



## INDIGENOUS WISDOM COMES ALIVE AT BARNESVILLE SCHOOL

The Barnesville School of Arts and Sciences, hosted Peter Brooks of the Piscataway Indian Nation for a ground breaking program that took 9 years to craft and brought ancient wisdom to life for 3rd and 4th graders. Over two 90-minute sessions, Brooks wove together storytelling, music, and hands-on activities that left a lasting impression on both students and teachers. The program included:

- ◆ A powerful animation retelling the story of the Great Law of Peace
- ◆ Introduction to the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address, fostering gratitude and environmental awareness
- ◆ The innovative Clan Animal Dance, which connects students to nature, themselves, and Piscataway Traditions
- ◆ An actual indigenous song to help young people learn the courage of compassion
- ◆ Crossword puzzles and word find games to take home such as the: Piscataway Clan Animal Game. Everyone belonged to one of seven clans represented by a specific animal which was inherited from the mother. In

### WHAT'S YOUR CLAN ANIMAL?

Find out at: [interacty.me/projects/653e2ade23cbf08a](https://interacty.me/projects/653e2ade23cbf08a)

this game we match clan animals to personality in a fun way that makes you think.

“Every single student was en-



“It’s like a birthday when children perform the animal dance. They connect with nature and have a birthday celebration with Mother Earth,” says Peter Brooks, above, dancing with Barnesville student participants.

gaged, captivated and inspired,” remarked art teacher Alika Middleton. “Peter’s teachings seamlessly integrated crucial aspects of personal development and responsibility.”

The impact of the program extended far beyond the classroom, sparking conversations about Indigenous culture, environmental stewardship, and personal responsibility throughout the school and in several homes afterwards.

This unique educational exper-

ience not only bridged cultures but also challenged students to rethink their relationship with the natural world, embodying the Piscataway principle that “our agriculture was not separate from our spirituality or our community life—it is all interconnected.”

“I bring these teachings to our youth to give honor to the past, and to illuminate the future,” Peter remarked. “These old ways still offer a compass for navigating challenges and by sharing these original instructions for human beings, living here in Maryland, the next generation is equipped with timeless tools for creating a more balanced, interconnected world for themselves. You must know math, science, and reading, but understanding these through the lens of our earliest rituals brings context, appreciation, and a reason to live in gratitude and sharing rather than regret and hoarding. This program is trying to build and expand this bridge between knowledge and wisdom for young people.”

Local professor and writer Christine Rai has been an Ag Reserve resident for almost 20 years. She and her coauthor are finalizing the draft of their book *Medley Mysteries: Curious Tales and Hidden History* from Montgomery County’s Agricultural Reserve. Find out more at: [www.facebook.com/groups/508355383566045/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/508355383566045/)

The grandson of legendary Jazz singer Cab Calloway, both of Peter Brooks’ parents were teachers, hence the influence to become a teaching artist. Working through the Maryland State Arts Council he is available to give memorable experiences that connect Marylanders to their history in profound ways.