

Federal Recognition of Virginia Indians* Fact Sheet

- Six of the eleven tribes recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia have been seeking federal recognition through an Act of Congress since the late 1990s: the Upper Mattaponi, the Chickahominy, the Eastern Chickahominy, the Nansemond, the Rappahannock, and the Monacan Nation.
- The Bureau of Indian Affairs is the normal way to get federal recognition.
 - Due to Walter Ashby Plecker and his “paper genocide” they cannot meet two of the seven criteria to do so. Plecker, who was head of Vital Statistics in Virginia from 1912-1946, replaced the term “Indian” with the term “colored” on all official documents, such as birth and death certificates, marriage licenses and voter registration forms.
- The current bills are: H.R.783: The Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act of 2011 (House bill) and S.379: Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act of 2011 (Senate bill).
 - H.R.783 is currently in the House Subcommittee Indian and Alaska Native Affairs. For more information on the bill and its progress: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d112:HR00783>:
 - S.379 is currently waiting to be placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar as it was approved by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on July 28, 2011. For more information on the bill and its progress: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d112:SN00379>:
- Benefits of federal recognition for the Virginia Indians:
 - Respect. The ability to tell their ancestors, and everyone, that their struggle for survival was not in vain and that they are now a sovereign nation with a government to government relationship with the United States of America.
 - They would be able to apply for scholarships and federal funds for housing, health care, and economic development. They DO NOT want to open casinos and have signed away their right to ever open them even if casinos were opened in Virginia.
 - Use of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which allows them to petition for the return of ancestral bones and funeral objects from museums so they can be reburied with respect.
- Resources for more information on the Virginia Indians, the different tribes, and their fight for federal recognition:
 - Virginia Indian Tribal Alliance for Life (VITAL) – established to support Virginia Indians in matters of the Virginia General Assembly and the US Congress (<http://www.vitalva.org/>)
 - Virginia Council on Indians – a council created to study, research and discuss issues relevant to Virginia Indians (<http://indians.vipnet.org/>)
 - The Virginia Indian Heritage Trail – Virginia Council on Indians book, which tells the Native story from the Native perspective, last updated in 2008 (http://www.virginiafoundation.org/VIHP/docs/Heritage%20Trail_2ed.pdf – 2007 ed.)

**When referring to the Virginia tribes, as a whole, this is the preferred term*