

Monacan Indian Nation



August 2021

Tribal Newsletter

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

The Monacan Nation continues to move forward, and I believe that we are making history that will benefit the Monacan people for generations to come.

This fall should bring lots of excitement as we hope to break ground in Madison Heights at the Highview Monacan Community Center for our new Elder Center and for the Indian Health Services clinic.

Our folks at the Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank continue to stay busy helping fellow Monacans and members of the community with their food needs. I understand that produce from the garden behind the Food Bank is beginning to be distributed, as well.

And I'm so proud of the work being done in the Tribal Hall and in the Monacan Museum. I appreciate seeing

folks taking time to make a difference for our nation. When we work together, we can accomplish so much.

At our most recent tribal meeting, we voted to look at purchasing a very large parcel of land in Monroe near High Peak Road and Route 29. We discussed many different ways that we could use this land for economic development. We would like to hear your ideas, too. Please join us at our next tribal meeting on August 21 at 11 am at the Highview Monacan Community Center. Information about the meeting will be posted on the *Tribal Members Only* portion of the Monacan Nation website. In September, our tribal meeting will be held on the 18th.

~Chief Kenneth Branham

SCHOLARSHIP HIGHLIGHT

The Virginia Commonwealth Award is available to in-state students accepted at Virginia's two or four year public colleges and universities who demonstrate a financial need as defined by their school. Both undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at least half-time in a degree seeking program are eligible for this award. To apply, students must complete the FAFSA at www.FAFSA.ed.gov. For more information on the Virginia Commonwealth Award, visit

<https://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/tuition-aid-section/undergrad-grad-financial-aid/vcafactsheet.pdf>

CONTACT INFORMATION

Tribal Office: 111 Highview Drive, Madison Heights, VA 24572 • (434) 363-4876

TribalOffice@MonacanNation.com

Monacan Ancestral Museum: 2009 Kenmore Road, Amherst, VA 24521

www.monacannation.com • Facebook: Monacan Indian Nation

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

Monacan Indian Nation Tribal Newsletter Submissions: MonacanNews@gmail.com

Monacan Tribe Explores Foster Care for Native Children

Prior to 1978, native children who were being abused or neglected could be removed from their homes by the state and placed with individuals who would act as foster parents and care for them. Because many states struggled to find adequately qualified and trained native foster parents, these young children were often placed in non-native foster homes. Seeing potential problems with this approach, the federal government passed the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in 1978 to ensure that the child’s federally-recognized tribe and its tribal families were involved when abuse and neglect made it necessary to remove native children from their homes.

Today, states work with federally-recognized tribes to offer the training and licensing necessary to ensure that there are plenty of qualified native individuals ready to foster native children when needed. In late March, three members of the Monacan Tribe attended a Virginia Department of Social Services Roundtable meeting with members of Virginia’s federally-recognized tribes to discuss the process of providing foster care for native children. Since then, our Tribal Council has approved Matt and Sally Latimer to serve as the Indian Child and Welfare Act Coordinators with the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the Monacan Tribe.

The Latimer’s hosted a July meeting for individuals interested in learning about the foster parenting program and hope to host a second meeting in August. Sally Latimer says that it takes about 3 – 6 months to be fully trained and licensed as a foster parent with the state of Virginia. (See **Virginia Foster Home Approval Process** in sidebar.)

Our goal is to be prepared with trained and licensed foster parents ready to serve when it becomes necessary to place a child in a foster home, but keeping children with their parents is preferred, when it is safe. To that end, the Virginia Department of Social Services adheres to the provisions of the Family First Prevention Services Act, signed by President Trump in 2018. This act aims to keep children with their parents by providing federal funding for “mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home parenting skill training” to help parents so their children can safely remain in the home. According to the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Family First Prevention Services Act aims to “keep children safe, strengthen families and reduce the need for foster care whenever it is safe to do so.”

Virginia’s Foster Home Approval Process

Foster care provides a temporary, safe and stable home for children who have been removed from their homes for reasons of neglect, abuse, abandonment, or other issues endangering their health and/or safety. Every effort is made to help children remain with their family; however, sometimes it is necessary for a child to come into foster care and be placed with a foster family.

Foster families provide a safe and stable environment for children while working together with the local department of social services, the child and the child’s family to support birth family reunification. In some cases, if reunification is not possible and the child is not able to return to their home, a child’s relatives may consider being a placement option for them. Foster parents must be at least 18 years of age. They can be single, married, divorced or widowed and have the time and energy to give to a child.

Procedure for becoming an approved foster or kinship family:

- Complete a provider application
- Attend a one-time orientation meeting to learn more about foster care in Virginia
- Complete pre-service training
- Complete a Mutual Family Assessments (MFA) home study
- Submit to a national Fingerprint Criminal Record check, CPS Central Registry search
- Submit documentation regarding health & a tuberculosis screening
- Provide DMV checks
- Provide verification of income/ ability to meet household expenses

(Brochure from the Virginia Department of Social Services Constituent Services)

For more information on becoming a Monacan foster care parent, contact Sally Latimer at the Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank.

Homecoming Hopes to Return First Saturday in October

State restrictions from COVID-19 last fall caused the cancellation of our annual homecoming, and the same thing could happen again this fall, but for now, everyone is hopeful that there will be a Fall 2021 Homecoming on Saturday, October 2. This year's homecoming will look like those of the past with a few exceptions. Just like always, there will be baked goods, canned goods, and some handmade crafts in the downstairs rooms of the Tribal Hall. Upstairs, you will find a delicious, homemade buffet meal with plenty of meats, vegetables, salads, breads and desserts. And, over near the fire place, you will still be able to purchase a ticket for the Virginia state quilt that is going to be raffled off—an annual tradition since the earliest years of the Homecoming.

There is one thing you will not find at this year's homecoming, though. This year's homecoming will not have a scholarship benefit auction. The auction is always a crowd pleaser, but organizers were hesitant to approach local businesses to ask for donations this year since so many businesses have suffered under COVID-19 shutdowns.

Undeterred, Tribal members are busy getting ready for the Homecoming and have been updating the Tribal Hall kitchen and painting walls and trim work in the building.



Newly updated kitchen in Tribal Hall showing new cabinets and flooring.



View of kitchen looking out the window to dining area.

The Monacan Museum has also undergone updates and now has a larger gift shop area with many more items for sale, including items made by Monacan Tribal members.



Items for sale in Monacan Museum gift shop.

As always, the Homecoming promises to be a time to gather together to reminisce over the past and to support the work of our tribe for the future.

Upcoming Tribal Dates



- * August 21 - Tribal Meeting
- * September 18 - Tribal Meeting
- * October 2 – Homecoming

Food Bank Gardeners Seeing the *Fruit of Their Labor*

The late spring work and the care given to those plants so far this summer has begun to yield results. Produce from the Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank garden is beginning to be harvested and sent home with Food Bank clients.



Back in the late spring, the garden area behind the Food Bank was just beginning to take shape. That was then...



This is now....

As reported in our June 2021 newsletter, the Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank was also recently featured in *Harvest—A Newsletter of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank*. With permission, the full-length article is included in this, our August issue, of the Monacan Indian Nation Tribal Newsletter.



Eggplant ready for harvest in the Food Bank garden.



Tomatoes ripening on the vine in the Food Bank garden.

harvest

A NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE AREA FOOD BANK

Honoring Legacy and Building Community

at the Monacan Indian
Nation Food Bank

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Blue Ridge Area
FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.





The Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank (MINFB) team.

We're All ONE,

WE'RE ALL CONNECTED

*Honoring legacy and
building community
at the Monacan Indian
Nation Food Bank*

At the Monacan Indian Nation Food Bank (MINFB), co-director Sally Latimer was getting ready for another busy day serving clients at their Madison Heights location, across the James River from Lynchburg.

"It'll take a lifetime to give back all that was given to me," Sally reflected.

The day we visited, the dynamic women running MINFB provided groceries to 30 families from the Monacan Nation and the surrounding community. "Among Native American tribes, the Monacans are known for being very hospitable and providing a very welcoming spread of food for their guests," observed Sally over a lunch that the pantry staff provided their Food Bank visitors. The food is as important as the connections and conversations sparked when people pick up groceries or the MINFB team delivers them.

Patricia, a client who had to stop working a year ago to take care of her three grandchildren, said of the women who run MINFB, "[They] have become my friends. I'm home a lot and don't get out, but I look forward to coming here."

Meet two of the hunger heroes who feed their community's spirit through their work at MINFB.

Meet Sally

When Sally reopened MINFB in 2018, she wanted to help her tribe. One in four Native Americans is food insecure (a higher rate than for any other race or ethnicity in the U.S.), and Monacans, she said, have long been discriminated against in rural Amherst County.

But she also wanted to encourage unity and understanding. After all, Sally knew what it was like to be hungry. About a decade earlier, her husband died, and she became the sole provider for her young son (now grown, pictured with Sally on the front cover). She struggled to cover their bills.



“There’s a stereotype that people who visit food pantries are lazy,” she said. “The majority of the people that we serve are working people.”

Sally and her MINFB teammates deliver groceries if someone is sick or elderly. They call clients every week to check in and confirm appointments. They host dinners for elders and hope to start a hot meals delivery program in low-income neighborhoods. *(The Food Bank has granted MINFB funds to help purchase a truck in support of this effort; learn more about our investments in the network on pages 4–5.)*

“Every time I hand a bag of food to someone, it’s me giving back just a tiny bit of what was given to me,” Sally said.

Meet Jennifer

As co-director, Jennifer sees endless potential to reach her tribe and the wider Amherst County community. She planted a garden with traditional Monacan staples like Tutelo strawberry corn and amaranth, which they’ll distribute at harvest.



Traditionally, the Monacans are gardeners, and Jennifer hopes to expand the plot, plant fruit trees, and create a seedling program. Growing food gives back to the earth, she said, which reflects Monacan beliefs:

“We’re all one. From the insects that crawl to the birds that fly, we’re all connected.”

The distributions are also a way for the Monacan tribe to stay connected. “COVID has taken its toll on our social lives,” she said. “[Regarding] some of the older people, we’re some of the only people that they get to see for that week, so we’ll sit down, have conversations with them...and make sure they’re doing OK.”

Sally and Jennifer are quick to explain that they and the three other women running MINFB are equal partners. We celebrate them *all*.



To learn more about our network of pantry partners and program sites, visit www.brafb.org/about-us/how-we-work.



Monacan Tribal Homeland

As the Food Bank marks 40 years of serving the Blue Ridge region, we humbly acknowledge that Monacan ancestors inhabited this region for more than 10,000 years. The earliest written histories of Virginia state that in 1607, the Monacan people and their Mannahoac allies were arranged in a confederation ranging from the Roanoke River Valley to the Potomac River and from the Fall Line at Richmond and Fredericksburg west through the Blue Ridge Mountains. A federally recognized tribe, the Monacan Nation has more than 2,000 citizens today.

Source: The official website of the Monacan Nation (www.monacannation.com)

Meet “Aunt Bertie”

Bertie, 78, has cared for others for as long as she can remember. Growing up with a single mother, she helped raise her four younger siblings.

Long before the pandemic forced the closure of the Monacan Indian Living History Exhibit at Natural Bridge State Park, Bertie worked as an interpreter, cook, and gardener. Now she’s living on a fixed income, and MINFB has become a lifesaver. “I don’t have to worry about trying to get food anymore.”



Affectionately referred to as “Aunt Bertie” by the women running MINFB, this matriarch uses the groceries she receives to help feed her 15 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren, and 7 great-great-grandchildren, some of whom she looks after every day.

“That’s what life is all about: helping each other and taking care of each other,” she said.