

# Past, Present and Future: Exploring and Restoring Native Perspectives on Roanoke and the Chesapeake

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The seeds of racial discrimination [and] separation of people crossed the ocean with the invaders... Unfortunately, those seeds grew and infected the nation with much destruction for my people. Chief G. Anne 'Little Fawn' Richardson, Rappahannock Tribe.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

For historians, the words of Thomas Harriot and the watercolours of John White have long served as the principle window into native life in North Carolina as encountered by the English settlers. Their words and images, however, provide at best a brief and biased snapshot of regional native cultures, belying the complexity and the diachronic continuum of native identities. Physical data from contact-period Algonquian sites ground and complicate the portraits drawn by White and Harriot, while native understandings challenge scholarly assumptions and notions of historical 'truth'. For example, while the fate of the lost Roanoke settlers may remain a mystery to scholars, there is no lack of certainty for members of North Carolina's state-recognized tribal groups. They know that the colonists were absorbed into native society by their ancestors, as noted by Christopher Oakley: 'every Indian community in the state has, at one time or another claimed a relationship to the ill-fated settlement'.<sup>2</sup> Reliance on the documentary and pictorial record over alternative historical sources and narratives impedes the aim of moving beyond European visions to acknowledging the cacophony of past and present American voices. For a more complete understanding of the meaning and ongoing significance of the John White watercolours to emerge, the contributions of archaeology and the voices of the descendant communities must be taken into consideration. This discussion therefore prioritizes consideration of the tangible physical evidence about 16th-century native life and addresses the more intangible complexities of contemporary native identities and their connections with the past.

### On the eve of colonization

Evidence from Late Woodland and protohistoric period sites (the Late Woodland phase in eastern North America prehistory is generally dated from c. 900 until c.1500, the protohistoric from 1500–1607) in the wider Roanoke region reflect and complicate the White illustrations and the texts of Harriot and later Virginia commentators including John Smith, Henry Spelman and William Strachey (Fig. 1). These commentators agree on the presence of highly stratified native societies, dependent on horticulture, and by the 1580s, well accustomed to European contacts. In general, Algonquian-speaking polities in the North Carolina and Virginia coastal plain shared a similar settlement pattern that included intensive use of fertile soils alongside navigable rivers in inland areas, and intensive use of the sandy loam uplands in the outer coastal plain.

Primary native settlements were centred around towns, some occupied seasonally and others on a year-round basis, supported by a range of seasonal resource-collection sites. The towns themselves were often highly dispersed. It is worth noting that while the size of these settlements clearly varied from what might traditionally be termed hamlets and villages to larger towns, some of today's Virginia Indians prefer that the settlements of their ancestors be referred to as towns, as expressed in a statement issued by the former chair of the Virginia Council on Indians in 2006: 'Terms like "village" or "hamlet" consistently applied to Native American communities imply that our towns were primitive or quaint'.<sup>3</sup>

One can also extrapolate Native settlement patterns from looking at subsequent English settlement, as places described as 'Indian Fields' in Virginia and North Carolina were routinely acquired and planted with colonists in the 17th century. This pattern continued in Maryland, with the establishment of the principal settlement, St Mary's City, atop a native town.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the lack of any native settlement on what became known as Jamestown Island doubtless served as an encouragement to the English settlers in 1607. Although the settlers' decision to make their permanent base on the swampy Jamestown Island has often been derided, the site was defensible from Spanish attack through its position on the James River, as well as being uninhabited. Recent finds of Late Woodland materials underlying James Fort period deposits, including a nearly complete Townsend cooking pot, suggest that the island had not been long abandoned before English arrival.<sup>5</sup> The likelihood of a cleared and open landscape on the

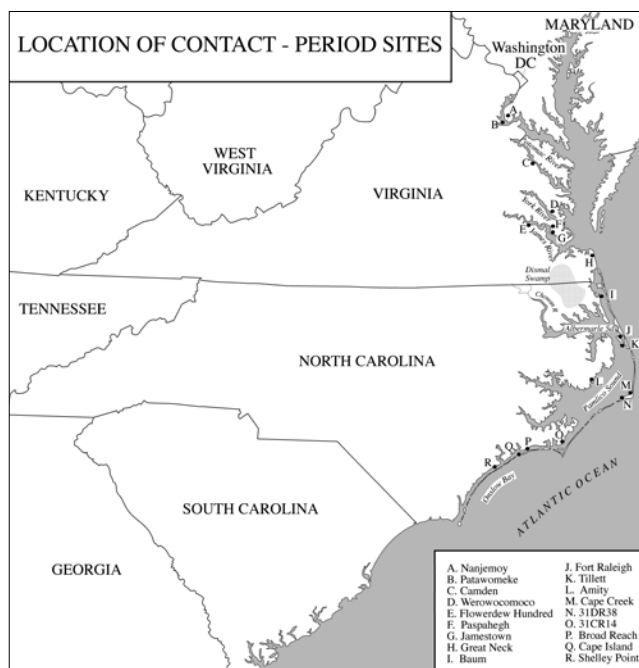


Figure 1 Location of sites discussed in this chapter

island must have enhanced the appeal of the site for the English. Another possibility is that Jamestown Island, like Roanoke, was only being used on a seasonal basis. Happening on both locales when they were temporarily uninhabited, the English settlers presumed a lack of occupation and hence ownership, as they would have understood it.

