

## Reverend Doctor John R. Norwood

**NCAI Delegate, Historian, and Church Pastor, Former Nanticoke Tribal Leader,**

Rev. Dr. Norwood is a man of many talents and achievements, contributing to multiple fields including the study and politics of Indigenous peoples in and from New Jersey; a group which he belongs to. He has served as the senior Pastor in the Ujima Village Christian church since 1992, and was a Tribal Councilman of the Nanticoke Lenape Tribal Nation from 2004-2019. Norwood has authored multiple works about Indigenous History, such as the research paper *We Are Still Here*, and published in academic journals articles such as *Contextualized Worship Among the Nanticoke-Lenape American Indians*.

In this interview, Rev. Dr. Norwood shares some of the traditions, oral stories, and history passed down through the generations of Lenape, while also weighing in on contemporary Lenape experiences. This includes part of the Lenape founding myths, histories of interactions with the colonial and federal government, and the ongoing political struggle of Indigenous groups. In this candid discussion, Rev. Dr. Norwood explains issues such as gaming on reservations, the pros and cons of federal recognition, intertribal relations, education about Indigenous Tribes, modern cultural practices, and identity.



**Interview With Rev. Dr. Norwood****Friday, March 10th, 2023****Interviewers: Dr. Barbara Krasner, William Paterson University Student Intern Phil Bana****Index**

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**[00.00.00]Krasner:** Hello everyone, today is Friday, March 10th, 2023, I'm Barbara Krasner, Director of the Mercer County Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Education Center. Today's job is to interview Reverend Dr. John Norwood, who is a member of our advisory committee, and interviewing him will be our student intern, from William Paterson University, Phil Bana. So Phil, I turn it over to you.

**[00.00.34]Bana:** Okay, thank you. So Reverend, starting off simply, could you please tell us about your connection to the Lenni Lenape and Nanticoke?

**[00.00.47]Norwood:** Well, I'm Nanticoke Lenape. My ancestors come from both communities, and matter of fact my family name is a Nanticoke Tribal name, coming into the Nanticoke way back as early as the late 1500s, early 1600s. We can trace it in a documented fashion back to the mid 1700s, but there's some stories that lead us to go much much earlier. On both sides of my family I have both Nanticoke and Lenape ancestry in addition to ancestry from the Gingaskin Reservation, in Virginia on the eastern shore, and also African Ancestry. I'm a citizen of the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Tribal Nation which is one of the three recognized Tribes here in the state of New Jersey.

**[00.01.44]Bana:** Okay thank you, and as Dr. Krasner put in the chat, can you tell us a bit about the Oral Tradition that was passed down?

**[00.01.55]Norwood:** Well, you know much of our history has been passed down orally. Many of our stories, the spiritual practices, the crafts, have moved from one generation to the next orally.

However, there is much of our history that has been documented in a written fashion, often by, initially missionaries, and then by researchers, ethnologists, and then anthropologists, and so we have a mix of all of it. The oral tradition goes all the way back to when our people first came to this part of what we call Turtle Island, which is North America, and tells the story of a migration all the way to the east coast, to where the sun rises. There are some that have debated the authenticity of the story, not necessarily the oral part of it, but what was uh, written down with symbols. There's some debate about some authenticity of a discovery in the 1800s, but in regards to the oral tradition that it represents, there are many that hold it as being accurate.

**[00.03.16]Bana:** And for clarity, it's through these oral traditions that you know that you yourself belong to the Nanticoke as opposed to the other Lenape tribes.

**[00.03.27]Norwood:** Well yeah, uh through the oral tradition we know the ancient history, through our own family tradition and through documentation we know our own stories. The family lines that feed into our tribe are those families that remained after most Lenape and Nanticoke people migrated westward by force, they were pushed further and further west and north, many winding up as far out as Oklahoma and in Wisconsin and up into Canada, some into Upstate New York. The Nanticoke and the Lenape being related, with the Nanticoke in ancient times coming from the Lenape, when the major body of Lenape began to be pushed out of the homeland, many Nanticoke went with them. Those of us who remained were families that had adapted to some of the European life ways, we were Christianized, we were worshiping in churches, there's a record of our baptisms in the early 1700s. We know some of these conversions took place in the 1600s, one of the chiefs in central Delaware actually had changed

his name to Christian the Indian, and was referenced in that fashion on land grants and treaties. The families that continued, learned the importance of deeded land, learned the life ways of the colonists that had come, and continued to stay in community. Our families knew each other, recognized each other, continued a form of self governance initially in the churches, we established our own churches in the early 1800s, we established our own schools around the same time in the early 1800s, around 1820-1830. Those congregational roots continue even today. In Delaware among the Nanticoke in the early 1900s, there was a move out of the church to form a separate organization that continued to claim the church as a tribal church, but the governance came out of the churches. The same happened in New Jersey and in central Delaware in the late 60s and early 70s. Part of that was demographic changes, because the churches were the seat of tribal government in the tribe and so when you had demographic changes in the churches it threatened the governance of the tribe. It threatened it to actually be out of tribal hands. So while the churches continue, within the history of the tribe, the governance came out of the churches and elected tribal councils and elected tribal chiefs were reestablished. My story is very similar to many others, and that is that my ancestors continued in those communities, were documented to continue in those communities, those three communities, us in southern New Jersey and the two in Delaware, continue to intermarry and there are records of our people being identified as Indians, serving in the military, having merchant marines seaman's papers identifying us Indian, I have two ancestors who served in the French and Indian war who were identified as Indian. This kind of documentation continued from the 1700s straight through into the 1900s where our own people were also keeping records of our activities.

**[00.07.04]Bana:** Very interesting, and can you briefly explain some of the differences between the Nanticoke and Greater Lenape?

**[00.07.15]Norwood:** The Nanticoke came from the Lenape in ancient times, we're not exactly sure when it happened but we do know it happened prior to first contact with European settlers. The old oral tradition that I've been told was that there were six Nanticoke- rather Lenape hunters who had traveled south who were washed off course by a storm, and wound up in the central Delmarva on the shore, and wound up intermarrying with women who were there from some of the communities that were there and those 6 marrying 6 additional women formed the Nanticoke tribe. It's difficult to know whether that's a folk tale or not but we do know that the oral tradition of the Nanticoke and their language indicates that they hailed from the Lenape in ancient times. The Lenape always were decentralized in governance, and yet lived at peace with one another, identified one another as Lenape people. In the northern part of the Lenape territory you have the Munsee, the continuing tribe that identifies in New Jersey with that branch is the Ramapough (Ramapo) Lenape up in the north part of the State. They have a tradition of being predominantly from the Munsee along with a few other tribes along the northern border of the ancient territory. As you move further south into New Jersey, you have people in Central New Jersey that actually are a mix of remaining Lenape families who are really related to the Nanticoke Lenape there is a lot of interconnection there that is documented there to the mid 1800s, but there were a lot of Virginia Indians who came up and settled in a known native community of remnant families, and that's the Powhatan Lenape community that's in central New Jersey. Further south is the Nanticoke Lenape, because our people were more or less along the Lenape and Nanticoke border, and our families intermingled. Those communities around the

bay, which are documented in colonial times as bay Indians, the Delaware Bay Indians, were the Nanticoke and Lenape people and those are the families that continue to this very day.

**[00.09.53]Bana:** At least in the case of specifically the Nanticoke and New Jersey Lenape, can you describe any of the Historical and Contemporary Challenges?

**[00.10.12]Norwood:** Oh yeah, well historically in regard to the strategies for survival it's very common up and down the east coast. It was a situation of great difficulty to remain in the homeland. Many tribal people were pushed further and further west. During the time of President Jackson in the 1830s you had many American Indians finding themselves conducted west by the department of war, by the Military, in the great Trail of Tears, which a lot of people focus on on the Cherokee and the tribes further south but that also occurred here in the North. Actually it started much earlier than that with the pressure during the colonial era. What we see however is that the communities that stayed wound up dealing with a reidentification, a form of "paper genocide" so to speak where they were eradicated by misidentification, and what I mean by that is you have individuals who were documented as native, some living in the area of early colonial reservations that were disbanded, you can show that the families were there and that the families continued in community and that suddenly they went from being identified as Indian to being identified as People of Color or Mulatto, Free People of Color or Mulatto, because they became Christian. This being because the definition of Indian, and this is documented in Delaware, the definition of Indian at one point in the 1700s was an individual who lived in the woods, ate deer meat, and wasn't a Christian. So you had individuals who converted to Christianity, were living in European style homes, and eating chicken, and suddenly they were no longer identified legally

as Indian, but identified as free People of Color or Mulatto. And during that time period the term mulatto actually just simply meant a person who essentially was not white, who was of mixed heritage, or brown. Many of the people were simply just identified as Brown from the 1750s onward. That became a further misidentification during and after the civil war where free person of color in the popular mind just meant Black. In some areas of the country especially in the middle states, and in the Northern part of the South, if you had a single drop of African blood then as far as the law was concerned you were Black. Even if you were living on the site of an old reservation that had been disbanded and all of your people identified as native, it didn't matter what the percentage of your ancestry was, you were no longer Indian. This became something that was important, it was part of the agenda of eradication. Because if you could eradicate the Native population, you could also cut ties with any obligations you had because of treaty arrangements. That's why here in New Jersey, when the Brothertons who were the residents of the only official reservation in New Jersey, which was the later 1750s through the early 1800s, when that reservation was disbanded, illegally I might add because it was given to the Lenape people in perpetuity, when that was disbanded because it was difficult to survive there, and about 70 remaining Brothertons went north into New York and joined the tribe that eventually went out to Wisconsin, the state of New Jersey began to make the claim that they were the last of the Lenape. Even though the State was fully aware that not all Lenape moved onto that reservation, people were free to move in and out, it wasn't like the western reservations where you weren't allowed to leave. People came back and forth, it was a religious reservation sponsored by the state and a religious organization. In addition to that, the treaty that allowed the Brothertons to leave made reference to the rest of us who were remaining in the state. So the state was very much aware that there were Natives still here, the minister that administered



