

# Study Guide For Teachers

**Rob Aptaker**  
in  
*The Ways of the Lenape*

presented by

**Young Audiences**

(866) 500-9265

[www.yanj.org](http://www.yanj.org)

[www.yaep.org](http://www.yaep.org)



## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Long before the first European settlers came to “the new world”, the Lenni Len’ape Nation lived in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In *Ways of the Lenape*, Rob Aptaker takes students on an adventure as he demonstrates the cultures and customs of these tribes during pre-colonized times. Students will learn about and experience the tools, clothing, toys, games, medicine and music that were part of the Lenni Lenapes’ daily lives.

## BEFORE THE PROGRAM

Make a list of things the class knows about the Native People of Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

For example:

What name did they call themselves?

Talk about their food, dwellings, clothing, government, beliefs, customs, and livelihood.

In modern America, children go to school to learn reading, math, computers, science and social studies to prepare them for the future. If you were a Native American boy or girl in what is now Pennsylvania and New Jersey, 500 years ago, what kinds of things would you be learning to prepare yourself for adulthood?

What tools and materials (example cooking pots made from metal) did the original people of our area use? For cooking? Building? Clothing? Other?

## AFTER THE PROGRAM

- After the presentation list three things you learned that you didn’t know before
- List two things that surprised you
- Did you learn anything that showed that what you thought before was mistaken?
- In what ways is your life most like/ unlike that of the Lenape people of 500 years ago?
- What do you do that is like what they did? What is very different?

We often think life in the past, in tribal cultures was more difficult than our life today, but can you think of problems we face today that the Lenape people did not have to deal with before the arrival of the Europeans? (examples: unemployment, traffic jams, pollution, climate change, junk mail...)

## VOCABULARY WORDS

The following English words are derived from Native American languages:

|          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| MOOSE    | RACCOON   |
| CHIPMUNK | COUGAR    |
| SKUNK    | HICKORY   |
| PECAN    | AVOCADO   |
| PAPAYA   | BAYOU     |
| SAVANNA  | HURRICANE |
| BLIZZARD | PARKA     |
| TOBAGGAN | POTATO    |
| TOMATO   | HAMMOCK   |

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS**

### **Life before colonial contact**

The Lenni Lenape (pronounced len 'ah-pay) are members of the Algonquian linguistic group. Before the arrival of the Swedish, Dutch, English and German colonists, their territory spanned much of PA, NJ, and southern NY. Their name means "regular people" They were later named "Delaware" -- a name with no meaning in their language. This was the name of Lord De La Warr, a European nobleman who, though he was granted a portion of the river that now bears his name, never traveled to the territory of the Lenape.

The Lenape were corn, squash, and bean farmers who made their villages near rivers and other bodies of water where alluvial soils, fresh water and opportunities for fishing made life pleasant. They also hunted and trapped animals for food and clothing, and they gathered chestnuts and other wild foods including maple sugar. But their primary means of support was farming -- an activity in which women were the primary workers. Because of their role as life givers and providers, Lenape women had high status and held considerable sway in tribal matters, especially domestic ones. Male leaders and councils were more likely to manage matters of relations with other tribes and (later) with Europeans.

### **Gender roles and family**

In Lenape society men served as protectors, fishermen and hunters, tool makers and builders. They were usually the leaders in civic and religious life. Women farmed, made pottery, gathered wild foods, and were most often responsible for knowing about healing and making medicines. They also cooked, skinned wild game and made clothing from the furs and skins, and managed the home. Elder men and women helped with child care, gardening, counseled the leaders, and took the larger part in educating children in the skills they would need for adult life. Couples usually did not have many children --2 to 4 was more common than the large numbers in some colonial families. But family was reckoned on a much broader scale than we think of today. Clan cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents lived in close proximity and shared property, farm fields, and child care.

### **Social Structure**

They are matrilineal people -- meaning that inheritance and family identity travel through the mother's line. Hereditary leaders (nowadays called "chiefs") gained their position through their female parent or aunt. Before European contact, the Lenape were separated into three main groups whose languages varied somewhat. They organized themselves with a clan system which, while it may have once had more groups, was reduced to three principal ones: Turtle; Turkey; and Wolf Clan. Each village was autonomous, but well respected leaders (such as the legendary sachem Tammamend) sometimes held great influence in certain regions.

### **Children**

Boys and girls were generally treated with gentleness -- spanking or beating was unknown to Lenape children. Until age 6 or 7 children had few responsibilities beyond helping gather firewood or chasing crows from the cornfields. As a child grew, grandparents, and aunts and uncles began to teach them the skills needed for adult life. All boys learned tracking, trapping, fishing, tool making, building, and hunting. Girls learned to identify edible and medicinal plants, to tan skins and make clothing, to farm and to make baskets, woven mats and pottery. Boys and girls helped with making maple sugar, and weeding gardens, but compared to modern people there was more leisure time -- for adults and children. Except during planting, harvest or moving and building a village, there was time for ball games, wrestling, swimming, and games of chance as well as singing, dancing, and seasonal celebrations and ceremonies -- some lasting as much as 12 days.

### **Relations with other tribes**

The tribe was largely peaceful -- not famous for raiding others --but their warriors were known to acquit themselves with skill in revenge raids and in defense of their homes and families. The Lenape were near neighbors of the powerful Iroquois Confederacy. By colonial times they had negotiated peace with this powerful nation, in part by agreeing to a certain degree of Iroquois supervision of their territory. Before the arrival of the Europeans, this oversight was largely symbolic (though it did create a degree of security through association). But during colonial times, the Lenape were sometimes disempowered in negotiations and land dealings by their powerful Iroquoian overseers.

### **The Lenape today**

During colonial times the tribe was compelled to yield more and more land to encroaching settlers. The most famous and egregious forced removal was the "Walking Purchase," by which the tribe was tricked into giving up most of what is now Bucks County as well as parts of Pike, Monroe, Carbon, Schuylkill, Carbon Northampton, and Lehigh. They endured displacement first west of the Allegheny Mountains, then to Ohio. Some went to Canada, to Texas and even Mexico. A large body of the tribe -- who are now called the Delaware -- was moved to Oklahoma where they have a reservation today. You can visit their tribal website:

<http://www.delawaretribe.org/community.htm> to learn more about them.