Pennsylvania government officials and representatives from Lancaster County’s Amish, Mennonite and Presbyterian churches and Quaker meetings will honor Native American cultures and acknowledge the historic wrongs committed against the local Native people at a 10:00 AM program at First Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, on Saturday, October 9.

Their statements will be formally received by a wide cross-section of local and regional Native Americans and Native groups representing the Haudenosaunee, Lenape, Susquehannock, Shawnee and other tribes who once lived here, as well as Native people from other regions who now call this area home.

Admission is free, but tickets are required. Contact the 1719 Hans Herr House at (717) 464-4438.

“This is a Lancaster County event on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the first European settlers arriving here,” said Bob Doe, chair of the planning committee that includes Native and church groups. “It’s a first step toward understanding our shared history and beginning to set things right between Native people and European immigrants.”

According to a committee statement, all First Nations People held a common view that life and land were interconnected and shared by everyone, and so they resonated with William Penn’s vision of Pennsylvania as a place of peace and sanctuary.

But not all immigrants held to Penn’s ideals. Settlers broke treaties Penn made with Native tribes and ignored Pennsylvania law when it applied to Native grievances. In two separate incidents in 1763, an immigrant militia from Paxton Township destroyed the last village of the Conestoga tribe and massacred its inhabitants.

Christians were complicit in these offenses, the statement continues, not responding effectively to injustice, encroaching on Native land protected by treaty, participating in a land grab following the Conestoga massacres, and more recently, removing Native children from their families to enroll them in boarding schools.

“In my opinion, they were hypocrites,” said Mary Ann Robins, a Native American committee member representing Circle Legacy, a Lancaster non-profit created to support and empower indigenous people.

William Penn’s Treaty with the Indians when he founded the Province of Pennsylvania in North America. Painting by Benjamin West, 1771.
“Lancaster Roots 300” Calendar of Events

Public Acknowledgement and Commemoration of Native American Legacy
Saturday, October 9
10:00 AM event at First Presbyterian Church, Lancaster; 2:00 PM dedication of Native American longhouse site at the 1719 Herr House, with multicultural celebration continuing there until 5:00 PM. All events are free.

Historic West Lampeter Township Driving Tour
Saturday, October 16, 10:00 AM–4:00 PM
Self-guided driving tour to historic sites in the vicinity of the 1719 Herr House with interpretive guides at each stop. Adults $8; children 7-12 $4; children under 7 free. Begin at the Herr House.

Native Americans of Lancaster County
Monday, November 1, 7:00 PM
A panel of experts will discuss the history of Native Americans in and around Lancaster three hundred years ago. A free public meeting at Lititz Moravian Church.

Opening reception, Pennsylvania German Folk Art Show and Sale
Friday, November 19, 6:00–9:00 PM
Show of quality reproduction folk art at Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society continues, Tuesday-Saturday, 8:30 AM–4:30 PM, through December 31. Admission is free; all art is for sale.

Christmas Candelight Tours at the 1719 Hans Herr House
Friday, December 3, 6:00-8:30 PM; Saturday, December 4, 5:00-8:30 PM
Theme: “Three Hundred Years of Christmas Traditions.”

Other Historical Society Events

Juniata and Snyder County Fall Foliage Trip
Saturday, October 16, 2010, 8:30 AM–5:00 PM
Join Henry Benner on a genealogy and history tour of sites to which Pennsylvania Germans migrated in the 18th century, including the newly restored Joseph Hochstetler homestead. Learn about the history of the rivers, their role in logging, canals, and other colonial transportation. Visit the restored 1869 Richfield (“Brick”) Mennonite Meetinghouse and the adjoining Juniata Mennonite Historical Center, as well as a museum of restored John Deere tractors. Members $85; nonmembers $95; lunch included.

1710 Pequea Settlement Tour
Saturday, November 6, 2010, 8:00 am–noon
Follow in the footsteps of the first permanent European settlers in Lancaster County, visiting sites of Pennsylvania German historic and genealogical interest in Strasburg and Willow Street. This half-day tour, led by Martin Keen, stops at related points of ancestral interest to Bowman, Funk, Hauri, Houser, Herr, Kendig, LeFever, Miller, Mylin, Tschantz and Weber surnames. Members $40; nonmembers $50.

Both tours depart from and return to Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. For reservations, contact Peggy Erb: (717) 393-9745 or perb@lmhs.org.

Community Events

A four-session harmonica workshop with folk musician Sharon Hunsberger will be held Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on October 12, 19, 26, and November 2, 2010 at the Mennonite Heritage Center, 565 Yoder Road, Harleysville. No previous experience needed. Registration $30 ($25 members); harmonicas available for $5. Contact (215) 256-3020, info@mhep.org or www.mhep.org.