By the time of the arrival of the English at Jamestown in 1607, native society in the Virginia coastal plain was organized as a paramount chiefdom, with Chief Powhatan, or Wahunsenacawh, exerting leadership over 32 individual polities in a territory encompassing more than 6,500 square miles from northern North Carolina, to the Eastern Shore, as far north as the Potomac River and as far west as the fall line, marking the transition between the coastal plain and the Piedmont region.<sup>6</sup> Ethnohistoric accounts suggest that this polity was known as Tsenacommacah to its members, and in anthropological terms, represented an unequal stratified society or complex stateless society. Population estimates for Tsenacommacah range from 13,000 to 22,000 at the time of English arrival, figures that may or may not reflect population densities before the effects of European exploration began to be felt. Despite the richness of the ethnohistoric data in describing the social complexity of the Powhatan world, until recently little had been revealed archaeologically to support the long-term presence of a paramount chiefdom in the Coastal Plain region.<sup>7</sup> Most scholars therefore argued for the relative newness of Tsenacommacah as a polity encouraged and established by Wahunsenacawh himself, with European contact possibly serving as a catalyst through encouraging regional alliances and providing a new set of prestige goods.<sup>8</sup> However, recent archaeological research in Virginia is beginning to de-centre European influences on native social complexity by revealing indigenous societal change occurring in the centuries preceding European expansion.<sup>9</sup>

Before considering this evidence, it should be noted that the following discussion of the Virginia coastal plain is not intended to imply that the Virginia Powhatan case can adequately stand for that of the Weapomeoc, Chowanoke, Secotan, Roanoke, Croatoan, and other documented North Carolina Algonquian-speaking peoples, believed to have been organized into about nine separate polities.<sup>10</sup> Nor does it imply that we can uncritically read the John White watercolours as readily applicable to the protohistoric Chesapeake societies. There was undoubtedly a range of recognizable differences between all of the Algonquian-speaking peoples who once occupied the region that we now divide between Virginia and North Carolina, even though those differences are as yet poorly understood.

Direct contact between Europeans and the Indians living in the eastern North Carolina and Virginia region is usually traced to the mid-16th century, when a Spanish Jesuit mission was established on the York River during the period 1570–2. However, Spanish, English, French, and Portuguese vessels began extensively plying the waters of the Atlantic and the eastern coast of North America from the late 15th century, precipitating the first regional contacts between Europeans and natives.<sup>11</sup> The effects of Spanish colonization were probably felt not long after Juan Ponce de León's 1513 landing on the coast of Florida, while Hernando de Soto's 1539–43 brutal westward expedition has been linked to major

alterations in the social structure of a number of southeastern Indian tribes. De Soto's mission has been described as a 'biological wrecking ball', although it should be pointed out that this assertion is not supported by known mortuary evidence.<sup>12</sup> Spanish reports from the establishment of the York River mission refer to famine and death experienced by local native communities.<sup>13</sup> Their observation can be linked not to the impact of European disease, but to the existence of a protracted drought revealed by dendrochronological analysis of bald cypress trees along the Blackwater and Nottoway rivers. Tree-ring data indicate that rainfall during the growing season was well below average between 1562 and 1571. Periods of extreme drought were also identified for the years 1587–9, corresponding to the struggles of the Roanoke colony, and between 1607–12, relating to the so-called 'Starving Time' at Jamestown.<sup>14</sup> Arguably, the continued willingness of scholars today to uncritically accept the notion that European diseases rapidly decimated native societies constitutes an *a priori* denial of native contributions to post-contact American society, as well as continuity in native identities. Like so many other aspects of scholarship on the contact period, the issue of biological impact has reverberations in the present.

Excavations at Werowocomoco, the seat of the Powhatan *mamanatowick* (paramount chief) and the setting for John Smith's tale of his dramatic rescue by Wahunsenacawh's daughter Pocahontas (which, if it actually occurred, was almost undoubtedly an adoption ritual rather than rescue)<sup>15</sup> are providing the most complete and convincing evidence for the existence of a complex, stratified society in the region well before the arrival of Europeans. Located on Purtan Bay on the York River, the site was visited by the English six times between 1607 and 1609, when Wahunsenacawh left the village and headed inland to the town of Orapaks, near present-day Richmond. As described by John Smith, the chief's house was spatially separated from the principal village, which housed a population of around 133 to 200 persons. The discovery of two parallel ditch features running for at least 210m and separating the riverside from an area of higher ground are believed to relate to above-ground earthworks. The dates for the Werowocomoco ditches, derived from radiocarbon as well as artefact types, indicate continued use from the 13th century into the 17th century.

Powhatan's house was likely on the rise east of the ditches, separate from the village site itself and on higher ground. The symbolism of this placement would have been readily understood not only by members of Tsenacommacah, but also by the English. Social and political hierarchy expressed through architecture and landscape was well established in the cultural grammar of late-medieval England. The character of the site as encountered by the English appears to have great time depth, thus the cultural complexity of protohistoric Tsenacommacah cannot be read as a response to European incursions. Werowocomoco was clearly a dominant centre of spiritual and political power in the past. In the present, as noted by the Werowocomoco Research Group (which includes Powhatan descendants), 'the site also encompasses a historical setting that, for contemporary Virginia Indian communities, is charged with political authority and sacred power'.<sup>16</sup> Turning back to the White watercolours from North Carolina, similar manipulations of landscape can be intuited from the careful

spatial separation of activity areas evident in the painting of Secotan, while the double-palisaded entry depicted by White for Pomeiooc could be understood as directing the path of those entering the village (Figs 2–3).

Documentary and archaeological sources indicate that native Algonquian towns in North Carolina incorporated a range of 10 to 30 houses, with populations of 120 to 200 persons, dependent in part on maize cultivation.<sup>17</sup> While more contact-period Algonquian sites have been examined in Virginia than in eastern North Carolina, there are several important excavations that are adding to understanding of native life in the Roanoke region. One example is the Amity site (31HY43), located in Hyde County.<sup>18</sup> Scatters of Colington-phase ceramics (associated with Algonquian settlements, dated c. 800–1650) in association with European goods initially supported the possibility that the Amity site was the contact-period village of Pomeiooc.<sup>19</sup> Further excavation unearthed evidence for a palisade as well as two houses, measuring 46ft by 21ft (14.02m by 6.40m) and 30ft by 20ft (9.14m by 6.09m). While the site was ultimately dated to the mid-17th century, its physical characteristics appear rooted in the Late Woodland period, complementing the White depictions and suggesting post-contact cultural continuity.