Brotherton had picked up a ministry in the area where my tribe's headquarters is, among at the time what was called the Cohanzick Indians, those that lived in what was the Cohanzick area, or Bridgeton. It was known, but that was an inconvenient truth, because that meant that some of the duties by treaty and land grant would remain. It was much more convenient to tell the tale that they all left and they were happy to leave and they told us how happy they were and they're leaving. That was a statement made by one person representing the Brothertons, or at least he claimed to be representing the Brothertons when they were asking for some remuneration for the reservation. It wasn't a statement on behalf of the rest of us who stayed, and that's a point of bitter history for many of the families who stayed in New Jersey. The more time went on and the more the state denied the existence of these families, the more we began to be forgotten, and to a certain extent, that we did not fight that because it was at a time when native people, people of color were persecuted anyway, native people were persecuted in many instances even more so in regard to land ownership, in regard to citizenship rights, and if you were identified, there were many families who were afraid that they could have their land taken and that they could be shipped off to a reservation. According to oral tradition the last wagon that took our families west, some finding their way back, was in 1924, within the living history of the tribe in my childhood. And so there was a great fear about lifting your head up too much. We knew who each other were, and the communities around the bay knew each other and intermarried, and there were other tribes in the region up in New York and New England and into Maryland and Virginia, we all knew each other and knew we were existing, but did not make a big deal out of it to the general public for fear of consequences. That changed during the same time period as the ethnic pride, cultural pride during the 60s, that was for people of color across the United States. And certainly that fervor was also felt by native American communities and there was a push to

advocate for our rights and declare who we actually were with the greater public. Our Elders were afraid of doing this. I know when I went into tribal leadership, I spent about 15 years in tribal leadership, but when I went into tribal leadership in the early 2000s there was still a fear among some of the Elders about actually having their names on the list of enrolled citizens, for fear that at some point the government would use that list to take what they had. So that fear was still there. I know that in my Chief's youth, our recent Chief Mark Gould, our current chief is Urie Ridgeway, but in Chief Gould's youth and he's in his 80s now, but when he was a younger man he tells the story of having to deal with the Ku Klux Klan coming into the area and the tribe having to defend itself. He tells the story of hostility, because we were a "third community", you know not White, not Black, treated poorly by both. When I was growing up I did not grow up in the tribal community, I grew up in central New Jersey, many of my family members are actually a part of the Powhatan Renape community even though I also descend from the Nanticoke Lenape but you know I have cousins in the other communities. My mother said that, and she's 99, she'll be 100 in June, she said that it was hard enough when people thought you were black, if they knew you were Indian too they'd just kill you. So that was the mentality that caused our people to kind of stay hidden in plain sight. And whatever folks thought you were you let them think that's what you were so you could live your life in peace. When my aunts spoke about our Native heritage they did so quietly, almost like someone was listening in, that they had to be careful about it being overheard. That's something I've heard repeated for my generation and the previous generation, throughout the tribal community.

**[00.19.52]Bana:** And you said that when you were younger you grew up outside of the community here, what motivated you to enter into the community and especially go on to enter leadership?

**[00.20.06]Norwood:** Well in regards to reconnecting, was the family stories that I had. Especially among my Aunts, who were the keepers of the story who and continued to remind me as a child who I was, what I was, and as I grew and married and had children of my own I was very eager in investigating more about that and learning more about the history and the heritage, and was able to reconnect. Now our tribe has a very strict standard for enrollment, even though when I reconnected just my oral history made it very clear of who I was and I knew the connection, in fact at the time the leadership of the three communities around the Delaware bay, were all related to me. I still had to document who I was, birth certificates, death certificates, proof of ancestry, and it had to be verified that I had a minimum of quarter blood quantum, which was the standard for our tribe. We are a blood quantum tribe, you have to have 25% from the tribal families that were documented prior to the 1900s, as being part of the three communities. So you know that was the process I had to go through in order to be admitted and enrolled into the tribe, and therefore also my children were eligible. My wife is enrolled also, she is actually a Haliwa-Saponi from North Carolina, she is a Saponi Indian. She was brought into the tribe as a tribal citizen, as marrying into the tribe. The issue with tribal leadership actually surprised me, there are actually far more Norwoods in Delaware than there are in New Jersey, and I was brought in and given some responsibility and we loved working for our people and embracing the culture, and quite frankly I was kind of drafted into leadership. I continued on the council for 15 years, served also as a tribal judge, and now served as the delegate to the National

Congress of American Indians, as the tribal delegate of the Nanticoke Lenape, and I also serve as the general secretary for the Alliance of Colonial Era Tribes, which is thirteen tribes of eastern and southern colonial history that are along the seaboard.

