



### Native American Heritage Month

Native American Heritage Month was first observed in November 1990. In recognition of the month, this issue of Multicultural Moments will highlight local Native American tribes, local land recognition efforts, and resources to learn more about Native American Heritage.

**Present with a Rich Past.** American Indian tribes are often referenced in the past tense. While tribes have a long and rich history, their legacy and culture are ever-present.

- **History of the Tribes of Maryland.** Traveling through Maryland, you will find many references to Native American nations, tribes, and bands—Potomac River, Patuxent River Park, Chesapeake Bay, and Assateague Island, to name a few. These names are not only reminders of the region's original inhabitants but also a legacy of what remains today. [The Genealogy Trails Group](#) summarizes some tribes who have called this area home.
- **Local Tribes Today.** Piscataway Indians have lived in the Maryland region for thousands of years, and thousands continue to live there. The [Piscataway Conoy Tribe's website](#) indicates, "We are The People Where the Rivers Blend." Although not federally recognized, the Tribe received official State recognition in January 2012 after many years of fighting for this designation. The Tribe has a formal government with elected officials. Their mission is to "promote the advancement of our People through cultural, education, health, economic development, and social programs," in addition to preserving the cultural traditions and identity (["Our Mission," Piscataway Conoy website](#)).
- **Researching Ancestral Records.** Identifying one's tribal roots can be a tedious process. For those looking to explore their tribal ancestry or seek tribal affiliation, the [Association of American Indian Affairs](#) offers tools and tips to get started. The [National Indian Law Library](#) has various resources to aid the research process.

**Land Recognition and Reclamation in the Region.** Land acknowledgements have become a common way to recognize indigenous tribes in recent years. Others are going beyond land acknowledgements and working with local indigenous communities to facilitate land reclamation.

- **Land Acknowledgements.** Land acknowledgements have become more common in recent years. Hear MC's Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Sharon Wilder explain the purpose of land acknowledgements and introduce the [video land acknowledgement](#) presented by Mr. Rico Newman, Elder and Member of Piscataway Nation. In September 2022, The University of Maryland's president, Darryll Pines, released the College's official land acknowledgement statement. The statement resulted from a more than two-year collaborative effort among students, faculty, staff, and members of the local Indigenous Elders. You can read the full land acknowledgment [here](#).
- **State Park Connections.** Before colonization and European settlement, the area now known as Maryland was once a thriving community where dozens of tribes engaged in trade and made their living from the many resources, including the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River. Since gaining State recognition in 2012, The Piscataway has entered a long-term agreement with Maryland Park Service to use [Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary](#) in Prince Georges County and [Chapel Point](#) State Park in Charles County for traditional cultural ceremonies and events. Read more about the history of the land and how it is used [here](#).

- **Challenges of Renaming Land.** In addition to land acknowledgement, renaming local lands to recognize the original habitants of the land has been a common practice that can draw debate. In April 2022, Maryland Governor signed [HR 1433](#) to designate Route 210 Indian Head Highway in Southern Maryland as Piscataway Highway. The bill falls short of officially changing the name on signs, addresses, and other places and comes with some controversy. Some believe the current name of the route, Indian Head Highway, references the violent treatment of Indigenous people in the past. Others believe the current name references the Indian Headlands and do not want to erase the historical reference. Read more about the issue in this June 8, 2022, *Washington Post* article, [Renaming Indian Head Highway Seemed Like a Good Idea. How Did it Go Went Wrong?](#)
- **Supporting the Land Back Project.** In recent decolonization efforts worldwide, Indigenous groups and allies have worked to reclaim Indigenous lands through what is known as Land Back Movement. Watch this [video message](#) from Natalie “Standing on the Rock” **Proctor**, tribal chair of the Cedarville Band of the Piscataway Indians, to learn ways to support local Land Back efforts.

**Additional Resources.** Many resources are available to support celebrating and recognizing Native American Heritage. Here are a few resources for further exploration:

- **U.S. National Park Service.** Our national parks offer activities throughout November to celebrate Native American Heritage. Explore the [site](#) to learn about tours, hikes, films, and other events.
- **The U.S. Department of Interior.** The department’s website highlights the work of the [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#), which was established in 1824, and the [Bureau of Land Management](#) to offer services to Native American tribes across the U.S. Learn more about the Department’s efforts to preserve stories, celebrate the connection to natural resources, and promote cultural heritage in celebration of native American Heritage Month by exploring the website [here](#).
- **National Museum of the American Indian.** With locations in Washington, D.C., and New York, this Smithsonian institution offers many resources to celebrate and teach about the American Indian culture and heritage. To learn about virtual and in-person exhibits and collections, visit the [National Museum of the American Indian \(si.edu\)](#).
- **University of Maryland.** Maryland’s flagship university publishes [Native Americans in Maryland: A Resource Guide](#) that includes maps and links to local organizations.
- **National Public Radio (NPR).** The popular news radio program has curated resources from political articles, author interviews, and pop culture segments to recognize [Native American Heritage Month: NPR](#).

*May we avoid blaming or bias based on our circumstance and continue to be grateful for the gifts of the global community.*