The archaeological traces of the houses, or *yahecan*s, present within the Amity site and other Algonquian villages differ from their depiction by John White. While White portrays the longhouses as rectangles with flat faces, their archaeological signature shows the structures to be subrectangular or oval in shape. Marked by patterns of post moulds, the soil stains from where thin structural posts (usually bent saplings) intruded into the ground, the structures vary in size and in the presence of internal divisions. One of the Amity houses included post-mould evidence suggestive of the presence of benches, presumably for sleeping, sitting, and storage, placed along the long walls of the dwelling.<sup>20</sup> Experimental archaeology indicates that the houses, built by lashing together bent saplings, are self-supporting and thus may need to be of this rounded shape for stability.<sup>21</sup> Thomas Harriot described the houses as ‘made of small poles made fast

at the tops’ and constructed ‘in rounde forme after the maner as is used in many arbories in our gardens of England’.<sup>22</sup> White also alludes to this construction technique in describing the Pomeiooc buildings as ‘all compassed about with smale poles stock thick together in stedd of a wall’, yet deviates from a more accurate depiction through showing the structures with flat faces and angled corners. Arguably, by giving the houses corners, White is to some degree anglicizing them – making them appear familiar as dwellings and in so doing, urging his audience to regard their occupants as ‘familiar’ (Fig. 4).

While White may have anglicized elliptical native houses in northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia, it is worth noting that Late Woodland-period rectangular structures have been unearthed in Carteret and Onslow counties, North Carolina. The Shelly Point site (31CR53) includes traces of a rectangular structure, while a site on Cape Island in Onslow County also exhibits a rectangular post-mould pattern.<sup>23</sup> Excavations at the Broad Reach site (31CR281) unearthed post-mould patterns for dozens of structures exhibiting a complex array of architectural forms ranging from rectangular to oval to completely round. The archaeological and ethnohistoric data on these southern North Carolina coastal sites indicate cultural dynamism, with no clear consensus among scholars as to whether the inhabitants were Algonquian, Siouan or Iroquoian. The rectangular houses may be hinting at significant cultural differences between these groups and those in the Roanoke region. Alternatively, John White may have been extrapolating from one of possibly many house types encountered in the Carolina Algonquin heartland, or as suggested, merely translating the shape for English eyes.

While the Amity site was later interpreted as a 17th-century seasonal settlement, the presence of a stockade supports the White painting and other ethnohistoric descriptions of Algonquian towns. For example, the early 18th-century commentator Robert Beverley observed of the Virginia natives:

Their Fortifications consist only of a Palisado, of about ten or twelve foot high; and when they would make themselves very safe, they treble the Pale. They often encompass their whole Town: But for the most part only their Kings Houses, and as many others as they judge sufficient to harbour all their People, when an Enemy



Figure 2 (left) Secotan, John White (BM 1906,0509.1.7)



Figure 3 (right) Pomeiooc, John White (BM 1906,0509.1.8)

comes against them. They never fail to secure within their Palisado, all their Religious Reliques, and the Remains of their Princes. Within this Inclosure, they likewise take care to have a supply of Water, and to make a place for a Fire, which they frequently dance round with great solemnity.<sup>24</sup>

The function of the Amity stockade, only 16m in diameter, may have served as an occasional retreat, as suggested by the Beverley description. Another possible function for the palisades may be protection against predators.<sup>25</sup> Alternatively, the spatial separation provided by the palisade may have related to social status or spiritual beliefs. For example, a small palisade at the Patawomeke site, a protohistoric village on the Potomac River in northern Virginia, enclosed two ossuaries and a small possible mortuary structure.<sup>26</sup>

The more sizable defensive features depicted by White and revealed archaeologically at a range of Virginia sites may have become a necessity because of increasing European contacts or because of occasional conflict between native polities. Algonquian villages in the North Carolina coastal region were threatened by the aggressiveness of the expanding Powhatan paramount chiefdom to the north, as well as by sporadic conflict with Siouan and Iroquoian groups immediately to the west. Protohistoric Siouan-speaking groups in the North Carolina region include the Monacans and Manahoacs, while Iroquoian-speaking peoples include the Tuscarora, Meherrin, and Nottoway. Certainly the Chesapeake Indians had good reason to palisade their principal town. The Chesapeake homeland was located close to what are now the boundaries of Virginia and North Carolina. Unusually for the Virginia coastal region, the Chesapeake resisted incorporation into the Powhatan paramount chiefdom, but paid dearly for their resistance. The Chesapeake people were reportedly wiped out

by Powhatan forces in 1607, around the time of the Jamestown settlement. Excavations in the 1980s on the west bank of Broad Bay near Lynnhaven Inlet, within the city of Virginia Beach, unearthed the most likely candidate for the principal Chesapeake settlement. Designated 44VB7 and known as the Great Neck site, excavations revealed the presence of a timber palisade, dwellings, and burials.<sup>27</sup> Like White's painting of Pomieoc, the longhouses at Great Neck were situated parallel to the principal palisade. Like the Amity site structures, the longhouses were subrectangular to oval in shape, rather than rectangular.

