

Report funded by and produced at the request of the HOA Roundtable of Northern Virginia

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Report: **American Indian Habitation History in the Gainesville, Virginia Region**

With commentary related to the area defined as the proposed Prince William Digital Gateway Project

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Heritage-

Cherokee, SE Kentucky Clan- Anikawi, aka. “The deer people” or “deer clan.”

Tuscarora, Berkeley County, West Virginia



Prologue:

As I read through dozens of pages of information produced by all the parties involved in the PW digital gateway, including the proposal from the developers, the phase I archaeological report, County Officials correspondences, and all other pertinent documents involved in the Data Center project, several things were not lost on me.

Regarding the “promises and plans” from the developer of creating *new facilities* that will “honor and educate” people about the rich, diverse history and beautiful outdoor aesthetics of Prince William County including projects such as the 9+ miles of pedestrian & equestrian trails, Unfinished Railroad Park, Ms. Dean Thorton’s School of Reflection, etc. I must point out the obvious since the “bling” the developers are offering are obscuring reality. This is done to appease the idea that much of the beauty that is *already in place* here and the already long-established importance of this County’s storied history to American history and Virginia’s history that so many people learn from and take pride in. To get around this sense of pride the developers have created a smoke screen of deception to ease the decision makers’ conscience. Please read this carefully. To create these “memorials of history” and provide County residents with an outstanding cultural resource to learn about their history and heritage, as well as the false perception that 9 + miles of pedestrian and equestrian trails will somehow look better than the natural beauty that is already there, *much of the original history and nature must be destroyed first*. Let me say that again. To create these visions of grandeur that honor the history of Prince William County, they must first actually destroy the “actual history” of Prince William County and the Gainesville area to create a facsimile of what happened to your Ancestors throughout their lives before you were born. Also, to create walking paths for pedestrians the natural beauty already in place must be greatly disturbed with the removal of trees, and the addition of asphalt, or gravel thereby creating an image of an urban city park instead of the wonderful rural look and feel that nature is still there and is already in place. Simply put, the developers are trying to “trick” everyone into thinking that a few trinkets will try to replicate the actual reality that is already in place. As I stated before, they are simply trying to ease the conscience of the decision makers that the destruction of the Gainesville area’s history and its beautiful natural look is better than the actual history and natural look currently in place. Let me (developer) destroy your nature and your history and I will give you a walking trail and a few token buildings that talk about what I destroyed. Wink. Wink.

Secondly, most of the location known as Prince Williams County today and its history was barely even mentioned. Yes, of course times and events such as the Civil War were mentioned. We know how important that time in history is. We have dozens of parks around the Eastern US to commemorate the five years this war took place. There was also mention of the early settlers (17th century). I was impressed to see that the African American history was also talked about considering that the entire Gainesville area was an area that many African American freedmen and their families would settle and build lives thereby creating what we know today.

Prominent families such as the Washingtons, Fletchers, Allen's, Deans, Scotts, Berry's, Davis's, and many other African American families around the Thorton Drive, Flat Iron Corner, Sudley Road and Marble Hill areas would build the first school in Virginia for African Americans and create many family cemeteries that this digital gateway project will most certainly erase forever. Many of these people would also marry American Indians thus creating diverse mixed communities. Despite the hardships of poverty and discrimination these incredible families would help build Prince William County.

The second thing I noticed in all the correspondence and reports was what is **not** being talked about. What is missing is the acknowledgement of the history of a people that have been in the Gainesville area for over thirty thousand years. It's hard to imagine that in the year 2023, in the age of woke political correctness, when people speak of the history of a particular area, it still all begins when the white man arrived. America is 243 years old. Yet, the only important history people spoke of in these correspondences was the period after the Europeans arrived. Yes, during the phase I archaeological report when an artifact was found that was used by American Indians, it was mentioned. As a matter of fact, I took note of one particular artifact found. It was an arrowhead. All arrowheads have a type of classification. This classification also tells us an approximate age as well. This artifact is classified by the archaeologists as a "Lamoka."

