

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL
AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP
RELATIONS

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Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Start: 10:25 a.m.

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Carlina Rivera, Chairperson

COUNCILMEMBERS:

David M. Carr
Shahana K. Hanif
Crystal Hudson
Farah N. Louis
Chi A. Ossé
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Laurie Cumbo
Commissioner
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Lance Polivy
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Joel Whitney
BPL Presents Literary Programs Curator
Brooklyn Public Library (BPL)

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Jason Baumann
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Joe Baker
Lenape Center

Maeve Montalvo
Museum of the City of New York

Ty DeFoe
Artist

Ika Santamaria
Coopdanza

Brent Stonefish
Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing Collective

Laura Phipps
Whitney Museum of American Art

Murielle Borst Tarrant
Safe Harbors NYC

Natalia Mesa Higuera
Ballet Hispánico

Janice Monger
Staten Island Museum

Katie Hill
Perelman Performing Arts Center

Dylan Yeats
Prospect Park Alliance

Luke Boyd
Historic Richmond Town

George Stonefish
Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing Collective

Lucy Sexton
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

Potrirankamanis Queno Nur
Kinding Sindaw

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, and welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations. Please silence all cell phone and electronic devices. Please do not approach the dais, I repeat, do not approach the dais.

If you need assistance, we'll be more than happy to help you. Chair, we're ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you.

Good morning. I'm Councilmember Carlina Rivera, Chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations. Welcome to our oversight hearing supporting the arts, culture, and history of indigenous peoples in New York City.

First, let me say that our hearing today is taking place on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Lenape people, and as a sign of respect to the Lenape Nation, past, present, and future, we acknowledge the importance of actively addressing our past and the pervasive legacy of colonialism, exclusion, and erasure by amplifying indigenous voices, narratives, and works. This committee has long dedicated itself

to uplifting the voices of marginalized communities.

For centuries, indigenous communities have faced profound harm, the loss of their land, culture, and traditions, yet their vibrant communities continue in bettering our society.

Indigenous arts and culture represent so much more than just creative self-expression. They serve as a powerful mechanism for preserving their heritage. We must present indigenous voices to all New Yorkers so that we can gain a deeper understanding of their lived experience and struggles.

Without proper support from the city, indigenous arts, culture, and history can be further marginalized, creating still more challenges in gaining the recognition they so deeply deserve.

I'm looking forward to discussing the ongoing efforts of both our libraries and arts and cultural organizations to support this community. Our three public library systems also play a crucial role in educating the public and creating space for indigenous voices. And through lectures, poetry, discussions, arts workshops, book recommendations, and exhibitions, our libraries highlight indigenous

stories, offering both cultural enrichment and
historical reflection.

I'm eager to hear more about the role that DCLA
plays in supporting organizations that are led by
indigenous peoples and that can bring their talents
to all New Yorkers with this support. And while
November is recognized as National Native American
Heritage Month, I hope to hear more details on how
the libraries and DCLA work to support indigenous
arts and culture all year round.

Now, I want to acknowledge my colleagues on the
committee who are present, Ossé, Hudson, Carr, and
Ung. Okay. Thank you for being here.

I would like to thank the committee staff who put
together this hearing, Christina Yalamati, the
committee's counsel, Regina Paul, the committee's
policy analyst, and Sandra Gray, the committee's
finance analyst. And I'd like to thank my staff,
Katie Loeb, my chief of staff, and Eddie Amador, my
director of legislation. I would also like to remind
everyone who wishes to testify in person today that
you must fill out the white appearance card, the
little slip of paper, which is located on the desk of
the sergeant at arms near the entrance of this room.

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Even if you have already registered in advance,
that you will be testifying in person today. Please
fill that out. And I'm going to ask my colleagues to
limit any questions and comments they have to five
minutes.

And as a reminder to all our witnesses, please
state your name prior to your testimony for the
record. We're ready to start with the panel of
representatives from DCLA. Thank you for being here.

And please say your name for the record when you
start your testimony. And I'll turn it over to
Christina.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi. Good morning. Please
raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the
truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
before this committee and to respond honestly to
councilmember questions?

Laurie Cumbo?

COMMISSIONER CUMBO: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lance Polivy?

MR. POLIVY: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Good morning. And I want to
begin by thanking everyone for your patience as I was

arriving. Normally I would blame it on the traffic
in Staten Island.

But Councilmember Carr is here, so that won't
work as effectively today. Good morning, Chair
Rivera and the members of the committee. I am Laurie
Cumbo, Commissioner of the New York City Department
of Cultural Affairs, here to testify in regards to
today's topic, Surrounding the Arts, Culture, and
History of the Indigenous Peoples in New York City.

I want to thank the Council for having a hearing
on this important topic. Really, I believe this is
the first time this council has had such an important
hearing on such an incredible and important
community. There has been tremendous momentum in
recent years to better recognize and celebrate the
Native people who lived on this land before Europeans
arrived and whose ancestors continue to live here and
across the U.S. today.

Native Americans are a dynamic community here in
New York City. More than 180,000 city residents
identified as having American Indian or Alaska Native
ancestry in the most recent census.

The efforts to be more inclusive of Native
American voices and culture include both important

symbolic and ceremonial gestures and real investments in Indigenous communities that are helping to amplify their voices and reclaim their place in our national narrative.

There's so much more to be done, and that is why we are here today.

But following Native American Heritage Month, this is a great moment to take stock of what the cultural community here in New York is doing to uplift the Indigenous people of this land, past, present, and future, and how we in city government can better support this work.

So I'm grateful for you for convening today's hearing.

Art and culture can do for our Indigenous communities what it does for so many others. It can help to foster, preserve, and share an identity. It can forge community networks, strengthen social bonds, and drive local economies.

Art can also carve out a space in contemporary society, communicating across the divides that have kept Indigenous people unfairly marginalized for generations.

1 This weekend, I had an amazing time at a Lenape
2 Cultural Fair in Prospect Park, which brought
3 together Indigenous artists from around the region.
4 The traditional crafts-- Which is where I got these
5 earrings-- The traditional crafts, artwork, food,
6 and performances at the fair were so joyful and
7 alive. I was honored to participate in this vibrant
8 celebration, and I'm thrilled that so many groups
9 across our city are taking steps to listen to
10 Indigenous people and collaborate with them on events
11 like this one. And I have to say, the event was
12 packed. It was incredible. They had arts,
13 craftmaking. My son made a doll out of corn husks
14 that is just phenomenal.

15 It was a great celebration of the heritage and
16 culture. It's only going to grow. I encourage
17 everyone here to make sure that you check this out,
18 because it's going to be an annual event.

19 As you know, the primary way that the Department
20 of Cultural Affairs supports the cultural life of New
21 York City is through funding to not-for-profits,
22 which in turn create the vast array of programming
23 that is so central to our city's energy and identity.
24

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Many of these groups offer programming that engages deeply with Indigenous culture, uplifts Indigenous artists, explores Indigenous history, and works closely with Indigenous people to convey the diversity and vibrancy of their culture to audiences. To share just a few examples of Indigenous programming, exhibitions, and events from organizations we're proud to support.

At historic Richmond Town on Staten Island, their native encampment site features a wigwam and several other structures that depict the life of Native people in Staten Island during post-European contact.

The encampment includes special programs throughout the year, including Old Home Day and Hearth and Harvest Weekend, another phenomenal event that I've been able to attend. For Native American Heritage Month, the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx offered programming and digital highlights of the plant-based traditions of Native Americans from the Northeast and throughout the Americas.

These included lessons on the Lenape's use of plants for food, medicine, tools, building materials, alongside Native-led programs exploring contemporary Indigenous perspectives.

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The Met Museum offers a great example of how cultural organizations can both examine Native history and tradition and uplift contemporary Indigenous artists. For Native American Heritage Month, they offered a tour exploring subjects, voices, and narratives found across 5,000-plus years of artwork in their collection.

From 2019 to 2021, the Met also featured a site-specific commission in their Great Hall by Kent Monkman, a Cree artist known for his playful and provocative reimaginings of Western European and American art history.

This past Saturday, Flushing Town Hall in Queens hosted a Native American market and social, featuring artwork, dancing, drumming, singing, and storytelling in an event created in collaboration with Indigenous-led organizations, artists, and small businesses.

Many of you may be familiar with the American Museum of Natural History reopening their Northwest Coast Hall in 2022, following a five-year, \$19 million renovation. This was done in close consultation with First Nations people of Canada's Vancouver Island, where many of the artifacts originated. The new hall thoughtfully incorporates

the perspectives of the 10 nations whose cultures are displayed, giving greater care and context to the meaning of the items for the people who created them. Space is also provided for first-person community testimony and for examining the government-backed oppression of their people.

The process of presenting these sacred objects in a way that is respectful and gives their creators their due is part of an ongoing conversation that's happening in institutions around the world. It is truly a must-see.

Last year, the Whitney Museum of American Art held an exhibition of the work of Indigenous artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, the first New York retrospective of her extraordinary work.

The museum hosted several open studios for families with kids of all ages and collaborated with Rachel Martin, an Indigenous artist based in Brooklyn, to lead a family program inspired by the groundbreaking exhibition.

On Governor's Island, American Indian Community House has been an organization in residence since 2019, receiving free indoor space on the island in exchange for offering free public programming. In

September of this year, the public programming that grew from this partnership included a panel featuring a retrospective of Thunderbird American Indian dancers, which explored the links between land-based dances and well-being.

The La MaMa Indigenous Initiative aims to provide a platform for Indigenous art and culture, both nationally and worldwide. The initiative curates original Indigenous programming, including workshops, markets, and theatrical productions to elevate the voices and artistic works of Native communities.

This year marked Lotus Music and Dance's 22nd annual Drums Along the Hudson, a Native American and multicultural celebration which happened this past June in Inwood Hill Park. I've been every year. It's phenomenal. That's where I got this wrap. Wonderful shopping, incredible culture. The drumming is so spiritually inspiring. It's an incredible event. I encourage everyone to attend.

The event was conceived as a powwow in 2002 and has evolved into a showcase of cultures that share the drum as the heartbeat of artistic expression. We're proud to partner with Council to invest in our city's organizations doing this important work

through the Cultural Development Fund, Coalition of
Theaters of Color, and other Council initiatives we
administer.

DCLA has worked with Council to support a number
of organizations with missions dedicated to Native
American culture and programming. These include
Amerinda, which promotes the Indigenous perspective
in the arts to a broad audience through the creation
of new work in contemporary art forms, visual,
performing, literary, and media. Amerinda is
committed to empowering Native Americans, breaking
down barriers, and fostering intercultural
understanding and appreciation for Native American
culture.

Coopdanza is an interdisciplinary art, media, and
educational organization that produces dance and
multimedia experiences inspired by the wisdom of
Indigenous American cultures. They engage in local
and international collaborations to create activism,
performances, community, and educational programs to
generate environmental awareness.

The Red Hawk Indian Arts Council is a not-for-
profit organization founded and maintained by Native
American artists and educators residing in New York

and New Jersey. Since 1994, the Council has been dedicated to educating the general public about Native American heritage through song, dance, theater, works of art, and other cultural forms of expression. Each June, the Council hosts the largest powwow in the Northeast at Brooklyn's Floyd Bennett Field.

And of course, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian has an outpost here in New York located adjacent to Bowling Green and Battery Park. The institution cares for one of the world's most expansive collections of Native artifacts, encompassing the entire Western Hemisphere, and the location here in New York houses exhibitions, research, educational activities, and performing arts programs.

And of course, we all know Spider Woman Theater, founded and led by the extraordinary Muriel Miguel, has been a leading voice in advancing Native American voices through the performing arts since it was founded in 1976.

In partnership with local Arts Council partners in each borough, DCLA invests nearly \$3 million each

year directly into artists, collectives, and smaller organizations across the five boroughs.

The Bronx Council on the Arts recently awarded a Bronx Recognizes Its Own, or BRIO, award to Dennis Darkeem, whose work focuses on Indigenous visual art.

The Brooklyn Arts Council includes Cliff Matias, founder of Red Hawk Native American Arts Council, in their Folk Feet Dance Workshop Guide, which aims to connect people to Brooklyn's traditional dance masters. We will continue to work with the Arts Councils to support Indigenous culture and creative expression across the five boroughs.

