



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Kelly Gee
Secretary of the Commonwealth

December 28, 2023

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 2023.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Gee".

Kelly Gee
Secretary of the Commonwealth

2023 Report on the Status of Virginia Indian Tribes

The Commonwealth recognizes 11 Virginia Indian tribes: the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe, Chickahominy Indian Tribe, Chickahominy Indian 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: 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

On January 18, 2023, Virginia's federally recognized tribal nations organized the inaugural Virginia Tribal Nations Legislative reception at the Library of Virginia. Secretary Kay Coles James, Deputy Secretary Jenna Moon, and Director Ashley Traficant joined the federally recognized tribal chiefs, including Chief Frank Adams of the Upper Mattaponi, Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Indian Tribe, Chief Keith Anderson of the Nansemond Indian Nation, Chief Stephen Adkins of the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, Chief Kenneth Branham of the Monacan Indian Nation, and Chief Jerry Stewart of the Chickahominy Indian Tribe Eastern Division. This gathering marked the 5th anniversary of federal recognition for these tribal chiefs and provided a platform for them to highlight the transformative impact of federal recognition on their relationship with the Commonwealth.

Governor Glenn Youngkin and First Lady Suzanne S. Youngkin, alongside Secretary Kay Coles James, Deputy Secretary Jenna Moon, and Director Ashley Traficant, hosted a luncheon for the 11 Virginia Indian chiefs on **April 13, 2023**. The gathering served as a platform for direct communication with the chiefs, focusing on the current status of their tribes, areas requiring administration assistance, and discussions on other matters relevant to tribal concerns. This event underscores the administration's ongoing commitment to strengthening relationships with Virginia's Indian tribes.

Chief Walt "Red Hawk" Brown and members of the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe from Southampton County, Virginia, presented Governor Glenn Youngkin with the 310th Spotswood Treaty Tribute on **April 21, 2023**. This tribute, consisting of three peace arrows wrapped in a beaver pelt and accompanied by a wampum belt, commemorates the historic Spotswood Treaty signed on February 27, 1713.

On April 27, 2023 and again on **December 19, 2023**, the Secretary's Office, Secretary of Agriculture, and Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources met with the Mattaponi Tribe regarding land acquisitions as well as grants assistance.

The Virginia Indian Advisory Board, led by Brandon Custalow, met four times in early 2023 to discuss the petition of applicants seeking recognition as a Virginia Indian tribe, criteria and protocol for future petitions.

On **July 12, 2023**, the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office and the Secretary of Finance met with representatives for the Federally recognized Tribes and Tribal Leaders to discuss tax issues.

August 31, 2023, Secretary Kay Coles James stepped down as Secretary of the Commonwealth. Governor Youngkin appointed Kelly Gee as Secretary of the Commonwealth. Secretary Gee immediately worked to continue cultivating an open and positive relationship with the Tribal leaders and their communities.

Secretary of the Commonwealth Kelly Gee, conducted a virtual introductory meeting with all Virginia Tribal chiefs on **October 6, 2023**. The purpose of this meeting was to formally introduce Secretary Gee to the tribal chiefs and engage in conversation, emphasizing a collaborative relationship between the Secretary's Office and the Virginia Tribal communities.

Secretary of the Commonwealth Kelly Gee, Deputy Secretary Jenna Moon, and Director Ashley Traficant joined the Chickahominy Tribe on **November 1, 2023**, to announce a significant collaboration between the tribe and Comcast. Comcast pledged \$25,000, provided 100 laptops, and installed a Lift Zone, delivering free, high-speed WiFi to support the Chickahominy Indian Tribe. This partnership is designed to enhance digital literacy and skills training among tribal citizens, with a particular focus on utilizing the \$25,000 grant to empower senior members for success in an increasingly digital world.

On **November 2, 2023**, officials from the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Travis Voyles, conducted a visit to the Rappahannock Tribe's Fones Cliff. Chief Anne Richardson and Assistant Chief Mark Fortune guided the tour, highlighting the tribe's recently acquired land and engaging in discussions about their tribal history. This visit underscores the commitment to tribal engagement and the importance of understanding the cultural and historical context of Virginia's Indian communities.

Secretary Kelly Gee, Director Ashley Traficant, and Special Assistant Erik Conyers visited the Pamunkey Indian Tribe on **November 9, 2023**. They met with Chief Robert Gray, and he provided a tour of the reservation while sharing the history of the Pamunkey.

Governor Glenn Youngkin and First Lady Suzanne S. Youngkin hosted the 346th Tribute Ceremony with Secretary of the Commonwealth Kelly Gee, on **November 22, 2023**. Members of the Mattaponi and Pamunkey tribes were present along with members of the public. Before the tribute ceremony, Governor Youngkin, the First Lady, and Secretary Kelly Gee met with the leadership of the Pamunkey and Mattaponi tribes. This annual ceremony dates back to the 1677 Treaty of Middle Plantation.

Legislative Affairs

SB 1332 and **HB 2004**, introduced by Senators Jennifer McClellan and Emmett W. Hanger, Jr. and Delegate Paul E. Kirzek, respectively; Federally recognized Tribal Nations in the Commonwealth; agencies to consult on permits and reviews. Consultation with federally recognized Tribal Nations in the Commonwealth; permits and reviews with potential impacts on environmental, cultural, and historic resources. Requires the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Historic Resources, and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission to establish policies and procedures for

consulting with federally recognized Tribal Nations in the Commonwealth when evaluating certain permits and reviews relating to environmental, cultural, or historic resources that potentially impact those federally recognized Tribal Nations in the Commonwealth. The bill directs the Secretary of the Commonwealth to designate an Ombudsman for Tribal Consultation to facilitate communication and consultation with federally recognized Tribal Nations in the Commonwealth. The bill codifies Executive Order 82. These bills were Left in House Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources.

HJ 559 introduced by Delegate Delores L. McQuinn; Wolf Creek Cherokee Tribe of Virginia; Extends state recognition. This bill was left in House Rules.

Federal Affairs

The seven federal recognized tribes continue to work with federal government agencies to build direct government to government relationships and pursue federal programs and grants to improve the lives of the Tribal members.

Cultural Affairs

This year, Virginia Indian tribes organized nine powwows, that were open to the public and provided an opportunity for non-tribal members to gain insights into Virginia Indian culture. The list of powwows held in the past year is as follows:

- 34th Annual Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe Powwow – **May 27-28, 2023**, attended by the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth
- Monacan Indian Nation 30th Powwow – **June 3-4, 2023**
- 25th Annual Mattaponi Indian Reservation Powwow – **June 17, 2023**
- 31st Annual Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian “Green Corn Dance” Powwow – **July 1, 2023**
- 35th Annual Nansemond Indian Powwow – **August 19-20, 2023**
- Annual Nottoway Indian Powwow – **September 16-17, 2023**
- 71st Annual Chickahominy Fall Festival & Powwow – **September 23-24, 2023**
- Rappahannock Powwow – **October 7-8, 2023**
- 32nd Annual Cheroenhaka Indian School Day and Fall Festival Corn Harvest Powwow – **November 3-5, 2023**, attended by the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth

Apart from the aforementioned powwows, the tribes organized numerous additional cultural and educational events throughout the year engaging students and the broader community.

The 7th Annual Pocahontas Reframed Film Festival, was held from **November 17-19, 2023**, at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture in Richmond, VA. Notably, Chief Lynette Allston of the Nottoway Tribe holds a position on the Board of Directors.

Tribal Leadership

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

- Chief Diane Shields, Monacan Indian Nation