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Office of the Governor

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Governor Northam Proclaims Indigenous Peoples’ Day in Virginia

~ For the first time in the Commonwealth, Monday, October 12 will honor the history and culture of Virginia’s native people ~

RICHMOND—Governor Ralph Northam today declared Monday, October 12, 2020 Indigenous Peoples’ Day in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the first such [proclamation](#) in Virginia history.

Governor Northam issued the following statement and shared a [video message](#) with Virginians for Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

“For the first time in Virginia history, we are recognizing Indigenous Peoples’ Day—this year on Monday, October 12. As a country and as a Commonwealth, we have too often failed to live up to our commitments with those who were the first stewards of the lands we now call Virginia—and they have suffered historic injustices as a result.

“Indigenous Peoples’ Day celebrates the resilience of our tribal communities and promotes reconciliation, healing, and continued friendship with Virginia’s Indian tribes. In making this proclamation, we pay tribute to the culture, history, and many contributions of Virginia Indians and recommit to cultivating strong government-to-government partnerships that are grounded in mutual trust and respect.

“This represents an important step forward in our work to build an inclusive Commonwealth, and I hope all Virginians will join me in honoring Virginia’s native people.”

Virginia is home to 11 state-recognized Indian tribes, which include 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.

“The Rappahannock’s are so grateful to our Governor for the work he has done to restore honor to our tribes and equality to all people,” **said Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe**. “I believe he is a profound reflection of the intent of the founding fathers values when this country was established.”

“I am excited and proud of Virginia and Governor Northam for making this monumental decision to declare October 12 Indigenous Peoples’ Day,” **said Chief W. Frank Adams of the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe**. “This is a long overdue honor for all tribes and native people of Virginia and I applaud Governor Northam for being the leader of this movement. After more than 400 hundred years of suffering, I hope this leads to other states and the federal government will get behind this movement.”

Last year, Governor Northam announced a [land acquisition](#) by the Chickahominy Tribe and signed a [land trust agreement](#) with the Mattaponi Indian Tribe, two significant actions in rectifying the past when the Commonwealth allowed their reservation land to be encroached upon and ensuring the sustainability of Virginia’s Indian tribes for future generations.

Later this month, Virginia will open [Machicomoco State Park](#), the Commonwealth’s 40th state park and the first devoted to interpreting the experiences and history of Virginia’s Indian tribes and the Algonquin nation.

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