Join us for Frazer Mennonite Church’s Centennial Celebration, October 15-17, 2010 in Frazer, Pa. We will release a commissioned book on our first 100 years, hear from former pastors and bishops, record memories, view videos and displays, sing and fellowship. See www.frazermennonite.org for a detailed schedule of events. For questions or additional information, contact Harry King at info@frazermennonite.org or 610-644-3397.

Palatines to America National Conference—co-hosted with Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society—will be held June 9, 10 and 11, 2011 at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For more information, go to www.palam.org.

The Mirror (ISSN 0738-7237) is a bimonthly newsletter published by the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, at www.lmhs.org, phone: (717) 393-9745, fax: (717) 393-8751, e-mail: lmhs@lmhs.org.
POSTMASTER, please send address changes to The Mirror, c/o Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602-1499.

Staff from the 1719 Hans Herr House set up an information table and announced prize winners to the crowd at a Lancaster Barnstormers baseball game during “History Day” at Clipper Stadium on August 21.
does not recognize any local indigenous groups.

“It’s time to talk about Native history,” said Rusty Sherrick, who identifies himself as both Mennonite and Native American. “A longhouse is just what we need. We need it as much as the Hans Herr House.”

“As I’ve gone out and done school programs I’ve asked the kids, ‘What Indians are you studying?’ There’s a minimal amount that anyone learns about Indians from this area.”

Representatives of Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society and the 1719 Herr House have been planning the longhouse with local Native American advisors since 2008.

One Longhouse Committee member, Harold Mast, has visited more than a dozen replica longhouses in Pennsylvania, New York, Ontario, Virginia, Michigan and even Alaska.

“It sparked an interest,” Mast said. “I just started trying to find stuff.”

Historically, longhouses varied according to when, where and by whom they were built, but they were generally twenty or more feet wide and equally tall, Mast said. In northern areas, they were made by bending tall saplings and lashing them across a pole frame, then covering the outside with grasses or tree bark.

Longhouses could be hundreds of feet long and house dozens of families.

Mast’s favorite replica longhouse was in Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons in Ontario, Canada.

“It felt like you were going into something real,” he said. “They had a fire going in the middle, and even though there were smoke holes, the smoke hung down just above my head. Everything smelled of smoke and the ceiling was black with soot.”

It’s an example that Mast and Sherrick hope the 1719 Herr House will follow.

“Visitors that come to the longhouse will be able to touch, smell and feel the 18th century,” Sherrick said. “They’ll be able to feel the dirt floor and see animal skins on the wall and smell the fire pit with a fire burning.”

The longhouse at the 1719 Herr House will be 20 feet high, 20 feet wide, and 62 feet long, Mast said. It will be constructed near a stand of trees by a small stream across Hans Herr Drive from the 1719 Herr House. To make the site more historically accurate, the museum has received a grant to plant native trees in an adjacent pasture.

The building itself will cost approximately $100,000 to build and furnish. The museum is seeking an additional $250,000 as an endowment for maintenance and interpretative costs.

Construction will begin in 2011, in the spring when saplings are the most pliable.

Donations may be sent to “Longhouse Project” care of the Hans Herr House, 1849 Hans Herr Drive, Willow Street, PA 17602.

For more information, call the 1719 Herr House at (717) 464-4438.

Northern longhouses were made by bending tall saplings and lashing them across a pole frame. Raised platforms against the walls were used for sleeping and storage.

The inside of a longhouse in Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons in Ontario, Canada, captures the look proposed for the future longhouse at the 1719 Herr House.
Rusty Sherrick: Mennonite Native American

At a June fundraiser for the Mennonite Native American longhouse at the 1719 Herr House, Rusty Sherrick was hard to miss. Among families eating sandwiches and ice cream, he was dressed like an 18th-century Delaware warrior, carrying a long rifle and wearing leggings designed to look like they had been taken from a fallen English army officer’s coat.

One half of his face was painted a livid red and the other an icy blue.

“Mennonites don’t know what to do with me because I keep my Christian and my Indian side together,” Sherrick said. “My grandmother was Shawnee. My grandfather was Delaware. I grew up in the Mennonite Brethren church. I didn’t learn about my Indian side until I was in my 40’s.”

In recent years, Sherrick has immersed himself in Native American culture. A leatherworker by trade, he has painstakingly recreated Native American tools and ceremonial items, some of which are displayed at the 1719 Hans Herr House.

He also has found and visited members of the Sherrick family in northeast Oklahoma, where many Delaware Indians settled after being displaced from their ancestral land in eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and southeastern New York.

“Indians didn’t worship nature. They didn’t worship idols. But they believed that everything has a spirit,” Sherrick said.

