

# Indigenous Conservation Council Presentation to the Stakeholder Advisory Committee



February 20, 2025

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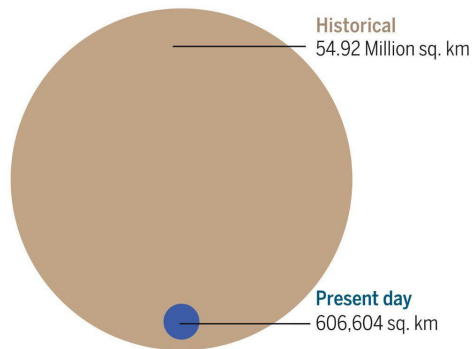


[Link to YouTube Video](#)



# The Legacy of Colonialism

## Estimated land area (coextensive)



98.9%

Aggregate reduction in cumulative coextensive lands

42.1%

Tribes from the historical period that have no recognized present-day land base

2.6%

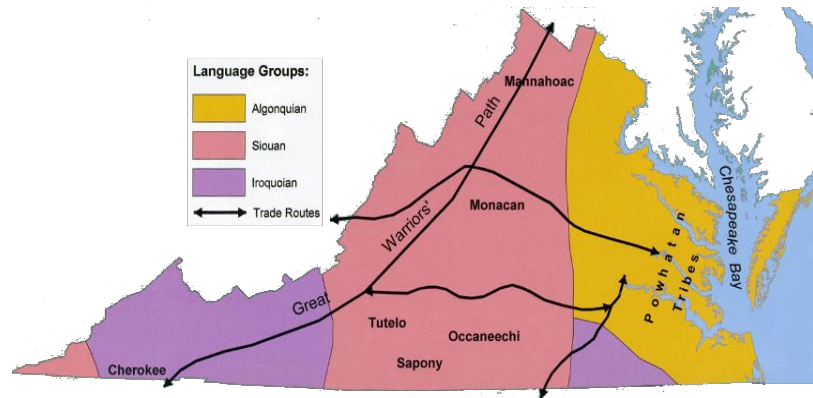
Average size of a tribe's present-day lands compared to historical (median=0.4%)



Average forced migration distance (median=131 km)



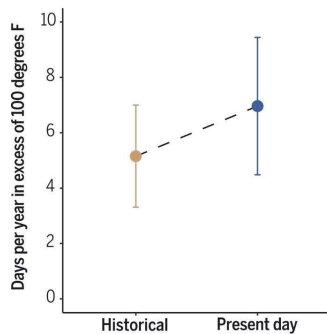
Maximum forced migration distance



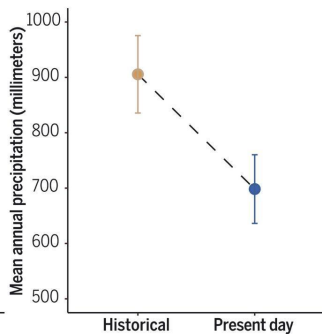
Of the estimated total land area of Virginia, 25.27 million acres, over 4.28 million acres or 16.96% is "currently protected". June, 2023

GROUP	EASEMENTS	FEE-SIMPLE	TOTAL ACRES CONSERVED	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Federal	14,692.77	2,339,253.35	2,353,946.12	54.92%
State	986,712.51	450,121.80	1,436,834.31	33.52%
Local	48,599.35	110,463.06	159,062.42	3.71%
Non-Profit	234,067.59	101,815.69	335,883.28	7.84%
Tribal	0.00	504.00	504.00	0.01%
TOTALS:	1,284,072.21	3,002,157.91	4,286,230.12	100.00%

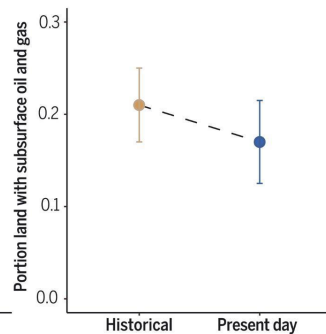
### Extreme heat



### Precipitation



### Mineral value potential



Source: Farrell et al., Science (2021)

 VIRGINIA MERCURY

CRIMINAL JUSTICE • POLICING ENERGY • ENVIRONMENT GOV • POLITICS EDUCATION HEALTH COMMENTARY

ENVIRONMENT

**Tribes awarded state grants for the first time to conserve Va. forestland**

BY: EVAN VISCONTI • NOVEMBER 22, 2022 12:02 AM



# Founded with a Purpose to Serve

**Our Vision:** Tribal nations in the Chesapeake region are leading rematriation efforts of ancestral landscapes in ways that **support the care, repair, and Indigenous connections** needed to protect cultural heritage for future generations.

