

Colonial Williamsburg

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
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Colonial Williamsburg Introduces First American Indian Nation Builder



Kody Grant interprets American Indian culture. Grant will portray Oconostota as part of the Nation Builder program beginning this fall. Image courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (March 7, 2022) – The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is making history by adding the first American Indian historical figure to its iconic [Nation Builder](#) program. Oconostota was a well-known and respected member of the Cherokee nation and a part of a Cherokee delegation that came to Williamsburg in 1777. Oconostota will be portrayed by Kody Grant, an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Isleta and a descendant of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians who has worked with Colonial Williamsburg since 2015 as an actor interpreter and a member of the American Indian Initiative.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to help bring Oconostota to life for our guests,” said Grant. “The new position of an American Indian Nation Builder will help bring another key perspective on our shared history. The stories of American Indian people are as diverse as the individuals of their communities; bringing Oconostota into the Nation Builders will help us share just one of these stories. My hope is that this is only the beginning of a new path for

research and scholarship of American Indian people here at The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation with much more to come.”

Colonial Williamsburg’s Nation Builders, first introduced in 2005, are a group of actor interpreters devoted to researching and embodying specific historical figures associated with 18th-century Williamsburg. The current corps of Nation Builders includes 13 men and women, Black and white, portraying characters ranging from well-known historical figures such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson to less well-known Williamsburg residents such as Ann Wager and Gowan Pamphlet.

“Sharing Oconostota’s story and perspective through the Nation Builder unit will broaden our ability to explore and understand the complex world of early America,” said Beth Kelly, Colonial Williamsburg’s vice president for Education, Research and Historical Interpretation. “So many American Indian communities were such a vital part of the 18th-century story here in Williamsburg, and I can think of no better person to help us tell those stories than Kody.”

Like his fellow Nation Builders before him, Grant will take the next several months to engage in in-depth research into his character before debuting as Oconostota in fall 2022. To learn more about the many different American Indian tribes who either lived in Tidewater, Va. or sent political delegations to Williamsburg during the 18th century, visit colonialwilliamsburg.org/aifaq

About Oconostota

Oconostota was an active participant in a constantly changing social and political landscape of the mid-18th century. Elected as a “War Chief” by the Cherokee “Metropolis” town of Chota – a position akin to a warrior politician – Oconostota demonstrated his ability to navigate colonial relations on behalf of the community he represented. His influence was sought after by many powers, western and Indigenous alike. The French recognized his participation in the French and Indian War by bestowing the title of Captain on him in 1761. He also dealt directly with British colonial powers in the Carolinas and Virginia, including a direct correspondence to Lord Dunmore in 1775. He was part of a Cherokee delegation that came to Williamsburg in 1777 to discuss future relations between his nation and the newly free Commonwealth of Virginia, and possibly traveled with earlier delegations to Williamsburg. Oconostota is one of the many tribal officials who helped shape the path of both the Cherokee nation and the new American nation.

About Kody Grant

Historical interpretation and cultural scholarship have been Grant’s primary focus for the past fifteen years. Over the last seven years as a Colonial Williamsburg actor interpreter and American Indian interpreter, Grant has told the stories of the broad range of American Indian people who interacted with Williamsburg throughout the colonial period. Grant is an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Isleta and a descendant of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

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The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation preserves, restores and operates Virginia’s 18th-century capital of Williamsburg. Innovative and interactive experiences highlight the relevance of the American Revolution to contemporary life and the importance of an informed, active citizenry. The Colonial Williamsburg experience

includes more than 600 restored or reconstructed original buildings, renowned museums of decorative arts and folk art, extensive educational outreach programs for students and teachers, lodging, culinary options from historic taverns to casual or elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 45 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones and his son Rees Jones, a full-service spa and fitness center, pools, retail stores and gardens. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg's educational programs and preservation initiatives.

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