crow was the Lenape before the coming of the Europeans. The Second Crow symbolized the death and destruction of our culture. The Third Crow was our people going underground and hiding. The Fourth Crow was the Lenape becoming caretakers again and working with everybody to restore this land." A short video produced by Amit Das and Kristin Searle of Penn's Graduate School of Education introduces visitors to "The Prophecy of the Fourth Crow" in the welcoming chamber of the exhibition.

**Lomewe, luwen okwes xu kshihele xkwithakamika.**  
*Long ago it was said a fox will he run on the earth.*  
**Ok luwen newa ahasak xu peyok.**  
*and it was said four crows will they come.*  
**Netami na ahas kenthu li guttitehewagan wichi Kischelemukonk.**  
*first the crow he flew the way of harmony with Creator.*  
**Nisheneit na ahas kwechi pilitu entalelemukonk, shek palsu ok ankela.**  
*second the crow he tried to clean the world, but he became sick and he died.*  
**Nexeneit na ahas weneyoo ankelek xansa ok koshihuwe.**  
*third the crow he saw him his dead brother and he hid.*  
**Neweneit na ahas kenthu li guttitehewagan lapi wichi Kischelemukonk.**  
*fourth the crow he flew the way of harmony again with Creator.*  
**enahkihechik xu withatuwak enta xkwithakamika.**  
*Caretakers will they live together on the earth*

Like nearly half of all Native American groups in the United States, the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania is not recognized by either federal or state authorities. Today, some Lenape communities in Wisconsin and Oklahoma have federal and state recognition, as their histories were well-documented when hostile conditions in 18th century Pennsylvania pushed them westward. Though the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania has recently reevaluated their decision to remain silent about their history, this emergence from secrecy has not yet led to formal recognition. While there are many privileges to be gained through recognition, such as the ability to sell traditional crafts or to petition for the repatriation of human remains, the process of gaining recognition remains both complex and expensive for many Native Americans groups. Currently, the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania lacks the resources to pursue formal recognition. For now, the tribal council has decided to focus its energies on education and land conservation in the Lenape homelands, and the Lenape Nation remains a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

“We believe the time has come for our people and our neighbors to share and celebrate the rich and unique history and culture of the Lenape community of Pennsylvania,” said Chief Red Hawk.

The public opening celebration runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, 16 October 2011, and is free with optional donation. The curators will speak, and members of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania will share and demonstrate some of the music, dance, stories, arts, crafts, and spiritual practices that have sustained them as a people. Activities will be available for both children and adult participation.

The exhibition, originally displayed at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology from September 9, 2008 thru June 11, 2011, is now permanently displayed at the Lenape Nation Cultural Center on the second floor of the Bachmann Public House on 2nd and Northampton Streets, Easton, PA.

Visitors at the opening will be given coupons for free admission to the **Lenape Exhibit at the Sigal Museum** just up the street at 342 Northampton Street. This exhibit was also curated by Shelley DePaul in cooperation with the Northampton County Historical Society and The Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania. The exhibit features information on Lenape descendants of Northampton County. Among the objects on display is an impressive, life-sized wikewam

(Lenape house), a deerskin drum, and photographs of the Lenape ancestors of families in Northampton County.

Fulfilling a Prophecy website: <http://www.lenapenation.org/FAP%20main.html>

Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania website: [www.lenapenation.org](http://www.lenapenation.org)

Sigal Museum website: <http://sigalmuseum.org/>

*Fulfilling a Prophecy is made possible by Diane vS. and Robert Levy, University Scholars at the University of Pennsylvania Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships, the Penn Center for Native American Studies, the National Science Foundation's Research Experience for Undergraduates "Native Voices" program, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, and by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities' We the People initiative on American History.*