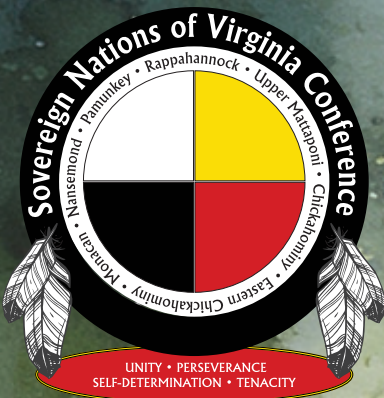


Ancient Wisdom Guides Today's Paths:

- Respect
- Relevance
- Reciprocity
- Responsibility



September 10, 2026

Virginia Crossings Hotel
and Conference Center

VPM congratulates the
Rappahannock Tribe
on hosting the 2026
Sovereign Nations of
Virginia Conference.

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Conference Agenda

8:00 AM

Registration

Henrico Ballroom

Snacks and beverages available in Henrico Ballroom Lobby

9:00 AM

Opening Ceremony

Drum Song

• Maskapow Drummers and Singers

Rappahannock Tribe

Welcome and Prayer

• Melissa Ann Ehrenreich, Emcee

Executive Director, Indigenous Conservation Council

Introduction of the Chiefs

9:15 AM

Remarks from Senator Tim Kaine

• Introduction by Chief Anne Richardson

Rappahannock Tribe

Sovereign Nations of Virginia



Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division

Chief
Joanne Howard

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CHICKAHOMINY
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THE SEAL OF THE RAPPAHANNOCK
FOUNDED BEFORE 1570

Chief
Anne Richardson

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UPPER MATTAPONI TRIBE

Chief
Frank Adams

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9:30 AM

Respect

Session One: Acknowledging the inherent worth, dignity, and unique worldviews of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems.

- Introduction by Kitcki Carrol
Executive Director, United South & Eastern Tribes
Data Sovereignty and its Importance to Tribal Nations (5-minute video)
- Aaron Sims
Chestnut Law
- Samuel Kohn
Kaplan Kirsch Law

A discussion on how Tribal Nations can shift the outcome of federal litigation by adopting strong Tribal laws and processes that define and protect Tribal cultural heritage. For example, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) looks to Tribal Nations to identify whether a particular item possesses sufficient cultural import to qualify as a “cultural item” under NAGPRA. By adopting clear Tribal laws and processes in these areas, Tribal Nations can increase the likelihood of winning federal cases and protecting their irreplaceable cultural heritage items, even under federal laws as they currently exist. Speaker(s) will discuss case studies where Tribal Nations’ laws and processes were able to help establish the cultural import of particular items or places sufficient to qualify them for protection under United States law.

10:45 AM

Relevance

Session Two: Ensuring that K-12 education includes meaningful Indigenous cultural and historic content for all learners.

- Autumn (Morningstar) Custalow Alfaro
(Mattaponi) Ne-penough Learning Circle
Ms. Alfaro will share the goal of empowering our local Virginia Indigenous communities as well as enriching schools by developing accurate curriculum, comprehensive learning resources, interactive programs, and professional development for teachers. Being a voice for Indigenous youth is essential as it influences their sense of belonging and engagement in the learning environment.

12:00 PM

Special Presentation

Chief Anne Richardson will present 2026 Champion award to The Wilderness Society for their support of the Virginia tribes.

