



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Levar M. Stoney
Secretary of the Commonwealth

March 22, 2016

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA:

Pursuant to §2.2-401.01 of the Code of Virginia, I submit the attached report on the status of Indian tribes in Virginia for calendar year 2015.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance as you review this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Levar M. Stoney".

Levar Stoney
Secretary of the Commonwealth

2015 Report on the Status of Virginia Indian Tribes

In 2015, Virginia had eleven state-recognized Indian tribes: the Cheroenhaka Tribe, the Chickahominy Tribe, the Eastern Chickahominy Tribe, the Mattaponi Tribe, the Monacan Indian Nation, the Nansemond Tribe, the Nottoway Tribe of Virginia, the Pamunkey Tribe, the Patowomeck Tribe, the Rappahannock Tribe, and the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe.

The eleven Virginia Indian Tribes had a relatively quiet year, though there were some noteworthy occurrences.

Federal Recognition

On July 2, 2015, the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) [announced](#) the Pamunkey Indian Tribe would be the 567th federally-recognized tribe in the United States and the first federally-recognized tribe in Virginia, [effective October 6](#). The Pamunkey greeted the announcement with elation, as they had spent decades and more than [two million dollars](#) seeking recognition. However, on [October 2](#), the last day of a 90-day window to appeal the recognition, [Stand Up for California](#), a California-based, anti-gambling, nonprofit organization, challenged the tribe's recognition status, charging the current members are not descendants of the original Pamunkey and the tribe has not always had a functioning political influence, both requirements for recognition. The Interior Board of Indian Appeals will decide on reconsideration, though the Board had not set up a timeframe as of the end of 2015.

Six of Virginia's state-recognized tribes continued their fight for federal recognition: the Chickahominy, the Eastern Chickahominy, the Upper Mattaponi, the Rappahannock, the Monacan, and the Nansemond. These tribes have been seeking federal recognition through the legislative process for many years and 2015 brought a new round of bills sponsored by the Virginia congressional delegation.

Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Mark Warner (D-VA) cosponsored, [S.465](#), the *Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act of 2015*, in the United States Senate. Representative Robert Wittman (R-VA-01) introduced, and Representatives Gerald Connolly (D-VA-11), Robert "Bobby" Scott (D-VA-03), Donald Beyer (D-VA-08), and Scott Rigell (R-VA-02) cosponsored, [H.R.872](#), *To extend Federal recognition to the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, the Chickahominy Indian Tribe-Eastern Division, the Upper Mattaponi Tribe, the Rappahannock Tribe, Inc., the Monacan Indian Nation, and the Nansemond Indian Tribe*, as the companion bill to the Senate bill. Both bills would grant federal recognition to the Chickahominy, the Eastern Chickahominy, the Upper Mattaponi, the Rappahannock, the Monacan, and the Nansemond, while prohibiting the tribes from allowing gambling on their lands. As of the writing of this report, both bills had been heard in committee and awaited action by their respective bodies.

Legislative Affairs

At the state level, Delegate Chris Peace introduced [HB 2106](#), a bill to establish a Joint Commission on Virginia Indian Recognition, which would have created a commission to review applications from tribes seeking state recognition. The bill passed the House of Delegates but was not brought to a vote in the Senate. Among the tribes supporting the bill were the Appalachian Cherokee Nation and the Wolf Creek Cherokee Tribe.

The Wolf Creek Cherokee Tribe was also the subject of another bill, [SJ292](#), introduced by Senator A. Donald McEachin, would have extended state recognition to the Wolf Creek Cherokee Tribe. The bill was agreed upon by the Senate by a voice vote but was not voted on by the House of Delegates.

Cultural Affairs

Culturally, Virginia Indian Tribes have had a busy year as well. In 2015, at least seven of the tribes hosted powwows, celebrating the tribes' long histories in Virginia and providing an enjoyable opportunity for non-tribal members to learn about each tribe's culture.

The powwows were spread throughout the summer: the Monacan Indian Nation's powwow was May 16-17, the Upper Mattaponi celebrated their powwow on May 23, the Mattaponi's powwow was on June 20, the Cheroenhaka Inter-tribal "Corn Dance" Powwow was held on July 25, the Nansemond powwow was August 15, the Nottoway Tribe's powwow was September 19-20, and the Chickahominy held their Fall Festival and Pow Wow September 26-27.

Collegiate American Indian associations in Virginia also held events celebrating Virginia Indian culture this year: the University of Virginia's Native American Student Union at UVA held their first annual Pow Wow on March 28, the American Indian Student Association at the College of William and Mary held a Native Dance and Drum Demonstration on March 28, and George Mason University's Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education held their 13th Annual Veteran's Powwow. These events strove to educate non-Native students and community members about the culture and sacrifice of Virginia Indians.

Additionally, the Nansemond tribe and the Patawomeck tribe are recreating pre-colonial scenes to educate Virginians. The Patawomeck tribe continues to host "working villages" in the Fredericksburg area, recreating tribal members' ancestors' bygone lifestyle. Joseph Sullivan, a Stafford County student, [recreated a working village](#) behind Hartwood Elementary, the first such village built on a Stafford school property. The Nansemond are [continuing their work](#) on their 70-acre [Mattanock Town](#), a \$5 million investment. The tribe has been working on the project for 2 ½ years.

Honoring the 338 year old Treaty of Middle Plantation, the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Tribes [delivered](#) their annual tax to the Governor on November 25. The Treaty of Middle Plantation originally gave the tribes hunting and fishing rights and land in exchange for allegiance to British rule. This year, the two tribes presented the Governor and First Lady with two trussed deer, one from each tribe, pottery, a bracelet, and a bolo tie. About 200 people attended the event, crowding around the Virginia Executive Mansion.

Grants

The Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe [received a \\$271,145 grant](#) from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation to protect approximately 170 acres of the Cheroenhaka's reservation. The grant is a 1:1 match, meaning the Tribe will be providing half of the resources to protect the area. The land, which is adjacent to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Cypress Bridge Swamp Natural Area Preserve, will be harvested in one area of its pine forest and replanted with longleaf pine, a native tree, and have control burns in another area so native savannah can fill its place. The new area will serve as a buffer to the fragile, neighboring swampland.

The Patawomeck Tribe received notice on December 17 they will be receiving a grant in coordination with the Central Rappahannock Regional Library to create an interactive display highlighting traditional Virginia Indian health and wellness. The display, along with speeches by experts on the subject and tribal members, will open mid-July 2016.

Leadership

Some of the Virginia Indian Tribes experienced leadership changes in the past year. Chief Kenneth Adams, longtime chief of the Upper Mattaponi Tribe, was succeeded by new Chief Frank Adams; Chief Earl Bass followed Chief Barry Bass as chief of the Nansemond; and Chief Robert Gray of the Pamunkey Tribe succeeded previous Chief Kevin Brown.

Chief Sharon Bryant, the first woman to be chief of the Monacan Indian Nation, [passed away](#) in June and was succeeded by Assistant Chief Dean Branham. A passionate advocate for federal recognition and economic development, Chief Bryant was a tireless advocate for the Monacans. She once said the chief's job is "riding drag — is being last in the line and making sure that everyone else gets fed or gets across or gets to where they're going." She was a powerful leader, fitting for a woman known as "Bear Woman."