**Our Mission:** To build the capacity of tribal nations to rematriate and care for their lands in a manner that reinforces sovereignty and self-determination.



Photo credit: Pamela D'Angelo



# Sovereignty 101: A Very, Very Short Primer

“Only tribes who maintain a legal relationship to the US government through binding treaties, acts of Congress, executive orders, etc., are officially “recognized” by the federal government. Once “recognized” a tribe has a legal relationship with the United States.”

–Native American Rights Fund

**Federally recognized tribes are not stakeholders or the general public, they are Sovereign Nations.**

“As the U.S. Supreme Court has affirmed, Indian Tribes are a unique political class, not a racial one, and their sovereignty and trust relationship with the federal government must be upheld.”

–Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), [February 5, 2025](#)

[Resources to Learn About Tribal Sovereignty](#)



# Understanding International Rights

The [UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) codifies international law with regard to the universal rights for Indigenous Peoples.

**The ICC operates with Free, Prior and Informed Consent to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples codified into international law.**

Under UNDRIP, the ICC affirms the “universal right to self-determination. Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) allows Indigenous Peoples to provide or withhold/ withdraw consent, at any point, regarding projects impacting their territories. FPIC allows Indigenous Peoples to engage in negotiations to shape the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects.”

[ICC Fundraising Policy](#), Approved October 23, 2023 by the ICC Board





# What Does the Future of Indigenous-led Conservation Look Like?

## Some responses...

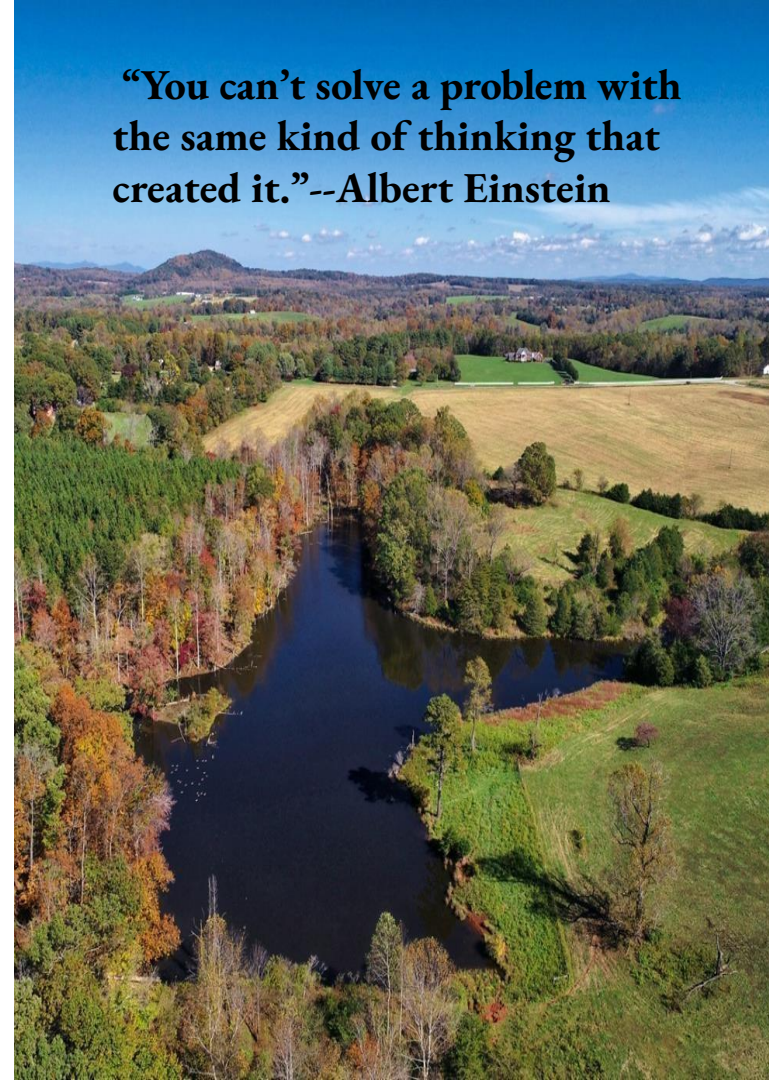
- Sovereignty Respected in State Codes
- Better Easement Pathways: Conservation, Cultural, Sacred, Held by Tribal Governments
- Stronger Sovereign-to-Sovereign Co-Management Agreements
- Tribal Sovereignty in the Chesapeake Bay Program
- Tribal Conservation Codes & Zoning (e.g. Rights of Nature)
- Compacts and Accords on Landscape Scale Management (e.g. Great Lakes Consent Decree)
- First Light Land Return Initiative (Just Give it Back)
- Indigenous Guardians



