

Storytellers of the Delaware Tribe

The Lenape had many stories and a number of them are in the Lenape Talking Dictionary and are told in Lenape. You can find those stories here:

<https://www.talk-lenape.org/stories?category=a>

and also here:

<https://www.talk-lenape.org/stories?category=b>

There are also many more stories that were told to researchers over the years but there were no sound files made, only transcriptions. In some cases these are shortened versions of the stories. Those stories are shown here with the name of the storyteller and the name of the person who took down the story. The stories told by members of the Delaware Tribe have a blue border around them while those told by the Delaware Nation have a brown border. In a few cases the person who took down the story did not include the name of the storyteller and those do not have a border around them.

Delaware	Tribe	Delaware	Nation
Anon	Anonymous	BS	Bessie Snake
BS	Betty Skye	EH	Esther Homovich
CZ	Curtis Zunigha	LW	Lillie Whitehorn
CE	Charles Elkhair	ME	Martha Ellis
FW	Fred Washington	MW	Marvine Watkins
JF	Julius Fouts	WS	Willie Snake
LB	Lucy Blalock		
JB	Janifer Brown		
MF	Minnie Fouts		
MP	Michael Pace		
ND	Nora Dean		
RA	Richard Adams		

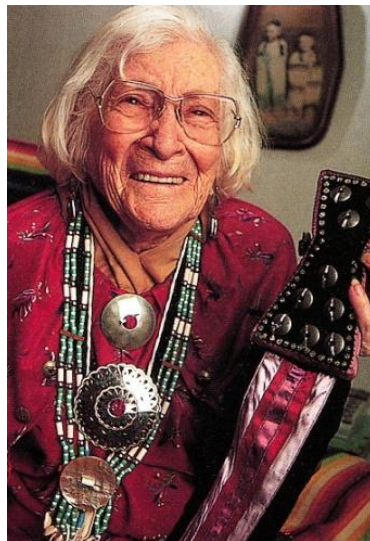
In the lists below there are photographs and information about Lenape storytellers. Most are no longer with us but their knowledge of the language, history, and folklore has been passed down for the younger generation of Lenape people.

Enjoy the stories!



Nora Thompson Dean
1907 – 1984

Nora taught Lenape language classes at Nowata, Oklahoma, in the years 1979-80. Nora also developed several cassette learning tapes and booklets called the Lenape Language Lessons in 1980. Over the years she also worked extensively with a number of linguists and anthropologists to try to preserve the Lenape language and culture.



Lucy Parks Blalock
1906 – 2000

Lucy began to teach Lenape classes at the Tribal headquarters in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, in 1992 under the auspices of the Delaware Tribal Culture Preservation Committee. These continued until May of 1994 when she was no longer able to teach, but the language work continued with some language committee members going to Lucy's home at Quapaw, Oklahoma.



James H. Thompson

1867-1964

An elder who contributed to the folklore is James H. Thompson, the father of Nora Thompson Dean and Leonard Thompson. James was born in Kansas near Kansas City, and as a baby moved with his family on the Delaware's forced move to Indian Territory (later Oklahoma). He worked with several scholars such as Willard Rhodes and W. W. Newcomb, Jr., to preserve knowledge of his people's songs and customs. He worked with Jim Rementer on the language in the early 1960's.



Edward Leonard Thompson

1904 - 2002

Another elder who has contributed to the Lenape dictionary is Edward Leonard Thompson, the brother of Nora Thompson Dean. Leonard taught some language classes in 1985. He has also worked with a number of people on the language.



Willie Longbone

1867 - 1946

Willie worked with linguist Carl Voegelin in 1939 at the University of Michigan.



James C. Webber

1877 - 1950

James, more commonly known as Charlie, worked with anthropologist Frank Speck at the University of Pennsylvania in 1928.



Charles Elkhair

1848-1935

Called Kòkwëlëpuxwe ("One Who Walks Backward"), Elkhair was a knowledgeable traditionalist of his generation. A resident of Copan, near Dewey, he was also a singer in the Big House and a leader in the Peyote Religion.



Fred Fall-Leaf

1900 - 1971

Fred Fall-Leaf promoted efforts in the 1950s and 1960s to have events for the people who spoke the Lenape language to get together and have a chance to keep in practice with the language. Fred also worked with several linguists over the years. His father John Fall-Leaf also promoted the traditional ways by holding Stomp Dances.



