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For Immediate Release

New Jersey Native Americans: JCTC Showcases Lenape Arts, Culture & Community

Jersey City Theater Center (JCTC) honors National Native American Heritage Month with a celebration of the indigenous people of Hudson County and New Jersey. This Native American festival features an art exhibit by Jack “Crying Raven” Anderson and an exclusive screening of *American Native*, a documentary on the history and present day struggles of the Native peoples of New Jersey.

The JCTC National Native American Heritage Month event takes place at Merseles Studios, 339 Newark Avenue, Jersey City, N.J. 07302. This event is free & open to the public.

“The Lenape have always been here in New Jersey and Hudson County,” said Olga Levina, Artistic Director, JCTC. “Their history is filled with struggles, but their culture is rich and alive today. Jack is a remarkable Lenape artist and JCTC is proud to showcase his important body of work, along with screening *American Native*, to help tell the story of this resilient community.”

Predating America’s colonial era, the Ramapough Lenape Nation included New Jersey, and vast sections of Pennsylvania, Delaware and New York. In one of the darkest incidents in Hudson County history, on February 25, 1643, Dutch soldiers sailed across the Hudson River from New Amsterdam (Manhattan), and attacked the Tappan and Wecquaesgeek branches of the Lenape, killing scores of men, women and children in what is known as the Pavonia Massacre.

Few appreciate the history of the indigenous people in New Jersey, or even realize that many of the towns in New Jersey – such as Hoboken, Mahwah and Paramus – are derived from the Lenape language. Even fewer realize that the Lenape people not only survived colonial-era warfare but have kept their culture alive to the present day, with an estimated 2,000 Lenape currently residing in Bergen, Essex, Union, Passaic and Essex counties.

Born in Newark and currently living in Westwood, Jack “Crying Raven” Anderson is a self-taught artist whose work has been exhibited in City Without Walls (Newark), The Silver Whale Gallery (NYC); The Monroe Street Art Center (Hoboken) The Cozy Art Gallery (Brooklyn), The Ramapough Lenape Tribal Art Show in Haverstraw, N.Y. and Origins, a 2015 JCTC series. His work is influenced by Lenape spirituality and cultural traditions, his love of family and his love of John Coltrane and Billie Holiday.

“I have been using color to create since I was old enough to pick up a crayon,” he said. “I use color to express my love, my fears, my sorrow and my joy. What I paint comes from my heart

and soul. I draw inspiration from my Ramapough-Lenape, Cherokee and African-American heritage. My life has been an overwhelming, but fantastic journey. I have learned the power of the Circle, the importance of family, unconditional love and creativity during my journey. My art is a record of my journey.”

Curating the Jack “Crying Raven” Anderson gallery show is Atim Annette Oton, a Nigerian-born, American and British educated designer turned Curator. A Jersey City resident, Oton is the director of Calabar Gallery in Harlem, co-owner of Calabar Imports, a 15 year old Brooklyn retail business, and founder of the Creative Side, an arts and design consultancy.

“Jack's work is focused on Native American spirituality, drawings of women and jazz,” said Oton. “Some of his work evolves from visions he sees when he goes to Lodge, a self-constructed spiritual space of Native Americans. Artists like him utilize the subconscious to capture vibrant descriptive images. His work often concentrates on captivating two sided female portraits and faces as well as every day Native American culture.”

Also at the event is a screening of *American Native*, a documentary on the Leni Lenape, directed by Steven Oritt. The film tells the story of The Ramapough Lenape’s fight for respect as Native Americans, examining their efforts to gain acceptance from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the private interests that may have colluded behind the scenes to prevent them from doing so. Through expert interviews and unbridled access to this close-knit community, the film provides an in-depth look at the complex past, volatile present and endangered future of the Ramapough Lenape Nation.

Native American Heritage Festival

Solo-Show by Jack “Crying Raven” Anderson
Curated by Atim Annette Oton
November 16
5:00-10:00

Gallery Show & Artist Reception
***American Native* screening: 7:30**
Followed by Artist-Talk, including Jack “Crying Raven” Anderson & members of the
Ramapough Lenape Nation

This event is free to the public

For more information, visit: www.JCTCenter.org

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Native American Heritage Festival/Solo-Show by Jack “Crying Raven” Anderson was also made possible through the generosity of Ben LoPiccolo Development Group, JCTC’s Board of Directors, private donors and local Jersey City businesses.

Jersey City Theater Center, Inc. (JCTC) is a nonprofit, 501c3 arts organization committed to inspiring conversations about important issues of our times through the arts.