## What Does the Application of Indigenous Knowledge Look Like?

- Increasing the Resilience of Shellfish to Ocean Acidification through Clam Gardening (Swinomish)
- Reducing Pollutants and Carbon Sequestration through River Cane Restoration (Keetoowah Band of Cherokee)
- Increasing Biodiversity and Food Sovereignty through Indigenous Agro-Forestry (Hoop Valley Tribe)
- Enhancing Soil Health, Culture and Habitat through Native Seed Banks (Cherokee Nation)

**“You can’t solve a problem with the same kind of thinking that created it.”--Albert Einstein**

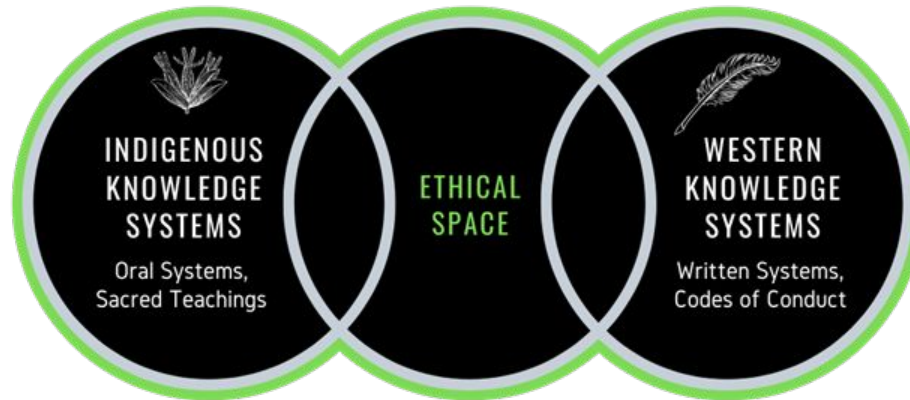




# Creating Ethical Space

**“The focus of ethical space is on creating a place for knowledge systems to interact with mutual respect, kindness, generosity and other basic values and principles. All knowledge systems are equal; no single system has more weight or legitimacy than another.**

**One system does not need the other to “corroborate” it to achieve internal validity. For example, the written system does not always need archaeological evidence to provide sound “proof” of an Indigenous practice or story.”**



—(Source: [Indigenous Placemaking and Ethical Space](#), 2020, Graphic: [Vancouver Island University](#))

# Key Milestones

## July 2023:

- Board Presentation on Financing Long-term Tribal Capacity through Ecosystem Markets with National Indian Carbon Coalition (NICC)
- Request Approved by Board to Join Chesapeake Conservation Partnership

## October 2023-February 2024:

- Board Presentation from Una'maki Institute of Natural Resources and Eli Enns on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas
- Discussion w/ Tribal Marine Stewards Network
- Strategic Plan feedback from Tribal Staff

## February-March 2024:

- Tribal Participation in ERG Interviews
- ICC Participation and feedback in Beyond 2025: Peoples Feedback Session

## April 2024:

- Formulation of Three-year Strategic Plan w/ Guardianship as Focus
- Presentation of Master's Thesis on Sovereignty & the Chesapeake Bay Program and Agreement on Tribal Caucus
- Indigenous Guardians Summit Participation by ICC

## June-July 2024:

- Conservation Finance Bootcamp Audit with First Nations Development Institute on Indigenous Application for Land Conservation and Capacity Building
- Tribal NGO Discussions re: Review of Beyond 2025 Draft Plan
- ICC Research on Watershed Wide Restoration Initiatives and Tribal Engagement for ICC Tribal Nation Members