Ollie Beaver Anderson

1890-1981

Ollie Beaver Anderson was a fluent speaker of Lenape, and was married to another Delaware named George 'Tom' Anderson. Ollie worked on the language during the 1960s mainly with linguist Ives Goddard, then a graduate student at Harvard. We would like to express our thanks to Dr. Goddard for sharing his recordings of the vocabulary work he made with Ollie.



Reuben Wilson

1899 - 1970

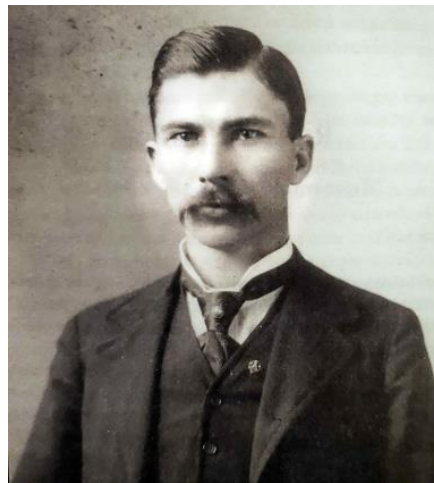
Reuben worked with anthropologist Frank Speck, and with linguist Bruce Pearson and Jim Rementer in his efforts to preserve information about traditional Lenape language, songs and dances, as well as handmade items. As far as we know Reuben was the only Lenape to have been on a radio show singing Lenape songs, although at the time he was extremely hard-of-hearing due to an auto accident. Reuben was also the last living Lenape to have sung his vision song in the traditional Big House Church.



Freddie Washington

1905 - 1976

Over the years Freddie worked with a number of linguists and anthropologists, including Frank Speck, in attempts to preserve the Lenape language and culture. Freddie worked on the language during the 1960s with linguists Ives Goddard and Bruce Pearson, then graduate students working on their dissertations. He also worked with Jim Rementer.



Richard C. Adams

1864 – 1921

Richard Adams devoted 25 years of his life to being a champion for Delaware causes. He acted as their legal representative in Washington DC helping to direct the tribe's legal battles with the Cherokee Nation over land rights. Adams wrote five books about Delaware legends, religion, and traditions



Mary Louise Watters

1931 – 2018

Mary was a gifted storyteller and also worked to preserve Lenape culture and history. She was also a member of the Lenape Language Committee.



Betty Skye

d. 2003

- Betty was a gifted storyteller and also worked to preserve Lenape culture and history. Betty was a nurse.
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Janifer Brown

d. 2015

Jan was a gifted storyteller and also worked to preserve Lenape culture and history. She was a member of the Lenape Language Committee.



Michael Pace

Mike is a storyteller at Conner Prairie Museum, he has been invited to tell Lenape stories in several foreign countries, and he is a member of the Lenape Language Committee. Mike was also the assistant tribal chief.



Curtis Zunigha

Curtis is the director of the Delaware Tribe's Cultural Center, and he is a lecturer, historian, a member of the Culture Preservation Committee, and a former tribal chief



Lenape Language Committee

The Lenape Language Committee was formed in 1995 to make plans for language preservation projects. The photo shows the committee presenting a Lenape Language CD to former Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating in 2011. Members were Michael Pace, Jim Rementer, Mary Watters, and Janifer Brown.

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Martha Ellis

1900 - 1978

Martha worked on the language during the 1960s with linguist Ives Goddard, then a graduate student working on his dissertation. She later worked with linguist Ralph Cooley of the University of Oklahoma, and also linguist Bruce Pearson.



Bessie Snake

1896 - 1999

Bessie worked on language preservation during the 1960s with linguist Ives Goddard. She later worked with linguist Ralph Cooley of the University of Oklahoma. She also worked with linguist Bruce Pearson, and with Jim Rementer and several scholars on various topics.



Willie Snake

1900 - 1989

Willie worked on language preservation with linguist Ralph Cooley of the University of Oklahoma. He also worked with linguist Bruce Pearson, and Duane Hale to help preserve the Lenape language.



Willard Thomas

1905 - 1988

Willard worked on language preservation with linguist Ralph Cooley of the University of Oklahoma. He also worked with Duane Hale to help preserve the Lenape language. In 1963 Willard represented his Delaware group as an invited guest to Sweden.



Lillie Hoag Whitehorn

1902 - 1994

Lillie worked on language preservation with linguist Bruce Pearson, and also with David Oestreicher and Jim Rementer to help preserve the Lenape language and music. Lillie was half Caddo and was also fluent in the Caddo language.

Lillie's sisters Esther Homovich and Josephine Martinez also made recordings to help preserve the language.