Through our Percent for Art program, we've commissioned a number of Native American artists for permanent, site-specific public artworks. These include artist Jeffrey Gibson, who designed a mural for a community room in the New York home of NYPD's 40th precinct in the Bronx, and Frank Big Bear, who created a set of works on paper for the library of PS75 in Brooklyn.

Next year marks 400 years since the Dutch established a permanent colony on Lenape land, not far from here. At this moment in our history, we are poised to make the most of this milestone, to dig

deeper in the Native history of our city, and to explore new narratives, more accurate narratives around the people and communities who made New York City into the city it is today, willingly or not.

Last month, Mayor Adams hosted a reception at Gracie Mansion for Indigenous groups and declared November 20th Lenape Heritage Day.

Next year, NYC Tourism will be leading a collective effort to mark the occasion through a range of programming. For our part, we will be making sure to connect our cultural partners with the citywide programming that will accompany the 400th anniversary.

We're living through an incredible moment where Indigenous people are raising their voices, working together, and fighting for recognition across New York City and beyond. This gives me so much hope for the future. We're seeing new opportunities open up for Native American artists and cultural organizations, and so many other organizations are taking the initiative to work with Native people to right the wrongs that are ingrained in their collections, exhibitions, and programs. We recognize that there is still a tremendous way to go, and here

in New York City we are committed to taking that journey with our partners in the cultural sector. The phenomenal work and programming I've listed here today is just the start.

I'm so inspired by the growing eagerness to listen to Indigenous voices, work with Indigenous leaders and communities in good faith, and work together toward a fairer, more inclusive approach to engaging with and celebrating their cultures. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify on today's topic. I want to thank Ryan Max, who's here on my team, for doing so much of the research to produce this testimony today. It gives us a very well-rounded understanding of the progress that has been made, but also recognizing that there's so much more work to do.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have, and I thank this committee for suggesting and putting together this very important hearing on a topic at this particular time. Thank you all so much.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you, Commissioner Cumbo. I want to acknowledge we've been joined by Councilmember Louis.

Thank you for your testimony.

I'm reminded of a conversation we had some time ago, where you mentioned that the City of New York has been very intentional in saying now is the time to support Black, Indigenous, people of color. We're bringing them to the table, and in doing so, it's really important that we support them. It's clear.

The funding has to be equitable. It has to be prioritized. I'm going to ask just a couple of questions on what DCLA is doing, particularly to support these artists, this population.

Do you have any plans to extend funding to more Indigenous arts and cultural organizations? I know Coopdanza receives \$15,000. Red Hawk Indian Arts Council receives \$19,000. That was in fiscal year 24. However, no other Indigenous-led organizations have received funding in this cycle. How can we work together to ensure that that list is much longer in the next fiscal year?

COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Thank you so much for that question. We, as an agency, we fund approximately about 80% of the organizations that apply to our agency.

So, it's very important for our Indigenous community. We need more organizations coming forward

in order to fund more organizations. At this time, the Department of Cultural Affairs, our largest grant award amount is \$100,000.

That is our ceiling at this time. So, for awards, they are based off of the budget, the annual operating budget of each organization. So, we have to award grants in proportion to the actual annual budget size.

So, for those organizations, we are able to do that through a panel review process. Two things that could happen here: if we had more individuals from the Native American community participating in the panel review process, if we had more Native American organizations participating and submitting grants and applications, which our agency is more than willing to help and support in that application process, then we could increase the amount of funding that go to our Indigenous communities. That's certainly something that we all want to see moving forward.

I also want to say that with the number of organizations that we do support, it doesn't reflect the amount of organizations that do provide exhibition space, artist-in-residency programs, teaching artist programs. Also, for the agency, we

can award funding through the panel review process,
but we can also increase that funding in partnership
with the City Council, where you have more
flexibility for discretionary grants that would allow
us to collaborate on awarding larger grants for these
really important organizations.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Given the importance of
supporting Indigenous art, does DCLA give Indigenous
arts and cultural organizations any kind of priority
in funding? You've mentioned some of the barriers,
right? We need more participation, we need more
groups applying, but how does DCLA prioritize the
groups that have come forward, have approached the
City for support, and how can the City Council better
support Indigenous arts and cultural organizations?

COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Excellent question. We are
not permitted to give priority to any one particular
organization. All of the organizations that come
before the Department of Cultural Affairs, they are
going through a panel review process of their peers,
and it would not be permissible for us to give any
one organization special preference or consideration
in that way.

For the City Council, you have more flexibility in that, perhaps, of wondering how we could create more funding for Native American communities.

Perhaps the Council could create an Indigenous cultural art fund, similar to other funds that have been created, such as the Theatres of Color, or the Holocaust Initiative, or the-- There are many different initiatives that have been created. So I feel like if the Native community wanted to work with the City Council to create an Indigenous fund, that would be a way in which funding could be allocated to that community.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Certainly, I mean, we would love to expand our initiatives, especially when it comes to arts and culture. Clearly you've been a champion for that, and so have the members of this committee. I'm very thankful to them. We've also looked at even, you know, arts and workforce and how we can amplify and support and expand some of the funding in that sector, because these are important jobs, and artists are also struggling to live here. This is an incredibly expensive city.

So given the city's affordability crisis, what is DCLA doing to ensure that Indigenous artists can

continue to live and work in New York City? What should you be doing, and what can we do in collaboration?

COMMISSIONER CUMBO: We can always do more with more, and that is really our mantra here at the Department of Cultural Affairs. The way that we are actually able to fund Indigenous artists are through our local art councils.

So the ability to fund artists would happen specifically through the Brooklyn Arts Councils, LMCC, the Queens Council on the Arts, the Staten Island Council on the Arts, and the Bronx Council on the Arts. These are the larger of those, but there are also ones like NOMA, where people are able to fund and provide grants for artists, and our agency is really excited about the opportunity to fund artists through those initiatives. So as read in testimony, there are many artists and arts organizations that are applying to our local arts councils for that type of funding.

We are also doing a lot with our Percent for Art program. We're really excited about the opportunity for many of our Indigenous communities to participate in the Percent for Art program, where they're able to

have permanent works of art that are part of the fabric, the cultural permanent fabric of New York City.

And we're really excited about the work that's happening on Governor's Island for our Native American communities, where they are able to have very often free space, or space at no cost for them to express all of their cultural expressions here in New York City.

So there are many opportunities in that way, but of course the issues that the Native American community are facing in terms of the cost of living in New York City are issues that we are working on for the entire cultural community, to find more ways for artists to be able to sustain themselves in New York City. And that's ongoing work that will be forever something that in a city as expensive as New York City that we're going to be grappling with.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I agree. I mean, I always start with housing. I know this is the Culture Committee, but we need to do something about it, because people deserve to have a good place to live.

COMMISSIONER CUMBO: I look forward to a Housing and Cultural Committee joint hearing on that very topic.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: The Actors Fund, I know they have a new name now, they're working on housing in Hell's Kitchen. I think there's a lot of potential to do similar models in many of our districts.

So I want to thank you because your testimony covered many organizations that are doing good work, and we're going to hear from some incredible people. That's what I'm most looking forward to. So you don't have much time up here, so any last thoughts?

I did want to ask, because you mentioned all of these great groups, from very large organizations to my own fourth arts block, La MaMa initiative here.

The educational component of these organizations are so important as well.

Do you believe that New Yorkers are sufficiently aware of the importance of indigenous arts and culture?

COMMISSIONER CUMBO: I would say that in New York City specifically, we've done a lot to raise up the history and the culture of many of the voices in New York City and cultural creators that have made New

1 York City what it is today. I think that we have a
2 long way to go, but I do see momentum and movement
3 forward, because frankly many of the people in this
4 room have raised their voices on so many different
5 levels inserting their culture in New York City in a
6 way that is to the benefit of the city.
7

8 Until you really understand Native American
9 indigenous culture and the truth and the reality,
10 however uncomfortable that is in a school and
11 educational setting, until you understand Native
12 American contribution, the forced removal, the
13 reality of that forced removal, anything else that
14 you understand about New York City will only confuse
15 you.

16 So, it's really important that on an educational
17 level, on a cultural level, that we continue this
18 momentum of writing, rewriting the history of New
19 York City. And I'm hoping that on so many levels
20 that this recognition of the 400 years following the
21 Dutch forced removal of Native people from their
22 land, I'm hoping that this recognition will rewrite
23 that history, but in rewriting that history that we
24 will also come forward with new policies, new
25 implementation, new curriculum, like the levels of

equality that are so needed and necessary, but also on many levels we have to make sure that our land acknowledgements become a reality of not only acknowledgement, but actual usage of actual being able to reclaim of actual real space that communities can utilize.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: : I certainly agree with you. I think that that legacy of colonialism and exclusion and erasure is just something that we have to continue to discuss.

And I think when people say, well, what can you do for any particular community across a city that has been historically disenfranchised, marginalized, the answer is support. And it's to show support with actual funding, with showing up, with including representation. And it has to be led by these very individuals and this incredibly talented group of New Yorkers.

I just want to make sure that we acknowledge Councilmember Hanif. Thank you for joining us.

Do my colleagues have any questions?

I think many of us want to hear from the artists. You did a great job in really encompassing a lot of the work that's happening across the city and thank

you. You know, I'll always say we need the mayor's office to continue to not just keep funding, but increase baselines and support as many groups as possible.

So thank you for your partnership. Thank you for your testimony and I encourage you to stay and listen to your colleagues.

COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Thank you. I will remain for the remainder of the hearing and look forward to also hearing from many of my colleagues that are here today to testify. Thank you all so much.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you, Commissioner.

Okay. We're ready to start with the panel of representatives from the libraries and the Lenape Center. Please join us.

Okay, Jason Baumann, Sharon Myrie, Joel Whitney, and Joe Baker. Okay. Well, what a pleasure. Thank you for joining us. And you can start as soon as you're ready.

MR. BAKER: Good morning. My name is Joe Baker. I'm an enrolled member of the Delaware Tribe of Indians, whose headquarters are located in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

I'm a proud member of the Simon Whiteturkey family who arrived in Indian Territory, the present-day state of Oklahoma in 1867.

I would ask everyone to point their eyes to the painting of George Washington, which is hanging here on the chamber wall. My fourth great-grandfather, Captain White Eyes, negotiated the first treaty with the U.. government, United States government, with General Washington. And that treaty was to create the 14th all-Lenape state, with representation in Congress.

I share that with you because it really begins to tell the complex story of the important presence of Lenape, and the contributions that the Lenape people have made to the city and the state of New York.

I appreciate Commissioner Cumbo's outline of activities, a plethora of activities around Native American communities, but I have to say I'm disappointed that the Lenape Center was not mentioned.

I am co-founder and executive director of Lenape Center here in Manhattan, which was established in 2009 to continue our cultural presence in a city that has all but erased us.

And that work has not been easy. It's difficult work. And we've realized our expressions, our educational platforms, through partnerships with other cultural organizations within the city.

I also want to share, since I'm in City Hall, a story for my community, a story that happened 40 years ago when Tribal Elder Nora Thompson Dean drove her little Ford Falcon station wagon from Oklahoma here to New York City. The reason for the trip was she was presenting a paper at Seton Hall University, but a legend grew up around her trip into the city to meet with the then mayor, Ed Koch. So she was in this very building waiting, waiting to meet with the mayor.

This would have been a historic moment. The meeting never happened. After waiting in the chamber, his assistant presented her with a souvenir pin of the city of New York.

And I share that story with you because I think about how different our present-day experience of New York City could have been had that meeting happened.

And I'm happy to share with you another historic moment that happened only a few weeks ago, November 1st, 2024, when Mayor Adams received at Gracie

Mansion my chief, Chief Brad KillsCrow, in a meeting.
So I think it's taken 40 years for us to move
forward.

But there's a lot of work that needs to happen.
And when I think about how the city unfolds and
expresses itself, I'm always reminded that this big
umbrella, this big tent umbrella that we people of
color, Native people, Native communities are placed
under is confusing, is perhaps not the best forward
approach because we're not alike. We all are unique.

We have a unique language. We have unique
culture. We have unique experiences.

And one must first recognize the original people
of this place, the Indigenous people of this place,
the Lenape, before any other recognition can happen.
And that recognition must really begin and start with
the understanding that there are three federally
recognized Lenape Nations living within the borders
of the United States.

These are governments, sovereign nations. They
are the true survivors of what was a genocide the
world has never come to reckon with. So consultation
for any of these programs for art and culture must

first begin with the true and authentic
representatives of those tribal nations.

