

Monacan Indian Nation



December 2021

## Tribal Newsletter

### A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

This time of year gives us many opportunities to spend with family. I hope you had time with your family at Thanksgiving and will have more time together at Christmas.

We continue to have many good things to report for the Monacan Indian Nation. Indian Health Services has now put a trailer onsite to be used as their construction office for the upcoming demolition and construction work. Once they start tearing down buildings, they hope to be done with the construction of the new health center in about one year.

Work also continues for preparing the area behind the Highview Monacan Community Center for the two planned buildings. One will be for an elder center and

the other will be for much-needed office space and some teaching space.

We've also just completed the concrete handicap ramp for the Tribal Hall near our museum. And, to make access easier, we paved the parking area in front of the Tribal Hall, as well. The lane off of Matohe Road that leads to the Memorial Ash Garden has also been paved.

We feel like 2021 has been a very successful year for the tribe, and we look forward to more positive things in 2022.

*~Chief Kenneth Branham*

### SCHOLARSHIP HIGHLIGHT

The American Meteorological Society (AMS) Minority Scholarship is open to minority US citizens and legal permanent residents with a 3.0/4.0 GPA or better who will be a freshman for the fall 2022 semester and who plans to work in the fields of atmospheric, oceanic or hydrologic sciences. The AMS was founded in 1919 and works to support and advance atmospheric related sciences and technologies through a variety of means including the Minority Scholarships which aim to increase minority representation within these disciplines. For more information on the scholarship, visit <https://www.ametsoc.org/index.cfm/ams/information-for/students/ams-scholarships-and-fellowships/ams-minority-scholarships/>.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank • (434) 300-5055 Ext. 109

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## Food for the Holidays

Recent food bank donations helped to feed over 200 Monacan and non-Monacan families in Amherst County and in the surrounding counties. Work is wrapping up now to distribute food for the Christmas holidays. Families and individuals needing food donations are asked to call the Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank at (434) 300-5055 Ext. 109 by this Friday, December 17, to complete the necessary forms. Christmas food pickup from the food bank will be from 9 am - 3:45 pm during four days next week—Monday, December 20, through Thursday, December 23. If necessary, appointments for pickup can be made outside of those hours.

For those wanting to help the Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank by making donations, there are several ways to do so. First, the food bank can always use unopened and in date food and personal care items. Personal care items, especially toilet paper, are always in high demand. Donations may be dropped off during regular business hours or by appointment outside of regular hours, if need be.



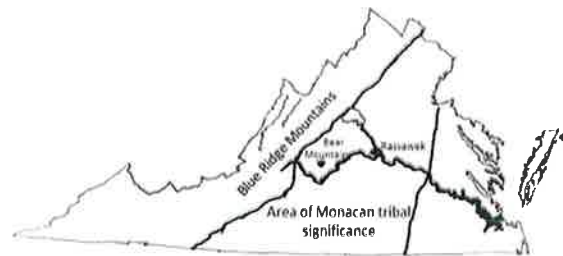
Donations help keep the shelves full to feed those in need.

Monetary donations are also always welcome, as well. Donations can be made by check or money order mailed to PO Box 1136, Madison Heights, Virginia, 24572. Donors may also make online donations through Monacan Indian Nation Go Fund Me or

PayPal. To ensure that all donations are directed to the food bank, please designate Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank in the memo line when making any monetary donations.

## Lynchburg's Randolph College Hosts Land Acknowledgement Ceremony

On Thursday, November 18, Lou Branham represented the Monacan Indian Nation while speaking at a land acknowledgement ceremony held at Randolph College. The college, which is situated just uphill from the James River on 2500 Rivermont Avenue, wanted to acknowledge that their 100-acre campus sits on land once inhabited by the Monacan Indian Nation. Like many other institutions, Randolph College sought to formally acknowledge what is known to be true—native peoples lived throughout our state and our country before European settlers began arriving in the fifteenth century.



Map showing an approximation of geographic area of interest for the Monacan tribe historically located between the fall line at Richmond in the east and the Blue Ridge Mountains in the west.