12:15 PM

Luncheon

Dining Room Buffet

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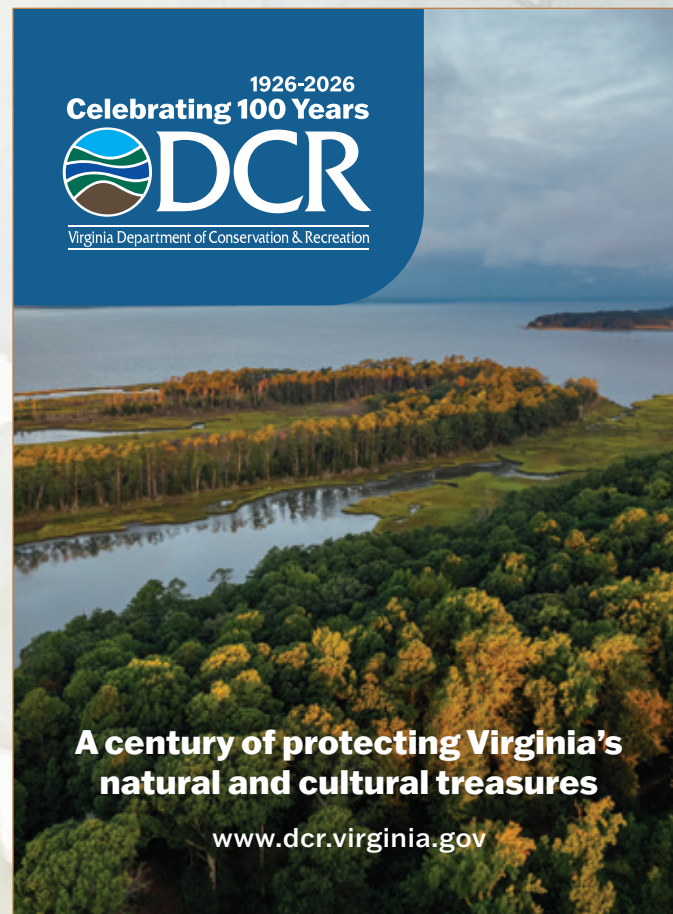
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1:15 PM

Reciprocity

Session Three: Building relationships based on mutual sharing, understanding, and benefit, moving beyond extractive research models.

● Dr. Carole Nash

James Madison University

Virginia archaeologists have a history of investigating Indigenous sites and landscapes without the partnership or even input of descendant communities. However, new approaches built on collaborative relationships are changing this practice. By holding archaeologists accountable to Indigenous community partners, reciprocal archaeology creates new opportunities for research and cultural revitalization.

2:15 PM

Responsibility

Session Four: Recognizing the ethical obligations of the Commonwealth of Virginia to include Indigenous nations in codes and opportunities.

● Paul Krisek

Virginia Delegate

● Dr. Andy Block

Director of the State and Local Government Policy Clinic

● Reggie Stewart

Chickahominy citizen, IT Director and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds Manager for the Chickahominy Tribe

● David Wilkins

Professor at the University of Richmond Jepson School of Leadership Studies

Delegate Paul Krisek will provide an overview of the Commission's background, mandate, and scope of work, including the five legislative bills introduced during the General Assembly. Dr. Andy Block will provide clarity on the bills, efforts made to advance them, their outcomes, and plans for the coming year. Chickahominy citizen Reggie Stewart will offer a Tribal perspective on the works, barriers faced by Tribal nations, and the need for greater education among legislators and the public. Dr. David Wilkins will explore the meaning of Tribal sovereignty and the importance of government-to- government relationships that serve the interests of all Virginians.

3:30 PM

Closing remarks

Conference Adjourns

Thank you, Wilderness Society!

2026 Champion Award for Advocacy, Partnership, and Leadership

Thank you for supporting the Virginia Tribes.

The Sovereign Nations of Virginia are pleased to present this award to The Wilderness Society for their partnership, advocacy, and leadership, which have played a meaningful role in advancing Tribal sovereignty, conservation, and stewardship. Founded in 1935, TWS is one of the nation’s leading conservation organizations. The

organization has helped shape the modern conservation movement, grounded in the belief that public lands are a shared resource that must be protected for the benefit of everyone. TWS worked alongside the Nansemond Tribe to launch the Great Dismal Swamp Stakeholder Collaborative, advancing the protection of culturally and ecologically significant lands while supporting Tribal priorities. TWS also collaborated with the Rappahannock Tribe to bridge funding gaps by opening the door to new partners

“ I would like to thank The Wilderness Society for being the first olive in the jar to pop out for our Return the River Program. Their support allowed us to grow in capacity and bring on a staff person who could lead the program forward and get it established.

To now see where our Return to the River program is at, I am grateful for The Wilderness Society’s faith in us, and I want to award them today for the amazing support they have given to the Virginia tribes and us.”