That is something General Washington knew.

That's part of the history of New York. And that
treaty, though not realized, in our opinion, in our
view, and in our communities is still active.

And we come before the city of New York. We come
before your committee. And we ask that you respect
our sovereignty, that you respect our art and
culture, and that you celebrate with us the unique
story that is New York City.

Thank you.

MR. WHITNEY: Good morning. My name is Joel
Whitney, and I'm the BPL Presents Literary Curator at
Brooklyn Public Library. Thank you to Chair Rivera
and the members of this committee as well as the
entire city council for the opportunity this morning
to highlight our partnership with the Lenape Center
and work across many BPL departments to celebrate and
support the arts and culture of Indigenous people in
New York City.

BPL Presents, overseen by Vice President of Arts
and Culture, László Jakab Orsós, is the library's
year-round series of arts and culture events,

including author talks, panel discussions, and readings, as well as live music, dance, and theater, film screenings, and art exhibitions. Events feature new and established artists engaged in exploring nontraditional artistic spaces and incorporating civic themes.

So far in 2024, we've presented over 790 cultural events attended by more than 51,000 patrons, including an event just last month with the Lenape Center.

The Lenape are, of course, the original inhabitants of the land we are meeting on today. Four years ago, my colleagues and I met with Joe Baker, Adrian Cumans, Brent Michael Davis, and Curtis Zuniga of the Lenape Center and asked a simple question: What do you need? Their answer launched an ongoing multi-year and multi-disciplinary collaboration that has touched on so many facets of BPL.

Within two years of that conversation, we opened Lenapehoking, the first Lenape-curated exhibition of Lenape cultural arts in the city of New York.

Lenapehoking is the Lenape name for their homeland, reaching from northern Delaware to the foot of the Catskills, from western Connecticut to eastern Pennsylvania, with New York City at its center.

Curated by Joe Baker, Lenapehoking used a mix of contemporary and historical objects to tell the story of a vast and vibrant community, reframing the narrative of Indigenous tribes told in more traditional settings, which too often overlooks the genocide of the Lenape people and their living legacy today.

With Mr. Baker and his colleagues, we selected Greenpoint Library and Environmental and Education Center as the home for Lenapehoking. This library archives Greenpoint's history as the site of one of the largest oil spills ever recorded in the United States and the community's fight for environmental justice.

During the exhibition, the branch's rooftop teaching garden featured Indigenous fruit trees that were historically cultivated by the Lenape in Manhattan and elsewhere, using seeds descended from those carried by Lenape people during the forced expulsions from the East Coast. The incorporation of

organic materials into the exhibition space created a portal into the living culture of the Lenape people today and a continuity between the ecological past and present.

Alongside this exhibit, BPL hosted poetry readings, artist talks, and panel discussions as part of an ongoing reckoning around Indigenous rights and historical revisionism of the Lenape. The series featured talks with activist Gloria Steinem on critical social issues, readings by Lenape poet Rebecca Haff-Lowry, and panel discussions with the nonprofit Hudson Valley Farm Hub, all of which prescind, recognize, and honor the fervent Lenape plan of return to their homeland. They should be welcomed by New York City's institutions lest we continue to perpetuate the erasure and injustice of centuries of forced removal.

As part of the exhibition, Lenape Center and BPL began discussing a curated book list patrons could reference to further learn about Lenape history. This was not possible, however. There were just not enough published books detailing Lenape culture in their own words and images in a way that did not relegate their stories to the distant past.

To correct this, BPL and Lenape Center published Lenapehoking, an anthology with selections of original Indigenous scholarship, essays, poetry, full-color art, and more. Approaching its fourth printing, this anthology is available in select libraries across the region.

Last month in a conversation at Central Library's S. Stevan Dweck Cultural Center, Mr. Baker mentioned that our actions like this can be generative and impactful in ways we might never know.

He was describing to over 100 educators how this anthology is the foundation of Lenape Center's partnership with Teachers College, Professor Rachel Talbert to create curriculum for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students to provide a comprehensive approach to teaching Lenape history and culture. He could easily have been describing that first conversation BPL and Lenape Center had together.

But beyond these actions, BPL took a participatory approach to the acquisition of Indigenous stories and materials in our collection. BPL staff worked alongside Lenape Center to find books that should be in BPL's collection.

Internally, BPL has also launched an Indigenous Services Committee to advise on strategies to help connect our patrons with the diversity of materials on our shelves through innovative programming, marketing, and outreach. This committee was launched in 2019 after the Living Land Acknowledgement Convening hosted by the Brooklyn Museum right next door.

Separately from our work with Lenape Center, BPL's Heritage Ambassador Program aims to foster and highlight folk arts at our branch libraries. This initiative supports folk and traditional artists in Brooklyn by connecting library patrons to cultural heritage, practices through art-making, storytelling, and community knowledge sharing. For much of this year, works by Heritage Ambassador Bebonkwe Brown, a Brooklyn-based Plains Cree artist hung at Brooklyn Heights Library and an exhibit titled Urban Skins and Ancient Kin, and Heritage Ambassador Araceli Poma created mini-documentaries with Indigenous language speakers here in New York City.

BPL's Center for Brooklyn History archives the work by Heritage Ambassadors.

I and the BPL team are really proud of this work. We consider everything I've described to you to be part of our Living Land Acknowledgement.

This is not just something we say at the start of special programs or at ribbon cuttings, but a collaboration and a practice we've put into place. It's not just words but actions we are taking to support the culture of Lenape and Indigenous peoples in New York City. And I thank you again for the time to speak this morning and for all your support for libraries.

MS. MYRIE: Good morning. My name is Sharon Myrie, and I'm the Vice President of Programs and Services at Queens Public Library. It's a pleasure to be here to speak on how the library serves as a key resource in discovery and learning about the history, culture, and arts of Indigenous peoples in New York City.

Before I begin, Chair Rivera and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this subject and for the incredible work that you do to support our libraries.

Queens Public Library welcomes every individual who visits our branches and our digital platforms,

regardless of their circumstances or background. Our branches serve as beacons of knowledge and opportunity, allowing our users to follow their curiosity, dive into any subject matter, and form their own viewpoints.

A significant component of fulfilling this mission is preserving and strengthening our extensive collections to aid in anyone's learning journey. We take seriously this responsibility, including as it relates to our offerings focused on the Indigenous peoples of New York City. The library has a vast and diverse collection comprised of books, e-books, periodicals, newspapers, and more.

Our collections include materials that focus on Indigenous people, their history and contributions, fiction, social justice, health and wellness, and poetry, and more for all ages.

Free streaming platforms offered by QPL, like Hoopla and Freegal, offer audio books, television shows, documentaries, and music created by and or focused on Native Americans.

While these items are available throughout the year, a special spotlight is given during Indigenous Peoples' Day and Native American Heritage Month,

along with special programs and curated book lists
and displays for adults, teens, and children.

This year, the library's programs included a
Native American-focused QPL Baby, Baby and Me
Storytime at Auburndale Library, a celebration of
Native American heritage with Alexia Dreams
Storytelling at Rochdale Village Library, which was
sponsored by Speaker Adrian Adams, and a book
discussion on Wandering Stars by Tommy Orange at our
Fresh Meadow Library.

Vital to QPL's ability to properly provide and
promote information on this topic is close
collaboration with various cultural institutions,
community-based organizations, and local groups. In
partnership with CUNY Queens College, QPL's Queens
Memory Project collects personal histories,
photographs, and other records of contemporary life
in the borough.

Since 2016, Queens Memory has been collaborating
with Professor Jonathan Thayer and graduate students
on the ongoing project, The Old Town of Flushing
Burial Ground. Starting initially as grassroots
community activism, the project aims to document and
preserve the original Native and African American

burial ground that dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries, which was turned into a city park in the 1930s.

Including local residents, several of whom are descendants of those buried at the location, this collaborative effort continues to reveal more about the history of the grounds through research and interviews, and shares a study through public presentations, lesson plans, oral history interviews, and genealogical research on the Queens Memory website.

In 2019, the burial ground in this research project served as an inspiration for a Queens Museum exhibit by Alexandria Smith called Monuments to an Effigy.

More recently, Queens Memory has been working with Zion Episcopal Church in Douglaston to examine the church's history, in particular its relationship with the local Matinecock Nation. With support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Queens Memory is working with the church to examine and reveal its past relationships with the tribe, especially the relocation in 1931 of their burial grounds to the churchyard.

In February, we hosted a four-week community conversation series with Zion at our Douglaston Little Neck Library, and we're currently coordinating a follow-up series for next year. We look forward to sharing our research about the Matinecock and their experience in relationship with Zion Episcopal Church as our research continues.

QPL's archives are essential to the ongoing documentation of life in Queens and Long Island, with thousands of photographs, newspapers, books, audio recordings, including interviews conducted by Queens Memory and more.

One highlight is an interview with Chief Little Fox, the Session Chief of Matinecock Nation, in which he discusses growing up with Native American traditions, becoming the leader of the tribe, and the preservation of the tribe's traditions and land.

Archival content illustrating the lives and memories of the local tribes also includes a collection of photos, postcards, and papers. Readily available online are the East Hampton Inhabitants and its Indian Tribes Papers, a collection of 11 manuscripts and land transactions from the 17th century, as well as the Ralph Solecki Photographs, which showcase

artifacts like arrowheads, ceramics, and other
supplies that provide a glimpse into the past lives
of Indigenous peoples.

Additionally, the library's research databases
are valuable for discovery and learning about
Indigenous groups. Users looking to learn more about
the Lenape and Native populations can access
Britannica Academic, which provides information not
just on the peoples of New York, but also the East
Coast and the entire continent. The database
suggests other potential areas of interest for those
who want to learn more about the Lenape and critical
moments in their history, such as the Walking
Purchase, the infamous treaty that forced them off
their own lands. It also recommends primary
documents, for example, the Treaty with Delaware,
1778, and external sites, such as the official site
of the Delaware Tribe of Indians and a national
public radio segment on the Lenape.

For individuals interested in learning more about
their own family histories, QPL has Ancestry Plus.
This database provides access and makes it easier for
users to search government records to learn more
about their ancestors, including records on Black and

Indigenous soldiers who served in the American Revolution, Indian census rolls dating from 1885 to 1940, and letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs from 1824 to 1881. It also provides the ability to engage others via message boards for helpful recommendations from others doing similar work.

The library is proud to uphold its legacy of serving as a free and trusted repository of information. While we're proud of the resources we offer that focus on the city's Indigenous people, we know that there is more we can do. Queen's Public Library is dedicated to ensuring all the cultures, races, and ethnicities that form this amazing borough and city are recognized in our collections and our programs, including the Indigenous peoples who originally lived on this land.

We look forward to continuing to expand this area and our public offerings, giving more opportunities for the public to learn about the people who stood here before us.

Thank you, Chair Rivera, for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Queen's Public Library.

MR. BAUMANN: Good morning. My name is Jason Baumann, and I am the Susan and Douglas Dillon Director for Collection Development and Global Studies at the New York Public Library. I would like to thank Chair Rivera, Speaker Adams, and the members of this committee for inviting me to testify today.

It is a privilege to share the work NYPL does to support the arts, culture, and the history of Indigenous people in New York City.

Today, I will be talking about this topic with respect to our research collections, special events and exhibits, and initiatives within our branch libraries. You will observe that NYPL's support of the arts, culture, and history of Indigenous people speaks to collections and initiatives both by and about this demographic.

Our primary offerings that pertain to the history of Indigenous peoples are our research collections. While the city primarily funds the operations and collections of NYPL's branch libraries, our endowment and other private funding support the majority of the offerings of our four research libraries.

NYPL's research collections have more than 100,000 volumes that document Indigenous peoples of

the Americas. This ranges from the earliest grammars and dictionaries of Indigenous languages from the 16th century to contemporary literature, including children's and young adult literature, and scholarship by Indigenous people.

The library's curators collect not only materials by and about the Indigenous people of the United States, but also North, Central, South America, and the Caribbean with very strong holdings in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and dozens of Indigenous languages.

The library's collections are also strong in historical works and linguistics, with many pioneering works on Native languages, including manuscript dictionaries of Algonquin and Chippewa languages from the 19th century. Library's special collections are strong in documentation of Indigenous relations during the 16th and 17th century colonial period for Latin America, particularly in Mexico and Peru, including early manuscripts in Nahuatl.

