

Abstract for a presentation at the scientific conference *Presentation and Representation Revisited: Places, Media, Disciplines*, 33<sup>rd</sup> American Indian Workshop, University of Zurich, April 12-15, 2012

### **A Place to Present and Represent Indigenous Pennsylvania: The Case of the Lenape Cultural Center in Easton, PA**

Many people assume that the Northeastern part of the United States today is largely void of contemporary American Indian life. Most representations of indigenous cultures such as the Lenni Lenape in Pennsylvania deal with artifacts, stories, and protagonists as issues that firmly belong to the past. Where American Indian lifeways are presented, questions of authenticity and authorization are immediately raised. Consequently, American Indian people of today's Pennsylvania are often faced with discrimination, judgments and disbelief outside their communities. Their struggle to present their culture, their heritage, and their present-day reality is frequently met with suspicion by other Indian and non-Indian people alike.

Reclaiming and preserving Lenape tradition and identity is divided into efforts that are directed at educating both oneself and a non-Indian audience on a local and regional level through talks, language classes, music and storytelling. At the same time these efforts aim at increasing the visibility and recognition of American Indian life in Pennsylvania in a wider context. One way to achieve these goals is the creation and establishment of real places, where Lenape people come together to share their experience among themselves, to educate an interested audience, and to be open to questions from visitors and the public.

In view of the current debates of decolonizing and recolonizing indigenous cultures by means of re-/presentation, the case study of the Lenape Cultural Center in Easton, PA, is used to illustrate the many challenges and crossroads in voicing one's own identity and in bridging multiple histories.

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