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International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is celebrated annually on August 9, during which the world takes a moment to recognize the enduring legacy, diverse cultures, and contributions of over 476 million indigenous people globally. Established by the United Nations General Assembly, this day marks the anniversary of the first meeting of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982. It serves not only as a time of commemorations, but also as a worldwide call to action to address the systemic challenges Indigenous communities continue to face.

Indigenous communities are custodians of more than eighty percent of the world's biodiversity and possess extensive knowledge of environmental-friendly living practices. Despite this, they continue to face challenges such as cultural loss, social inequality, and displacement. This year's observance highlights the UN's Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), emphasizing language preservation as a crucial aspect of sustaining cultural identity and community strength.

In New Jersey, the Lenape people are recognized as the original habitants of the state. Their legacy remains a vital part of New Jersey's rich history, with ongoing efforts by local tribes and cultural institutions to educate, advocate, conserve, and honor indigenous history in the state.

As we recognize this day, we are reminded of the importance of equality, inclusion, and respecting indigenous voices worldwide and in New Jersey.