



Apr 19, 2024

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RE: *Support for the National Indigenous Peoples' Day Act*

On behalf of the Indigenous Conservation Council (ICC) of the Chesapeake Bay, I am writing to indicate our support for the designation of the National Indigenous Peoples' Day Act to commemorate and mark the legacies and continuing cultural contributions of Indigenous Peoples in the United States of America. The ICC Board of Directors includes representation of the seven federally-recognized tribes in Virginia and is focused on building the capacity of tribal nations across the Chesapeake Bay region to repatriate and care for their ancestral lands. We view our approach as one that reinforces the importance of sovereignty and the full appreciation of Indigenous values and cultures that are still thriving today.

As tributary tribes, the Chesapeake Bay is our ancestral landscape and we are deeply committed to its health and vibrancy. As such, we strive to be active partners in sharing its natural wonders and our unique Indigenous history and culture. The Doctrine of Discovery and papal bulls which called for the seizure of Indigenous lands by colonizers such as Christopher Columbus and others led to the invasion and theft of our lands.

Last year, the Doctrine of Discovery was renounced by Pope Francis given the harm it created on Indigenous Peoples all over the world including here in America.

Virginia tribal nations bore the brunt of First Contact and harmful policies by colonial governments that served as the basis for the founding of the United States of America. Our tribal nations have persisted despite all attempts to erase our culture and identity as Indigenous Peoples and tribal nations with inherent sovereignty.

This year marks the centennial year of the passage of the Act of Racial Integrity, one of the most harmful legislative attempts to erase Indian identity in the Commonwealth of Virginia in recent memory. The effects of this legislation which was lauded by the Third Reich as a template to create the master race, are still felt to this day. We urge the full Virginia Congressional delegation to support the U.S. House Bill #5822 and the U.S. Senate Bill #2970 to make this necessary designation change and turn the page on a painful era of history. Please provide the leadership to support healing and reconciliation needed between the US federal government and sovereign nations around the country and here at home.

We hereby re-affirm the importance of respectful government-to-government relationships and policies which acknowledge our shared painful history and support truthful reconciliation, mutual respect, and repatriation of our tribal lands. We respectfully support and ask you to join us in calling for the need for national designation of Indigenous Peoples' Day in lieu of Columbus Day. A National Indigenous Peoples' Day will honor and celebrate Indigenous resilience, our heritage and history, and the importance of Indigenous connections to the natural world that will continue for time immemorial.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anne Richardson".

Chief Anne Richardson  
Chair