**[00.22.57]Bana:** This National Organization, the National Congress of American Indians, does this include the other Lenape that are now scattered across the united states to Wisconsin and Oklahoma?

**[00.23.18]Norwood:** Yes, the ones in Wisconsin and Oklahoma are federally recognized tribes, they are in membership of NCAI. Membership ranges because tribes have to sign up each year and reaffirm their membership but from what I understand it's somewhere between 175-250 tribes, so we'll just say around 200 tribes, around the country, are at point in membership with this inter-tribal organization. NCAI is the oldest and largest inter-tribal organization, where tribal delegates who represent their tribe get to vote on issues and resolutions that actually have an impact on federal policy.

**[00.24.10]Bana:** The three tribes in New Jersey, you say, aren't federally recognized. Has the tribe within the state, can you tell us about the process of trying to get federal recognition and what that process is like?

**[00.24.30]Norwood:** Well interestingly enough I served as the co-chair of the task force on federal acknowledgement for the [NCAI]. The process of federal acknowledgement vs state acknowledgement is misunderstood both within Indian countries and outside of Indian countries,

and even within the federal and state governments. Interestingly enough state recognition precedes federal recognition, there were state recognized tribes that go back in many instances to colonial times. The colonies established relationships with the various tribes within their areas, in many instances set up colonial era reservations, and those relationships in some instances continued into the time period of the federal government, and in some instances were broken only to be reestablished later. State recognition historically simply meant that the state did things in its history that acknowledged that there were Indians within the state that they dealt with as tribal people, in other words that had some level of community governance. That was maintained extremely clearly for our people in Delaware, and also tacitly here in New Jersey, even though the push in New Jersey after about 1830 was to simply say we weren't here at all, and that continued straight up into the 1980s. Even though the federal government was documenting who we were at the end of the 1800s and early beginning of the 1900s into the 1950s. Federal acknowledgement is something that you know in regard to using those terms, to be federally acknowledged, really is a manifestation of the 1970s. In 1934 there was a push to have what was called the Indian Reorganization Act, where after the government acknowledged that Indian citizens- Indians who were on reservations under the care of the federal government in one way or another, were also indeed citizens of the United States. About 10 years after that, they pushed to have tribes adopt an approved form of governance, in many instances completely changed the way tribes governed themselves, and they began to establish a list of tribes. Some communities chose to leave off the list, even though they were clearly identified. In other communities they chose to be put on the list. In some instances it was arbitrary, in some it was because the tribal community refused to cooperate, clearly there was enough history to suggest that there was mistrust of the federal government, and some communities accepted it. Under the Indian

reorganization act, you were under the secretary of the interior, you couldn't even change your own tribal constitution without the approval of the secretary of the interior. It was definitely a diminishing of your inherent sovereignty, even though it was the government acknowledging you as one of the domestic sovereigns. So it was a catch-22 situation, that continued into the termination era, which is what we call the late 1940s into the 1950s, where there was a government effort to destroy tribes, to sever the relationship, to assimilate tribes into the larger community, which would've been a complete destruction of our culture. Sadly it was the continuation of a process which had begun you know, a century and a half before. The NCAI was born out of that time period, the termination period, fighting against termination, fighting to preserve tribal sovereignty, and self-governance. In the 1970s, there was an awareness that there were many tribes that had been left off the list of tribes of the Indian reorganization Act, or had been dropped from the list for one reason or another. By 1978, under the Carter administration, there was a standard for administrative acknowledgement so that tribes that had the history could be put back on the list and be federally recognized. So at this point there was an understanding of the difference between state and federal recognition, even though many state tribes had enjoyed many of the same rights as the so called listed or federal tribes prior to that time. For example state tribal citizens had the opportunity to receive certain benefits, attend certain schools- sadly some had been [dragged] off to the schools, but as time went on and the schools slowly became more and more controlled by Indians, many were also privileged to be able to attend them. The federal boarding schools have a mixed and unfortunate history the further back in time you go. That delineation between federal and state created an almost apartheid kind of system in the United States that people don't understand still continues to this very day. The standards for federal recognition for the first tribes to get through the administrative process, they were able to