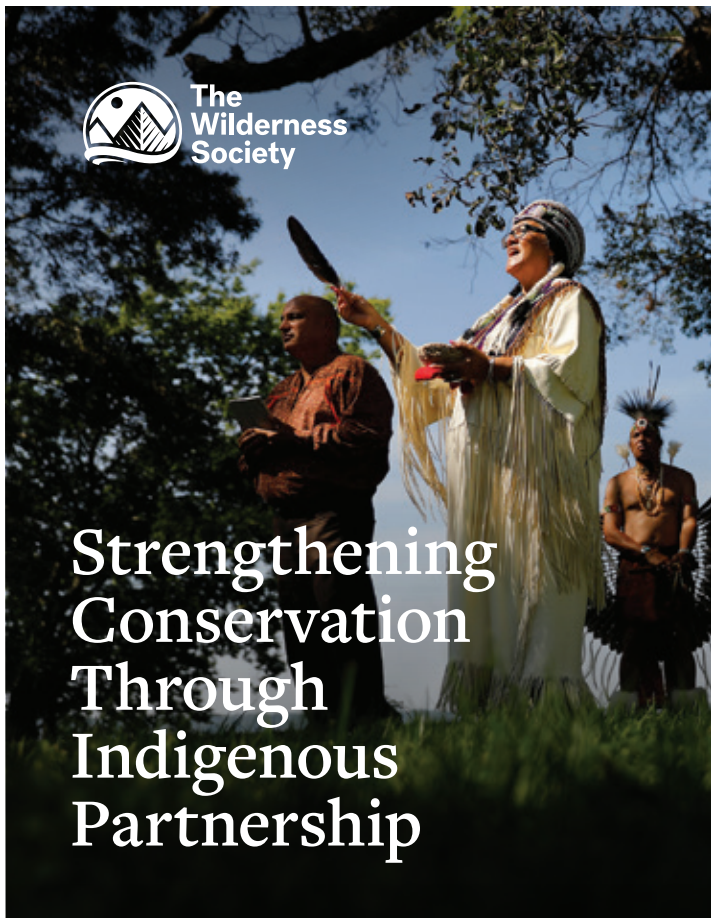
Anne Richardson,
Rappahannock Tribal Chief



The Champion Award is presented to individuals and organizations who support the Virginia Tribes. The Wilderness Society exemplifies this spirit through action, partnership, and meaningful collaboration.

and donors through their network of supporters. Moreover, they were the first major philanthropic partner to invest in the Rappahannock Tribe’s Return to the River initiative, and their early support was instrumental in launching the program. Beyond financial support, TWS has been a steadfast advocate for Tribal inclusion in national conservation policy. They sponsored critical research that highlighted disparities in conservation funding, demonstrating that while substantial resources are allocated to environmental efforts, only a small portion has reached Tribal Nations. In partnership with the

Department of the Interior, TWS advanced these efforts by carving out resources specifically for Tribal use. This work helped inform federal policy discussions and contributed to the inclusion of Tribal priorities in the EXPLORE Act. The Sovereign Nations of Virginia honor The Wilderness Society today for their contributions to Virginia Tribal Nations and what can be achieved through respectful, trusting collaboration toward a shared vision for the future. Together, we can continue to build a path where Tribal sovereignty is upheld, and natural resources are protected for generations to come.



The **Native Lands Partnerships** team at The Wilderness Society grounds its work in Tribal sovereignty and self-determination and **collaborates with Tribal Nations and Indigenous partners** to ensure that sovereignty, history, and knowledge **shape the future of public lands and waters.**

By providing comprehensive resources and direct pathways to information, **we seek to support Tribes** in making cultural and natural resource management decisions that **align with their values and priorities.**

We are honored to support the Sovereign Nations of Virginia Conference and grateful to the Nations for their **enduring leadership in conservation and their continued stewardship** of this region’s lands, waters, and wildlife since time immemorial.

Scan to learn more
about our Native Lands
Partnerships work and
links to specific resources.



Photo courtesy of the Rappahannock Tribe and Jonathon Gruenke / Daily Press

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Conference Speakers



Kitcki Carroll, Executive Director, United South and Eastern Tribe: United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET) and the USET Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) are inter-tribal organizations advocating on behalf of 33 federally recognized Tribal Nations from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Mexico. In his capacity as Executive Director, Kitcki works to protect, promote, and advance the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of the organization’s member Tribal Nations and Indian Country overall. Mr. Carroll is a strong justice advocate for all Native American people and actively works to ensure that the United States fulfills its trust and treaty responsibilities and obligations to Indian Country. Mr. Carroll is a citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. He has held various Executive/Senior management positions in the tribal government and not-for-profit sector over the past 20 years, and he has served on various work groups, panels, task forces, boards, and advisory groups.



