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COLLEGIATE CHURCH, LENAPE NATIVE AMERICANS MARK RECONCILIATION
AND NEW RELATIONSHIP

New York, (Nov. 27, 2009) — Members of the many bands of the Lenape family of Indians, from as far away as Canada and as near as Brooklyn, came to Bowling Green Plaza in lower Manhattan on Friday morning to participate in an historic healing ceremony with members of the Collegiate Church of New York, the oldest surviving institution of the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam.

Subsequent to Henry Hudson's landing in New York 400 years ago, the Dutch West Indies Company essentially established New Amsterdam as a "company town." The Collegiate Church became the company church--the conscience of the new settlement.

"We were complicit in imposing an alien culture and economic system on the Lenape that caused great suffering," said the Rev. Robert Chase, a Collegiate Minister, "and it is fitting that we acknowledge our role in this history. That's what today is all about."

The Consistory of the Collegiate Church voted unanimously at its meeting on October 5, 2009 for a resolution that states:

Despite being a faith of brotherhood and sisterhood and love for neighbor, our actions towards you, our Native brothers and sisters, caused great suffering under the imposition of this new culture and its accompanying economic and legal systems. We, the Collegiate Church, recognize our part in your suffering... We consumed your resources, dehumanized your people, and disregarded your culture, along with your dreams, hopes and great love for this land. We express sorrow for our part in these actions.

Representatives from several Lenape bands were present and took part in the ceremony.

Ron Holloway, Chair of the Sand Hill (Lenape) Band of Indians read a response to Collegiate Church's declaration that included an expression of appreciation for the day's events: "Today, the descendants of the original explorers who landed here have come to the descendants of those who have always been here, and openly apologized for their responsibility in policies that so decimated our peoples. They have extended their hands in friendship to chart a new course of race relations, to usher in a new era of healing and reconciliation that can only have beneficial results for the whole of humanity."

Representatives of Collegiate Church and the Lenape signified their reconciliation by exchanging wampum, which Native Americans traditionally used to seal a treaty.

In June, President Obama signed into law The Native American Heritage Act of 2009 which establishes the day after Thanksgiving as a time to honor Native American culture and contributions to this country. This ceremony coincided with the first Native American Heritage Day.

The event was called, "Healing Turtle Island." Turtle Island is a translation for the term Native Americans use for the land that Europeans call "the new world."

"From the beginning," said Rev. Chase, "we did not want this day to be a one time event. Rather, it marks the beginning of a partnership between our two communities. In fact, collaborations have already begun in education, especially among children; in arts and culture; and in the delivery of services to Native Americans in social and economic distress. This day is symbolic of a new way forward."

Copies of Collegiate Church's declaration of reconciliation, and the Lenapes' acceptance of the declaration, are attached.

Copies of Collegiate Church's declaration of reconciliation, and the Lenapes' acceptance of the declaration, can be found here:

Statement- <http://www.healingturtleisland.com/01files/CollegiateChurchStatement.pdf>

Response- <http://www.healingturtleisland.com/01files/LenapeResponse.pdf>