submit a banker's box ethnographic information, and they were signed off on, and they went through. By the early 2000s, tribes that were trying to get through were spending millions of dollars and tens of thousands of documents and still being denied. So much so there were hearings, congressional hearings about the dysfunction of the acknowledgement process. I was involved in some of that in the 2010s, 2012, and through 2015. An attempt was made to resolve some of this but we are still working to improve the process. Just within the past few weeks, a worthy tribe with a known history was denied federal acknowledgement. It's been a very difficult challenge, and then you have some tribes worried about how some of their benefits may be diminished if other tribes get acknowledgements and are lighting for historically documented communities from getting on the list. It's a mess, and it's an expensive mess, and it's filled with political intrigue. Two tribes that were acknowledged up in Connecticut and had federal acknowledgement suddenly lost it because of the pressure from politicians that were worried about gaming. In New Jersey we had to fight to have our state acknowledgment reaffirmed after the state acted like it had never acknowledged us, and that was a battle that took many years and wound up in federal court before we were able to win. It was all about the fear of gaming, even though our tribe has its own law stating that we will not profit from forms of vice, including casino gaming, and we even offered the state a compact indicating that you know, "you reaffirm the fact of what you did, support us in a federal acknowledgement bid, and we will never pursue casino gaming." The state absolutely ignored us. So those are common struggles that we've had, and also some of the differences between federal and state acknowledgement, that a lot of people don't understand.

**[00.32.35]Bana:** Real quick, on the topic of Gaming, is there a perception of a double standard within New Jersey on that, because I know Atlantic city is currently a gambling hub, so where does the fear from the State of New Jersey from Lenape getting involved in gaming come from?

**[00.33.02]Norwood:** Hypocrisy and racism. You know that's basically it, the assumption is any time the tribal community tries to stand on its feet, claim its rights, do right by its citizens, you have those gaming interests and the gaming lobbies smearing it as "they want a piece of the action, they want gaming" when we don't. Matter of fact, most tribes in the United States don't have gaming, a lot of people don't know that. And of those who have gaming, there's quite a few who don't want gaming. The Virginia tribes that were acknowledged under the Trump administration by Congressional action swore off gaming in their bill. We've offered the same thing, not every tribe wants it. Some tribes have benefitted in some ways from it, some have testified to the challenges it's created in their own communities. Yes it is hypocritical, you have a gaming state denying tribes for fear that they want to do gaming. Now part of the reason that you have a challenge is because under the Indian Gaming and Regulatory Act, tribes have certain benefits and protections that non-tribal corporations don't have. That's why you have so many corporations trying to team with tribes to establish casinos. We have had casino investors make promises to our people and offer our people that they'd see us through the federal process if we would promise that we'd let them set up a casino. We Denied them. Even though we said no years ago, the state still acts like "oh my goodness if they get federal acknowledgement the only thing they want to do is set up a casino that will drive Atlantic city out of business". That's not true, that's a racist opinion.



**[00.35.03]Bana:** With the other two tribes in New Jersey besides the Nanticoke, could you please quickly list the names of the various Lenape Tribes in New Jersey?

**[00.35.14]Norwood:** In the north you have the Ramapough Lenape, they are related to the Munsee. Also in the north there's a small community that's not state recognized, but recognized by the state recognized tribes, it's in Monmouth County, they're the Sand Hill community. In the central part of New Jersey you have the Virginia Indians that came up into the state, and they're the Powhatan Renape. They're a mix of Virginia, Delmarvan Indians. Many of them are of Nanticoke history, they're part of the three tribes, both Virginia Indian, Nanticoke, and Lenape. They came up and intermarried with a few of the remaining Lenape families that were in that area in Burlington and Camden county. In the southern part of the state you have what is the largest tribe in the state, greatest largest population in the state, that's the Nanticoke Lenape. There are family ties between the three.

**[00.36.23]Bana:** At least to your knowledge, do members of the tribe in New Jersey, prefer to be referred to as American Indian, Native American, Indigenous...

**[00.36.38]Norwood:** Indigenous is always the safe one, but you know you have those who are very sensitive to being called American Indian because it's technically not a correct term, it's based on an error made by Columbus who thought he had made it to India. Fact is that term is used in our national treaties, and that's why many of the national organizations that deal in politics still use Indian as the term. We have a history of knowing that when you begin to change words around there's a forced confusion that causes us to always get the short end of the stick. So

your national organizations often will still maintain the use of the term Indian Tribe because that is how we're referred to in federal law and policy. Native American can literally refer to anyone who is born here. There are many tribal people who also accept that term, but the easiest thing to do is to ask the person "how do you want me to refer to you". Often the response will simply be "refer to me by my tribal identity". While I may fall under the category of indigenous and American Indian and native American, actually I'm Nanticoke Lenape, that's what I am. So when in doubt ask. I'm not sensitive to that because I know the confusion around it, and if a person is trying to be polite I accept them for their effort. There are some that are a little more uptight about it. Indigenous tends to be a term that is generally accepted, even more recently First Nations which is more popular in Canada but is starting to catch on here. If you were to come to one of the national meetings that I attend, or regional meetings that I attend, with leaders that deal with politics and governance, you will hear the term Indian quite often.