## October 2024:

- Plenary discussion Restoring America's Estuaries Annual Conference on Respecting Tribal Sovereignty
- Coast Funds Event & Follow-up Discussion on Financing Indigenous Guardians Programs
- Attendance of International Congress for Land Conservation (Quebec City, Canada) by ICC Chair

## November 2024:

- Board Briefing on Opportunities to Finance Tribal Capacity and formalize relationship with Chesapeake Bay Program
- Regional Tribal Operations Committee Annual Conference w/EPA and Commonwealth of Virginia Leadership to engage in formal consultation on the CBP

## December 2024- January 2025

- US Forest Service Grant Executed with NICC to Explore Private Ecosystem Market Access to Build Tribal Capacity
- Formal Consultation with Federally Recognized Tribal Leadership and EPA Chesapeake Bay Program
- Declaration Passed and Submitted into Formal Record



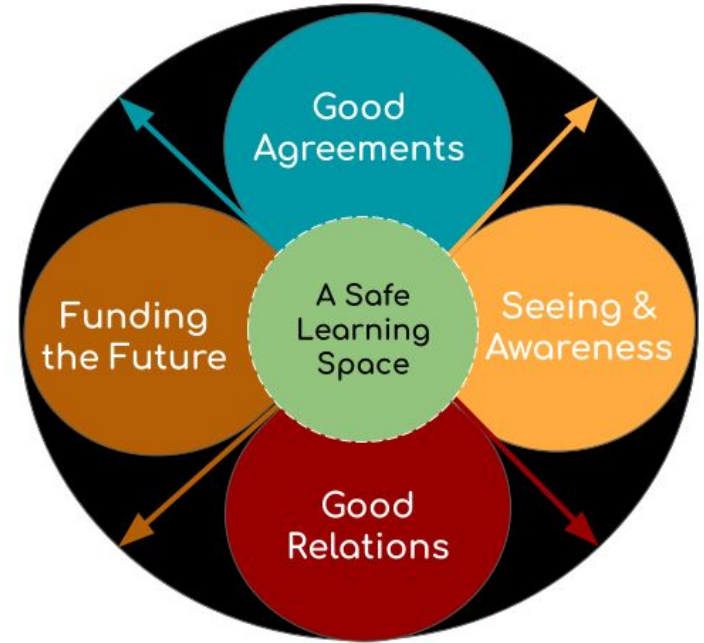
# Where We Are Leaning In

**GOOD AGREEMENTS:** Enhance the use of and support for sovereignty-led solutions for rematriation.

**SEEING & AWARENESS:** Boost the capability of tribal nations to harness their sovereignty to sense and protect ancestral landscapes from emerging threats.

**GOOD RELATIONS:** Develop leadership, training, and partnerships to protect and care for ancestral lands.

**FUNDING THE FUTURE:** Create the flexible resources, both funding and non-extractive financing, needed to rematriate ancestral landscapes





# **Sovereignty in the Chesapeake Bay Program**

## **INDIGENOUS INVOLVEMENT IN ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION: AN ANALYSIS OF VIRGINIA'S SOVEREIGN NATIONS INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM**

**–Nicole Holmes Brooks (Passamaquoddy, Penobscot), UMCES, Master's Dissertation, Presented to the Indigenous Conservation Council on April 16, 2024**

- 1. What is the current relationship between the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Sovereign Nations of Virginia?**
- 1. How do the power dynamics between the CBP and stakeholders affect the involvement of Virginia Sovereign Nations in the Bay's restoration?**
- 1. What aspects of government-directed environmental projects could be positively affected with more Virginia Sovereign Nations involvement and relationship improvement on the Chesapeake Bay?**