Additionally, NYPL holds important documents relating to New York's relations with the Six Nations, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora, and the 18th century.

Building on these published works and historical collections, our curators have grown our visual collections by Indigenous artists in recent years, acquiring works by interdisciplinary Diné artist Dakota Mace, photographs by Indigenous Inuit Canadian artists for our recent exhibition about the Arctic, as well as acquiring a collection of the first photographs of Indigenous communities in Colombia, important collections of photo documentation of Indigenous communities in Brazil, and artist books from Indigenous creators in Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Peru, among others.

Beyond acquisitions and offerings, the library's curator for Latin American, Iberian, and U.S. Latino studies works intensively on showcasing relevant holdings and connecting them to Latin American Indigenous communities in New York City.

In 2019, this team organized and hosted the panel, Identity, Culture, and Poetics in Latin America, Reading and Conversation with Elicora Chihuahua, Chihuailaf, Jose Marmol, and Miguel Angel Zapata. Mr. Chihuailaf is considered one of the most influential Mapuche Chilean authors. He writes in

Mapudungun and in Spanish and has been translated
into many other languages.

In April 2024, the same department connected with
the Colibrí Collective, an organization in New York
City of Indigenous translators working with the
Department of Education and Health to provide
translation and interpretation services of Latin
American Indigenous languages. Our curator gave the
collective an orientation on the diversity of books
and periodicals that the library holds in dozens of
Indigenous languages that can aid them in their work.
The team also published a research guide in Spanish
to facilitate the discovery of these materials and
has provided similar orientations for students in the
Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at
NYU.

This year, our Latin American, Iberian, and U.S.
Latino Studies curator additionally took the first
steps to establish a collaborative relationship with
the Juan de Cordova Research Library, a renowned
cultural institution in Oaxaca that specializes in
Indigenous languages from the Americas. Our
organization coordinated to digitize La Rosa del
Amor, an extremely rare 19th-century pamphlet in

Zapotec language whose only surviving copy is held at NYPL's Stephen A. Schwarzman Building. This pamphlet will eventually be published in a facsimile edition by the state of Oaxaca to promote the reading of text in Zapotec.

Complementing our research collections and activities, there are a number of exhibitions and programs, NYPL's premier cultural series, Live from NYPL, which hosts writers, artists, and scholars for conversations and performances, held events that highlight Indigenous authors and topics on several occasions. In 2023, the series hosted Lanape Center co-founders and co-directors Joe Baker, Curtis Iniga, and Adrian Cummins, along with Kara Fisher, curator of visual arts programming at Brooklyn Public Library for a conversation entitled The Land We're on, Living Lenapehoking. The four speakers discussed the Lanape Center's work, a Lenapehoking anthology, a work that contends with subjects ranging from the myth of the purchase of Manhattan to the self-curation of Indigenous art and culture.

In June of last year, the Library for the Performing Arts hosted an exhibition entitled Border Crossings, Exile and American Modern Dance, 1900 to

1950. Border Crossings highlighted the fundamental contributions of artists of color, immigrant, and Indigenous communities to the history of modern dance. It featured photography, costumes, moving images, and archival objects in an examination of the crucial issues of geopolitical events and structural racism at the heart of American modern dance.

Additionally, a number of works by artists and makers Indigenous to North America have been displayed in Treasures, our permanent exhibition highlighting our world-renowned research collections since it opened in 2021. This includes a print by contemporary Diné artist Dakota Mase to a syllabary by Sequoyah, a member of the Cherokee Nation, recording his language, among others.

In the spring of 2026, NYPL plans to mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence with an exhibition entitled Revolution at 2050. The exhibition will feature all aspects of the dynamics leading up to and following this historic event. This includes the exclusion of women, enslaved people, and Indigenous people from those identified as American.

The center case will also feature documents highlighting the role of Western expansion and Indian removal in precipitating the revolution.

NYPL's branch libraries conduct a number of initiatives, campaigns, and offerings that aim to support arts, culture, and history of Indigenous people in New York City on an ongoing basis. Branches highlight Indigenous voices through selections for branch book discussions. For example, this past month, branches hosted discussions about relevant titles like Shudder, Future of the Living Good, and Wandering Stars. The branches also regularly hold heritage celebrations, a cornerstone of programming, with events that celebrate the multicultural diversity and rich heritage of our communities.

One such celebration took place as a collaboration between the Staten Island Museum and the West New Brighton Library. The branch hosted the event where participants learned about the history of the Lenape people on Staten Island and joined an art activity where they made a pinch pot inspired by our works on display.

A number of programs geared towards children and young adults focus on works by and about Indigenous peoples as well. This includes Kids Live events, featuring relevant titles from our Best Books for Kids list, and a two-page spread on the Lenape in our Teen Reading Ambassador Produced Magazine portal. Our Teen Reading Ambassadors have also written a number of blog posts in observance of Native American Heritage Month on book recommendations for kids.

Since 2021, NYPL has hosted an annual World Literature Festival. The first festival featured a virtual panel discussion organized by our curator for Latin American, Iberian, and U.S. Latino Studies entitled Celebrating Indigenous Languages of the Americas, the event brought together Quechua Collective and the Mixteca Organization, two New York City-based organizations who talked about the work in preserving and educating people about Indigenous languages of the Americas spoken in New York City.

This year's World Literature Festival hosted Stephen Graham Jones for an author talk in his novel My Heart is a Chainsaw. The book covers themes such as the indigenous displacement and colonialism, among others, through the eyes of a half-Indian

protagonist. Whether in our research materials, on display in our exhibitions, or through an interactive event with our patrons, the New York Public Library is committed to telling the stories and featuring the works of indigenous people. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and am available for any questions.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much to all of you for your testimony and for being as inclusive as possible. I realize, you know, there are so many struggles within our own indigenous communities. Arts and culture should never take a backseat, but as we deal with economic instability and political turmoil and our perpetual fight for adequate representation, it can be exhausting.

So it's important to, I think, also highlight the celebrations. And I appreciate that that is also included in addition to the recognition of the brutality, the survival of brutality and genocide.

I'd like to start with you, Mr. Baker, if that's okay. I just want to thank you for what you said about how sometimes the tent can get very big. And sometimes we have this, I don't know, this inclination to bring everyone in, and then what

happens is the faces get lost in the crowd and we sort of lose the moral of the story, the plot, if you will, over what we were doing in the first place, which is to intentionally recognize the unique language, culture, and experiences of people. And recognizing the original people, I thought, was the most important.

So you are embarking on this multi-year, multidisciplinary collaboration along with your colleagues. What is the vision for, I don't know, the next year, the next couple years, and specifically, how can the city be helpful?

MR. BAKER: Thank you. Thank you for your comments and your questions.

And looking ahead for Lenape Center, we are looking to identify a permanent physical space within the city of New York. We feel that we have an important place and role to play in the future of this city.

650 million visitors per year, they come to this city. We at Lenape Center field questions all the time from international visitors asking, "Where do we go to learn about the original people of this place?" We can't direct them anywhere because there is no one

place, one center for art and culture for the Lenape people. And let me say that as a Lenape man, I have much more to offer than a powwow or a craft fair. There is so much more to say and to learn and to share about our history. It's much more extensive than what we are often reduced to and categorized as, as Lenape people.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And what can we do to, I think, dispel the myths that was mentioned in testimony? How can we support authentic curation?

MR. BAKER: Authentic curation must begin first with proper consultation by the federally recognized tribal nations which exist within the borders of the US, the United States of America. Those are the authentic voices of Lenape culture.

There are many people who have stepped into this place who speak for us. And sometimes, sadly, those voices are not recognized by our communities. So authentic voice must begin first with a proper consultation with the federally recognized tribes that live in the diaspora.

They don't live here. That's part of the complexity and problem of it. But they are, we are here. And Lenape Center can facilitate those

discussions as we did recently with the meeting with
Mayor Adams and Chief Brad KillsCrow.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And I was very happy that
you mentioned that because you mentioned the, I
guess, the meeting that never happened with Koch. And
then 40 years later-- I know you've been around
since 2009, the center that we have to find you a
physical permanent space. I'm glad that you
mentioned that. You have to get it on the record
because we're going to need all of the power of the
agencies and the mayor's office.

You've done quite a bit of consultation in your
own capacity and I know you're looking to grow the
center.

Are there certain partnerships or agencies that
we can tap into to help grow your capacity, to help
cultivate the things that you want to work on in New
York City? I want to figure out how to be very
intentional and helpful to the Lenape Center. And of
course, I know the library is doing a tremendous job.
But you also have colleagues here and individuals who
want to support.

MR. BAKER: One example that I will point to that
has been exceptional is a partnership with the

Smithsonian's Cooper Hewitt Museum of Design. The Seventh Design Invitational included an installation by Lenape Center, a Welcome to Territory. And so, if we can continue to develop partnerships with our cultural institutions, with our museums that bring authentic voice to these exhibitions and Welcome to Territory, that's really, really important. It's paramount.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, I know there are certainly cultural institutions and groups that are here that are also going to testify as to the work that they're doing. And we have our partners in the libraries. Clearly, there's Joe Baker here in the Lenape Center. But what is the process for your systems, for the library systems in selecting indigenous pieces for your exhibitions?

And anyone can chime in.

MS. MYRIE: I can't speak to that in particular point. I do want to reemphasize that what's been important to us at Queens Public Library is the relationships that we've had with several of those examples that I gave and connecting it to Queens Memory, which has been an incredible tool for the Queens Public Library to really get to those

authentic voices, and to record that and to store
that and to connect with the colleges, universities,
in particular, CUNY.

And so that's been our particular focus in really
working through the Queens Memory Project.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And I know you all have also
honored Native American figures who've made
significant cultural contributions in a variety of
fields. I know the Queens Public Library has done
that.

Do you continue that tradition, and how do you
ensure-- and this is for all of the systems-- how do
you ensure that the public is aware of the
programming, particularly around indigenous artists
and talent?

MS. MYRIE: Similar to many of the other programs
that we've done, we've really focused through our
marketing division and working through that.

I would say over the last several years, we've
really been much more focused on trying to
collectively focus on areas and making sure that we
can provide that across the system.

So we actually call that system-wide initiatives
that we've done around particular events. And

certainly this is one that we want to really focus on going forward. And that's a good way, because we do it in a very intensive way across the system so that all 65 of our libraries are aware of, and the customers in 65 libraries are aware of that.

So, we have upcoming things right now in terms of our Time for Kind, and we have Black History Month, and I think the emphasis of really pushing this across the system as opposed to individual branches really helps with the marketing and promotion of our programming.

MR. BAUMANN: Yeah, and I'll add that because of the lack of materials that felt accurate, authentic, and told through a Lenape lens, we've become content creators. So for us, getting the word out to New Yorkers who've had this history way too long erased, in a perverse way, it's become an opportunity because almost everything you can do to tell the authentic story of Lenape people in New York City feels like a first.

So we've become content creators with the anthology, obviously with the partnership with Lenape Center at the center of that, but also partnerships with other organizations around New York to get the

word out, including a professor at Teachers College,
Rachel Talbert, who's developing this as a test
curriculum for K through 12 grade New York City
public schools, developing this anthology into a
curriculum that's being tested now as we speak.

So getting the word out is always a struggle in
New York City, there's a lot going on, and our
marketing team does an incredible job. We've got one
newsletter that goes to, I think, 500,000 or so
subscribers, but it's a fight to get this long-erased
story told, and so we do look to partnerships, and we
appreciate the hearing that we're getting today.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you.

MR. WHITNEY: I'd just add for the America's
250th exhibition we're working on, we're planning on,
I think the curatorial team, if they haven't reached
out to you already, I think they're planning on it,
and also they're planning on commissioning some
Lenape artists to create works for the exhibition as
well.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, I know you certainly
have people here that are ready, willing, and able to
help, and I appreciate that you're recognizing that a
lot of the, quote-unquote, resources available are

not credible, and so we have to create our own content, and that partnership with the cultural institutions and groups is going to be, I think, very meaningful, and I think clearly a great idea, and something that can expand capacity as soon as possible.

I just-- You know, measuring the success of your programming, like you said, it's trying to get through, I guess, all the noise of everything that is going on, but I think when it comes to arts and culture, specifically in this city, we have to do better, and we certainly should. Arts and culture, I think, is a foundational pillar to our well-being, it's part of our identity, it's who we are, and so I'm very pleased to hear what you all are doing and what you're working on, and I'm not sure if there's anything else you'd like to add before I bring on some of your other colleagues.