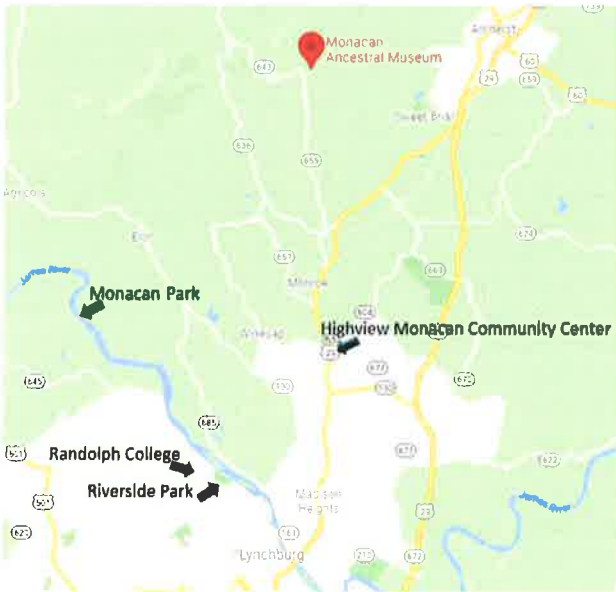
Josh Bulavko, a Randolph College student and one of the organizers of the land ceremony event, explained, “Today, Randolph College is doing the right thing in acknowledging that this is Monacan land. We must honor and respect the truth of that past.” Keesha Burke-Henderson, Randolph’s chief diversity officer, said, though, that “the discussion goes beyond just the land acknowledgement...It’s about the Monacan Indian Nation—connecting with its members and finding ways to forge a relationship with them.” To that end, Bulavko will be serving as an intern for one semester in the Monacan Indian Nation Ancestral Museum beginning in January.

Tomi-Lauren McGinnis, another Randolph College student who helped organize the November event, visited the Monacan Indian Nation Ancestral Museum

along with Gerry Sherayko, professor of history at the college. Following that visit, McGinnis remarked that “the museum is such a lovely place with a story that continues on today and needs to be heard.”

### Location of Randolph College and Riverside Park Relative to Early Monacan Settlement

In a 2007 issue of *Lynch's Ferry: A Journal of Local History*, Heidi James, recounting the history of Lynchburg's Riverside Park said, “Before anyone ‘owned’ the land at Riverside Park, located between 2100-2238 Rivermont Avenue in Lynchburg, this part of Virginia was Monacan Indian territory. There was a big encampment of Monacan Indians several miles up the James River, not far from Holcomb Rock, but on the Amherst County side, in Bethel. There is now a park and public river access on that site called Monacan Park. It is easy to imagine the Monacan Indians fishing in the river and spending time on the small islands just off what later became Riverside Park.”



Map showing location of Lynchburg's Randolph College along Rivermont Avenue. Also shown are Monacan Park and Riverside Park on the James River.

### Learning from Our Elders: Basket Making

Recently, Bertie Branham sat down with Lou Branham at the Monacan Indian Nation Ancestral Museum at Bear Mountain to share her knowledge and skill of basket making. Bertie, an elder of the Monacan Indian Nation, learned basket making from her mother and grandmother when she was very young. Some of her mother's split baskets are in the museum along with some baskets made by Bertie.



Bertie and Lou Branham

Bertie has made baskets from oak splits, but she prefers to make baskets from honeysuckle. She recommends harvesting the honeysuckle in the spring when the vines are wet and flexible because the vines are easier to work with as you bend them to shape your basket. Bertie doesn't always start with a finished design in mind, but instead, she lets the design evolve and develop as she works with the natural materials.



During her time at the museum, Bertie not only made a basket for Lou, but she also taught Lou how to make her very own honeysuckle basket. Bertie has also been teaching her own grandchildren the skill of basket making in hopes of preserving and passing along this traditional Monacan skill to future generations.

If you are searching for a meaningful Christmas gift option for your loved ones, consider purchasing one of Bertie's baskets available for sale in the Monacan Indian Nation Ancestral Museum gift shop.



Display of baskets in the museum.



Paved lane leading to burial grounds and ash garden.

## Recent Grants Fund Improvements for Monacans

Recent grant funding has helped to improve access to the Monacan Tribal Hall, as well as access to the ancestral burial grounds and the Memorial Ash Garden off of Matohe Road. Additional grant money was used to purchase new playground equipment, too.



Newly paved parking area outside of Tribal Hall.



Newly installed playground equipment behind Tribal Hall.



New concrete ramp along backside of Tribal Hall.



Diane Shields and Eleanor Branham try out the new swings.