

Samson Occom's Petition of the Shinnecock Tribe to the State of New York
ca. 1787-88

To the most Excellent and Good Governor, and all the Chief Rulers, in the State of New York—

We poor Indians, known by the Name Umshennuckoouk or Shenecuck Indians, on Long Island, Most humbly send greeting—

We desire to be permitted, to rejoice with you in your great deliverance from the Cruel Tyranny of your once King, and from the Hands of your Brethren, who are like Esau and you have got your great Freedom, Liberty, and Independence, by your firm Resolution, Great Boldness, and undaunted Courage. You have now Shook off the Cruel Shackles and the hard and rough Yoke of Bondage, and now you are free People, you have your own Power in your own Hands.—

May the Great God, who has all Power, Make you very great, Strong and good forever.—

Most Noble and Great Gentlemen, we humbly beg, that you woud of your Clemency hear us a few words about our little Affairs—

The Supreme and independent Spirit above, who is the right owner and Disposer of all Worlds and all things and Creatures therein, Saw fit, to give us this great Continent to live in, and here we have been, nobody knows how long, and it pleased him also, in process of Time to Send your forefathers in this Country; and here they find our Fathers, Wild and poor, and very Ignorant; They livd altogether upon Hunting, Fishing, and Fowling, and picking wild Fruits, and they knew nothing of improving Land, and kep no Tame Creatures, and indeed there was no need of it, for When they wanted Fresh meat they woud run into the Bush, and Catch wild meat enough Presently, they only kept Dogs for Hunting, and When the English Came into our Country, they found it very good Land, and they bought it all for a trifle for our Fathers were utterly Ignorant of the Value of Land, they thought their Hunting, Fishing, and Fowling woud always Continue; But alas, alas it is all gone from us, and we are now poorer than our Fathers were; We have a little bit of Land that we Call our own, but the English have got all the profet of it, they Claim all the grass and the feed, and

we Cant keep any Creatures; we can only Plant a little Corn, beans and Pumpkins, and thats all, And we think, we are Usd very hard, would they be willing to be Usd in this manner? We think it is Writen in the Good old Book, Blessed is he that Considereth the poor, and we are the most wretched poor and this the way to Consider the poor, to Strip em of every thing, And now we know it is in your Power to help us, and there fore, we are Come before your Excellency for help, for we have no where to go now for help to your Honors, and if we no help, we must die at your Feet,—We only want to keep Some Cattle, Horses, and Hogs,—

We are your most unworthy Servants

Umshennuckoouk

Document Source: The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan