

Virginia American Revolution 250 (VA250) Commission
Tribal Nation Leaders Advisory Council
Virginia Museum of History and Culture
Wednesday, January 31, 2024
10:00 AM

MINUTES

Members present:

Chief Stephen Adkins, *Chair*, Chickahominy Indian Tribe
Chief Robert Gray, Pamunkey Indian Tribe
Chief Diane Shields, Monacan Indian Tribe (*Virtual*)
Chief Keith Anderson, Nansemond Indian Tribe
Chief Lynette Allston, Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia
Chief Charles “Bootsie” Bullock, Patowomeck Indians of Virginia
Chief Walt “Red Hawk” Brown, Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe
Edward Ragan, Rappahannock Tribe (*Virtual*)
Ken Custalow, Tribal Counsel – Chickahominy Indian Tribe East

Jamie Bosket, President and CEO, Virginia Museum of History and Culture
Christy Coleman, Executive Director, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
Cliff Fleet, President and CEO, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Carly Fiorina, VA250 National Honorary Chair
Cheryl Wilson, Executive Director, VA250

Chair’s Remarks and Charge to the Committee

Chief Stephen Adkins, Chair, convened the first meeting of the VA250 Tribal Nation Leaders Advisory Council and thanked everyone for participating in this important meeting. Chief Adkins noted that our nation’s 250th – its semiquincentennial – holds promise for all Americans, and all Virginians, to unite, engage, and inspire, and commit to ensuring that all stories are told and that all communities are engaged.

Chief Adkins asked members to reflect on the questions presented in the agenda and to provide solutions as we identify problems. The Chair called on members to join in ensuring that Virginia’s 250th is a commemoration in which every Virginian can see themselves, and that inspires hope in our collective march toward a more perfect Union.

VA250 Vision

Carly Fiorina, VA250 National Honorary Chair, shared the vision and goals for the commemoration and the opportunity to highlight the stories, people and places that are inclusive of all communities.

Chief Adkins thanked Ms. Fiorina and welcomed ideas and thoughts from the organization leadership members.

Jamie Bosket noted that VMHC is the oldest museum in the Commonwealth and has not always told the complete story. He sees the commemoration as a way to do better with the narrative and be inclusive.

Cliff Fleet echoed Mr. Bosket's words. Mr. Fleet spoke about what Colonial Williamsburg is doing to tell stories of marginalized communities. He stressed that CW and each of our organizations need the tribal nations to provide expertise and guidance.

Christy Coleman also echoed the comments from Mr. Bosket and Mr. Fleet. She highlighted the importance of using the resources available to tell the stories of those communities that do not have the resources, and stressed the importance of asking what they want to see rather than tell them what you plan to exhibit. She stressed that as Virginia leads the nation in this commemoration, we need everyone at the table.

VA250 Plans

Cheryl Wilson provided a brief overview of plans in development for the commemoration and the Chair turned the floor over to the members to offer discussion and reflections.

Discussion and Questions for Reflection:

What lessons can we learn from previous commemorations?

How do we make the semiquincentennial meaningful to all Virginians?

What programs should be planned?

What would you like to see occur during this commemoration to highlight the history and culture of Virginia's Indigenous peoples? How do we get there?

What are the under-told and under-known stories that should be highlighted statewide?

What should be our next steps?

Chief Anderson emphasized the importance of recognizing Indigenous peoples' protective connection to the land. Mentioned that an SAR chapter began with his tribe, and there are Patriots within his tribe. Stressed the need for a consistent presence.

Chief Bullock shared information about the tribe's museum, which is open seasonally. Suggested utilizing it for local schools to tell the tribe's story both locally and nationally. Mentioned the church organized in 1789, with significant figures buried in the cemetery. Acknowledged the importance of addressing difficult points in history to reach deeper and more positive knowledge on the other side.

Chief Brown highlighted the substantial indigenous contribution to the military. Noted the success of the mobile museum in Southampton County, with around 1000 visitors, presenting an opportunity for further engagement. He also stressed the importance of educating our educators about Virginia tribal history.

Chief Gray expressed a desire for the acknowledgment of native involvement in Bacon's Rebellion and military service. Emphasized the importance of featuring treaties, specifically those with Great Britain and the US post-independence. Addressed the ongoing impact of the US not honoring pre-existing treaties with Britain, affecting Virginia tribes today.

Chief Alston discussed the tribe's community interpretive center and acknowledged that many members of the community are unaware of their presence despite being there for centuries. Advocated for sharing native community stories during the revolution and finding historical nuggets of information. There were many tribes in the area with interesting dynamics.

Ms. Fiorina urged the group to provide information on events, places, and organizations to highlight. Emphasized collaboration to promote and amplify these highlights. Mentioned the possibility of using the

VA250 logo if appropriate. Also, discussed the need for content for the mobile museum and suggested that tribal leaders can help represent the entire geography of the state.

Discussion continued with many suggestions:

- Explore creating a mobile museum subcommittee to provide content.
- Use the existing history trail app for content.
- Explore tribal nations' websites for additional resources.
- Bring the mobile museum to Indigenous communities to foster community connections.
- Reference the Library of Virginia exhibit, as it features all 11 tribes.
- Take advantage of grants offered by VMHC for tribes who are telling their stories.
- Explore inviting the director of the Virginia Tribal Education Commission to the group.
- Emphasize the importance of sharing hard truths without being adversarial.

Next steps:

- Offer thoughts on July 4th events and programs. **What** and **who** should be included?
- Explore specific topics for the next meeting.
- Set-up monthly meetings for the council between now and July.