**[00.38.51]Bana:** Could you briefly tell us about the Red Hawks?

**[00.38.54]Norwood:** The Red Hawks?

**[00.38.57]Bana:** The Red Hawks.

**[00.39.00]Norwood:** Okay, you're gonna have to tell me a little about the Red Hawks-

**[00.39.03]Krasner:** So this apparently is some tribe in northern New Jersey, there's a library event at Rochelle park about the Red Hawk Tribe.

**[00.39.18]Norwood:** I have no Idea about the Red Hawk Tribe, none whatsoever.

**[00.39.25]Krasner:** Okay, then I'm not guiding any students to it.

**[00.39.28]Norwood:** What I will say is that there are individual organizations sometimes of people who discovered or claim Lenape ancestry, and that they are descendants. There are cultural enthusiast organizations that come together, and begin to use the nomenclature of tribe, but a tribe is a historic interrelated community that can point to an ancestry of individuals who lived in the community since at least before 1900, at least. Anyone who has kind of coalesced since then, maybe an enthusiast group, may have discovered their ties, but if they aren't related to each other, can't point to continuing community, then using tribal nomenclature is problematic. In doing so they are making specific legal claims. Claims of inherent sovereignty. That creates a problem for tribes, the legitimate historic communities which are struggling to negotiate sovereignty with the other sovereigns around them. I don't know about this organization, they may be well intended, it could be Natives from various communities that have come together and- I don't know whether they formally call themselves a tribe, or if people call them that because they are the Red Hawk Association of Indians. I know that there are three communities acknowledged by the state, one acknowledged by the tribes within the state, and other organizations that are cultural organizations, some put on presentations. Many have citizens of historic tribes involved in it, but I have no knowledge of the group you are speaking of.

**[00.41.34]Krasner:** Okay thank you. As long as I have the floor, thank you phil. You have sent me a link, Dr. Norwood, to a document of New Jersey place names, many of them Lenape. How do you feel about that, what does that mean to you that these names are still there?

**[00.41.55]Norwood:** Filled with pride and also humor. There's a certain irony in the fact that they maintain many of the names but deny the existence of the people that were still here for many generations. The other thing that's also humorous is many of the place names are wrong. They are mispronunciations, it's based on what some Europeans heard with their European ears, and did not really hear how it was being pronounced. So much so that expert linguists cannot even decipher some of the names anymore because they've been so mispronounced. In many instances they are using- mispronouncing archaic terms that faded from existence even prior to the 1800s. The third thing I laugh about, and I'm not going to name the town that asked me, but I was approached by a community that for many years assumed that their name came from a particular Lenape term, very very nice sounding Lenape translation, businesses were using this translation, it was on the letterhead of the township, and they asked me about the history of the term. So I really wasn't sure but I did research, got with a couple of linguists and did some digging on my own, and found that a translation that was not popular with the township was actually the correct one, and that they had mistranslated the original place name. When I came back and revealed this to them they suddenly cut off communications. So you know it's a mixed bag, it's nice to know that there are Lenape place names, at least attempts at Lenape place names. The sad thing is a lot of people don't know the history around the names, don't know the history of the places they live in, and don't realize it's a continuous history right here in New Jersey.

**[00.44.00]Krasner:** Can you give an example of one of these places that are terribly mispronounced.

**[00.44.07]Norwood:** I would be afraid to, lest we wind up getting people throwing stones at us. What I can say is, the area where my tribe hails from, called Cohanzick, this is well known it's not a big deal down there, but the Bridgeton area used to be called Cohanszick bridge. It was an effort to name it after a fabled Chief, and I say fabled not because he wasn't historic, but because the historic references to him are based in Oral tradition which go back even further. The chief is popularly known as Chief Cohansey, but there was no Chief Cohansey. There was a Chief of the area known as Gunahackink, and that was a description of the land. His name was never actually given, but in an effort to honor this Chief who was so honored among my people, even back in Colonial times, whose fame continued, the Europeans mispronounced it and began calling it Cohansey and assumed that was the name of the Chief. So there's a little bit of the history right there. (Note: Please see Rev. Norwood's [article about Cohanzick](#).)

**[00.45.22]Krasner:** Okay thank you, okay Phil back to you.

**[00.45.27]Bana:** Continuing along the language route, can you tell us about efforts to preserve your indigenous language in the modern era?