All right, well, I just want to thank you again for your testimony, and I just want to say, in respecting your sovereignty, your arts and culture, and I think also celebrating together, that's something that we will certainly be more intentional about, and I thank you all. I thank you very much.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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MR. WHITNEY: Thank you. I now open the hearing for public testimony, and I remind members of the public that this is a formal government proceeding, and that decorum shall be observed at all times.

As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times. The witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify, and no video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table. In fact, we are recording the hearing that you can review at a later date. And further, members of the public may not present audio or video recordings as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such meetings to the Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing's permanent record.

If you wish to speak at today's hearing, again, please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to be recognized, and when recognized, you will have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic. When you hear the bell go off, that means the two minutes is up for your testimony. You don't have to stop in the middle of your sentence. Please finish your last thought, and of course, your testimony will be included in the permanent record.

Again, two minutes on today's hearing topic,
Supporting the Arts, Culture, and History of
Indigenous Peoples in New York City.

If you have a written statement or additional
written testimony you wish to submit for the record,
you could always provide a copy of that testimony to
the Sergeant-at-Arms, and I will now call the first
panel.

Maeve Montalvo (and please let me know if I've
mispronounced your name, because it does happen to me
as well, so I totally understand), Ty DeFoe, Ika
Santamaria, and Brent Stonefish.

MS. MONTALVO: Honorable members of the
committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify
today.

My name is Maeve Montalvo, and I'm the Director
of Education at the Museum of the City of New York.
It's good to see you again, Ms. Rivera, and I'm here
to emphasize the importance of supporting the
Indigenous arts, culture, and history, particularly
that of the Lenape people about whom we've been
speaking, who are the original inhabitants of this
land.

For the past two years, the museum, myself, and my colleagues have worked in close partnership with the Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing Collective, which is a coalition of Lenape leaders, elders, and artists from across Turtle Nation.

Together, we are creating a multi-year project, including an exhibition called Unseated that will reframe New York City's history through the lens of its original inhabitants. This project reflects the diversity and complexity of Lenape voices, including those from diasporic communities, as well as those who remain connected to their ancestral homelands and live within the region.

Importantly, the museum and the collective continue to welcome additional Lenape voices to ensure this work reflects the breadth of these experiences.

New York City is a complex place, as we all know, and the stories of the Lenape people, and who tells them, are equally complex. I have a deep belief in people's ability to hold and appreciate this complexity, and at the museum, we are committed to presenting it with all the nuance it deserves.

The exhibition challenges dominant narratives, shedding light on Lenape's historical relationships with colonial forces, dispelling myths like the \$24 sale of Manhattan, about which we've already heard, as well as exploring, importantly, the continued impact of Lenape land stewardship and cultural practices and a worldview that can help us as we look to the sustainability and future of New York City.

Our work at the museum builds on longstanding collaborations over many years, including with the American Indian Community House, but it is the work with the Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing Collective that I want to testify on today.

It has been my absolute pleasure and honor to work closely with the collective and the members who are representatives from four different Lenape nations in a growing coalition, working collectively with them to decide the art, the programming, everything that is going into this exhibition and the related programming.

One thing that is unique about this is that we have an opportunity, as the Museum of the City of New York, to bring these stories to many more individuals

that would not necessarily come to or think of coming
to a program specifically about the Lenape.

As a part of these efforts, we are reworking our
programming and integrating, for example, Lenape
stories, culture, history, as well as present day
experiences into all of our family programming so
that Lenape stories become a part of the accepted,
known, and really just everyday history of New York
City.

I know from years of working with New York City
teachers and students, as well as many thousands of
people, New Yorkers visiting the museum, that the
very fact that Lenape people continue to live and
exist today is a surprise to many. Many students are
shocked.

And when our partner, Brent Stonefish, who will
speak as well, joined me this summer in working with
and teaching 25 teachers in a program, they were
humbled to be able to hear from him about these
experiences. And those 25 teachers collectively this
year teach over 3,000 students. We multiply this by
the number of educators, over 900 each year, that we
can work with at the museum.

The exhibition that we are planning will
anticipate 150,000 visitors coming through.

The last thing I'd like to share-- and thank you
for the time-- the last thing I'd like to share is we
are doing this work with the Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing
Collective, which is this, again, coalition of
multiple nations of Lenape people. As the Museum of
the City of New York, we have the opportunity to put
our time, our resources, and the very physical plant
of our building to work for the collective and for
the Lenape people.

My friends now in the collective, they have full-
time jobs. They do not do this work as their job.
They are teachers and engineers and civil servants.

And so those of us who do work in the cultural
sector, we can use our time, resources, and energy to
be able to help them create and amplify the stories
that they want to put forward. And I'm incredibly
grateful to be part of this. And thank you for
hearing this work.

Hello, boozhoo aaniin, everyone. Greetings to
the Council here, as well as relatives and colleagues
who are streaming online. My government name is Ty

DeFoe, and I'm a citizen of the Oneida Nation and
Anishinaabe tribe of Wisconsin.

I'm a transgender, indigiqueer, two-spirit writer
and artist living on the unsundered homelands of
Lenapehoking— so not unceded, but unsundered-- in
New York City. I currently reside off the NQR train
in Hipster, Brooklyn, where you can find a plethora
of vegan pizza.

And I'm honored to have been recognized this year
as a transfuturist working to create a just and
pluralist society by reimagining systems and
transforming culture as an individual artist.

You know, I grew up with many different
indigenous values, including being a language
speaker, which is a sister language to the Lenape.
And one of our values that we hold is, if you are not
dreaming seven generations ahead, you are not
dreaming big enough.

So if you are not dreaming seven generations
ahead, you are not dreaming big enough. Which means
I hold titles with many native communities nationally
on Turtle Island, as well as being an individual
artist here in New York City. I'm known as a
storyteller, a hoop dancer, a song keeper, a language

student, and a mentor. I'm a professor of practice at ASU. I'm a current writer in residence at Pace University right across the street, and I'm working on an initiative called The Ground Beneath Our Feet, which is a place-based experimental humanities research initiative. It empowers young people, scholars, to learn about the African American burial ground, as well as Chinatown here in New York City and Lenapehoking. It empowers people to also have their own lived experiences.

In addition to my artistic work that centers indigiqueer individuals, I co-found Indigenous Direction with Larissa FastHorse, and I'm also an artistic advisor at PAC-NYC. I'm currently part of the inaugural commission of The Democracy Cycle, which I'm collaborating on a new piece titled Six Nations, One Fire, with my fellow Haudenosaunee artists from New York State, Jeannette Harrison and Vicky Ramirez.

So as a language student, there's this term that I learned growing up, and it's called pimatisiwin, which translates to "living to your highest human potential." And there's a reason why I was New York

City bound. So there's no other place like it here,
the center of all many cultures coming together.

So when I first came to New York City from my
home state of Wisconsin several years ago, and now
call this place home, I returned to my mother's
homeland, right? The Oneida Nation, which is
upstate, now only on 32 acres of land, in search of
community and culture and an artistic home. And
actually I lived on West 38th Street between 8th and
9th Avenue, where the Port Authority bus terminal is.
And I had a package of my wooden flutes there.

And I would go around a city and I would play
flute music for people in parks, in subways, at
different festivals throughout the city looking for
community. And I played at the Bronx Heritage
Festival founded by the late Bobby Gonzalez. And
also I would pass people and I would just play songs
for them.

And I said, a lot of people that I met were
native people. And they asked me, where are the
native people in New York City, different indigenous
people? And so I said, "Well, you just have to look
around because we're here." And the earrings that we
wear, the t-shirts, places we just sort of pop up.

And I said, you know, one day, this one evening I was invited to a dance class from a friend of mine. And it was one of those long New York City hustle days.

And I got this invitation to come to this class and it was this dingy dance art studio in Midtown. And I went and they said, "Okay, by the way, you have to pay \$10 cash to come here." So as you do in New York City, you follow your intuition. I went, I paid my \$10 cash. And what I was realizing, there was a group of individual indigenous people gathered to have a dance class with each other. We plugged in our iPhones and we danced, we sweated, we laughed, we cried together. It was ceremony based on our own self-determining ways where we needed space.

Sometimes some people would bring snacks and we would just enjoy being together. And I met native artists of all ages, both young, middle age and old.

In the heart of New York City, we were protected by the simple act of paying \$10, creating this self-determined space within our own community so we can talk to each other because we are all from different tribal nations and communities. And for a few hours, we can breathe and connect and belong. So I ask the

city council here, I come to you today and urge you,
and urge you that often presence is silenced by
colonial ratio, which was mentioned earlier and
inequities. But what does it look like to challenge
ongoing legacies of colonialism and envision a
decolonial future?

I'm telling you that native community can be
found in the rhythms of drums playing in the subways
to simple symbolic literacy located on the flags,
such as behind the Council here.

How can we amplify aunties secretly placing their
medicine bundles in the East in Hudson River so that
they could have space?

And I wanted to emphasize the importance of
recognizing and honoring intersectional identities of
native people, Afro-indigenous people, trans two-
spirit individuals. How can we create access,
amplify, and also heal? How can we find meaningful
ways to express ourselves that's not defined by a
single identity, but a multiplicity of them?

So, like many other individual artists, I ask how
can we find individual artists like me who are not
part of one organization, but are a part of many who

are laboring with these organizations? How do they
find out about these initiatives?

The second thing is access. How can we host more
meetings like this where we can have a room filled
with people to tell their stories and also know about
some of these selection processes?

The third thing is amplifying the most
marginalized indigenous native communities, trans,
queer, Afro-indigenous people through this vibrant
city of New York.

So pimatisiwin is not only referring to living at
your highest human potential, but pimatisiwin is also
living to the fullest. So as this individual artist
practitioner, I'm asking support for access for
individual artists who are making high cultural
impact.

Miigwetch.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you.

MS. SANTAMARIA: Good morning, I think still it's
morning. My name is Ika Santamaria. I am with
Coopdanza, and I have to say thank you for having us.
And I'm here to testify for Coopdanza.

Indigenous cultures surviving in New York City,
still here. Coopdanza, Inc., USA, is an

interdisciplinary art, media, and educational organization that produces dance and multimedia experiences inspired by the wisdom of indigenous American cultures. We engage in local and international collaborations to create activism, collaborative performances, community, and educational media dance programs.

Since 2019, we have built and strengthened an intergenerational and intercultural indigenous north-south bridge through festivals, co-productions, and community education. We envision a resilient planet where every form of life is honored, and indigenous values of harmony, balance, and justice are deeply respected and integrated into daily practices. We dream of a world where communities thrive sustainably, guided by the wisdom of native cultures through the universal language of dance, music, and poetry combined with digital media and rap storytelling.

We foster a profound connection between humanity and nature, celebrating the rhythms and rituals that unite us all. Programming: Our organization connects and collaborates with indigenous and non-indigenous communities in the Americas (meaning

United States, Central America, South America), to promote the well-being of the planet and prevent further environmental ravages.

Next year, in 2025, we are preparing an indigenous festival with an educational program, artistic program, and is going to have the participation of United States, New Zealand, Canada, Chile, among other countries, of course, including Colombia. Thank you for having us.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you.

MR. STONEFISH: Oh, there we go.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: You got it, yeah.

MR. BRENT STONEFISH: Kuwiinguneewul alumwa. Nii ndushiinzi Ahkuk Paposi Ndami Minzitikwa. Ninojia aii Eelünaapéewi Lahkéewiit, aniha dilnapawi, anishiki almokwang alamiliang yong kwa kishweek, ninongi aii Yountali.

And so what I said is: My name is the one who rides a snake. I am Turtle Clan. I am from Eelünaapéewi Lahkéewiit, which is a Lenape or Lenape community in Canada. I said I am also from here.

I represent the Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing Collective. Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing means the Land of the Lenape and the Munsee dialect of the Lenape

language, which was spoken in New York City at
contact.

Our word for ourselves is Lenapow. Most people
say Lenape. That's the Unami dialect of the
language. The Lenapow is the Munsee dialect of the
language, and that's the language that was spoken
here. And so when the Unami people call this
Lenapehoking, we say Linnapow Aking. I'm a language
coordinator for our community, and I've been spending
a lot of time with the only Lenape speaker left in
the world, Diane Snake. She's 83 years old.

