

# A Long Island mansion built on 10,000 corpses: Shinnecock attorney declares a sacred site desecrated

WSHU | By [Natalie Discenza](#)

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The Shinnecock Graves Protection Society celebrates the completed deal between the town of Southampton and the Peconic Land Trust that allows them to reclaim ancestral burial grounds.



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The Shinnecock Indian Nation might have discovered more ancestral graves underneath a mansion that the tribe reclaimed from Southampton last year after demolition started earlier this month.

The tribe has been fighting for their land back for decades. This property, known as Sugar Loaf Hill, is believed to be a sacred ancestral burial ground.

Tela Troge, a Shinnecock and an Indigenous sovereignty attorney, said the tribe brought in a ground penetrating radar team to capture images below and surrounding the mansion.

“Before we started the demo of the mansion, we did GPR around like the ground, and we found some remains,” Troge said. “But once the house was actually down, and we could get the equipment in to find out what was underneath the home, we found that, you know, there could be around 10,000 or more burials on the site.”

The Shinnecock Graves Protection Society knew that the area was a sacred site from their elders who passed it down with oral tradition. Troge said there were maps from the 1700s that showed that it was a burial ground, and that state archaeologists excavated a nearby site in the 1990s, finding human remains.

“It's in these power brokers' best interest to keep our voices silenced because I think if people truly knew the horrors and the injustices that the Shinnecock people have faced and watching their most sacred graveyards be desecrated in order to build another mansion, I think people would be really horrified,” Troge said.

The tribe acquired the 4.5 acres of land for over \$5 million. Troge said their tribe had help from land trusts.

“For a long time, our voices have just been overlooked and erased,” Troge said. “Now we have the data and the confirmation of all of these experts as to just what a significant burial area is. It's not really a surprise to us, but it's really more of a confirmation backed up by data and science as to what we've always been telling not only the town, but also builders and developers and homebuyers in the area.”

“This is an extremely sensitive and sacred site. It's not a place where you should be building a pool and a mansion and a golf course and a tennis court,” Troge added.



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It would take the team months to carefully go through all of the data from the ground penetrating radar. Demolition remains on hold to prevent damaging ancestral graves.

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