



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
*Office of the Governor*

Kelly Thomasson  
Secretary of the Commonwealth

December 31, 2019

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 2019.

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 "Kelly Thomasson".

Secretary of the Commonwealth

## 2019 Report on the Status of Virginia Indian Tribes

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The Commonwealth continues to recognize 11 Virginia Indian tribes: the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe, Chickahominy Indian Tribe, Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division, Mattaponi Indian Tribe, Monacan Indian Nation, Nansemond Indian Tribe, Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, Pamunkey Indian Tribe, Patowomeck Indian Tribe of Virginia, Rappahannock Tribe, and the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe.

Seven of these tribes are federally recognized, including the Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division, Chickahominy Indian Tribe, Monacan Indian Nation, Nansemond Indian Nation, Pamunkey Indian Tribe, Rappahannock Tribe, and Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe.

### State Affairs

The Northam Administration remains focused on continuing to strengthen the Commonwealth's relationship with Virginia's Indian Tribes and build strong government-to-government relationships with the seven federally recognized tribes. This year, the Administration took several important steps toward honoring their tribal history in Virginia and ensuring they have a place to continue their sacred traditions.

In June, Governor Northam announced an important land acquisition by the Chickahominy Tribe. The 105-acre site, known as Chickahominy on the Powhatan, along the James River was purchased with the assistance of a grant from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF). At the same time, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) signed an easement with the tribe to permanently protect the site. The land, upriver from historic Jamestown Island, will now be protected from development and will provide a location to showcase the culture, history, and traditions of the Chickahominy Tribe. In addition to its cultural importance, the property was identified by the Commonwealth's new data-driven approach to land conservation, *Conserve Virginia*, for its ability to reduce flooding and protect wetlands.

In August, Governor Northam signed a land trust agreement with the Mattaponi Indian Tribe, formally transferring over 100 acres of land to the reservation in King William County, almost doubling the size of the current reservation. Over the past decade, the Mattaponi have purchased and re-acquired over 100 acres of private land that had once been part of the reservation. These land parcels will now be held in trust for the benefit of the Tribe, and the Mattaponi will have complete control over the land. The Governor visited the reservation to commemorate the occasion and joined tribal members at their annual Homecoming and Revival.

Governor Northam participated in two annual commemorative events, accepting gifts in honor of the 306th Spotswood Treaty tribute and the 342nd tax tribute, which marks the anniversary of the Treaty of Middle Plantation.

Secretary Kelly Thomasson continues to speak with tribal leadership on a regular basis to ensure the Commonwealth of Virginia addresses tribal concerns, as well as hosting roundtables with leadership from tribal governments and state agencies. Secretary Thomasson also supported a number of events with the federally recognized tribes and federal and state agencies including:

- Tribal Emergency Management Summit – July

- Meeting with Indian Health Services – September
- EPA Tribal Summit – September
- Tribal Education meeting – November

In April and November, the Secretary of the Commonwealth hosted conference calls open to all members of the tribal community to discuss opportunities to serve on state boards and commissions, as well as the importance of the upcoming 2020 Census.

In April, Tribal leaders, Secretary Thomasson, and Secretary of Natural Resources Matt Strickler met with Dominion Energy officials and various other interested parties for the final planning meeting for the forthcoming Machicomoco State Park, the first Virginia State Park dedicated to telling the story of the Virginia Indians. The group agreed to the new name “Machicomoco”, the project was formerly referred to as the Gateway to Werowocomoco at Timberneck Farms.

On July 1, Governor Northam, Secretary Thomasson and Secretary Matt Strickler, joined Chief Branham and other members of the Monacan Indian Nation on the James River overlooking Rassawek, to learn about their historic capital city and their concerns about a proposed water pumping station the James River Water Authority (JRWA) hopes to construct on the presumed site of Rassawek.

The Virginia Indian advisory board on state recognition, which was formed in 2018 and established criteria and procedure for groups to petition for state recognition, received one notice of intent to petition. On October 8, 2019, the Wolf Creek Cherokee Tribe, Inc. submitted a notice of intent to pursue state recognition as a Virginia Indian Tribe. The board is in the process of scheduling a meeting to prepare for receipt of the petition.

### **Legislative Affairs**

A number of bills were introduced during the 2019 General Assembly session related directly to Virginia Indians.

Chris Peace introduced HR397 into the House of Delegates, commending Virginia Indians.

Delegate Krizek introduced HB1676 to designate the Wednesday immediately preceding the fourth Thursday in November as Indigenous Peoples Day. The bill was referred to the Committee on Rules. The Committee left the bill in Rules.

There were a number of bills related to the authorization and regulation of casino gaming. SB1126 passed and was enacted, but is required to be reenacted during the 2020 General Assembly session.

### **Federal Affairs**

The seven federally recognized tribes have continued working with federal government agencies to build direct government-to-government relationships and pursue federal programs and grants to improve the tribal members’ lives and preserve the tribes’ culture.

The four other Virginia Indian tribes are at various stages in the process of requesting federal recognition. To date, no legislation has been introduced in Congress to extend recognition to any additional Virginia tribes.

### **Cultural Affairs**

Virginia Indian tribes hosted eight powwows this year. As always, the powwows were open to the public and offered non-tribal members a chance to learn about Virginia Indian culture. Secretary Thomasson or her proxy attended every powwow this year, making this year the fourth year in a row a Governor's representative has attended every powwow. The powwows in the last year were:

- 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Monacan Indian Nation Powwow – May 18-19, 2019
- 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe Pow – May 25-26, 2019
- 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Mattaponi Indian Reservation Pow-Wow – June 15, 2019
- 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian “Green Corn Dance” Powwow and Gathering – July 6, 2019
- 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Nansemond Indian Pow Wow – August 17-18, 2019
- 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Nottoway Indian Pow Wow – September 21-22, 2019
- 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Chickahominy Fall Festival & Pow Wow – September 28-29, 2019
- 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Cheroenhaka Indian Fall Festival Corn Harvest Powwow – November 3, 2019

In addition to the powwows above, the tribes held numerous other cultural and education events with students and the greater community.

The third annual Pocahontas Reframed: Native American Storytellers Film Festival was held in November at the Byrd Theater in Richmond. Assistant Chief Brad Brown of the Pamunkey Indian Tribe served as the director of the festival.

### **Tribal Leadership**

Three tribes elected new leadership this year. The following are now serving as Chief:

- Chief Kenneth Braham, Monacan Indian Nation
- Chief Samuel Bass, Nansemond Indian Nation
- Chief Charles (Bootsie) Bullock, Patawomeck Indian Tribe