I also represent the collective as one of the co-
founders. My other co-founder is my cousin here,
George Stonefish. George Stonefish has lived his
entire life in the city, and his mother was actually
one of the founding members of American Indian
Community House.

Most recently, we've entered into many
partnerships in the city, and one of the partnerships
is with the American Indian Community House. And I
honor American Indian Community House because they
were the first one-- they were the ones that created
space for Indigenous people in the city in 1969.

And then, most recently, they were able to receive the Manahata Fund, and they recognized that they needed to give that money to a Lenape collective, the Lenape group, to utilize that to create, you know, events and create educational opportunities in the city. And George, being a former member of their board, was the one they approached, who approached me, and we created the Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing Collective, or for short, we say EL Collective. So if that's a tongue twister for you, just say EL Collective. You'll be fine.

Anyways, the reason I'm here is that the Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing Collective represents two state-recognized Lenape groups, two federally recognized groups in Ontario, Canada, and then another non-recognized Lenape group. We also have many different private citizens from different Lenape communities across Turtle Island, because our vision is to unite and hear the voices of Lenape across Turtle Island.

Our whole idea is to allow us to create space for many different stories from many different Lenape people. I respect and honor the testimony that was given by the Lenape Centre, and I appreciate all of the work they've done in this community. But at the

same time, there's a lot of work to be done, and we're hoping that we'll be able to share that responsibility going forward.

One of the things that we're trying to do is have a two-day powwow in New York City, but because of stipulations of the Parks Department, you can only have a one-day event, and you would think they would make an allowance for the original people of this land, right? Because this city has been built on the bones of my ancestors.

So with that, we also are looking for space as well. One of the things that I find unique about the American Indian Community House is that they are strained for space as well. If they could give us space as the EL Collective, as one of their partners, they would, but they don't have the space themselves. So we're looking for space as well, and we're looking to have that powwow, two-day powwow, which goes against the policy of the Parks Department.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: We'll see about that.

MR. BRENT STONEFISH: But we also have many partnerships, one being MCNY, one being Lefferts House and the Prospect Park Alliance. We've been

1 talking with Inwood Park. What house is that? And
2 the Stone House in New Jersey as well.

3
4 So we wanted to do this testimony to introduce
5 ourselves to you, and that we are present in the city
6 as well, and it's very expensive for me to travel
7 from Canada to do this testimony. But I thought it
8 was important to do that. With the help-- a little
9 bit of the help of our partners, we were able to do
10 that, and I appreciate the time.

11 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. May I ask, where
12 is Diane Snake, 83 years young?

13 MR. BRENT STONEFISH: She is-- She lives in our
14 home community in Canada.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Amazing. I just-- Thank
16 you for sharing that. Thank you to all of you. I
17 agree that, you know, one of the-- There's a few
18 things that we hope hearings, these hearings will do,
19 right? In addition to bringing us all together,
20 sharing information. I think that's incredibly
21 important. There are groups of many, many different
22 sizes across the five boroughs, and so we try to
23 support them all equitably, but I agree that
24 individual artists, we're working on supporting them
25 in a more robust way. So, I appreciate your comments

on that, and it is, it is meetings like this where we're hoping, through this testimony, I've certainly learned a lot, and I'll continue to as we hear from the other amazing stakeholders, but really trying to uplift the most, you know, marginalized and disenfranchised communities. I feel like that's why I'm in office. That's what I'm supposed to do.

Every community is different. Every elected official is different as well, but I want you to know that-- well, one is, I mean, they can do like a three-day concert in Governor's Island, but they can't give you a two-day permit?

Anyway, we're going to, we're going to work on that.

But I think to your point of the, the shared responsibility, I appreciate that language because it is about the generations to come and about the work that you are doing to be very, very inclusive of, of Indigenous peoples. I'm very grateful, and of course to the museum. I'm a very big fan.

So I guess my question is on, on funding. You all are looking for different revenue-- I mean, different funding sources.

I'm-- I know the city is helpful to cultural institutions and groups, but even that is limited. So, I hope that, you know, through this conversation and, and ongoing partnership that the city can really step up. So, I want to just thank you for your testimony. I'm-- I remain, I'm humbled and, of course, very, very, very grateful to you all for the work that you're doing. Thank you.

Next, Laura Phipps, Murielle Borst Tarrant, Natalia Mesa Higuera, Janice Monger. Okay. You don't have to-- Take your time. It's okay.

Sure, thank you. Great.

MS. PHIPPS: Thank you, Chair Rivera and members of the committee, for the opportunity to speak about the Whitney Museum of American Arts' work with Indigenous art, artists, and community-based organizations.

I'm Laura Phipps, Associate Curator and Co-Chair of the Whitney's Indigenous Artists and Audiences Working Group, IAWG. This is an internal body that was convened in 2017 with members of the museum staff across departments to think critically about the place of Indigenous art in the Whitney's collection and program. Indigenous art was a field that the

museum had not historically engaged with in our program, and one aim of the group since its inception has been to focus on how the Whitney, as an institution dedicated to American art, can address this absence and articulate a way forward.

Alongside our work to build the collection and organize exhibitions, the ongoing and evolving aim of this group has been to develop programming to pursue various forms of outreach to and engagement with Indigenous artists and audiences, to create resources for museum educators, and appropriate terminology for interpretation.

So I'd like to share just briefly some top highlights of our work together with the committee.

So the group has, as I mentioned, researched work by Indigenous artists in the Whitney's collection, built relationships with artists for programming within the museum, and we are working to frame the museum's engagement with contemporary Indigenous artists and communities.

Since the Whitney's move to its new home downtown in 2015, the museum's collection of Indigenous art has grown to include over 140 works by 43 Indigenous artists representing 38 sovereign nations. It may

not sound like a huge number, but it represents a more than 20% increase over the past nine years, and is an example for us of what focused attention and resources can accomplish.

We cannot simply hold them in our collection. They need to be visible and available to audiences, and to that end, since 2017, the Whitney has presented 20 exhibitions that include works by Indigenous artists, including notably all four of the most recent Whitney Biennials, the museum signature exhibition, and has presented the first New York museum solo shows for at least three Indigenous artists at different stages in their career.

Further, since 2017, the Whitney has hosted 13 unique educational programs and special events focused on Indigenous artists and culture to share this work with all aspects of our public, and one special partnership has been with, as we've all heard, the American Indian Community House, which has been a community partner through the museum's Whitney Education Community Advisory Network, WECAN, since 2018. And these are partnerships that are sustained and extended. And as a part of that partnership, the Whitney has hosted H's community gathering since

2018, reflecting this need for space, and in March 2025, everyone's invited, the Whitney will host their Spring Social, which invites the public to engage with the work of this important organization.

The Indigenous Artists, and Audiences Working Group at the museum also presents its work regularly to the internal Whitney community through presentations and workshops, and has advised Whitney leadership on policy development, including the adoption of the museum's First Land Acknowledgement in 2022, which was the culmination of a multi-year process of conversation, research, and relationship building.

I will end there and thank the members of the committee for holding this hearing on this topic, for exploring and helping us explore more ways to support the arts and culture of Indigenous people in New York.

MS. BORST TARRANT: Good morning, Council. Thank you very much for having us here for this opportunity to speak on behalf of our organizations and our communities. My name is Muriel Borst Tarrant. I'm from the Kuna and Rappahannock Nations. I am the Artistic Director of Safe Harbors New York City.

I am the former Chairwoman of North America for the Indigenous Caucus for Women's Issues. I'm also the former Representative to North America, Special Assistant for the Indigenous Council, and I work directly with the Council of Chiefs of the Haudenosaunee Nation.

I am also the daughter of Muriel Miguel of Spider Woman Theater, and I am the former Associate Director of that organization. I advise on many different theaters, and I also advise with the Perelman who we've just discussed earlier.

Before I go any further, I would just like to acknowledge a little bit about what this community is here in New York City. I, and like many of my colleagues here, two of us, we are lifelong members of the New York City community. Some of our tribes do not come from this area, but my family has been here since 1800.

And not only that, my husband was the former Executive Director of the American Indian Community House, who is now deceased, who died of COVID four years ago.

What I would like to say with that is that there's many community leaders who are here who do

not come from tribes from this area, who've given their life flow and their blood for this community.

I would also like to acknowledge that in the surrounding areas of Manhattan, particularly, there are different tribes who are in those surrounding areas that we need to acknowledge. We need to acknowledge the Shinnecock Nation, the Matinecock Nation, the Unkechaug Nation, and we should also acknowledge the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. These are all surrounding nations around the island of Manhattan.

And I think it's also-- We have to remember here that there is a lot of work to be done when it comes to the form of theater. I'm a theater maker and I work in-- you know, I work in theater and that's what I do. I would just also like to say that I'm trying to, that Safe Harbors New York City is an arts initiative that focuses on the development and production of indigenous performing arts in New York City.

We seek to build an understanding of Native American mythologies and performance that in turn will function as cultural liaison to non-Native theater artists in the city. The more successful we

are in engaging these populations, the closer we hope to be to creating truly cross-cultural lines of communication. Our mission, Safe Harbor, focuses on the development and production of Native theater and performing arts in New York City within the broader American theater.

We combat stereotypes and support vibrant Native communities. We develop ongoing dialogue with policymakers about the approach to cultural and socioeconomic issues using theatrical performances, performing arts, Native cultural consultancy, panel discussions, and cultural events.

I would just like to say that we just came back from a conference that we just hosted at Brown University and we want to talk about the ecosystem of Native theater in New York.

What we found is we gathered over 20 theaters and one of those discussions is other than land acknowledgement, which we are very appreciative of, but other than land acknowledgement, we need to look at programming for Native theaters. And so we are not, for lack of a better word, ghetto-sizing where we're at. So we have, you know, we have Latino Commons, we have the Black American Theater, and what

we really need in New York City is a regional theater to represent our work. We are hoping, and I urge this Council, and I urge the City of New York, especially during this next economic crisis that will be coming up in the further years, that we're hoping that we can get funds for Safe Harbors, New York City, so we're able to have a theater and figure out how a Native theater can happen so we can have programming, so we can have other tribes that are coming in, that we can have the Lenni-Lenape-Munsee come in and they can have discussions and panel discussions. So there's a place that we can do theater.

If you look at the Dramatists Guild, we see when there was a report that came out, our percentage of what is being produced, not only in New York City, but across the United States, we don't even hit the mark of the percentages, and that is because we need to start to have programming on how Native theater is being looked at. If you look at Broadway right now, there's not-- we had one Native show that was on Broadway, which was Larissa FastHorse, it was a Thanksgiving play.

We need to look at how do-- how do we change that? We understand that there is a great apology that needs to be made to Native people in a whole in the United States, but I'm talking about storytelling that comes from our traditional ways of thinking, and how do we go further with that? I urge this council to about that, and I thank you for your time.

MS. MESA: Good morning, Councilmember Rivera. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Natalia Mesa, Community Engagement Director at Ballet Hispánico. As the city considers funding for the arts and culture, I am here to advocate for the continuation of bilateral support for cultural organizations, particularly Indigenous, Black, and People of Color-led organizations like Ballet Hispánico. Our educational philosophy incorporates culturally relevant and sustaining approach that addresses the intersectionality of Latina identities embedded in cultural themes, histories, and legacies through traditional and current Latinx dance training.

Indigenous dance contributions from the Americas and its cultural narratives are explored through our

curricula. Students could be exposed to a Bolivian Guayano or a Mexican Jarocho, with teaching artists that are cultural bearers of the dance forms.

During an assembly, students can see excerpts from *Con Brazos Abiertos* by Mexican-American choreographer Michelle Manzanares. The piece deals with identity questions. Am I American enough? Am I Mexican enough? Students observe the excerpt while costumes inspired by traditional dances from Veracruz flow on stage and create in all to express and embrace all aspects of each person's identity with open arms or *Con Brazos Abiertos*.

Latinos are not a monolith. We are a combination of many ethnic groups. Indigenous roots are vibrant and present in Latinx population, and Ballet Hispánico programs seek to give prominence to these traditions that are so often overlooked.

We thank the City of New York and you for this opportunity to advocate for expansive support for organizations and cultural institutions like ours, uniquely positioned to provide critical resources that support arts, culture, and history of Indigenous peoples in New York City. Thank you.

