



**Presidential Policy Memorandum No. 308**

**To:** Virginia Tech Faculty, Staff, and Students  
**From:** Timothy D. Sands  
**Date:** February 18, 2019  
**Subject:** Observing Indigenous Peoples’ Day at Virginia Tech

**Approved by Commission on Equal Opportunity & Diversity:** December 17, 2018  
**Supported by Faculty Senate:** November 30, 2018  
**Supported by Staff Senate:** January 17, 2019  
**Supported by the Graduate Student Assembly:** January 31, 2019  
**Supported by the Student Government Association:** January 30, 2019  
**Approved by the University Council:** February 18, 2019  
**Approved by the President:** February 18, 2019  
**Effective Date:** October 14, 2019

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University Council approved a resolution to observe Indigenous Peoples’ Day at Virginia Tech each year on the second Monday in October. [Note: This has no impact on the observation of Columbus Day, which currently is a federal and state holiday.]

**Be it resolved,** that Virginia Tech recognizes the value and contributions of Indigenous communities and commits to continuing to support the American Indian and Indigenous Community Center and the American Indian Studies program; and

**Be it further resolved,** that Virginia Tech will officially and permanently recognize and designate on the university event calendar ([www.calendar.vt.edu](http://www.calendar.vt.edu)) (and other appropriate materials) the second Monday in October each year as “Indigenous Peoples’ Day”; and,

**Be it further resolved,** that Virginia Tech, in consultation with the American Indian and Indigenous community, will support the development and distribution of culturally appropriate materials to educate faculty, staff, students, and the Commonwealth of Virginia about Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

Following is the text of the resolution in its entirety.

**Whereas**, Virginia Tech, Virginia's land grant institution founded in 1872, recognizes and honors the Monacan-Tutelo people, the historical stewards and traditional custodians of the land now occupied by Virginia Tech; and,

**Whereas**, race integrity laws in Virginia discouraged American Indians from attaining public education until 1963; and,

**Whereas**, tribes from across the United States and Canada are represented among the students, faculty, and staff at Virginia Tech; and,

**Whereas**, Indigenous students at Virginia Tech study in nearly every college on campus and represent at least 16 Indigenous communities, including the Anishinaabe, Blackfeet, Cherokee, Chickahominy, Coharie, Delaware, Diné (Navajo), Eastern Band of Cherokee, Hawaiian, Lumbee, Monacan, Osage, Peepeekisis Cree, Quechua/Aymara, Shinnecock/Unkechaug, and Tohono O'odham; and,

**Whereas**, the American Indian Studies Program was established at Virginia Tech in 2000 and students from a vast majority of majors enroll in American Indian Studies courses every semester; and,

**Whereas**, the Native at Virginia Tech student organization was formed in 2008 and has been an invaluable community for Native American and Indigenous students at Virginia Tech; and,

**Whereas**, Virginia Tech's motto, *Ut Prosim* (that I may serve), is foundational to many Indigenous cultural identities and it is in the spirit of *Ut Prosim* that the Native at Virginia Tech student organization calls on Virginia Tech to serve and support the Native American and Indigenous community; and,

**Whereas**, in 2017 and 2018, the Native at Virginia Tech student organization hosted the Virginia Tech Pow Wow -- a symbol of cultural survivance that brought traditional dancers, singers, and visitors from across the mid-Atlantic region to share their culture with the Virginia Tech community; and,

**Whereas**, the Native American and Indigenous Community Alliance was founded in 2012, with a mission of activism, engagement, and support around Native American and Indigenous community issues; and,

**Whereas**, the American Indian and Indigenous Community Center was dedicated in 2016 and serves as a place of relationship building among Native and Indigenous communities at Virginia Tech, the greater Virginia Tech community, and tribal and Indigenous communities across the United States and the world; and,

**Whereas**, Virginia Tech has hosted tribal summits, including most recently in 2017, to strengthen reciprocal partnerships with the eleven tribal communities of Virginia which include the Cheroenhaka [Nottoway], the Chickahominy, the Eastern Chickahominy, the Mattaponi, the Monacan, the Nansemond, the Nottoway, the Pamunkey, the Patawomeck, the Rappahannock, and the Upper Mattaponi; and,

**Whereas**, Virginia Tech's Principles of Community state that "We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others"; and,

**Whereas**, University Council passed a resolution in 2017 authorizing a revision to Pathways General Education Curriculum to require a new core area of Critical Analysis of Equity and Identity in the United States to increase education and awareness; and,

**Whereas**, in January 2018, Native at Virginia Tech collected over 1,200 petition signatures from the community in support of a resolution for Virginia Tech to officially recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day; and,

**Whereas**, the public recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Day provides an opportunity for education and engagement, and reduces the historical invisibility and erasure of Native American and Indigenous people; and,

**Whereas**, in response to a proposal by Native at Virginia Tech to University Council in May 2018, President Timothy Sands issued a Presidential Policy Memorandum declaring Monday, October 8, 2018 as Indigenous Peoples' Day at Virginia Tech; and,

**Whereas**, Indigenous Peoples' Day was celebrated on October 8, 2018, with cultural programming hosted by Native at Virginia Tech, and the American Indian and Indigenous Community Center;

**Whereas**, the Commonwealth of Virginia has designated the second Monday in October as Columbus Day -- an official state holiday; and

**Whereas**, the Commonwealth of Virginia has not recognized Indigenous Peoples' Day as an official state holiday;

**Whereas**, CEOD acknowledges that it is beyond the scope of the Commission and University Council to call for a change in state law to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day as a state holiday, yet wishes to go on record advocating for such a change in the law;

**Therefore be it resolved**, that Virginia Tech recognizes the value and contributions of Indigenous communities and commits to continuing to support the American Indian and Indigenous Community Center and the American Indian Studies program; and

**Be it further resolved**, that Virginia Tech will officially and permanently recognize and designate on the university event calendar ([www.calendar.vt.edu](http://www.calendar.vt.edu)) (and other appropriate materials) the second Monday in October each year as "Indigenous Peoples' Day"; and,

**Be it further resolved**, that Virginia Tech, in consultation with the American Indian and Indigenous community, will support the development and distribution of culturally appropriate materials to educate faculty, staff, students, and the Commonwealth of Virginia about Indigenous Peoples' Day.

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