

Riverbend Naturalist



Riverbend Naturalist is the newsletter from the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB). Riverbend Park is located at 8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls VA 22066. Phone: 703-759-9018

Volume 17, Issue 3, *Fall* 2018, Cynthia Fisher, Editor.

Virginia Indian Festival on Saturday, September 8th

Riverbend Park's 20th Annual Virginia Indian Festival returns to the Visitors' Center on Saturday, September 8th starting at 10 AM and concluding at 4 PM. The Virginia Indian Festival has been held every year since 1999, and features the culture, arts and crafts of Northern Virginia's first settlers in activities appropriate for the entire family.

Dancers and drummers from the Rappahannock Tribe are an ever-popular feature, and perform several times throughout the day. Arts and crafts such as pottery and jewelry from the Pamunkey, Chickahominy, Monacan and Matteponi Tribes are often featured at their booths around the festival. Hands-on activities and

demonstrations such as story-telling, bow-and-arrow skills, spear-throwing, making stone tools, and building dugout canoes are planned especially for younger children. Tickets for the Virginia Indian Festival are \$7 per person if purchased in advance or \$8 per person at the gate. For more information and to register online visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park> or contact the park at (703)759-9018.



At the 2017 Virginia Indian Festival, members of the Rappahannock Tribe perform one of their many native dances on the banks of the Potomac River in Riverbend Park.



Native American Pottery at the Virginia Indian Festival



Children Learn about Making a Dugout Canoe

FORB and the Riverbend Virginia Indian Festival

The Virginia Indian Festival at Riverbend Park was born from the inspiration and dedication of three individuals in the late 1990s. Shirley Little Dove McGowan, as Chief of the Upper Mattaponi Tribe in King William County, had dedicated much of her life to preserving and perpetuating the culture of the Virginia Indian tribes who were part of the original Powhatan Confederacy.

The Manager of Riverbend Park at that time was Marty Smith who met Little Dove at a pow wow and asked her if an Indian Festival could be organized at Riverbend Park. Even though Riverbend Park in Fairfax County was some distance from the Mattaponi in King William County, Little Dove knew that the Riverbend Park area on the Potomac River had always been a traditional meeting ground for the many tribes of Virginia, and so she agreed. The drummers and dancers of the Rappahannock Tribe also always participated in the festival right from its inception.

To help organize and finance the expenses for the early Virginia Indian Festivals, the Founder and First President of the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB), Catherine Mayes, pitched in by publicizing the event, recruiting volunteers, setting up exhibits, organizing local logistics, and providing financial backing. In each of the first seven years (1999-2005) of the Virginia Indian Festival, FORB contributed up to \$7,000 to underwrite festival expenses. The event became so popular with local residents, especially the children, in subsequent years that it became completely self-sustaining, and today is a major source of revenue for Riverbend Park. In recent years, over 2,000 persons attend the Virginia Indian Festival each year.



Shirley Little Dove McGowan
Chief of the Upper Mattaponi Tribe



Past Riverbend Park Manager
Marty Smith at Indian Long House



Catherine D. Mayes, Founder and First President,
The Friends of Riverbend Park, Inc.

Virginia Indian Tribes Receive Federal Recognition

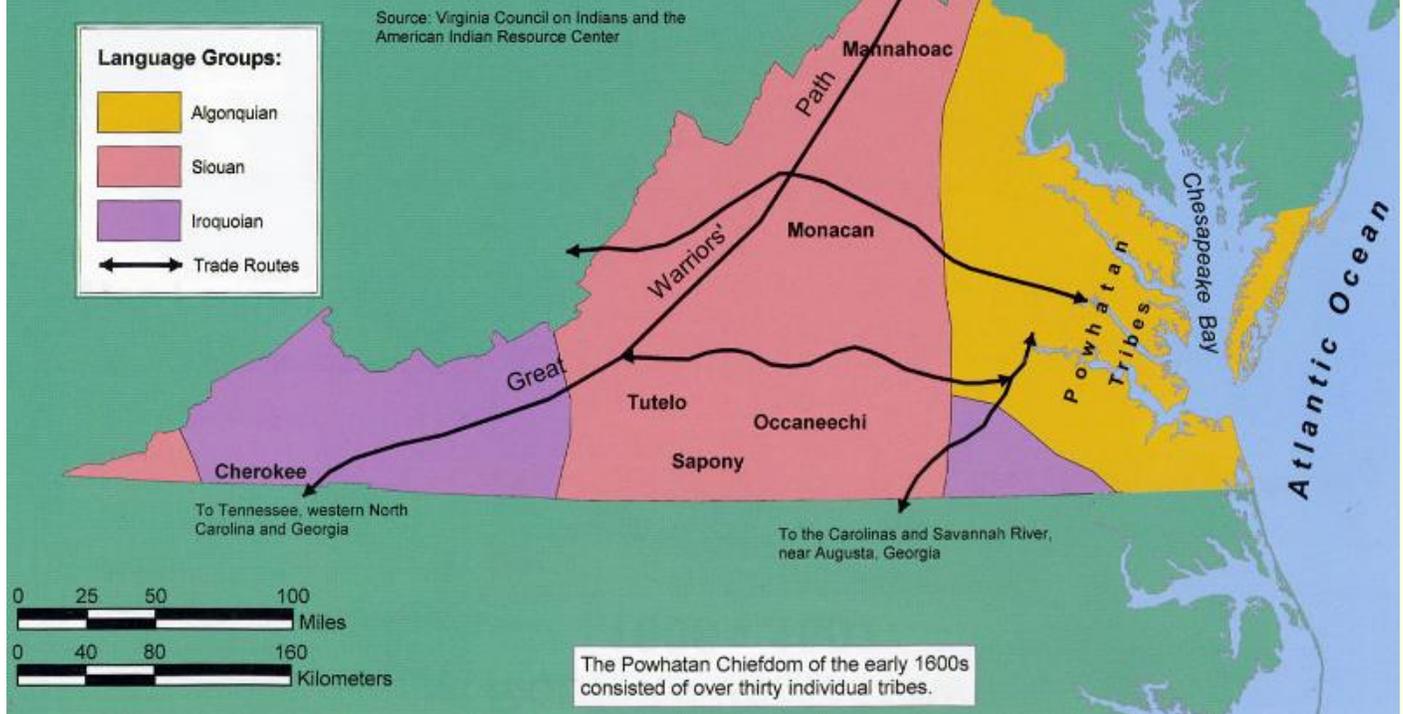
Six Virginia Indian tribes recently gained federal recognition, bringing to seven the number of Virginia Indian tribes acknowledged by the United States government. The newly recognized tribes are the Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Monacan, Nansemond, Rappahannock, and Upper Mattaponi. The Pamunkey tribe obtained federal recognition through the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 2015. All seven tribes are now counted among the 573 Native American tribes currently acknowledged by the United States government.