MS. MONGER: Greetings Chair Rivera and
committee. I'm Janice Monger. I'm President and CEO
of the Staten Island Museum, founded in 1881 and a
New York City Cultural Institutions Group member.

Staten Island Museum maintains collections in
natural science, history, and art, and all three of
these disciplines have materials in the collection
that are Native American, Indigenous, and origin.
The archaeology collection has approximately 3,500
items collected on Staten Island and in the
surrounding region that can be attributed to the
Lenape people and their ancestors.

The Staten Island Museum updated a permanent
display of Lenape archaeological items along with the
land acknowledgement in a central location to
maximize visibility and forefront the Lenape
collection for museum visitors as they enter. For
decades, the Staten Island Museum's education
department has offered the Land of the Lenape lesson
for elementary and middle school classes to introduce
Lenape culture to New York City students. During
this lesson, students learn about the history of the
Lenape in New York City region and see a
demonstration of traditional tools.

In FY24, the museum served 3,500 students from 155 classes for this lesson. Over the last several years, the Staten Island Museum has made concerted efforts to develop relationships and build trust with Lenape representatives, especially the federally recognized Lenape descendant nations, the Stockbridge-Munsee community, the Delaware Nation, and the Delaware Tribe of Indians, and that's because we have collections that we're responsible for at the, you know, federal level and federal regulations. We have open lines of communication with their respective tribal historic preservation officers and endeavor to always involve the communities in projects related to their cultural heritage.

This year, Staten Island Museum was awarded a federal Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to update inventory documentation and reanalyze the archaeology collection with the support of the three nations, and they have all agreed to consult on the project.

The museum has also been working on our NAGPRA compliance, and we've repatriated four ancestors in our collection and have a stewardship agreement for their care. The Staten Island Museum staff and board

are committed to continuing this important work of
stewarding Native American collections in
consultation with tribal representatives.

We look forward to continuing to deepen these
relationships and work in partnership to expand
interpretation of Lenape cultural heritage in their
ancestral homeland of New York City. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much. I
appreciate, you know, in terms of recognizing
expanding interpretation and what that means,
including, as we mentioned, credible resources, and
sometimes that involves creating our own content.

Would you say some of the biggest challenges
that-- I guess that you're facing is that there isn't
enough intentional support for arts and culture?

I know you mentioned having like a theater and
having space and telling these stories. Is it that
it just hasn't been available?

MS. BORST TARRANT: I think what's important to
understand is culturally, in Native culture, it's not
one way. It's not this compartmentalized way of
thinking. That's the colonization way of thinking.
When traditionally, all of these things are all
encircling, related into one another.

Health is related into mental health. Mental health is related into youth. You know, youth is interrelated into-- and all of that, you know, it all compensates into storytelling.

Theater in our societies is storytelling on an epic scale.

So how do we do that nourishment? How do we make that cultural nourishment? We don't see us on the Tonys. We don't see us on these things. And, so a little example of that is they do a thing-- there's a play called The Suffragettes, right? And it's about the feminist movement.

They show every spectrum of everybody on that stage except Native women. Native women, who these women studied for the feminist movement to go further. They studied the women of the Haudenosaunee Nation because we come from matriarchal societies. Not all of us. I particularly come from.

So that's just one example how we're not in the dialogue. We're not at the table. And if someone said to me one time, if you're not at the table, then know that you're the dinner.

So, I mean, there's something to think about that. How do we get into these consultancies?

I think it's really important-- and I have to agree that consultancy is one of the most important things that we can do as Native people. I also believe that it should not-- we are not one way. We had an earlier speaker, I forget his name, he said we are not one way. And that is very, very true.

But how do we go on to these consultancies if that-- if we say there's only one tribe here? We have to talk about the community in the whole. And what does that mean? Where everybody has a seat at this table? Because inclusion isn't just for some people. It's for all of us.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Well, I appreciate that. I do want to see storytelling at an epic level, and the cultural nourishment is critical.

So I just want to, I want to thank this panel. I want to thank you for your work and for your advocacy, and I very much appreciate your time.

MS. PHIPPS: Thank you.

Okay, the last in-person panel, Katie Hill, Dylan Yeats, and Luke Boyd. If there is anyone else present in the chambers who would like to testify, please fill out an appearance card and join us at the dais.

MS. HILL: Good morning, Chair Rivera and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs. My name is Katie Hill. I am the Assistant to the Executive Director of the Perelman Performing Arts Center at the World Trade Center, also known as PAC-NYC.

I appreciate the opportunity to share a few details related to PAC-NYC's commitment to working with Indigenous artists and communities.

Serving and representing all people who call New York City home is one of the key values of PAC-NYC. To help us reach this goal, we created a Department of Civic Alliances to develop partnerships with key organizations who serve different constituencies.

One of these partnerships is a foundational alliance with Lenape Center. We work closely with alliance partners throughout the year, providing free tickets and access to our programming, a stage to engage in dialogue with our artists and audiences, and the opportunity to curate performances on our lobby stage.

Celebrated Indigenous playwright and activist Mary Catherine Nagel sits on our board, while Native American artists Ty DeFoe and Muriel Borst Tarrant

are two of our artistic advisors, who you met earlier today.

Our inaugural season included a three-week run in our large theater of Between Two Knees by the intertribal sketch comedy troupe the 1941s, the creators of the hit television show Reservation Dogs. The show is an irreverent satire spanning 90 years in the life of a fictional Native American family. We intentionally programmed the show for our first season to honor the Lenape land upon which PAC-NY sits, and demonstrate our commitment to presenting work by living Native artists.

The audience was 30% Indigenous, with many attending for free through our access ticket initiatives.

We held special events to uplift Native and Indigenous voices throughout this first season, this one year. Kishux, a photographic installation conceived by Joe Baker from the Lenape Center, a pre-show opening night performance by the band Yellow Trees, two performances of Good Medicine, an all-Native stand-up comedy show, two post-show conversations on Native representation in contemporary media with Native artists and

1 changemakers, a community curated post-performance
2 panel featuring speakers from multiple Indigenous
3 organizations, two pop-up marketplaces in partnership
4 with Relative Arts to showcase Indigenous-owned
5 fashion and design.
6

7 On January 8th through 11th, we will run Teepee
8 Tales from the Stoop, a solo show by Indigenous
9 artist and performer Muriel Borst Tarrant. The show
10 is about growing up in Brooklyn, where her family
11 were the only Indigenous residents on a mafia-run
12 block. We plan to work with Native communities once
13 again to bring Indigenous audiences to the show and
14 plan associated programming.

15 As we move beyond our inaugural year, we look
16 forward to continuing key partnerships and then
17 uplifting native voices, however few dedicated
18 funding sources exist support programming and
19 partnerships of this nature.

20 If DCLA were to initiate funding opportunities
21 specifically for indigenous programming and civic
22 partnership, then we would be supportive of such an
23 initiative.
24
25

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Cultural organizations are eager to develop work and partnership with indigenous communities and DCLA can make an impact.

Thank you very much again for holding this important hearing, and we hope to see you at PAC-NYC soon.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. I'll be there.

MR. YEATS: Hello, I'm Dylan Yates director of museum programs and operations for the Prospect Park Alliance, the nonprofit organization that operates Prospect Park in Brooklyn in partnership with the city. In my role I develop interpretation and programs at Lefferts Historic House Museum. With guidance from descendant community advisors and partners, the museum explores and honors the cultures of resistance and resilience of the indigenous people whose unceded Ancestral lands the house and park rests upon, and the Africans enslaved by the Lefferts family. The vision is to transform this site of brutality into an incubator for contemporary descendant community culture and art.

The museum's current focus on indigenous history and culture and the legacy of enslavement began in 2022 with Prospect Park Alliance's hiring of a part-

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time coordinator to conduct new research into the site, alongside a much-needed structural restoration funded by the Brooklyn delegation of the City Council.

In 2023 transformative support from the Mellon Foundation funded a new interpretive plan, which was created in partnership with the Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing Collective, with representatives from four Lenapow or Lenape nations serving on our advisory committee. This new plan celebrates the Lenapow or Lenape cultures, and commemorates their histories through outdoor Installations as well as ongoing workshops, public programs, and exhibits, which will be implemented over the next four years through further funding from the Mellon Foundation, State Assembly members Robert Carroll, and Brian Cunningham, and the Prospect Hill Foundation.

Additionally just this past weekend as Commissioner of Cultural Affairs noted, with generous support from the City Council speaker Adrienne Adams, Eenda Lunaapeewahkiing Collective, and American Indian Community House, The Alliance hosted an indigenous culture fair that provided thousands of visitors with free cultural performances by the Red

Blanket Singers, craft workshops, and access to indigenous artisans from across the continent curated by George and Julianne Stonefish.

Welcoming the Lenapow or Lenape to share their cultures in their homelands has a profound effect on the park and our communities. It helps us better connect ourselves to the histories of this land, so we can build more sustainable and equitable relationships to it, as well as to each other.

However, this work is not easy. Culture bearers need support, audiences need access, and centuries of war, dispossession, and discrimination cannot be undone overnight.

Many museums and other institutions in this city took active part in the desecration of the Lenapow or Lenape and other indigenous cultures. While many are now trying to do right, rebuilding trust takes time.

The only way to actually do this work is to build genuine and equitable partnerships rooted in shared respect that includes tough discussions that can lead to effective actions. Supporting the art, culture, and history of the original peoples of this land and their neighbors deserves and requires substantial financial support as well as flexibility.

Organizations need time to develop reciprocal relationships and shared visions and that doesn't always fit into the typical funding cycle calendar. Culture bearers are often extremely overextended and need compensation and care commensurate with their importance. Skyrocketing transportation, accommodation, and venue costs are also a factor.

I'm honored and grateful to be able to address this committee on this important topic and I urge you to commit the resources necessary to do right by the histories we have inherited and the people's to whom we owe so much. Thank you.

MR. BODY: Good afternoon chair Rivera on behalf of historic, Richmond Town. My name is Luke Boyd I'm the director of education and public programs at New York City's Living History Village.

I'm here today to advocate for the financial support of cultural organizations and indigenous artists scholars and Presenters who chronicle the life of our city and its peoples. Historic, Richmond Town is located in the geographical center of Staten Island within the ancestral home of Lenape people of Lenapehoking within the Northeast Woodlands. Guided by the City Council and the Department of Cultural

Affairs Historic, Richmond Town has Refined its mission to embrace a totality of human history on Staten Island, and the history of the original stewards of this land, the Lenape, is at the center of this initiative.

To address this gap in the historical narratives presented the museum has been building a native encampment, an outdoor exhibit that illustrates the life ways of the Lenape people. This installation recreates a homestead of native peoples in the 17th century that visitors can see and touch.

Since 2021 the project has evolved in stages from the construction of a wigwam, or a summer house, an oyster midden, lean-to structures, and recently completed a palisade wall evoking defense fortifications made during colonial conflict.

With the support of the private sector, donations and grants, HRT has funded phases one and two of this project. We are seeking a funder to support the third phase of this installation, which would include the creation of a longhouse, a winter structure, so that visitors can encounter the native encampment with robust structures all year round.

I want to talk a little bit about the impact of
the encampment.

The site has been a fulcrum for education and
engagement on Staten Island. More than 20,000
visiting students have encountered the encampment so
far, with dialogue and activities facilitated by a
museum educator. Hundreds of students participate in
HRT's Casa programs have also taken part in Lenape
themed activities and lessons informed by the
installation, and every year as Commissioner Cumbo
indicated, we host a hearth and harvest festival four
years running in which we engage more than 25 Artists
from the pan-Indian community across the New York
City area and this includes storytellers, dancers,
musicians, and singers, and the connection to our
audience has been immense. This program has grown
every year and it will continue to grow as the years
go on.

But a deeper impact of the encampment is that
within the native community itself. The scope of the
installation set within the bucolic campus of
historic Richmond Town is unique among the five
boroughs of New York City. Not only is it a place
for visitors to learn about Native American culture

and heritage, but it is a place for the native community to convene the encampment will serve and has served as a catalyst for community ceremony, connection, and healing. The encampment attests not only to the challenging history of colonization and dispossession of native lands, but to the continuous presence of native people on this continent through the present.

The Council support for this work and the indigenous artists is critical. The commitment to understanding and preserving native history and culture goes beyond a yearly commemorative event or milestone. It is a perpetual practice that is ongoing and in many ways we have just begun.