**[00.45.39]Norwood:** Language actually carries so much of the culture, it tells you how your ancestors thought about the world, and their worldview. Sadly Nanticoke was mostly lost. There are a couple of hundred words that were preserved interestingly enough with the effort of

Thomas Jefferson, who worked with another gentleman who became a president. I can't remember if it was Madison or Monroe, but several hundred words were preserved. Lenape was much better preserved, interestingly enough by missionaries. The Lenape dialects of Munsee and Unami were very well preserved, there are two sub dialects of Unami, Northern Unami and Southern Unami, southern Unami was still spoken well into the 1900s out in Oklahoma. Very well preserved when the last of the born speakers were Elders, they began to record that, there was a great project out among the Oklahoma tribes preserving that particular dialect. Northern Unami is very well preserved, but not spoken since the late 1800s, early 1900s maybe at the latest. It became- it morphed into something called Mission Lenape, which was something used out in the Mission communities that were moving further and further west, especially under the aid of the Moravian Church which was documenting their language. That's very well preserved even though it isn't spoken anymore. Munsee was very well preserved, especially up in Canada. So there are revival efforts in all of our communities to try to revive our language to have a grasp of the world view that it brings, in preserving how our ancestors viewed the world around them and how they viewed each other, which the language really gives you an understanding of. So the revival effort among our people, the Nanticoke are indeed reviving Nanticoke, because there are ways that linguists can look at the root language that Lenape comes from and figure out with the family of languages to find out what the Nanticoke language word most likely was, so there's an effort to revive that. Southern Unami already being very well documented and preserved, is being taught within my own community, and our young people are learning the language and using terms and readings, and learning the words for common household elements, learning prayers in Lenape, and they are much more adept at it than those of us who have gray on their heads or on their faces.

**[00.48.48]Bana:** With the Oklahoma and Canadian and Wisconsin Lenape, could you share some areas in which the various groups are cooperating today?

**[00.49.03]Norwood:** Well, we have a fairly good relationship with the folks up in Canada and Wisconsin, and we have a fluctuating relationship with the people in Oklahoma. It depends on who's in charge when, and what influences there are. Sadly the colonized mindset and the push of the federal government tries to drive a wedge between those who have federal acknowledgement and those who do not. Sadly they have convinced many that if you are not on the Federal list you are not deserving, you are not worthy, you are not real. Which clearly is an acquiescence to a foreign power to identify who you are. There are times when the relationship between us and those in Oklahoma were much closer, we can document that. We have friends in those communities. In regards to the leadership it goes back and forth unfortunately. My prayer is that there will be more unity in general, and it's not just the division among those that are in the Lenape communities that are divided between relatively east and west. It actually is something that we see throughout Indian country, this mentality of division, this mentality of Apartheid that has been pushed and instituted by federal policies that divides our people, that brings a whole lot of misunderstanding. As we are divided, we are easily overcome and conquered, when we stand together we are able to achieve much more. My prayer is that there is greater unity, and I see it now and again, in the recent speeches of the President of the [NCAI] that spoke of the tribes we represent, and what Indian country is, what is being among the tribes that are both Federal and State recognized, and there are communities who have no recognition at all yet who are historic, and legitimate, and need to be defended and upheld. The United

Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People does not speak about federal acknowledgement, it speaks about Indigeneity. It is your history that needs to be respected, not necessarily the status that your tribal government may have with a foreign government.

**[00.52.06]Bana:** In New Jersey, do you think the education system is lacking in teaching non-native kids about who was here before them?

**[00.52.24]Norwood:** Absolutely, no question about it. There was a push with the Commission on American Indian Affairs which is a part of the Department of State, which has the two representatives from each state recognized tribes in voting membership by statute, to update the educational curricula in the state, to get the governor to push for an accurate history of the tribes that have remained, the tribes who have been pushed out, and to really tell that history within the context of the fact that it is not only in the past but that it is continuing into the present. We are still hopeful that that will happen. There are some communities, some school districts that are very interested in doing that, and trying. There have been some updates to the books that are used in some of the classes that actually have photographs and talk about the tribes today that are still in New Jersey. It just isn't widely communicated. You have a lot of teachers who have been miseducated to think that all of the tribes left the state, that there are none of us left in New Jersey. Even among those who are open to maybe learning about the continuing history, what they have as a resource is a mere mention of the indigenous communities here, and then suddenly there was colonization and then you don't hear about us anymore. We disappear like the dinosaurs in American history. Or we only are thought of as past tense and not as a part of the continuing fabric of the United States. That's still a problem, in the past 25 years, we have



had to meet with school boards because of some of the stereotypes that were perpetuated, some of the racist things that were still being taught as part of the curriculum. So now we have a long way to go.

**[00.54.50]Bana:** Do you think with some educational institutions like universities, that include things like land acknowledgements, do you think that's a positive step in that process of raising awareness?