Visits by Ralph Lane and by Thomas Harriot with the Chesapeake people are well documented. The positive relations between the Chesapeake and the English, to the extent that White was intent on settling in their territory in 1586, have led to speculation about their role in the fate of the 'Lost Colony'. Research by David Beers Quinn suggested that the survivors moved closer to the Chesapeake, affiliating themselves with the Chesapeake. Alden Vaughan has further asserted that the lost colonists 'melded during the next two decades with neighboring natives to produce, to some extent, an ethnically and culturally mixed society',<sup>28</sup> although it should be noted that there is no undisputed documentary or archaeological evidence to ground this possibility. Whatever the character of relations between the Chesapeake people and the lost colonists, the Chesapeake must have been well aware of the dangers of opposing the Powhatan polity, as underscored by the archaeological evidence for the incorporation of defensive elements into the town at Great Neck. Virginia's palisaded native sites are all located in zones of potential conflict, often near the boundaries of the Powhatan sphere of influence.<sup>29</sup> Patawomeke, for example, was on the northerly edge of the

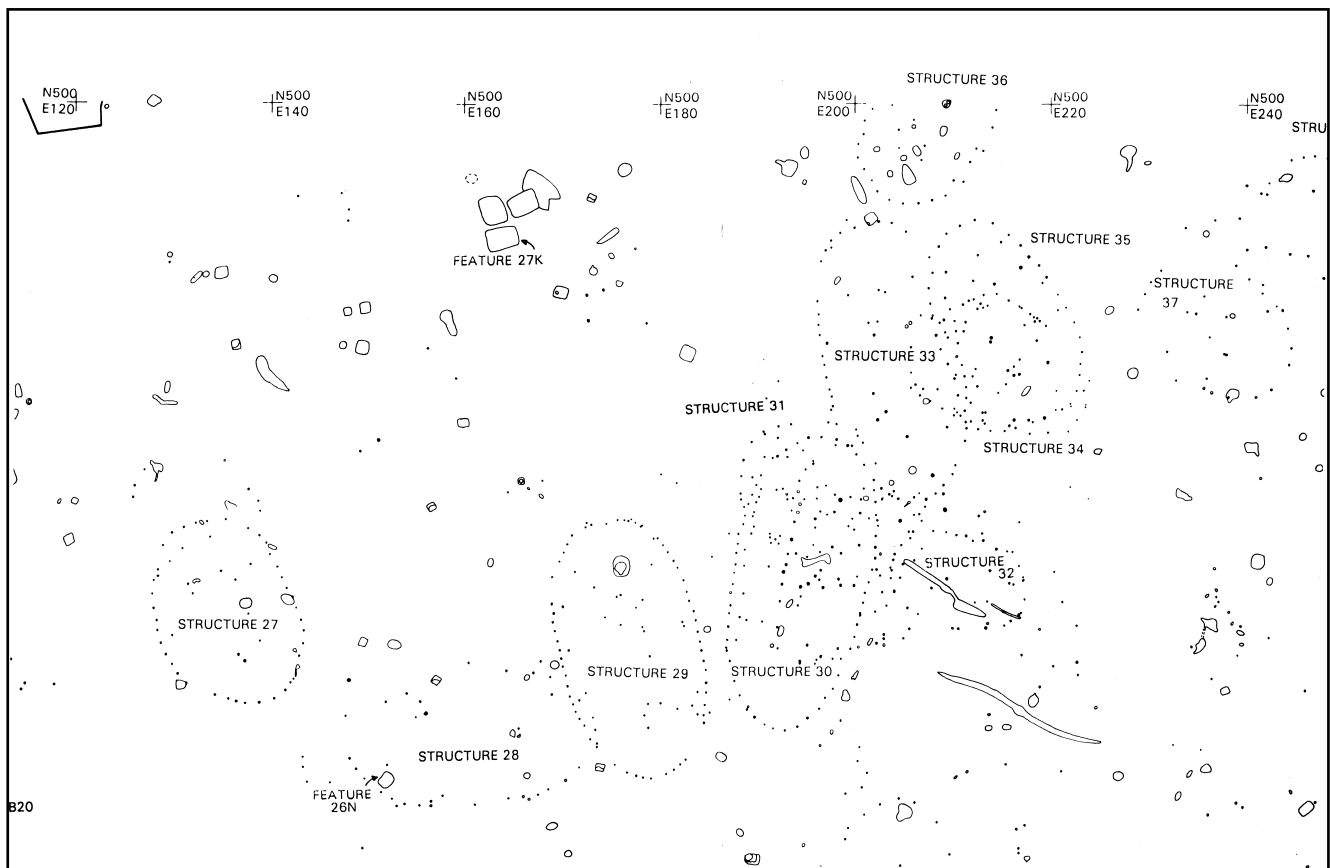


Figure 4 Postmould patterns from the Algonquian Paspahgh site, Virginia (James River Archaeology)

Powhatan world, and most likely populated by recent emigrants to the region, while the Buck site in Charles City County was associated with the Chickahominy, a polity physically located in the Powhatan heartland that nevertheless successfully resisted incorporation.<sup>30</sup>

Returning to North Carolina, archaeological projects searching for the principal settlement of the Croatoan have concentrated on a range of prehistoric and 17th-century deposits at the native Cape Creek site in Buxton, on Hatteras Island.<sup>31</sup> The site appears to have supported occupation from c. 500 into the 18th century, and may have accommodated 10 to 15 dwellings in the protohistoric period.<sup>32</sup> Work by David Phelps at Cape Creek in the 1990s included the discovery of a 16th-century signet ring bearing the insignia of the Kendall family. Although viewed by many as concrete evidence for the presence of Roanoke colonists at Buxton (a Kendall was part of the Lane colony), the ring itself was recovered from a mid-17th-century context. The fact that the ring appeared to be highly curated (worn and missing much of its shank) suggests that it may have been an heirloom dating back to the Roanoke colony but passed down through Croatoan family lines.<sup>33</sup> More important than the ring is the evidence for long-term native use of the Buxton vicinity, use that can be attributed to the historic Croatan Indians and their ancestors. Excavations in 2006 concentrated on a household midden dating to the Late Woodland period and potentially still in use in the 1580s.<sup>34</sup>

North Carolina and Virginia Algonquian sites are also often characterized by the presence of ossuaries – effectively pits filled with secondary deposits of disarticulated human remains.<sup>35</sup> Such ossuary burials represent a common feature of Late Woodland Algonquian society up and down the East coast, as well as a powerful symbol for contestation in the present. Significant numbers of Algonquian ossuaries were excavated during the 20th century, often with little to no consideration of the concerns of Native descendant communities. Policies regarding the treatment, repatriation, and reburial of the human remains from these excavations vary from region to region, as do native attitudes towards the future of these assemblages and towards the value or sacrilege of osteoarchaeological analysis. While keeping these concerns in mind, the following discussion will nevertheless focus first upon the interpretation of ossuary evidence, considered in light of John White's depiction of an Algonquian mortuary house and Thomas Harriot's description of mortuary practices. Prioritizing the consideration of the evidence itself is not intended to downplay contemporary sensitivities, but rather to acknowledge that mortuary data provide an invaluable key to unlock the complexities of the past native societies that underpin contemporary native identities.

