



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Kelly Thomasson
Secretary of the Commonwealth

January 7, 2022

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 2021.

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

2021 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 are federally recognized Tribal Nations, 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 continues to focus on maintaining a healthy, collaborative relationship with Virginia's Indian tribes.

During the 2021 legislative session, Governor Northam successfully pushed to include funding in the state budget for the Chickahominy Indian Tribe to acquire historically significant property known as Mamanahunt. The land deal closed at the end of December 2021 and the property has been successfully repatriated to the Tribal Nation.

In April, the Northam administration opened Machicomoco State Park, Virginia's 40th state park and the first state park dedicated to Virginia's 11 Indian tribes. The park, whose name means "meeting place" in the Algonquian language, focuses on telling a full and complete history of Virginia's Indigenous people.

In September, The Rappahannock Tribe hosted a Sovereignty Symposium at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens to further explore the topics of government-to-government relationships and tribal sovereignty. Governor Northam, Secretary of the Commonwealth Kelly Thomasson, state agency leaders, and several other members of the administration attended to further collaborate with tribal nations. The symposium was recorded to be publicly available into the future.

In October, the administration reconvened the Virginia Indian Advisory Board to address a petition for state recognition submitted by the Wolf Creek Cherokee Tribe, Inc. in early 2020. At subsequent meetings in November and December, the board appointed a workgroup to review this petition and make a recommendation to the Governor and General Assembly. Their work is currently ongoing.

In November, the Northam administration announced Executive Order 82, an order that requires certain state agencies to consult with federally-recognized tribes on matters pertaining to historical and environmental permitting, similar to the way in which federal agencies are required to consult with federally-recognized tribes.

In December, the Northam administration announced \$12 million in the proposed upcoming budget for one-time funding to assist Tribal Nations with land acquisition projects. This money

will advance land repatriation efforts to the tribes- helping them purchase land that was historically owned by the tribes, advancing historic justice. An additional \$10 million was proposed for a new fund that will conserve historic sites important to Virginia's Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.

Legislative Affairs

HJ572 was introduced by Delegate McQuinn to formally recognize the Wolf Creek Cherokee. The bill failed to pass in committee, with committee members recommending that additional time be given to the Indian Advisory Board on State Recognition to review the Wolf Creek's petition and make a recommendation to the General Assembly.

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

For the second year in a row, most of Virginia's powwows- sacred gatherings by tribes to celebrate their culture with dance, food, and fellowship- were cancelled due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) tribe held both of their annual powwows, first their "Green Corn" festival on July 3, 2021, and, later, their "Harvest Corn" festival on November 6-7, 2021. Both of these were held in Courtland, Virginia. The Nottoway tribe hosted a virtual powwow online on September 18, 2021.

The fifth annual Pocahontas Reframed: Native American Storytellers Film Festival was held in November at the Byrd Theater in Richmond.

Tribal Leadership

One tribe elected new leadership this year. The following are now serving as Chief:

- Chief Keith Anderson, Nansemond Indian Nation