# Exploring Indigenous Guardians Networks



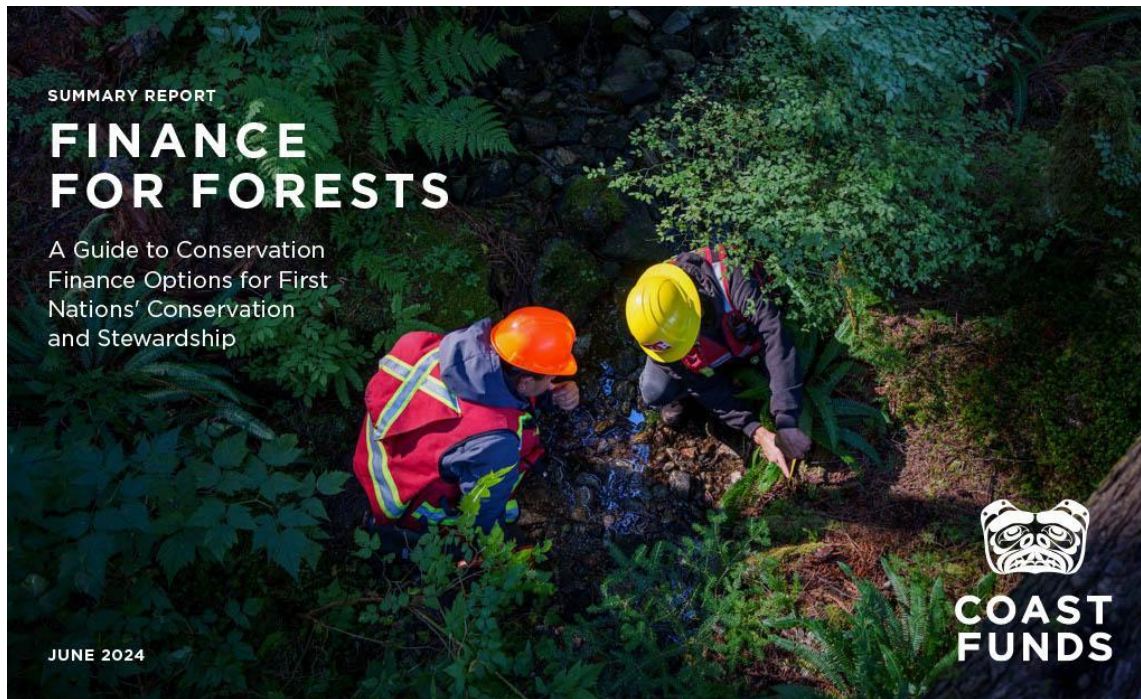
- [Indigenous Guardians Toolkit](#)
- [Land Needs Guardians](#)
- [How Indigenous Guardians Protect the Planet \(TED Talk\)](#)
- [Indigenous Guardians Summit Report Out](#)

Indigenous Guardians Summit, April 28-30, 2024, Lummi Nation





# Creative Financing for Indigenous Guardians Programs



“First Nations supported by Coast Funds have invested \$48 million of endowment earnings across 233 projects to leverage an additional \$85 million for stewardship and conservation (2008-2023).

Secured funding, with existing due diligence, can help lower perceived risk and attract additional funding.”

[Finance for Forests](#), June 2024





# Already Moving...

Federally recognized tribes are already moving to establish partnerships and grant funding to support revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge. Some examples:

**Virginia Tribal Educational Consortium:** Approved Bureau of Indian Affairs grant to work with all federally recognized tribes to develop climate change capacity and Indigenous Knowledge with tribal youth and elders.

**Rappahannock Tribe:** Launched an Indigenous Environmental Education Center and partnering with US Fish & Wildlife Service to monitor fish species and incorporate Indigenous Knowledge as they work to reconnect their youth to their river and cultural traditions.

**Nansemond Indian Nation, Monacan Indian Nation and Mattaponi Tribe:** Partnering with University of Richmond to synthesize climate science and support Indigenous Knowledge on mapping climate impacts.

**Upper Mattaponi Tribe:** Supporting food sovereignty and water quality monitoring with tribal youth to develop their tribal TMDL.



# A Declaration

## *A Declaration of Tribal Nations as Sovereign Governments Committed to the Protection and Restoration of Ancestral Lands and Waters through the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership, Approved January 15, 2025*

The resolution advances sovereignty, recognizes the unique political government-to-government relationships federally recognized tribes hold with the US federal government and states and key opportunities to meaningfully boost restoration and conservation efforts in the Bay region by:

1. Developing a true partnership with Sovereign Nations to reinforce a mutual duty of care for ancestral landscapes and the Chesapeake Bay watershed by creating a signatory status for Tribal Nations via the Indigenous Conservation Council;
2. Creating a new Indigenous Guardians Program funding program with Tribal Nations as the recipients to inspire new models of conservation that around the world have proven to accelerate the pace, effectiveness, and participation in conservation; and,
3. Establishing a new Tribal Nation Advisory Board within the Chesapeake Bay Program to guide the development Indigenous Guardian programs and application of Indigenous Knowledge to restore biodiversity, clean drinking water, and protect cultural resources.

[Full Resolution](#)