The use of ossuaries by eastern Algonquian societies corresponds well with the ethnohistoric descriptions of the storage of the defleshed remains of priests, *werowances*, and other elite individuals in special structures as painted and described by John White: 'the tombe of their Cherounse or cheife personages, their flesh clene taken of from the bones save the skynn and heare of their heads, the flesh is dried and enfolded in matts laide at their feete ...'. While White's description has been taken to imply that the preserved remains of the priests were stored permanently in the 'temples',<sup>36</sup> it is clear from burial evidence that many if not most individuals

whose remains were initially stored above ground were ultimately interred. Evidence from ossuary burials at the Patawomeke site, for example, underscore the above-ground storage of human remains before interment through the recovery of mud-dauber's nests within excavated crania.<sup>37</sup> Closer examination of the White depiction reveals the presence of reed chests, painted red, in the rear of the building. These chests most likely were used to store dried and disarticulated human remains before inhumation. The recovery of human bones exhibiting mat impressions and red staining from the Baum site, discussed below, confirms the detail in the White watercolour.<sup>38</sup>

Known North Carolina ossuaries include between 42 and 145 individuals. The North Carolina coastal ossuaries, like Algonquian ossuaries elsewhere, include the remains of male and female individuals of all ages.<sup>39</sup> A radiocarbon date of 1168 retrieved from the excavation of a small ossuary at the Broad Reach site (31CR281) hints at the possibility of a long continuity in burial practice, and by extension cultural beliefs, in the coastal North Carolina region. The ossuary at Broad Reach included the remains of 10 individuals in the form of bundle burials, consistent with the storage of bones above ground in a mortuary house.<sup>40</sup> The Broad Reach evidence has been used to interpret 'a series of dynamic mortuary processes, whereby the remains of the deceased were physically moved through one or more treatment stages before final interment'.<sup>41</sup>

Excavations between 1972 and 1983 at the Baum Site (31CK9), located on Currituck Sound in Currituck, North Carolina, uncovered three Colington-phase ossuaries.<sup>42</sup> Two of the ossuaries included panther bones (portions of a muzzle and claws), possibly indicating that the human remains had been wrapped in or laid out on top of panther skins within a charnel house. Panthers appear as religious symbols associated with higher status individuals in many southeastern North American cultures.<sup>43</sup> Osteoarchaeological analysis identified one individual who was suffering from a treponemal facial infection, as indicated by the presence of healed and unhealed lesions on the cranium. Similarly, the skeletal remains of an individual excavated at the Cape Creek site (31DR1) on Hatteras Island exhibit cranial lesions as well as evidence for infection throughout much of the body. Treponemal lesions indicate the presence of syphilis, most likely the non-venereal, childhood strain known as endemic syphilis or bejel, or more commonly as yaws. Such a condition was painful and disfiguring, but not necessarily fatal. Any discussion of the significance of the pathological data gleaned from osteoarchaeological examination of Algonquian ossuaries must also consider the social context of illness and healing. For every individual that suffered from a condition quantifiable through skeletal pathology, there was a family, kin group or community that facilitated the recovery of that person. Furthermore, the burial context suggests that these individuals were not treated as social pariahs because of their evident physical problems, but rather were accorded treatment akin to non-afflicted individuals. Illness did not impact on one's place in the social hierarchy as reflected through burial practices.

Several other Late Woodland Colington-phase sites have also yielded evidence for ossuaries, including the Tillet site (31DR35) on Roanoke Island, a site on Hatteras Island (31DR38), a village site on the Chowan River (31CO5) and sites

in Currituck County (31CK9) and Carteret County (31CR14).<sup>44</sup> David Phelps has suggested that a common feature in the placement of ossuaries in Colington-phase villages is on the periphery or just outside of a village. It should also be noted that mortuary practices in the Late Woodland Algonquian societies included non-ossuary burials, as at the Tillett site on Roanoke Island, where a flexed inhumation and a secondary bundle burial were recorded.<sup>45</sup> While John White's watercolour of the mortuary house represents a snapshot in time in one locale, the archaeological record of sites occupied over hundreds of years reveals continuity in the practice of ossuary burial as well as variability in custom, possibly according to social status, family custom or variation over time.

Complexity appears to be the hallmark of mortuary custom in eastern Virginia as well, with the suggestion that variability in practice increased during the protohistoric period. Maryland archaeologist Dennis Curry has recently summarized the excavation of nearly 40 ossuaries in Tidewater Maryland, providing a context for interpreting data from North Carolina sites. Some of the features incorporated the remains of up to 600 individuals, speaking to a considerable time depth and continuity for Late Woodland complex society. First, and concurring with the observations of Harriot and White as well as Phelps' observations from North Carolina, the ossuaries tended to be found in association with village sites, albeit separate from habitation areas. Second, osteoarchaeological examination of the human remains highlight the commonality of dental caries related to a diet relying on maize, as well as the common occurrence of fractured bones. As was the case at the Baum site discussed earlier, evidence for treponemal infection was in evidence in the majority of the ossuaries.<sup>46</sup>

The ossuary data from Maryland suggests a range of pre-interment treatments ranging from the scaffold burial and storage in a mortuary house recorded by White and Harriot, to in-ground interment, to cremation. One site, Nanjemoy Creek ossuary 3, was situated next to the traces of a 6m-wide structure that has been interpreted as a mortuary house akin to that depicted by White. A calibrated radiocarbon date was obtained from a charcoal sample within a post mould of this structure that pinpoints its use to c. 1447.<sup>47</sup> Ethnographic sources do not mention cremation, yet 45% of the ossuaries examined by Curry contain evidence for the burial of cremated remains, most likely wrapped in bundles akin to the burial of remains previously stored above ground. The differential treatment of human remains before their interment in an ossuary may reflect the individual's personal status in life, further evidence that supports the stratified character of Algonquian society. What remains unanswered, however, is exactly what status is indicated by ossuary burial as opposed to primary inhumation or nonburial.

