

**Dennis J. Coker, Principal Chief
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Brief Bio

A lifelong resident of Kent County, Delaware, Dennis J. Coker has been honored to be elected Principal Chief of the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware since 1996. During his term, successful collaborations with the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office and the Federal Census Bureau, his Tribe was awarded a Census Designation Area allowing Tribal members to include their ethnicity as Lenape on the 2010 Census for the first time in history. On August 3, 2016 Delaware's Governor, Jack Markell, signed legislation officially recognizing the long and continued history of the Lenape Community in the state of Delaware.

Chief Coker's service as a past Chairman of the Confederation of Sovereign Nanticoke-Lenape Tribes of the Delaware Bay has allowed him to effect progress towards recognition of the Indigenous human rights of all member Tribes. His membership in the National Congress of the American Indian (NCAI) and founding membership in the Alliance of Colonial Era Tribes (ACET) has brought recognition, furthered understandings, and developed collaborations for the betterment of Delaware's Indigenous population.

As a well respected public speaker and story teller, Chief Coker has helped educate diverse leadership as well as the public leading to Delaware's General Assembly proclamation that all residents celebrate November as Native American Heritage Month and learn to honor "The First People of the First State." In his well received keynote address at Delaware's First Annual Environmental Justice Conference, Chief Coker challenged educators to learn and pass on the Lenape view of the interconnectedness of all living things, the sanctity of place, and the concept that man is but one small part of the web of life, not the center of it.

Collaborating with the Department of Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) Renewable Energy Initiative and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council of the Oceans (MARCO) and his membership on the Chesapeake Bay Advisory Council, Chief Coker's rare sensitivity for the balance of ecology, economy and ethnicity makes him a valued member of many committees and task forces where he continues to work diligently with federal, state and local governments to improve the health and wellbeing of the Lenape People remaining in their original homeland, now known as the State of Delaware.