“So I’ve had to wrestle with my Indian background, not throwing out my Christian belief. We are all God’s children, and the Indians are God’s children, too.”

“My relationship with the Lord is strong. I read my Bible every day. I pray every day. Jesus is my best friend and I’m not throwing him away.”

Director’s Reflections: Living History

By Rolando L. Santiago

On one occasion, Jesus pointed out to a scribe the most important purpose in life: to love God and to love one’s neighbor. As I begin my duties as new director of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (LMHS), I like to think that at LMHS we serve to remind ourselves, and you as our loyal supporters, to love God and neighbor.

Ultimately, this is what our personal and communal life journeys are all about.

In our life journeys we engage daily in creating our own stories as well as the stories of the communities to which we belong. Creating a story is enriched when we remember and tell aspects of the story that are meaningful to us. I call this living history. At LMHS, we want to support you as you create, remember and tell your own living history, which may be about your own personal, family or community life story.

Creating my own personal story, or the story of my family or my community, is exciting to me. For over five years, I have devoted 10 to 15 minutes each day to write down the events of my day. Then, about four years ago, my father and I took two or three days to call his sisters and cousins to begin developing a genealogical chart for my Puerto Rican great grandfather, Fidel Santiago Mendoza, which currently does not exist. For about 20 years, my mother and I have been building a list of over 100 United States Mennonites who went to Puerto Rico beginning in the 1940’s and married Puerto Rican spouses. I am one of the offspring that resulted from these bicultural liaisons. These are just a few examples of how I have found meaning and enjoyment in creating my own living history.

Remembering significant events in the years since the first European settlers arrived in Lancaster County in 1710 is the goal of Lancaster Roots 300 this year. Over 900 people attended the interdenominational kick-off “Festival of Roots and Music” on January 31st at Strasburg Mennonite Church to remember and celebrate the diverse cultural heritage of Lancaster County. In July, Kim Lemon of WGAL promoted family history by airing, in three segments, her own family ancestry in the county. These heritage segments, and announcements for other inspiring Lancaster Roots 300 events can be viewed at our LMHS website: www.lmhs.org.

Telling our stories in new and life-giving ways is part of the living history we seek to promote at LMHS and the Hans Herr House. In an article in the July issue of LMHS’s Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage magazine, Darvin Martin discusses recent breakthroughs in genealogical research among Mennonites through the growing use of DNA testing. Then, at the Hans Herr House “At LMHS, we want to support you as you create, remember and tell your own living history”

A banner year for the Bookworm Frolic: From August 18-21, volunteers and staff maintained over 40,000 books in the front parking lot of the Historical Society. The sale grossed nearly $45,000 for the Society—its best year ever.
Government and Religious Leaders Honor Native Americans

“This acknowledgment is a chance for those groups to say ‘We should have done a better job. We had the same kind of problems as you, but we had no regard for when they happened to you. We did what benefitted us at the time.’” said Robins.

Lloyd Hoover, who represents Lancaster Mennonite Conference on the committee, said, “We, as Europeans, basically annihilated the Susquehannocks who were here and to the rest of the tribes we committed acts that scattered them across the nation. We divided lands and divided peoples and got involved in matters that weren’t our business.”

“Any way that I connect to that past as an European and a Mennonite and a Christian, I ask for forgiveness. I want to lay my hatchet down,” he said.

But coming together, even for reconciliation, has been difficult. It took months for the group to agree on a mission statement, and some meetings have resulted in misunderstandings, power struggles, anger and hurt.

As the project gained momentum, new participants also have asked to be heard and integrated into the planning process.

“It doesn’t surprise me that we would end up in conflict at this point, because of the nature of the history we’re dealing with,” said Doe.

Hundreds of years of tension will not be healed overnight.

Doe looked to William Penn’s vision as a rallying point. “We need to allow for different streams of thought to be represented so that we can honor everybody,” he said.

The group has also struggled with feelings of futility. What good is it to talk about events that happened hundreds of years ago? Shouldn’t we just forget the past and move on?

To a great extent, both Native and immigrant communities have moved on. But their difficult history also asserts itself in modern life.

The rum that Pennsylvania immigrants gave and sold to Native people created lifestyles of addiction that persist today.

The poaching of deer and fur animals on Native lands more than two hundred years ago began a struggle with poverty that still haunts Native communities.

The systematic displacement of Native groups from their homes and land left families and tribes fragmented.

And forced assimilation has stripped many Native people of their shared culture.

“I cannot blame people for what their ancestors did,” Robins said. “But hopefully they are learning something from their history, and I can hold them accountable for their treatment of Native people going forward.”

“This history is a scar on their descendants, too, and by acknowledging these wrongs they will begin to heal themselves,” she said.