Most of the ossuaries examined by Curry were excavated in the early to mid-20th century, a formative period in American archaeology when the concerns of Indian communities were rarely considered, particularly given the concomitant struggle of native people in the southeast against the legislated denial of their Indian heritage. Photographic images of the excavations reveal the casual treatment of human remains and hint at extensive loss of data. One of the few professionals involved in the Maryland ossuary excavations was the Smithsonian anthropologist T. Dale Stewart, well known for advancing

forensic archaeology but also for filling up the museum stores with thousands of Native American skeletal remains during his tenure from 1924 until 1971. Virginia and Maryland tribal descendants cannot claim these remains under the provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), first because the legislation does not apply to the Smithsonian, and second because NAGPRA claims can only be made by federally-recognized tribal communities.

Although the human remains from the North Carolina ossuaries discussed above have not been reburied by contemporary Native Americans, Virginia Indian groups have been organized and vocal regarding repatriation and re-interment of affiliated human remains held by repositories other than the Smithsonian. For example, the Nansemond tribe successfully lobbied the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) to repatriate the 64 burials unearthed at the Great Neck site, stressing the documented relations between the protohistoric Nansemond and the Chesapeake. Led by Nansemond Chief Emeritus Oliver Perry, a ceremony was held to mark reburial at First Landing/ Seashore State Park in 1997.<sup>48</sup> Similar cooperation between state organizations and Virginia's First People regarding repatriation and reburial is evident in the re-interment of human remains excavated at the protohistoric Paspahugh settlement of Cinquoteck, near Jamestown, and ongoing discussions over the repatriation of Chickahominy human remains uncovered during surveys along the Chickahominy River in the 1960s.<sup>49</sup>

Artefacts found in association with protohistoric burials reflect the stratified nature of Algonquian societies. The copper gorgets depicted by White have clear archaeological counterparts in the recovery of gorgets and tubular copper beads from burials. Three (one primary and two secondary) of the 21 burials excavated at the extensive Paspahugh town of Cinquoteck contained copper artefacts including tubular beads and pendants. Compositional analysis of the 31 copper objects revealed that 23 were made from European copper, possibly traded through native groups in the southeast or obtained directly from the Jamestown settlers.<sup>50</sup> Native sources for copper include sites in central and western Virginia and the Appalachian Mountains, as well as the Great Lakes. (See Karen O. Kupperman's paper in this collection.) The religious and social significance of copper in part dictated the relations between the eastern Algonquians and the Siouan and Iroquoian peoples who controlled the flow of copper.<sup>51</sup> Little wonder that the availability of European copper was viewed by Wahunsenacawh as a means to further cement and expand his power base through reducing Powhatan reliance upon the Siouan Monacans and Manahoacs.

New evidence from the ongoing excavations at the site of the James Fort on Jamestown Island, sponsored by the Association for the Preservation for Virginia Antiquities, highlights the initial importance of the copper trade between the English and the Powhatans.<sup>52</sup> Long recognized as a critical element in expressions of rank in Powhatan society, copper was a preciousness underscoring Powhatan power in the Chesapeake and beyond. Most likely based on the reports of Harriot, the Jamestown colonists recognized the cultural significance of copper and came prepared to manufacture copper ornaments as well as shell beads. Waste from the production of such items has been recovered from even the earliest of deposits at

Jamestown. Indeed, the flooding of the market with English copper may have ensured the survival of the English in the early years of the colony.<sup>53</sup> However, the influx destabilized the native trade and political order.<sup>54</sup> The rapid devaluation of copper was noted by John Smith: 'We gave them liberty to truck with or trade at their pleasures. But in short time, it followed, that could not be had for a pound of copper, which before was sold for an ounce. Thus ambition, and sufferance, cut the throat of our trade.'<sup>55</sup> Smith's observation is supported by an analysis of the copper artefacts from Jamestown and surrounding sites, conducted by Seth Mallios and Shane Emmett. They noted the rapid drop in demand for English copper following the initial flooding of the market, '... the devaluation of copper in Algonquian society transformed the elasticity of demand. Native demand for copper became price inelastic; it remained minimal even though supply decreased drastically.'<sup>56</sup>

The every day material culture associated with Algonquian Late Woodland sites includes a range of recognizable ceramics. The conoidal-base cooking pots depicted by White were coil-built using local clays mixed with crushed and burned shell as a temper. While never quite the enormous size seen in the Theodor de Bry engravings, archaeological examples from North Carolina include pots with rim diameters of up to 40cm. In addition to the cooking pots, Algonquian potters produced round and flat based jars, bowls, and small cups and dippers.<sup>57</sup> The exteriors were often incised, fabric impressed or simple stamped. The appearance of these ceramics (known as Colington) in North Carolina during the Late Woodland period may be indicative of the late intrusion of Algonquian groups into the region from the north.<sup>58</sup> Colington ceramics were excavated from 16th-century deposits on Roanoke Island in the 1950s, and during the investigations in the 1980s and 1990s that unearthed traces of the 1585–86 workshop of Joachim Ganz. A total of 782 native pottery sherds, including some from the Cashie series, associated with Iroquoian-speaking Tuscarora people in the inner coastal plain, were recovered. Seventy-seven percent of the sherds were derived from several cooking pots, which likely made their way into English assemblages not just as useful pots for cooking and for scientific experiments, but also as containers filled with Indian foodstuffs. The Cashie wares may relate to trips to the interior, or to inter-tribal trade.<sup>59</sup>

