



## Gloucester Department of Community Engagement

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: Thursday, March 21, 2019

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### **POCAHONTAS DESCENDANTS INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED**

Gloucester County is pleased to announce a new educational and outreach program named the “Pocahontas Descendants Initiative” that will share information with those who are descendants of Pocahontas or who are attempting to determine if they are descendants. The initiative will build on the growing interest in genealogy, ancestry and “finding one’s roots” as it is estimated that more than 100,000 people can claim Pocahontas as an ancestor.

Several organizations are working collaboratively on the initiative with the following founding partners joining Gloucester County: Henricus Historical Park, Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe and the Pocahontas Project of Replenish Richmond. Other partners, supporting organizations and individuals are invited to become involved.

The initiative will include hosting special events, maintaining a dedicated website, producing publications, providing genealogy and ancestry information and resources, and more as the initiative develops. A new website, dedicated to Pocahontas, was recently launched and is being hosted on the Gloucester County Tourism website at [visitgloucesterva.info](http://visitgloucesterva.info). The website currently includes information about an exhibit in the Gloucester Visitor’s Center, Werowocomoco, the Indian village site purchased by the National Park Service and information on the new state park site which will open this fall. The website will be expanded to include more information on Pocahontas, genealogical research, as well as material on Powhatan and Virginia Indian history. A detailed description with more information on the initiative is attached. For more information regarding the release or initiative, please contact Gloucester County Assistant County Administrator Carol Steele at [csteele@gloucesterva.info](mailto:csteele@gloucesterva.info).

SEE OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVE ON NEXT PAGE...

## Pocahontas Descendants Initiative

The ***Pocahontas Descendants Initiative*** (the Initiative) intends to build on the enhanced attention paid these past several years to the woman most famously known as Pocahontas, channeling that energy to continue and expand her legacy as an international cross-cultural ambassador. The Initiative will capitalize on the growing interest in genealogy, ancestry and finding one's roots – it is expected more than 100,000 people can claim Pocahontas as their ancestor through the Thomas Rolfe bloodline. Then there are the oral histories of a daughter born to Pocahontas' first husband Kocoum, creating intrigue and possibilities of a second bloodline. The Initiative intends to enable and facilitate an in-depth investigation into all possible descendants of Pocahontas and unite them in common purpose, as well as all others who are inspired by Pocahontas' life example.

### **Initiative Mission**

The Mission of the ***Pocahontas Descendants Initiative*** is to offer a platform providing information about Pocahontas and who might be her descendant, resources to facilitate an ancestry search, and ways and means to be an international cross-cultural ambassador doing good work in the name of Pocahontas.

### **Initiative Founding Partners**

#### ***County of Gloucester, Virginia***

The land now known as Gloucester Virginia has a unique relationship with Pocahontas and her father Powhatan which is being carefully considered in the development of a new US National Park named ***Werowocomoco*** – Powhatan's tribal headquarters and according to legend where Pocahontas saved John Smith's life. Gloucester is also home to the Pocahontas Museum and a statue of Pocahontas, dedicated in 1994 and part of Gloucester's effort to honor her legacy. Twenty five years later, after the statue's dedication and holding the "Pocahontas Festival" with descendants attending as special guests, Gloucester is again leading the charge to connect with the descendants of Pocahontas and is the recognized leader of this Initiative.

<http://www.visitgloucesterva.info/>

#### ***Henricus Historical Park***

Henricus Historical Park, located in Chesterfield County Virginia, is the country's leading interpreter of the time period that Pocahontas lived in Virginia and of Pocahontas herself, as she lived there and was converted to Christianity under the name of Rebeca Rolfe. John Pagano, Historical Interpretation Supervisor at Henricus, is finishing a book about Pocahontas and will act as the Initiative's education and historical consultant.

<http://henricus.org/>

#### ***Chief Anne Richardson***

Chief Anne Richardson is the chief of the Rappahannock Tribe, elected in 1998 after serving as assistant chief to her father. Anne has many powerful and personal connections to Pocahontas,

including sharing the experience of being the daughter of the chief, and for the past several years has become immersed in the life, legend and legacy of Pocahontas.

<https://www.c-span.org/person/?gannerichardson>

### ***The Pocahontas Project***

In 2016 Replenish Richmond started developing ***The Pocahontas Project*** in advance of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pocahontas' death in England in 1617. Supporting this Initiative is the latest in a succession of programs and efforts collectively designed to promote Pocahontas as a powerful civic engagement role model and spiritual icon of ***Hope and Purpose***.

<http://replenishrichmond.com/pocahontas-project/>

### **Initiative Tactics**

- Press release on March 21, 2019 announcing the formation of the Initiative
  - Press release sent out by County of Gloucester defining the Founding Partners:
    - County of Gloucester, Virginia
    - Henricus Historical Park
    - Chief Anne Richardson
    - Replenish Richmond / The Pocahontas Project
- Immediately involve a growing number of supporting organizations, communities + individuals to help spread the word about the search for the descendants of Pocahontas >> the stage is set to use 2019 to reach people across the Commonwealth and around the world. Start by inviting the following to join the Initiative:
  - Virginia Indian Tribes
  - Virginia Secretary of the Commonwealth
  - Virginia Museum of History & Culture
  - Jamestown / Yorktown Foundation
  - 2019 Commission
  - St. George's Church, Gravesend, UK
  - Borough of Gravesham, UK
  - HRH, the Duke of Gloucester
  - Border Crossings, UK
  - Virginia Foundation for the Humanities
  - Virginia Tourism Corporation / Virginia Film Office
  - Richmond Branch – English Speaking Union
  - Ancestry.com
  - Elected Officials (to be expanded)
    - US Senator Tim Kaine
    - US Rep Rob Wittman
    - VA Senator Jennifer McClellan
- Spend 2019 spreading the word and connecting to descendants and potential descendants of Pocahontas
  - Create a Pocahontas Descendants website (managed by Gloucester County)
    - Offer information about the life, legend and legacy of Pocahontas

- Offer a growing set of genealogy and ancestry information and resources to enable users to determine if they are descended from Pocahontas
  - Create a database of Pocahontas Descendant Prospects
- Involve Gloucester County students in all aspects of the process
  - Designing projects and programs for descendants
  - Social Media component
- The Initiative looks to involve anyone who believes they are descendants of Pocahontas and anyone inspired by Pocahontas' life example

**Founding Partner Expectations:**

- County of Gloucester, Virginia
  - Logistical manager of the Initiative
  - Initiative website and all data collection managed and controlled by the County of Gloucester > Promotes community support, transparency and accountability
- Henricus Historical Park
  - Education and Historical Consultant / Interpreter for Pocahontas' life in Virginia
- Chief Anne Richardson
  - Education and Historical Consultant / Conduit to the Virginia Indian Tribes
- Replenish Richmond / The Pocahontas Project
  - Rick Tatnall is the primary contact and the manager of the day-to-day activities of the Initiative, working at the direction of the County of Gloucester

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Presented by the County of Gloucester, Virginia

3-21-2019