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By Lizett Pajuelo

MILLERTON — The Schaghticoke tribe, a tribal nation made up of surviving native tribes from New England, has lived in obscurity for many decades in area stretching from Kent, Conn., to the state of Vermont.

In efforts to raise awareness of their existence and their culture, Sachem (Chief) Robert Hawk Storm Alan, has begun holding interactive gatherings to teach others about his tribe. One of the latest was at Gilded Moon Framing in Millerton, on Friday, May 27. The first one was held at Tabor–Wing House in Dover on Thursday, May 5.

“This is the year we’re coming out of the closet,” said Hawk Storm.

The Schaghticoques have lived in this area since the early 1700s. But in the ‘30s and ‘40s they were pushed off their reservation, scattering throughout the East Coast.

In the past couple of years, the chief — who has worked closely with the United Nations (UN) since 2012 to gain global recognition for his people — has dedicated himself to reunifying the tribe.

Hawk Storm, as he is well known, has since brought scattered family members together and put them in touch with one another.

“When tribe members were pushed out, I went to visit them and pursued them,” he said. “To see the results of that is amazing and a gift — families are in touch with one another.”

The chief is surveying land off Route 22 between Dover and Millerton to purchase roughly 40 acres for a cultural center.

“We want to build awareness of what we’re trying to do in the area,” Hawk Storm said. “We want to bring awareness of culture, alternatives to addiction, clean energy and teach sustainable development and agriculture — this is the purpose the cultural center will serve.”

The project will also include homes for tribal members, he said.

“We also want to bring in kids and teach them leadership skills through programs we’ll develop,” the chief added. “We’re getting the idea out there because we want to accomplish this project within the next couple of years.

A people’s history

The Schaghticoke are an amalgamation of surviving tribes from New England — Algonkin, Mohicans and others — who were decimated during the Pequot and King Phillip’s War in the late 1600s.

They were given land from the state of Connecticut for a reservation (located in the town of Kent), creating the oldest reservation borders since 1746, according to Hawk Storm.

In the ‘30s and ‘40s, they were pushed out to a large extent.

“Our reservation is so destroyed and encroached upon that we don’t have much space for housing,” Hawk Storm remarked.

In 2004, the tribe gained federal recognition, but then lost it in 2005 — one of the tribes to have lost federal recognition the fastest in history of Native Americans, making them “the laughing stock of native communities ever since,” the chief said. The chief added it was political, as Connecticut does not want another federal recognized tribe — a prerequisite to allow a gaming casino — something the Schaghticoke have pursued.

In 2015, Hawk Storm signed the United Nation’s Declaration of the Right of Indigenous People.

In efforts to continue building awareness and connect Native American tribes, Hawk Storm will host the first annual Schaghticoke First Nation Inter-tribal Unity Gathering on Saturday, June 4, at the Thomas J. Boyce Park in Wingdale from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Native American UN representatives will be there. Everyone is welcomed.

For more information, email Sachem Hawk Storm at hawkstorm1156@gmail.com [2] or Valerie LaRobardier at valarobardier@gmail.com [3].

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