Aaron Sims is a member of the Pueblo of Acoma, Partner at the Chestnut Law Offices, P.A. in Albuquerque, New Mexico: Aaron’s practice focuses primarily on general counsel representation for Pueblo tribal governments and organizations. Aaron joined the Chestnut Law Offices after receiving a J.D. with an Indian Law Certificate from the University of New Mexico – School of Law. Prior to attending law school, Aaron graduated from Dartmouth College with a B.A. in Government and Native American Studies. Currently, he serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the American Indian Law Center, Inc., established in 1967 and housed at the University of New Mexico School of Law, AILC is the oldest Indian-managed and Indian-controlled legal and public policy organization in the country, providing training, technical assistance, and preparatory legal education in support of tribal self-determination, and it administers the Southwest Inter-tribal Court of Appeals serving regional tribal courts. Aaron also serves on the Board for the Chamiza Foundation, a private foundation that provides grant support to New Mexico’s Pueblo Indian tribal communities to help ensure the continuity and living preservation of Pueblo culture and traditions.

Aaron has worked on a wide range of Indian legal issues, including intergovernmental relations, environmental issues, tribal economic development, and water rights. Aaron has worked extensively on and is especially interested in the protection of Pueblo cultural resources, including the preservation of sacred sites and the repatriation of sacred items.



Samuel Kohn is a member of the Apsáalooke Nation (Crow Tribe of Montana), Attorney, Kaplan Kirsch: Sam has nearly 15 years of experience helping Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives to interpret and advance their unique legal status and political relationships with the United States. Sam represents Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives, and tribal consortia in matters of self-governance and self-determination, matters related to Indian lands and related compliance, and other engagement with the United States, all while bearing in mind the unique challenges that tribes should consider when trying to obtain the best possible long-term outcomes.

Sam served previously as Senior Counselor to the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior. In this role, he supported the Assistant Secretary’s relationship with all Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives. Sam advised the Assistant Secretary on implementation of the Indian Self-Determination Education and Assistance Act, including Public Law 102-477, negotiation of collaborative stewardship agreements, protection of cultural and historic resources, Indian arts and crafts, fee-to-trust and right of way issues, Indian water right settlements, gaming matters, and roads and transportation matters.

In addition to his work in Indian law, Sam has managed nearly all stages of litigation. He has taken or defended depositions, briefed and argued motions, and won appeals, in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, D.C. Circuit, and California Court of Appeal.



Autumn (Morningstar) Custalow Alfaro, (Mattaponi) Ne-penough Learning Circle: Autumn has always had a deep sense of pride and a lifelong commitment to preserving her heritage through creative expression and storytelling. Her understanding of the significance of this mission deepened after becoming a parent and witnessing firsthand the effects of sending her children into school environments lacking representation and not being able to see themselves reflected in their surroundings

The objective was to develop educational resources for her children to learn at home and to build confidence in understanding their own history and culture. Autumn’s developed resources were shared with their teachers to use in the classroom. Being a part of her children’s education in this way, she was able to see the lack of resources that were available for schools in general and wanted to help aid that need. Following a few years of research, consultation with multiple inter-tribal participants and collaboration with various school administrators, Autumn began designing an educational program including curriculum, learning resources, and community outreach. This program’s purpose is to help empower our local Virginia Indigenous communities, as well as our schools and other educational institutions, called Ne-penough Learning Circle.



Dr. Carole Nash, Geography and ISAT Professor at James Madison University: Dr. Carole Nash is honored, as a -Indigenous ally, to study Virginia archaeology and historical ecology, and she is grateful for collaborations with citizens of Virginia’s Native American communities. Professor in the School of Integrated Sciences, she has taught at James Madison University for 38 years. She chairs the JMU Native American and Indigenous Working Group and JMU NAGPRA Committee and is a founding member of the Virginia Indigenous Nations in Higher Education Collective. She and her students maintain a research program in the Upper Rappahannock and Upper James River Valleys where she has been a cooperating archaeologist for Shenandoah National Park. She co-chairs the Society for American Archaeology’s Committee on Climate Change Strategies and Archaeological Resources, and her recent work focuses on the impacts of climate change on cultural heritage sites and the communities they represent. She co-directs the Virginia Archaeological Technician Certification Program and is president of Mountain Valley Archaeology, a non-profit in the Shenandoah Valley that partners with descendant communities.



Delegate Paul Krizek has served in the Virginia House of Delegates since 2016, representing the 16th district of Virginia in Fairfax County. Krizek is a staunch supporter of Indigenous peoples and the tribes in Virginia. Krizek graduated in 1984 with a BA from the University of Virginia and in 1987 with a J.D. from the Columbus School of Law at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He co-sponsored House Bill 1157, which requires Virginia’s permitting agencies to consult with tribes, and continues to advocate for tribal issues with the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Professionally, he serves as executive director and general counsel for Christian Relief Services. Christian Relief Services forms partnerships with local, non-governmental organizations and affiliates to provide donations and affordable housing at the local to international level. Krizek is also the former executive director of Running Strong for American Indian Youth, a charity founded by Krizek’s father, Eugene Krizek, and Olympic gold medalist Billy Mills, and dedicated to helping Native American youth across the country realize their dreams.

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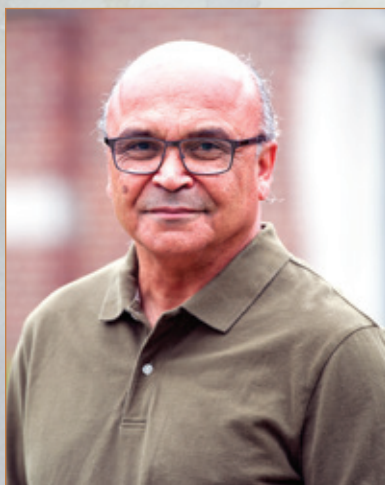


Dr. Andrew Block serves as director of the State and Local Government Policy Clinic at the University of Virginia School of Law. Some of the significant efforts Block and his students have supported include serving as primary research staff for Gov. Ralph Northam's Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law.

Prior to his return to the Law School, Block served as director of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice from 2014-19, where he led major reforms and improvements in the department. Block directed the Child Advocacy Clinic at the Law School from 2010-14, previously founded and served as the legal director of the JustChildren program of the Legal Aid Justice Center, and was a staff attorney for the Seattle-King County Public Defender Association. A graduate of Yale University and Northwestern University School of Law, Block received various awards for his work at JustChildren, including the American Bar Association Young Lawyer's Division Child Advocacy Award, the Virginia State Bar's Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year and the Virginia Bar Association's Robert F. Shepherd, Jr. Award.



Reginald C. Stewart, serves as IT Director and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds Manager for the Chickahominy Indian Tribe. Reggie retired from the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond after 31 years of service and has been a member of the Chickahominy Tribal Council since 2004. He serves as Chair of the Board of Directors for the Virginia Tribal Education Consortium (VTEC) where the seven federally recognized Tribes in Virginia provide education on the history of Virginia American Indians and provide educational assistance for American Indians. Reggie also serves as treasurer of the Inter-tribal Conservation Council of the Chesapeake Bay (ICC) and Chickahominy Indian Tribe representative on the Virginia Tribal Code Commission.



Dr. David Wilkins is the E. Claiborne Robins Distinguished Professor in Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond Jepson School of Leadership Studies. Prior to moving to Richmond with his wife, Shelly, he served as the McKnight Presidential Professor in American Indian Studies, Adjunct Professor of Political Science, Law, and American Studies at University of Minnesota/Twin Cities Campus for 20 years.

Dr. Wilkins has extensive experience in Native American history with specialization in Sovereignty. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, an MA in Political Science: American Indian Policy from the University of Arizona, and a BA in Sociology from the University of North Carolina, Pembroke. He has won many awards and grants and has published over 20 books, including *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*. 4th ed. (co-authored with Heidi Stark) (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018). He has also written numerous articles for scholarly journals, book reviews, monographs, conference papers and presentations, and has made many other contributions to the body of knowledge of indigenous history in the US. Dr. Wilkins is a member of the Lumbee Nation of North Carolina.

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Thank you for attending today's Sovereignty Conference

The Rappahannock Tribe hosts this conference to educate the public on topics of importance to the federally and state recognized tribes in Virginia. It provides staff support to plan and recruits speakers and sponsors, register participants, liaise with the conference facility and work throughout the event.

The conference is being recorded and all in-person and virtual registrants will receive an email when the recordings are posted on the website: sovereignnationsva.org.

If you have general questions, you may contact us at: info@sovereignnationsva.org

