



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Kelly Thomasson
Secretary of the Commonwealth

December 30, 2020

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 2020.

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" with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Kelly Thomasson
Secretary of the Commonwealth

2020 Report on the Status of Virginia Indian Tribes

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, Patawomeck 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 took a proactive approach in engaging with the tribes during a challenging year. The Virginia Department of Health's Health Equity Task Force took care to engage and liaise with marginalized and at-risk communities.

Governor Northam created the position of Director of Indigenous/Native American Outreach and named Courtney Wynn as the first person to hold this position. Courtney is a member of the Chickahominy Indian Tribe and has been serving in the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth since 2019.

The Administration coordinated a Tribal Affordable Housing Summit in August of 2020 whereby Northam staff and tribal leadership virtually met with staff from Virginia Housing and the Department of Housing and Community Development to discuss single-family housing assistance, multi-family housing assistance, rental assistance, and broadband and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Governor Ralph Northam declared Monday, October 12, 2020 Indigenous Peoples' Day in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the first such proclamation in Virginia history.

Legislative Affairs

A number of bills were introduced during the 2020 General Assembly session that failed to pass out of committee, including:

SB1076 regarding Chickahominy land convenience

HB1282 regarding hunting/fishing licenses for tribal members

HB1525 regarding creation of a Tribal Land Repatriation Program and Fund

HB591 designating Indigenous Peoples Day to replace Columbus Day

The General Assembly passed SB36 which included legislation introduced by Senator McClellan to establish the Virginia Indigenous People's Trust Fund. The Fund is to be funded by a portion of the Commonwealth's share of the tax levied for the operation of a casino gaming establishment that is operated by a Virginia Indian tribe. Moneys in the Fund shall be distributed

on a quarterly basis in equal amounts to each of the six Virginia Indian tribes federally recognized.

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

Due to the pandemic, Virginia tribes cancelled their planned powwows this year. A small delegation from the Mattaponi and Pamunkey tribes did meet with the Governor on November 25, 2020 for the 343rd honoring of the Tax Tribute ceremony.

The fourth annual Pocahontas Reframed: Native American Storytellers Film Festival was held in November virtually, as the physical festival was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.