National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Captain John Smith Chesapeake
National Historic Trail

Chesapeake Landscapes Through Indigenous Eyes

NPS/CHRISTINE LUCERO

View from a known native habitation site in tidal Virginia shows a marsh near a likely landing place.

The **Indigenous Cultural Landscape** (ICL) concept recounts how indigenous peoples of North America have regarded and used this abundant land for countless generations. Euro-American stereotypes of indigenous people as 'being one with nature' and ecologically noble have permeated contemporary environmentalist thought in a way harmful to American Indians. Such narratives are often unattainable in today's world and reduce indigenous beliefs, values, and practices to a one-dimensional fiction of the past.

The ICL concept is a way for conservation and environmentally-focused entities to promote indigenous thinking about how landscapes have been, and still are,

NPS/CHRISTINE LUCERO

High resource marsh adjacent to lands suitable for agriculture on a James River tributary.

used and understood. The concept considers a pre-Contact period perspective on the landscape, with all the lifestyle components of an indigenous community, including the surrounding land and water. It explains how men, women and children would need to be able to navigate these areas to obtain the materials necessary for food, shelter, medicine and ceremony. The name of the concept reflects indigenous thinking which does not divide the surrounding world into arbitrary categories of "natural" and "cultural."

Use of the ICL allows for centralizing American Indians in the interpretation of their ancestral lands and identifying portions of landscapes that demonstrate to visitors the natural or cultural resources supportive of Native lifeways and settlement patterns in the early 17th-century. ICL identification and the accompanying interpretive process began along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, where descendant communities are in partnership with conservation organizations and researchers to assure stakeholder respect in Chesapeake watershed tourism, interpretation, and resource protection.

USFWS/MEGHAN POWELL

A mixed deciduous forest at Powell's Creek shows a fall hunting area well above the water line.

For additional information contact:
Christine_Lucero@nps.gov
757-258-8914

National Park Service | Chesapeake
410 Severn Av, Suite 314
Annapolis, MD 21403