Stone tools associated with Late Woodland Algonquian sites include triangular projectile points, for tipping arrows made of wood or reeds, hafted triangular knives and a range of specialized tools such as drills and scrapers. Although Harriot argued for an absence of stone in the Roanoke vicinity, local sites have yielded projectile points fashioned from jaspers, which appear in pebble and cobble form on the Outer Banks.<sup>60</sup> Throughout the Virginia Tidewater region, native peoples principally relied on quartz and quartzite for their flaked tools, rather than the more easily worked flints and cherts found in other regions. While some of this 'exotic' material did make its way into the coastal plain, native flintknappers overwhelmingly relied on local materials. In considering the far-flung extent of trade for copper, it is clear that the Algonquian peoples did possess the long-distance connections to acquire such materials. That they chose instead to concentrate their long-distance procurement efforts on copper

again illustrates its religious and socio-political significance.

Native peoples enjoyed a rich material life that employed a range of organic materials that seldom survive archaeologically. How many of the thousands of marginella shell beads that have been excavated from Algonquian sites once decorated long-decayed leather items, such as the famed Powhatan's mantle, can only be guessed at. Powhatan's mantle, which consists of four deer hides sown together with sinew and decorated in marginella shells depicting the figure of a human, 2 quadrupeds, and 30 shell discs, is believed to have been collected by John Tradescant the Younger in Virginia in 1637. The object now serves as a centrepiece in the Ashmolean museum in Oxford. Another 17th-century Algonquian artefact in the Ashmolean is an arrow-shaped, leather pouch decorated with nearly 6,000 shells. Designed to be folded and worn over a belt, this surviving pouch was one of several in the Tradescant 'cabinet of curiosities', providing a tantalizing hint of the variety and quality of Algonquian leather and bead work.

Algonquian people were also skilled woodworkers, as attested to by occasional finds of canoes and by the White depictions not just of canoes but also of carved figurines and wooden platters. Other organic items that can generally only be inferred from archaeological data are baskets and textiles. Indirect evidence for basketry techniques can be found in pottery impressions, while scant traces of the waterproof mats woven by native women (according to the ethnohistoric record) have been recovered. A Middle Woodland period cremation burial at the Baum site was found wrapped in a juncus grass mat, a rare survival.<sup>61</sup> More recently, fragments of a woven mat were recovered from within the confines of the early 17th-century English James Fort on Jamestown Island.<sup>62</sup>

### Colonial entanglements

Archaeological evidence for significant and complex interactions between European settlers and native communities is abundant, albeit often ignored if not entirely denied. The abundant native ceramic assemblages at Roanoke would seem to be overt evidence for the extent of colonial reliance on native foods and attendant psychological support, yet discussion of the material has long concentrated instead on whether or not the materials predate the Roanoke colony. The desire to separate 'prehistoric' activity (read native activity) from 'historic' activity (read European) has characterized much archaeological research up and down the East Coast; research split by the artificial divide between prehistorians and historical archaeologists.

For example, evidence from Flowerdew Hundred, the site of a fortified settlement established by Governor George Yeardley in 1618, indicates continual Native American occupation from the Paleo-Indian period to the years just immediately preceding Yeardley's acquisition of the land from Abraham Peirse. Excavations in 1982 revealed that immediately underlying the rectangular enclosure built by Yeardley was evidence for an Indian palisade in the same riverside locale.<sup>63</sup> The closeness of the two settlements is reflected in the artefactual record, as described by Norman Barka: '... 27,368 artifacts were found within the Enclosed Settlement site ... approximately 64% are European derived and date to the period of the Enclosed Settlement, and 35% are pre-site or Indian in origin.'<sup>64</sup> Despite the confidence of the

excavator in separating the use of these objects as exclusively native or European, it is far more likely that a percentage of the European objects entered the material realm of the Weanock occupants, just as the English incorporated native material culture into their own repertoire. As argued by Edward Chaney and Julia King, 'studies in Chesapeake historical archaeology have generally minimized the day-to-day role Native Americans played in English settlement'.<sup>65</sup> In fact, too often native presence is simply rendered invisible, as at Flowerdeew Hundred. Presumptions of temporal separation accord well with cultural myths about settlers conquering the frontier, but take us no further in addressing the reality of colonial interactions. At the very least, native ceramics serve as a direct reflection of the trade in the contents of those pots: food, so desperately sought by many early colonists. A revised reading of the Roanoke workshop ceramic evidence underscores the reliance of Harriot, White and Ganz on the Roanoke people not only for food, protection and local knowledge, but also for the vessels used to carry out their experiments.

The tendency to assume a separation between native and English occupation on the basis of artefacts rather than superimposed features may also be blinding us to the realities of intercultural sharing of residences and settlements. Materials recently unearthed in the James Fort site reflect the complicated and variable relations between the English interlopers and the people of Tsenacommacah. Approximately half of the excavated ceramics dating to the period 1607–11 are of native manufacture. A significant number of complete jasper and chert projectile points found within Fort-period contexts have been interpreted as tangible evidence of gift-giving to the English from native peoples, possibly groups from the Eastern shore, North Carolina border and Appalachian regions where these lithic materials can be found. That these items found their way to James Fort as gifts rather than on the end of an arrow fired at the English is supported by their pristine condition, given the fragility of the lithic material.<sup>66</sup> The presence of lithic debitage (waste products from stone tool production) suggests that a native flintknapper was at work. Some of these items include points made from English flint. Jamestown archaeologists are now speculating that native women were resident in the fort, before the arrival of English women in 1609, hinting at a practice of cohabitation, if not intermarriage, long denied in the documentary record.<sup>67</sup>

Whatever the realities of the early colonial relations between natives and newcomers, the archaeological record from later 17th-century sites continues to reflect significant daily interaction. Evidence from the Camden site, a native settlement occupied between 1650 and 1700, underscores the selective nature of the incorporation of new practices and objects.<sup>68</sup> Homes in this town were European in design, but the majority of the ceramics were native hand-built wares, suggesting continuity in pre-contact foodways. Despite outward appearances, the adoption of English-style dwellings does not imply that the Indian inhabitants conceived of or used the interior space in the same ways as an English settler.

