

## Nanticoke Leni-Lenape

The Nanticoke Leni-Lenape Tribal Nation is part of three interrelated tribes of the area of the Delaware Bay. They are made up of the American Indian families from southern New Jersey and the Delmarva Peninsula who remained in their ancestral homeland after many of their relations were removed to the west and to the north as far as Oklahoma and Canada.

**Leni- Lenape-** The Leni-Lenape (or simply "Lenape") are the ancient root of many other American Indian nations. The Lenape homeland included all of New Jersey, northern Delaware, eastern Pennsylvania, and southeastern New York.

**Nanticoke-** The Nanticoke are the people of the Delmarva between the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays.

Their tribal nation of **Nanticoke** and **Lenape** people are the result of the coalescing of these two interrelated tribes, beginning as far back as the 1600's.

### History

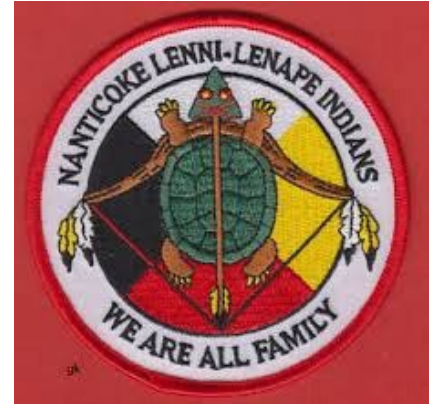
For more than **10,000 years**, their tribes called the area of the **Delaware River and Bay down through to the Chesapeake Bay, "Home."**

Their ancestors never surrendered their tribal identity or inherent sovereignty. From the mid **1600's** through to the **establishment of the United States**, they shared their homeland with the Swedes and Finns, Dutch and British, but always kept their tribal community alive and well. The **Lenape and Nanticoke ancestors** intermingled and intermarried in order to survive the swift changes brought by the European incursion into our ancient homeland.

While many from their tribes were forced West and North, eventually settling in the mid-western United States and Ontario Canada, the families that remained gathered into interrelated tribal communities and continued their tradition as "keepers of the land."

Throughout much of the **1800s and 1900s**, their tribal governance continued as a self-isolating family-clan style leadership operating in conjunction with their tribal churches.

For many years, their people created their own Native American churches, social events, and — in Delaware — separate Indian schools. From the **mid**



Chief Gould - Nanticoke Leni-Lenape



**1800's** through to the **mid 1900's**, it was primarily through several tribal congregations that they were able to preserve their culture and defend their people. Eventually, the tribal leadership moved to establish funded services and programming to benefit tribal citizens and to protect tribal sovereignty for future generations.

By the **1970's**, a new generation of leaders began to advocate for their people in a more open manner among the non-native public and government agencies, reorganizing the tribe with an elected chief and council which no longer functioned solely within the traditional tribal church.

## "Tribal Sovereignty"

**Refers to the right of Native American tribes to govern themselves and determine their own future.** Defending and asserting tribal sovereignty is essential to Indigenous Tribal Peoples. Sovereignty cannot be given or granted; it is inherent.

**Attributes of Native American tribal sovereignty include:** control of tribal land and the inherent powers to determine their form of government, to define conditions for citizenship in the nation, to administer justice and enforce laws, and to tax and regulate the domestic relations of its citizens.

According to chapter seven of **Felix Cohen's Federal Indian Law**, "...From the earliest years of the Republic the Indian tribes have been recognized as 'distinct, independent, political communities' and, as such, qualified to exercise powers of self-government, not by virtue of any delegation of powers from the Federal Government, but rather by reason of their original tribal sovereignty."

## Government and Grounds

The tribe is governed by a constitutional government, which provides for executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

The community services are administered through a tribally controlled 501(c)3 social services / community development organization called, "**The Nanticoke Leni-Lenape Indians of New Jersey**," which is subordinate to their tribal government. The main headquarters is in Bridgeton, Cumberland County, New Jersey, where they also operate a tribal store called the, "Turtle Trading Post."

They also have tribal grounds, called "**Cohanzick**," in Fairfield Township, New Jersey. This is the location of their **tribal community center** and **ceremonial grounds**, where many of their tribal families have lived for hundreds of years.

The **Nanticoke Leni-Lenape** are also affiliated with the **National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)**, the **Alliance of Colonial Era Tribes (ACET)**, and the **United League of Indigenous Nations**.