Lenape Indian tribe to sign new Treaty of Brotherhood

By Sue Kraner
Special Writer

Local residents will see a vision from the past this month when members of the Lenape Indian tribe pass through this area on a canoe journey that will eventually take them from Hancock, N.Y., to Cape May, N.J.

The first leg of the journey will be on the Delaware River and will pass through the area Aug. 14-15 when the Native Americans make camp at Bull's Island in Delaware Township and Washington Crossing State Park in Tinicum.

From these campsites, the tribe will be heading to Pennsbury Manor, the former estate of William Penn in Falls Township, Pa., where an historical event will take place Aug. 24. A treaty of renewed brotherhood will be signed between the Lenape Indian tribe and the Delaware River Gateway Partnership, environmental groups, churches, historical societies and other organizations as well as Native American tribes and nations which entirely support the Lenape Indian culture and cause, helping to reveal people, language and way of life.

Jim Bell, Lenape Tribal Council spokesman, said, "At least 13 to 20 organizations will be signing the Treaty of Renewed Brotherhood, and these organizations represent thousands of people.

The treaty will be a reaffirmation of the brotherhood that existed between the Lenape people and the one the Lenape called brother — William Penn.

Mr. Bell said, "Historically, William Penn's dealings with the Lenape were good and fair. The Lenape's rights, including their freedom of religion, were important to William Penn, and on more than one occasion, he made this known to many.

Lenape and Lenape chief Tanemsend signed the original treaty in 1682.

The Lenape people are the original inhabitants of Delaware, New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania and southern New York and remain the stewards of those lands. They were the first to sign a treaty with the United States and the first tribe to have land set aside for them in New Jersey.

Over a period of 250 years, many Lenape people were pushed west to Wisconsin, north to Canada and south to Oklahoma. However, a large number of Lenape families remained in the homeland and continued the traditions of their ancestors.

"Today the Lenape people from many parts of the country are coming together again, a rising motion," Mr. Bell said. "The 133-mile river journey and treaty signing will mark a new beginning of brotherhood between the Lenape and the people that neighbor the Delaware River."

The journey will continue after Aug. 24 from Philadelphia to Cape May, N.J. Rising Nation's sponsor is the Delaware River Gateway Partnership Inc., a bi-state public and private cooperative partnership of more than 100 nonprofit organizations and government agencies as well as individual members dedicated to promoting the stewardship of the Delaware River.

The partnership recognizes the importance of the Lenape as not only a part of Pennsylvania and American history, but also a living culture of today.

The Lenape will make camp in Philadelphia Aug. 12. They will travel 18 miles downstream to Upper Black Eddy the following day, Aug. 13. Wednesday, Aug. 14, they will travel the 12 miles to Bull's Island.

Thursday, the 15th, is the day the Native Americans will be paddling through Lambertville on the 13-mile journey to Washington Crossing State Park (in the New Jersey 306).

Penn signed the original Treaty of Brotherhood in 1682. The treaty signing is an invitation-only event that will include speakers from the Lenape Nation and the Delaware River Gateway Partnership as well as other invited speakers.

There will be live entertainment, featuring Bill Miller, Maryland's traditional drummers and dancers.

Indian culture says each generation responsible for next seven

By Sue Wanner
Special Writer

The historical Treaty of Renewed Brotherhood that will be signed by the Lenape people Aug. 24 comes at a crucial time for the tribe, according to Lenape Tribal Council spokesman Jim Bell.

"The signing of this treaty affects us all," Mr. Bell said, "and has the potential to make the future more culturally secure and open-minded for our children and the next seven generations.

The Lenape's historical principle is based on the Native American belief that each generation is responsible for ensuring the survival of the next seven generations to come. This principle says we must carefully consider the impact of all decisions that are made today in light of how these decisions and actions will affect the seventh generation — what we do today must not cause harm to the seventh generation. This includes all aspects of life, from the environment to culture.

Much of the existing Lenape culture is in peril today. Mr. Bell said, "Several dialects of the Lenape language still remain, but are spoken by only 60 people in the state who speak the language.

Of equal importance, he said, "are other aspects of the Lenape heritage; their oral history and historic accounts that have not been documented for the public. In addition, many pioneer Lenape burial sites and burial grounds that have gone unrecognized by the academic community need to be cataloged and preserved.

Mr. Bell said the treaty signing is "a new beginning for the Lenape and a joint endeavor toward historical preservation.

"For the treaty signing, things will be well," he said, "and there are many Lenape and others who will be signing the Treaty of Renewed Brotherhood.

From this new beginning, he said, "will come projects and programs that will emerge, such as acquiring land to build a cultural center for educational, cultural and historical programs regarding the Lenape people; the preservation of sacred sites; the implementation of Lenape cultural education; and the development of Lenape cultural sites along the Delaware River and the establishment of a Lenape National Historical Park.

The treaty reflects those thoughts. It concludes with these words: "May these partnerships serve to heal the past, give direction for today and brighten the future as we move forward, learning from the mistakes of some of our forefathers, and may we, together, bring light to the cultural and geographic significance of Pennsylvania, preserving this natural history for all of our children. May the Creator of all things embrace us as we move ahead."

The Penn's Park, Falls Township, Pa., treaty signing ceremony will take place at 2 p.m. at the Lenape State Park on the new Lenape Treaty Site. The treaty site is located at the Lenape State Park on the new Lenape Treaty Site.