**[00.55.04]Norwood:** It can be. The problem with land acknowledgements is that- I think they are a wonderful educational tool, they are a wonderful way to recognize the history of the area, but only if there is an understanding of the continuing relationship that Lenape and Nanticoke people have with the land, that its not only past tense but present tense, that the community is present tense. They are still here, still in the area. The other problem I see often is that there is this wording of only victimization, as opposed to a celebration of survival and continuation, and so some of the land acknowledgement formulas that are used, while sincere effort is appreciated, sometimes you can sincerely do more damage than you can help. You have to be careful about the wording, you have to be careful how you ensure that the continuing communities especially in the region you are in are represented in the acknowledgement, that you don't merely speak of it in regard to victimization or blame of non-natives who had nothing to do, you know they weren't here, they weren't born. Many of their ancestors hadn't even come yet when a lot of the atrocities had taken place. So the acknowledgements should be educational, and celebratory, and not filled with political ideology, playing the blame and the victimization game, we have to be careful about that. The second thing about the acknowledgements is we have to make sure that

they're not viewed as a "ok we've acknowledged we say we're sorry" which i never think is necessary to even be in an acknowledgement, "and now we're done with it". The acknowledgement should be the beginning of a continuing conversation and growing appreciation for the indigenous culture.

**[00.57.12]Bana:** As you talk about continuation, can you talk about cultural practices and how in the last few hundred years they've evolved into the modern day?

**[00.57.28]Norwood:** A lot of the cultural practices that we've had have been influenced, as with every culture, been influenced by the outside, whether they be other Native cultures due to migration, whether by non-native cultures because they moved here. Through the generations there was a core of continuing traditions in regard to our stories, in regard to our crafts, in regard to our food, in regard to our ceremonies that [were] continued. Before I wound up in leadership there were those who had the opportunity to visit, with some of the other tribal communities that were all on reservations whether out west, or up in Wisconsin or up in Canada, who wound up finding out that, and this is based on the testimony of quite a few of our Elders, that what they had been doing actually was very similar to and had preserved these ancient ways that were kept within the community, among the elders, and been passed down from generation to generation. Then of course there was also a sharing and revival of some of the things that had been lost, and each of the communities has to be able to share with the other and appreciate what has been lost. Our community being a blend of both Nanticoke and Lenape, our ways are a little different from the Lenape communities that left here, because we also have some Nanticoke tradition. Twice a year within the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape, there are gatherings that are cultural gatherings for the

community, and special invited guests, typically other natives or those non-natives who have worked with us for years, and they are ceremonial in nature. There will be the fire kept, and stories told around the fire, there will be several ceremonies, there will be a sweat lodge, community gathering and worship and food, both christian and traditional ceremonies. That happens twice a year. Once a year there is a powwow which is open to the public, and natives from all over the country will come and gather and dance and compete together in dance competitions, and there will be all kinds of food you can purchase, and crafts from all over. It's a wonderful opportunity to come and experience the culture, and that's on the second weekend of June at the Salem County fairgrounds.

**[01.00.08]Bana:** I've just one last question written down here, a very personal one, what does it mean to you to be Leni Lenape, or Nanticoke?

**[01.00.22]Norwood:** Well I'm both, I'm Nanticoke and Lenape. What it means is that I have a stake in this land, I'm connected to it, it's the lands where my ancestors trod, where they survived what was tantamount to an invasion, people that were welcomed and wound up eventually trying to stomp us out, and yet we continued to exist. When I've had the opportunity to especially go down to Delaware, and be on the land where ancestors that I have researched lived, and the land where they were, and the church that they established, and I can walk in the graveyard and see these people whose stories I know. It gives me a great deep sense of identity and responsibility, because it's a history that with great intention has been- the attempt was made to stomp it out, and the only way for it to be perpetuated is if we retell it, and affirm it. So I'm grateful, it is who God made me to be, I praise God for that and I praise God for my African

ancestry. A history of survival, and thriving in spite of great opposition. I can see that in the faces of my family and extended family.

**[01.02.02]Bana:** That's all the questions I've got written down, Dr. Krasner if you have a few others you might want to ask?

**[01.02.11]Krasner:** Dr. Norwood thank you so much, this was so informative. I can't wait to show this to my history of New Jersey students.

**[01.02.20]Norwood:** I have to get a copy myself.

**[01.02.23]Krasner:** Yeah this will be put on YouTube, so I will send that out as soon as I have it... when I have it. This was so great, and Phil will be producing a Transcript, a summary, and an index to the content, so that will all be part of the package.

**[01.02.47]Norwood:** Well I appreciate being invited to share, and I appreciate the work you're doing Dr. Krasner, and it was a pleasure meeting you Phil, and thank you for interviewing me. More things like this need to be done, absolutely.

**[01.03.06]Krasner:** Well I'm also going to share it with the State Commission.