Cultural Period: 5,500 - 3,500 B.P.

Middle to Late Archaic Period

<http://www.projectilepoints.net/Points/Lamoka.html>

Translation- This arrowhead is well over three thousand years old and can be as old as five plus thousands of years. This was found in the site area where the proposed data center could be built. Here we have a people that produced this arrowhead here (PW County) over three thousand years ago, yet all the conversations about the "history" of the Gainesville area is confined to a few hundred years. And is it a coincidence that this is when the Europeans arrived? You know this answer.

The intentional refusal to recognize and leave out a people who lived in Prince William County for many, many thousands of years before anyone else is a form of racism. If you look up this County's history online, you will see according to this white historian, it began with John Smith in 1608. This tells you all you need to know.

<https://www.visitpwc.com/blog/post/the-history-of-prince-william-va/>

It is also a great disservice and another form of racism to not mention that even after the Europeans arrived, conquered the Indigenous people's lands that you live on today, killed over 80% of their populations with disease and wars that there were still many Native peoples that survived and as mentioned before would assimilate with the African American Communities in the Gainesville/Thoroughfare area. They would also contribute to the development of Prince William County over hundreds of years. They contribute today as well. It is time to get out of the racist mindset that history only began when the white man arrived. Especially when that history of a few hundred years cannot even begin to compare to the many, many thousands of years of Indigenous history in the Gainesville area.



A Condensed History of Indigenous Peoples of Prince William County, Virginia

It is thought that the first people to inhabit the Gainesville area began to do so thousands of years ago.

[https://www.usgs.gov/programs/climate-research-and-development-program/news/discovery-ancient-human-footprints-white\)](https://www.usgs.gov/programs/climate-research-and-development-program/news/discovery-ancient-human-footprints-white)

Archaeological evidence found in New Mexico in 2021 show that humans were in North America over twenty-one thousand years ago. In the Eastern United States, there is a more conservative date of around 12,000 years that is generally accepted. However, many researchers and Indigenous peoples who share oral stories of their history state they have been here over thirty thousand years.

Indigenous people were mostly nomadic during through the Archaic Period (8000 BC to 3000 BC). They would set up temporary structures in the pursuit of gathering edibles such as roots and berries while simultaneously hunting for game. During this period and until the 18th century, Virginia had animals such as moose, elk, caribou, brown bear, mountain lions, etc. They were all exterminated by Europeans by the end of the 18th century.

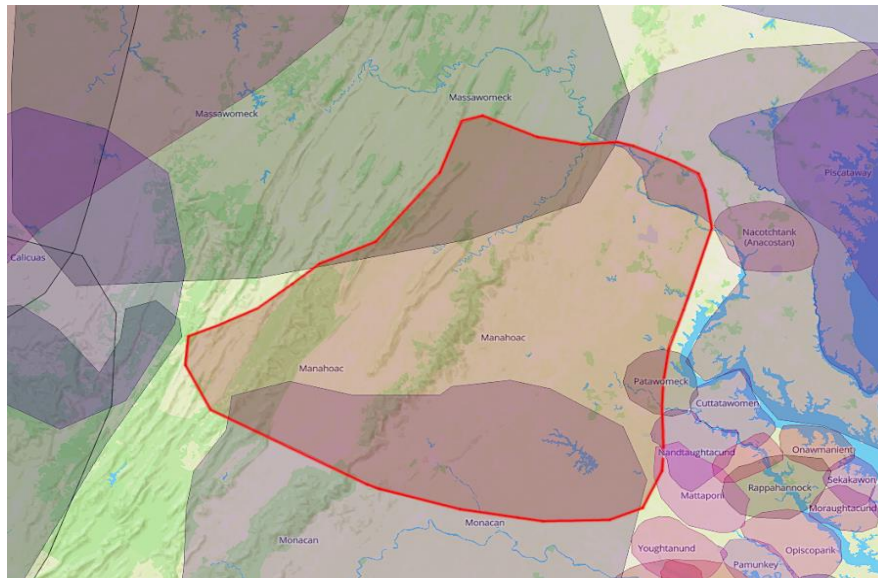
At the end of the Archaic period and at the beginning of the Woodland Period (3000 BC to 1000 AD), there was a paradigm shift in the practice of agriculture. The mastering of crops such as corn, squash, beans, etc. led to the people adapting to a sedentary lifestyle. Permanent structures called “wigwams” and “longhouses” were built. During this time, there was a massive population increase and competition for land and resources began to become frequent.

