

Alexandria Times

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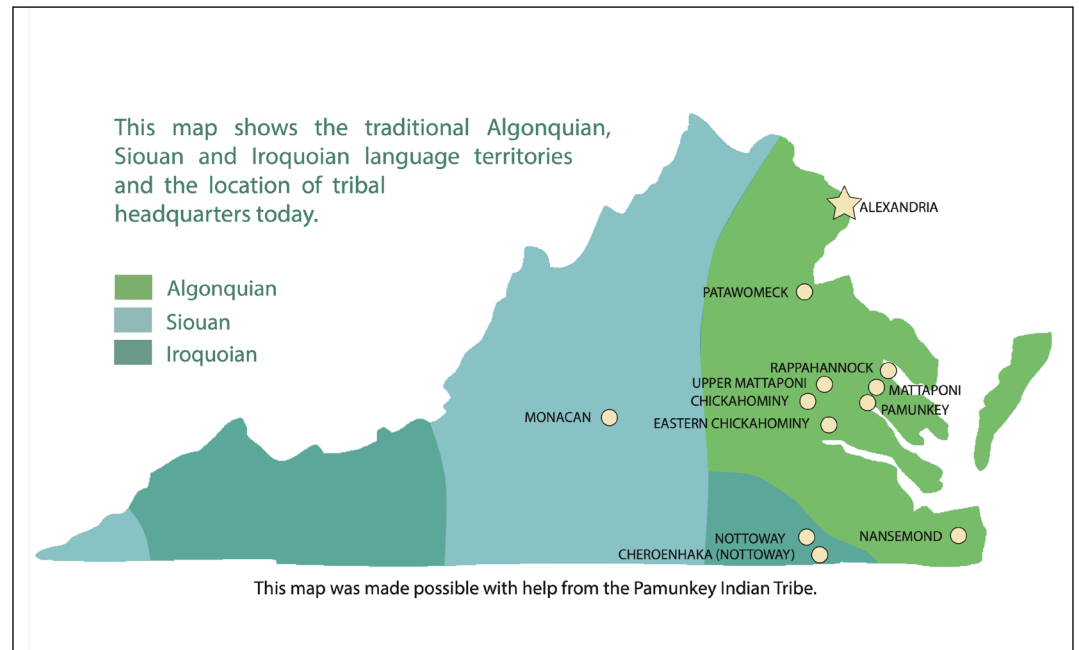
Alexandria and Indigenous Peoples' Day

On Sept. 10, 2019, Alexandria's City Council unanimously adopted a resolution celebrating the second Monday in October of each year as Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Alexandria wasn't the first city to do so. In fact, at its adoption, Alexandria joined 130 cities across the United States in recognizing the holiday, and according to the University of Washington, 195 municipalities had replaced or renamed Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day by 2023.

Thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans and Alexandria's founding in 1749, Indigenous people seasonally inhabited and traveled through what we know as the City of Alexandria today. The location of Great Falls just up the Potomac River from Alexandria meant that Indigenous Peoples traveled through the area to set up fishing and camping sites for millennia.

The Potomac region today is home to more than a dozen federal and state-recognized tribes and nations. Some of the federally recognized nations and tribes in Virginia are the Pamunkey, Chickahominy, Chickahominy Eastern Division, Upper Mattaponi, Rappahannock, Monacan and Nansemond. The Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway),



PHOTO/ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

A map showing the different Indigenous tribes that inhabited Virginia.

Chickahominy, Chickahominy Eastern Division, Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Nottoway, Pamunkey, Patowomeck, Rappahannock and Upper Mattaponi. Across the river, Maryland recognizes the Piscataway Indian Nation, the Piscataway Conoy Tribe and the Accohannock Indian Tribe.

Alexandria has more than 30 archaeological sites containing Native American artifacts and features. Artifacts, such as stone tools, give us a glimpse into what life might have been like before European contact. The oldest artifact in the Alexandria Ar-

chaeology Museum's collection is a Clovis Point dating back approximately 13,000 years, found during a survey of Freedmen's Cemetery.

Archaeologists currently think Clovis points were used in throwing spears, rather than arrows, which were not used until approximately 1,400 years ago. Other highlights in the archaeological collection include a point from the Kirk period, found during a survey of Jones Point.

The history of the Indigenous Peoples in this area did not stop with European contact, of course. The federal and

state recognitions of tribes and nations acknowledge not only that these groups lived in the area in the past, but that they live here today.

Alexandria celebrated Indigenous Peoples' Day on Oct. 14. To learn more about the tribes, nations, and peoples who lived and still live on the land that we know as the City of Alexandria, please visit alexandriava.gov/cultural-history/indigenous-peoples-virginia-indians-and-alexandria.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.