Federal recognition allows tribes to apply for federal grants for housing, health care, and education; allows them to negotiate with the Smithsonian and other institutions for repatriation of ancestral remains and cultural objects; and to have a direct relationship with the federal government. Most important for many tribal members, it validates their identity as Native people whose ancestors have known and loved their homelands for thousands of years and who met the first colonists when they arrived here.

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) issued the following statement of congratulations to the six tribes:

“The National Congress of American Indians congratulates the Chickahominy, the Eastern Chickahominy, the Upper Mattaponi, the Rappahannock, the Monacan, and the Nansemond tribal nations on the recent passage of H.R. 984, the Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act of 2017.”

American Indians (First Americans) circa 1600



“This is an important moment in U.S. history,” said NCAI President Jefferson Keel. “As the U.S. government continues to correct the mistakes of the past, we look forward to seeing the federal government honor its trust obligations to these six tribal nations in Virginia and all tribal nations.”

Four additional tribes are recognized by Virginia but not by the federal government. These include the Mattaponi, who were recognized by historic treaty, along with the Nottoway of Virginia, Cheroenhaka Nottoway, and Patawomeck, who were each recognized through state legislation.

Riverbend Park Acquires Fleet of Ten New Canoes

The Friends of Riverbend Park has matched a \$3,000 Mastenbrook Grant from the Fairfax County Park Authority to purchase ten new Mad River canoes for Riverbend Park. These ten new canoes will replace the ten existing canoes which were originally donated to the Park by L. L. Bean in 2010 through the efforts of FORB Past President, Serena Wilson. Over the past eight years, these canoes have been immensely popular with visitors and have seen over 3,000 uses each in daily rentals and summer camps, resulting in revenue to the park of over \$56,000. The new canoes will include a middle seat to encourage more widespread family usage and greater boating participation on the river. Delivery of the ten new canoes is expected in September 2018.



Middle-Seat Mad River Canoes for Riverbend Park

FORB's Annual BBQ Benefit to be Held on Saturday, September 22nd at the Visitors' Center

The Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) is again sponsoring its annual **Riverbend Park BBQ Benefit** at the Riverbend Park Visitors' Center on **Saturday, September 22nd from 6 to 9 PM**. The BBQ Benefit is the perfect opportunity to support Riverbend Park, meet your friends and neighbors, and relax and enjoy a cool drink and a barbeque dinner on the deck overlooking the Potomac River. Once again, the event will be catered by Mookie's Barbeque of Great Falls. S'mores by a campfire and boat rides on the river will also be available as well as other activities for kids. Registration is now open on the FORB website (www.forb.wildapricot.org), click on "Riverbend BBQ Benefit" to register. Payment may be made by credit card, PayPal, check by mail or cash at the door. Prices are \$50 per adult (\$20 tax-deductible), \$100 per couple (\$40 tax-deductible), \$25 for children (\$10 tax-deductible), and \$125 for a family (\$50 tax-deductible). Checks should be made payable to and mailed to "FORB" at Post Office Box 1841, Great Falls, VA 22066-8481.



Guests enjoy Mookie's BBQ on the Visitors' Center deck at the 2017 Benefit

Eagle Scout Projects Completed at Riverbend Park

Two Great Falls Troop 673 Scouts, Cameron Williams and Paul (Mitch) Williams, completed their two Eagle Scout projects during 2017-2018 with the help of funding supplied by the Friends of Riverbend Park. The project first started in June 2017 when the brothers approached FORB President Hugh Morrow at the Riverbend Park BBQ Benefit and requested \$550 support for materials for their separate but complementary Eagle Scout projects. All labor was supplied by family, friends, fellow scouts and park volunteers.

The first project, the stairway over the gully joining the south parking lot at the Visitors' Center to the picnic area, was completed in December 2017 in the snow to fulfill Mitch's Eagle Scout requirements. The second project, a gravel crossing at the foot of the stairs, was completed in July 2018 after the spring floods had subsided to fulfill Cam's Eagle Scout requirements. The project was designed to facilitate foot traffic from the parking lot to the picnic area, to prevent soil erosion at that location, and to preserve native plant life in the area.



Cam (second from left) and Mitch (second from right) Williams pose with their friends and volunteers upon completion of their two Eagle Scout projects.