At the time of first contact (17th century) between the Europeans and the Native peoples of Virginia, there were many different tribes living in Virginia. Today, the state government only recognizes eleven of them.

<https://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/virginia-indians/state-recognized-tribes/>

In the Gainesville area during the first contact period (17th century), the dominant tribe were known as the Manahoac. The Manahoac Confederacy of Virginia consisted of perhaps a dozen tribes, of which the names of eight have been preserved. Except for the Stegarake, all that is known of these tribes was recorded by John Smith, whose own acquaintance with them seems to have been limited to an encounter with a large hunting party in 1608 and the capture of one of the men where he garnered the limited information about the Manahoac Confederacy. In this territory, comprising Northern Virginia between Tide Water and the Blue Ridge mountains.

Tribal names recorded by Smith are Tauxanias, the Shackaconias, the Ontponeas, the Tigninateos, the Whonkenteaes, the Stegarakes, and the Hassinungaes. The Manahoac were allied with the Monacan tribe and worked together to wage war against the Powhatan tribes of the Tidal areas of Virginia.



Tribal Territory Map

One encounter with John Smith's hunting party proved to be very prophetic. *

In August of that year Captain Smith, with 12 men and an Indian guide, ascended the Rappahannock, touching at the Indian villages along its banks, and having gone as far as was possible in the boat they landed, probably about the present site of Fredericksburg, to set up crosses and cut their names on the trees in token of possession. This done, they scattered to examine the country, when one of the men suddenly noticed an arrow fall on the ground near him and looking up, they saw "about a hundred nimble Indians skipping from tree to tree, letting fly their arrows as fast as they could." Hastily getting behind trees, the whites met the attack, being greatly aided by their Indian guide, who jumped about in such lively fashion and kept up such a yelling, letting fly his arrows all the time, that their assailants evidently thought the English had a whole party of the Powhatan assisting them, and after a short skirmish vanished as suddenly as they had appeared. Pursuing them a short distance, the whites came upon a Warrior lying wounded on the ground and they assumed he was dead. On picking him up, however, they found that he was still alive, and worked hard to prevent their Indian guide from beating out his brains. The prisoner was taken to the boat, where his wound was dressed and he was given something to eat, when he became somewhat more cheerful.

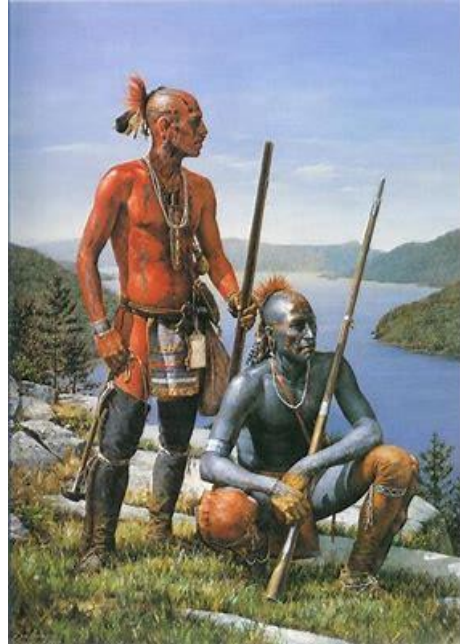
The English then began to question him through their Powhatan interpreter and learned that his name was Amoroleck and that he was the brother of the chief of the Hasinninga, who, with a large hunting party made up from several tribes of the confederacy, was camped at Mahaskahod, a hunting camp or headquarters not far off, on the border line between the Manahoac and their enemies the Powhatan. When asked why they had attacked the whites, who came to them in peace to seek their love, he replied that “they heard we were a people come from under the world, to take their world from them. “

* <http://www.virginiaplaces.org/nativeamerican/manahoac.html>



Manahoac's

The Manahoac were surrounded by many other tribes. The Powhatan Confederacy was located to the East and Southeast. *The Powhatan Confederacy was a league of over 30 Algonquian speaking Native American tribes that were in Chesapeake Bay, Virginia, and Southern Maryland. The names of the tribes associated with the Confederacy included the Potomac, Chesapeake, Mattaponi, Secacawoni, Chickahominy, Nandsemond, Weanoc, Pamunkey.