Committee members agree that actions as well as words are necessary to bring true healing. Two outcomes that the committee states will “give tangible form to attitudes and gestures of reconciliation” are collecting data on Native people in Pennsylvania and securing formal recognition for Native tribes in the state.

According to Doe, Lancaster was one of two main treaty-making locations in the United States, and was particularly the site of the treaties that opened the West which gave start to the French and Indian War.

Yet Pennsylvania is the only state with no tribal reserve and no tribal recognition, Doe said.

“I really believe this acknowledgment is a start for something positive to go forward,” Robins said. “Pennsylvania is the Keystone State. Other states look to it and it makes a difference to the rest of the country.”

For their part, Lancaster Mennonite Conference hopes that the Native American longhouse planned for the 1719 Hans Herr House can be a symbol of Mennonite commitment to learn from Native peoples and to repair some of the damage their ancestors caused.

A dedication for the replica longhouse will take place at 2:00 PM at the 1719 Herr House in Willow Street on Saturday, October 9, after the service of Acknowledgment and Commemoration. A multicultural celebration will also be held at the 1719 Herr House, from 1:00–5:00 PM.

Robins acknowledged that Mennonites can do good work.

“The Mennonite Central Committee does a lot for many Indian nations,” she said.

“One thing I really respect is that they say they don’t want to enable people, they want to help people learn to help themselves. They’re not forcing their religion on anyone. They’re helping, living hand in hand with people that need help,” she said.

On a recent Tuesday, Apache, Cherokee, Haudenosaunee, Lenape, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Quaker and other committee members sat around tables in the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Offices in Lancaster. After one tense exchange, an Apache man known as Gray Wolf spoke up.

“I think if our forefathers heard what we were talking about here tonight they’d be dancing with joy,” he said.
Driving Tour to Give Taste of Old Pequea Settlement

The “Historic West Lampeter Township Driving Tour”, scheduled for 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturday, October 16, will become a tour of historic sites within Lancaster’s original Pequea settlement, thanks to a new book published by Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society this spring.

Pequea Settlement 1710: Self-Guided Tour includes nearly 40 historic locations within a 6,000-acre tract granted to nine Mennonites in October, 1710. The driving tour on October 16, which can also be followed by bicycle or on foot, will visit six of those sites in Lancaster, Strasburg and Willow Street, Pennsylvania.

Properties will include homes, current and former Mennonite meeting-houses and a spring. One house, on Miller Street in Strasburg, was originally a horse stable. Another, on Beaver Valley Pike outside of Willow Street, still bears the faint outline of an early settler’s cabin.

Docents will be available at each stop to answer questions, but participants will be responsible for their own itinerary and transportation between sites. Tourists will start at the 1719 Hans Herr House in Willow Street where they will receive street addresses and a map.

The Pequea Settlement book, available in the gift shop at the 1719 Herr House as well as at the Historical Society, provides additional information about each site, including addresses for GPS use, full-color pictures and maps showing owners of the original land patents.

The late Sam Wenger first began assembling information about the sites for his popular 1710 Lancaster Settlement bus tour, which he led for the last time in May 2010.

In anticipation of that tour and the 300th anniversary of the settlement this year, local historians Mary Lou Weaver Houser and Joanne Hess Siegrist collaborated with Wenger to update and expand his information into a booklet. That partnership has seemed particularly valuable since Wenger’s sudden death on May 15.

“We wanted to expose people to the oldest tracts that we know about, and also the oldest dwellings still in existence,” said Weaver Houser.

“It was exciting to get into homes and interview people about what they know about their property,” she said.

At one site along Penn Grant Road, no one knew where the original log cabin had stood. But, when Hess Siegrist was shown inside an 1818 brick house on the property, she got a surprise.

In the lower level of the home, a spring gushes between 300 and 400 gallons of water per minute, year-round. On the west wall is a long, wide trough for food storage, and nearby, a walk-in fireplace with markings that indicate a “beehive” bake oven.

It’s likely that the existing brick house was built around the first home of Jacob and Magdalena Miller and their three children, who immigrated to Pennsylvania in 1710.

“So many houses get covered over with clapboard or vinyl siding and you just don’t realize the structures that could be hiding underneath,” Weaver Houser said.

For that reason, the authors invite updates, corrections and new information.

It was new information about her personal history that propelled Weaver Houser to work on the Pequea Settlement book in the first place.

She grew up outside of Philadelphia, but married a man from Lancaster County, born on one of the original Pequea Settlement tracts. While researching her own homestead in Lampeter Township, she discovered her Weaver ancestors and her husband’s Houser ancestors had been next-door neighbors for years.

Pequea Settlement 1710 sells for $14.95. The October 16 tour tickets cost $8 for adults; $4 for children 7-12. To reserve, contact the 1719 Hans Herr House at (717) 464-4438.