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I just want to say we've also been joined by Mr. Stonefish. I want you to just state your name for the record before you begin your testimony and thank you for being here.

MR. GEORGE STONEFISH: Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yes, we can.

MR. GEORGE STONEFISH: My name is George Stonefish. I am the cousin of Brent Stonefish, and I am the individual who started the Lenapehoking

Circle. Basically it was started as a consequence of one of my cohorts, Jack Chen, who was at that time with NYU and running their Asian program, but he was always sympathetic to the Lenape.

And because NYU refused to create any Lenape programs or even bring in Lenape or native students in general, he would sponsor these events for us.

And through that relationship he was called to testify at the Landmarks Commission about the Confederate flags and all that.

And they were talking about what they can do for the Lenape, and he spoke up and said well how can you make decisions because they suggested giving us a statue, and that the statues of Christopher Columbus could not be removed in New York because there's too many Italians.

So I mean during the time the time of this Commission meeting he spoke up and says, "How can you say you're going to give them a statue? There's no Lenape here! How do you know they even want one?"

So, he spoke up on our behalf. And to make a long story short Darren Walker was a co-chairman of the Commission, and he approached him and says, "You know, you got a lot of Ideas about the Lenape." He

says, "Why don't you write me a letter and I'll give you a grant?" So, he calls me up after he leaves. He says, "George! Blah blah blah letter." I said, "Well, write the letter!" So, he wrote the letter. Within two and a half months, we got got a \$250,000 grant from the Ford Foundation for Lenape.

Then he calls me up says, "Well, what am I going to do now? We got this money! What are we going to do? I say, "We are going to go and call the chiefs, because as a Lenape individual, my name is George Stonefish I'm Turtle Clan member, I'm a Lenape member, and as was stated with Brent, my mother was one of the founding members of the American Indian Community Houses board. I've been on the board of directors for a great many years. I just got off, Thank God. And now I have a little bit more freedom to do things.

The bottom line is though, it's you know-- From our things, we put together this craft fair in Prospect Park this past weekend. Phenomenal turnout. The thing is, though it was a Lenape based craft fair, we invited members of non-Lenape native groups to participate in it because you have to understand when you're talking about traditional Lenape

viewpoints, we always integrated and embraced our brethren the Canarsie, the Shinnecock, the Poospatuck, the Ramapough up in Connecticut. They are all Allies of the Lenape community.

The Lenape nation went from just below Upstate New York over by our Capital over there all the way down to the state of Delaware This was all of our territory. But we were separated by language, different languages. Up here in the New York area We're Munsee speakers. When you go down south towards towards Jersey, towards the border with Delaware and so forth they are Unami. They are a different branch of Lenape that aren't from this area. And although I appreciate what the Lenape Center has been doing in recent years, I take umbrage-- I take exception with the fact that they do not work with the native organizations in New York that come from all over Turtle Island.

They're our brothers. We should embrace them hand in hand and not try to isolate them and separate them from performing in spaces, and that type of thing here, which is unacceptable.

And the thing is, what we're trying to do is, you know, they kept mentioning federally-recognized

tribes. I hate to say this But the time of the great white father telling us who are Lenape and who are not are over. We have different Lenape groups all up and down the East Coast who refused to be removed to the state of Oklahoma and stayed back, hid in the in the mountains, in the swamps and remained as constructive territories.

With our organization, we are embracing all of them. I mean we have a requirement of for Lenape to be involved with us, and that is they have a tribal council, they have a chief, they have a constitution, they have a membership policy, and that they're basically functioning as a Lenape community.

Now if they have all of these things in place we will accept them to our Lenapehoking organization, because both me and Brent determined at the beginning, when I brought him in as a co-chair for this organization, that we did not have the wherewithal to determine who was and was not Lenape. But their history would. So when they're accepted to the organization, and they make it known, and we go and make a presentation to their tribal council, to their chiefs, and to their community, and we get to an agreement where we are accepting, where they

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1 understand that no politics are allowed with this
2 organization. Unacceptable. I will kick them out.
3 Because we don't have time for politics. We're
4 coming together to create a voice of the Lenape
5 people that goes throughout Turtle Island, which is
6 what we call the United States of America and Canada
7 and Mexico. If you look at it, it's a turtle.

8 And so we recognize that before the arrival of
9 the Dutch.

10 Now a lot of things-- You know, we're looking at
11 this as a full round thing. I mean, we're not just
12 talking about doing craft fairs, and then I did the
13 big powwow at the Park Avenue Armory in '18, and I'll
14 be doing another one this year, but the fact of the
15 matter is we do those things as an educational tool
16 to let Non-Indians, and also our Indian communities,
17 to have someplace to celebrate and come together,
18 whether they're Lenape or not. Because at the craft
19 fair we had people from New Mexico, from the Navajos
20 in New Mexico, from up in Canada. We had them from
21 all over along with the different Lenape groups,
22 because this is the way that we do business.

23 I'm an old-time person who's been a powwow'er,
24 and when I could walk, I was a championship fancy
25

dancer. And on the other hand, I'm a born-and-bred New Yorker. I went to PS6. I went to Wagner Junior High School. I went to the Bronx High School of Science, and I went to Syracuse University.

However, every summer time I spent up in Canada, up on Raven Town, and up on the other territories up there learning tradition and so forth. So, I mean I've had that duality

And the reason why I wanted this organization in the first place, because as a New Yorker you ask anybody: Who were the Indians that met the Dutch? And they can never tell you that they were either the Delaware, which is the same thing, which is the white person way of saying Lenape. So-- But they have no knowledge of that.

And I said I wanted to bring back all of the histories of dispossession because we were all chased from this area except for those two groups that went down to Oklahoma. The rest of us were all massacred and chased all the way into Canada, chased into Wisconsin, chased into Jersey, and we still remain. But because we're not federally recognized, people have a tendency of not looking at-- We are Traditional people.

And I'll tell you one thing the Nanticoke in Southern Jersey they have the only big house of all the Lenape nations throughout Turtle Island, and a big house is Similar to the longhouse of the Confederacy. It's where we hold our traditions and our ceremonies. And we hold ceremonies there now.

And You know, the Oklahomans, when they went to Oklahoma, they passed tribal resolutions that they will not embrace the longhouse or the big house again. So they're not involved in tradition. They know nothing about tradition let alone language. We have the only language speaker in our territory, and we're promoting that. We're going to use virtual reality to teach our young, to teach language to our other people, and with our organization these are the types of things that we have that we're working on. Where we are going to set up virtual reality studios on all of the Lenape communities to create the histories of dispossession, to do whatever the tribal councils want them to do, because we believe that we're not going to make those decisions. It's the chiefs and the clan mothers of our communities that will determine what we want to do.

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And when coming to New York City, this is our
homeland So I want to tell you as your landlord, I
welcome you.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Thank you very
much.

MR. GEORGE STONEFISH: Now, I'm basically done.
I wanted to just touch on those areas so that you
understand that.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you.

MR. GEORGE STONEFISH: But, I want to end with
one thing--

[background voices]

What? Just calm down.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: He's going to wrap it up
right now.

MR. GEORGE STONEFISH: I want to I want to sing
you an honor song in celebration of all that you're
doing here for day for indigenous communities.

[SINGING IN MUNSEE FOR 40 SECONDS]

Thank you very much for all that you're doing for
us, and hopefully you'll find us some money. I'm
done.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Thank you very
much.

MR. GEORGE STONEFISH: That's why they don't let
me talk too often.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I-- Well, my heart is
bursting. So I'm happy that you joined us.

Yes, I think we need to pay for things, okay? We
need to make sure that people have a place to live
and a living wage and create art and have the space
to do that. So I agree, we have to find some money
for sure.

I just want to thank you all. I want to thank
this panel. You're doing exceptional work. And the
arts and culture ecosystem that we've created here in
New York and beyond is deserving of support.

So thank you, and just know the Commissioner is
still here listening.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you very much. Thank you.

MR. GEORGE STONEFISH: We didn't have any
questions.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I'm just stunned. I feel a
bit speechless, and that's not typically my style.

We do have two people on Zoom that I'd like to
ask. Lucy Sexton and Potri Keanu-Noor. Lucy?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Lucy, you may begin.

MS. SEXTON: Okay, I'm unmuted. Thanks so much,
and thanks for everybody that testified today.
Really, really wonderful. Thank you, Chair Rivera.
Thank you, the Council's Cultural Affairs Committee
for holding this really important hearing and shining
a spotlight on our city's Indigenous arts and culture
workers, organizations, and communities.

I also appreciate the Chair referencing housing
and affordability. Indigenous New Yorkers experience
poverty at twice the rate of white New Yorkers, and
those working in the arts face even sharper economic
challenges.

If we want more native artists in New York City,
we need to make it more affordable to live here.

As far as Indigenous arts groups receiving
funding from DCLA and needing more engagement from
Native groups in the process, we also require
outreach and building networks of communication so
that Indigenous artists and cultural groups are aware
of the available support, and that requires more
capacity for DCLA. Only an increased baseline can
provide increased jobs to do the extensive work that
DCLA is charged with doing, and the wide-ranging
cultural feel it is charged with serving.

As the city begins its planning for its 400th anniversary, we must insist that the people whose land was taken to found the city have a leading role in that planning and telling that history. The cultural community is ready to partner with the city in engaging cultural groups from all communities in this anniversary.

I appreciate all the work that has been lifted up today. Native activists and leaders have made modest steps forward in recent years. However, as we well know, the backlash has been growing, and I fear that the new administration in Washington will only make it worse.

It will be worse also, as we know, for immigrant artists. We should note in this hearing, as Poetry will tell us, there are many immigrant cultural groups that are also indigenous people, bearing with them the indigenous culture of the countries from which they come. The Council, the administration, and our state government need to do all they can to protect immigrant and indigenous New Yorkers. We must pass New York for all—

[BELL RINGS]

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SERGEANT AT ARMS Your time has expired. Thank
you.

MS. SEXTON: We must protect cultural funding,
which is already under attack by the right. We must
do all we can to protect and support those most
vulnerable, black, indigenous, immigrant, and all
people of color, and lead the way in saying no to the
shutdown of DEAI initiatives, and yes to our wildly
diverse and vibrant city of culture and community.

Thanks so much.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Let me bring on
Potrirankamanis Queno Nur. And please let me know if
I've correctly pronounced your name. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

MS. QUENO NUR: Good morning. Good morning,
everyone. As-Salaam-Alaikum. Thank you very much,
Councilwoman Rivera. My name is Potrirankamanis
Queno Nur. In my passport, I am a Filipino. I was a
nurse that was transported, recruited from the
Philippines in the height of HIV AIDS during the
1990s, but I am a tradition bearer of the Maranao
people, Southern Philippines.

1 In the Philippines, there are groups of
2
3 indigenous people that is actually included, I mean,
4 included or embedded in the monolithic, you know,
5 being a Filipino. But as a tradition bearer, I carry
6 the tradition, legends, epics, and myths as what the
7 previous natives who were presenting, indigenous
8 people presenting, how the language we carry, and our
9 stories, and our history are carried through our
10 dance, music, and chants.

11 And we, in the Philippines, in Mindanao in
12 particular, we became part of the Philippines only in
13 1898 when Philippines was sold to USA to go to Puerto
14 Rico, Cuba, and Guam.

15 And here in New York, I don't want my children to
16 be cut off from the tradition that I grew up with,
17 and also to assert the presence and the visibility of
18 who we are as indigenous people.

19 We also honor the indigenous people on whose land
20 we are now living. And so the first thing that I
21 created, or I made, was to greet and to greet and
22 introduce myself to the indigenous people here. And
23 I met the Haudenosaunee, Tom Porter. And that's--
24 for him, he said, I told him we are the seventh
25 nation.

So, every time we go there during Strawberry Harvest Festival, he said, oh, "The seventh nation is here."

Now, what I mean here is that the only way for us to be visible and to be heard--

[BELL RINGS]

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired. Thank you.

MS. QUENO NUR: --is for the Council to take care of us. And also, thank you, DCLA. Thank you so much for this session that we're being given a chance to speak. And I would like to assert our presence as indigenous people here in the land of the Lenape people. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. If there is anyone else on Zoom who has not had the opportunity to testify but wishes to do so, please raise your hand. Seeing no one else who wishes to testify, I want to thank everyone here for their time and their very, very meaningful words. And of course, the call to action that we must all step up. And with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 15, 2024