To the west at the edge of the Blue Ridge mountains, the Manahoac's lived peacefully next to the Massowomeck (Erie) tribe. The Shawnee also were western neighbors of the Manahoac. To the Southeast was the Pamunkey tribe. To the North were the Lenapi (Delaware), the Susquehannocks (Susquehanna), and the Iroquois Confederacy.

* <https://www.warpaths2peacepipes.com/indian-tribes/powhatan-tribe.htm>



Wigwam

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After contact with Europeans in the 17th century, the Manahoac and all other tribes in this area experienced a period over the next hundred years where they were forced off their lands militarily or left their traditional homes voluntarily under threat of being attacked by the European settlers. The largest killer of Indigenous people during this time though was not the musket. Diseases such as smallpox, measles, flu strains and more would decimate the Indigenous populations because they had no natural immunity to these foreign diseases.



Common scene in PW County of Slaves working in the field's pre-emancipation



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Many of the surviving members of these tribes of Virginia would attempt to move West to avoid the settlers. This was only a temporary reprieve as eventually there was nowhere to go. Over the next two hundred years, anyone that even looked to be Indigenous was not allowed any rights, and attempts were made by representatives of the US government to destroy any semblance of the traditional culture.

Children were removed from their families and placed in re-educational schools. They were beaten if they spoke their native language. It wasn't until 1965, that the historic Voting Rights Act outlawed many discriminatory practices that denied U.S. citizens, including American Indians, the ability to vote based on their race.

And thanks to subsequent legislation in 1970, 1975, and 1982, their voting protections were further strengthened and empowered.

Three hundred and fifty-seven years (357) of attempted genocide, abuse, discrimination, and cultural suppression by force by the white race could not completely erase the American Indian from Virginia, or America. This is why it is time to start respecting our tens of thousands of years of history in this area called Prince William County, Virginia by including our history with the County's history. We will not accept any longer the deliberate attempt to exclude our history from conversation or the records. This is racist. It must stop. There are many people with American Indian heritage that contribute daily in a productive way to Prince William County. They deserve to have their heritage respected as well.





Matthew "Maasaw" Howard is of Cherokee (Anikawi) and Tuscarora heritage and is an Independent American Indian Field Researcher, author, instructor, and public speaker.

He has located dozens of ancient American Indian villages, ceremonial, and burial ground sites throughout the Eastern United States ranging from Canada to Virginia. Some of these sites date back to the Pleistocene period and are over 12,000 years old. After locating these sacred sites, Maasaw assists the landowners in having their land put into protective trusts to protect them from future development.

Maasaw has published several books on American Indian history titled "Adonvdo Yona (Bear Spirit) Mountain, An Ancestral Awakening" and "As I Rest, Let My Face Touch Heaven."

He is an instructor at Shepherd University teaching classes on "American Indian Burial Practices."

Often, Maasaw is called by the American Indian and African American communities to be an expert at identifying 17th and 18th century graves that are endangered of being destroyed by developers. He is involved in multiple civil rights legal cases against any groups that allow these sacred grounds of Native Americans or African Americans to be threatened.

Maasaw often speaks at archaeological conferences and Universities presenting his research findings. He also shares his research with archaeologists and fellow professional researchers so they can learn more about our Ancestors as well. He is a member of the Virginia Archaeological Society (VAS) and the American Indian Society (AIS).

***Disclaimer:** Maasaw is proud of his Native American heritage. However, he does not speak on behalf on any American Indian tribes or Indigenous organizations.