

Colonial Williamsburg

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Colonial Williamsburg's American Indian Initiative Offers New Programming During November's Native American Heritage Month



Colonial Williamsburg's American Indian Initiative explores the lives and stories of American Indians in the 18th century. Image courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
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WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (Oct. 31, 2022) – This November, celebrate National Native American Heritage Month with [Colonial Williamsburg's American Indian Initiative](#). As

part of the Foundation's ongoing work to tell an accurate and inclusive story of America's origins, the American Indian Initiative will offer new and increased programming this month including the public debut of Colonial Williamsburg's newest Nation Builder, [Oconostota](#), a member of the Cherokee nation and a part of a Cherokee delegation that came to Williamsburg in 1777.

"I think most people underestimate the significant role that American Indians played in 18th-century Virginia," said Fallon Burner, Colonial Williamsburg's Assistant Research Historian focusing on Indigenous histories. "Members of local tribes including the Pamunkey, Mattaponi and Chickahominy as well as representatives from tribal nations from farther away like the Cherokee, Shawnee and Wyandot had a profound influence on what we think of as American culture and democracy today. Better understanding of those influences not only humanizes and honors the people of the past, but also brings us to a more accurate understanding of how our nation and culture were forged."

American Indians were a regular and frequent presence in 18th-century Williamsburg. Because various tribes converged on the city for diverse purposes, Colonial Williamsburg has the unique opportunity to offer a broad range of content related to 18th-century American Indian life.

Visitors to Colonial Williamsburg can interact with members of the American Indian Initiative throughout the city any time of the year, as they would have been able to do in the 18th century. They can be found working in Prentiss field with a farmer or at the American Indian farming plot in the Colonial Garden, leading a horse carrying trade goods down Duke of Gloucester Street, or conversing with visitors on Palace Green. Starting this month, Oconostota will be a regular participant in the [Visit a Nation Builder program](#) which consists of daily public audiences with visitors. Nation Builders and programming vary depending on the date. Visit the [CW Planner](#) for the most up-to-date daily programming information.

The following special programs offered throughout November feature American Indian stories:

- [American Indian Life Series](#) (Oct. 30, Nov. 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 20, 23 at 10:30 a.m., Charlton Stage) An exploration of the diversity of American Indian nations and their role in our collective story. Topics vary and include the role of captive-taking and citizenship in Cherokee society, the history of the Brafferton Indian School at William & Mary, and the population and adaptation of Virginia Indian tribes.
- [Washington and the American Indians](#) (Nov. 2, 4, 9, 16, 18, 23, 25, 30 at 1:30 p.m., Hennage Auditorium) George Washington discusses his experiences with and views of various American Indian nations.
- [My Story, My Voice - Joseph Martin, Indian Agent](#) (Nov. 7, 14, 21 at 2:45 p.m., Charlton Stage). Joseph Lynch Martin, agent of Indian Affairs, returns home to Virginia and is confronted by his teenage son about his new Cherokee wife.
- [My Story, My Voice – Sam's War](#) (Nov. 6, 13, 20 at 2:45 p.m., Charlton Stage) Sam, a formerly enslaved soldier, tells his heroic story of self-liberation including his encounters with the Shawnee – his supposed enemy – and those who enslaved him.

- [From Freedom to Slavery](#) (Oct. 27, 29, Nov. 3, 5, 10, 17, 19, 24, 26 at 1:30 p.m., Hennage Auditorium) The story of Methotaskee, an enslaved woman who made a free life for herself as an adopted Shawnee Indian before being forced back into slavery.
- [Nation Builder at the Encampment](#) (Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22 at 1:30 p.m., American Indian Encampment Site) A Nation Builder joins a small American Indian delegation in Williamsburg to discuss their relationships and interactions with Indigenous peoples.

About Colonial Williamsburg's American Indian Initiative

Established with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in 2002, the American Indian Initiative was designed to give a voice to the untold stories of the native people of eastern North America. Since its inception, the American Indian Initiative has hosted panel discussions and lecture series, renewed relationships with American Indian descendant communities, facilitated community discussions, and created numerous programs featuring the histories of 18th-century American Indians. The program is currently seeking additional staff members to help grow this initiative. These full-time positions are filled by 21st-century American Indians from around the United States who interpret the stories, roles, and interactions of diverse indigenous people in the 1700s and their impact on contemporary American life. For more information on careers with Colonial Williamsburg, visit the careers page at colonialwilliamsburg.org.

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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.