Similar evidence for selective adoption of European goods has been noted in the recent excavations at the Cape Creek site at Buxton, North Carolina. Here, archaeologists uncovered the remains of a mid- to late-17th-century workshop that appears to have been used by the Croatan Indians. Items being

produced in the Croatan workshop illustrate cultural continuity, including shell and bone beads, and tubular and figurative copper beads. While the raw materials for the latter items were European, the processes and end products were native.<sup>69</sup> The Croatan culture of Manteo's time was clearly still thriving a century later, by then well accustomed to accommodating and rejecting material elements of English colonial society. The recovery of the Kendall signet ring from deposits associated with the workshop serves as one of the more evocative examples of native agency towards European material culture. The meaning attached to the ring by its Croatan owner or owners was surely divergent from whatever meaning it held for its original English owner, as well as being a far cry from the meaning attached to it in the present. The prioritization of the European history of this ring in media reports of the Buxton excavation, rendering it a potent material connection to the 'Lost Colony', only serves to alienate the object from its Indian cultural context, arguably continuing the centuries-long erasure of native people from regional history.<sup>70</sup> Despite displacement, disease, violence, subjugation and ongoing prejudice, it is clear that native peoples in the North Carolina and Virginia region maintained and indeed continue to maintain individual and community identities as native people.

Yet in the 2007 anniversary year of the Jamestown settlement, and despite the potential of archaeological data to significantly alter understandings of the experiences of all those who were caught up in the English colonial experience, and of colonial processes more generally, native people still struggled for public acknowledgement of their history and continued existence. Public interpretation at Jamestown celebrates the proto-American nature of the site, in spite of the more complicated stories suggested by the archaeology. In keeping with the patriotic rhetoric that has long surrounded Jamestown's interpretation, the latest synthetic publication about the James Fort project begins and ends with the assertion that 'the American dream was born on the banks of the James River ...'.<sup>71</sup> Such overly simplistic treatments of the site's significance exemplify the symbolic annihilation of Virginia's native people, an effort so successful that one of the most important issues for today's tribes, according to Nansemond Chief Barry Bass, is 'educating the general public that Virginia Indians still exist'.<sup>72</sup>

### **Post-colonial conversations**

As a non-native person, this author can only offer personal opinions and understandings regarding contemporary native perspectives. It is clear that contemporary native tribes and associations possess divergent understandings of their histories and of their identities, as was undoubtedly the case in the past. The 2007 Jamestown anniversary not surprisingly elicited a range of responses from Virginia Indian groups. In recognition of these divergent opinions, the official Virginia Council on Indians distanced itself from active engagement in the plans for 2007. Indian involvement was coordinated by a separate committee associated with the Jamestown anniversary effort.

Invariably implicated in attitudes towards the 2007 commemoration are the Federal Recognition efforts of six of the eight state-recognized tribes. Tribes seeking recognition

through a direct appeal to Congress (rather than via the lengthier Bureau of Indian Affairs process) include the Rappahannock, Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Nansemond, Upper Mattaponi, and Monacan. The two that are not participating in this effort are the Pamunkey and the Mattaponi, both of whom still maintain control of reservation lands first granted in the mid-17th century. Publicity and public education efforts provided by the Jamestown anniversary origin provided an obvious vehicle for native voices, and for the tribes seeking Federal recognition, a means to garner public support. That this tactic was partially successful is illustrated by the fact that in April 2007, the Thomasina Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act H-1294 was approved by the House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee. One month later, only a few days before Queen Elizabeth II joined in the commemoration activities at Jamestown, the bill was passed by the House. The significance of the date was not lost on the media, as exemplified by a 9 May article in the *Virginian-Pilot*: 'As Virginia and the nation prepared to mark the 400th anniversary of the first English settlement at Jamestown, the House on Tuesday paid a long-sought tribute to the American Indians whose early hospitality allowed that settlement to survive.'<sup>73</sup> This 'tribute' is now viewed as a hollow gesture, as the bill remains stalled in the Senate. As expressed by Karenne Wood, a Monacan and former chair of the Virginia Council on Indians, 'Some people are suggesting that they [House of Representatives] were just making sure that there wouldn't be public protests to mar the Jamestown commemoration.'<sup>74</sup>

The recent visit of representatives from Virginia tribes to England, during which time they viewed the White watercolours at the British Museum as captured in a video-recording by Max Carocci and Simona Piantieri, served to highlight that the tribes are already recognized by the British Government as sovereign entities. The statement of Virginia Senator George Allen, presented to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs as part of the Federal Recognition efforts, adequately summarizes the impetus for the visit to England:

'To put the long history of the Virginia Indians in context, while many of the Federally recognized Indian tribes have signed agreements with the government of the United States of America, the Virginia Indian tribes hold treaties with the kings of England, including the 1677 treaty between the tribes and Charles II.'

Despite these treaties, the existence of the reservations (of the non-petitioning tribes), and the fact that yearly tribute has been paid to the Virginia government for more than three centuries, proving the continuity of community identity for the recognized Virginia groups is hampered by legislated racism in the 20th century. The 1924 Racial Integrity Act designated any person claiming Indian heritage as 'coloured'. The designation Indian could not be used on birth certificates, nor were parents permitted to give their children Indian names. This policy was developed and instituted by Walter Plecker, Register of the Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics from 1912–46 and an outspoken white supremacist. In the estimation of Pamunkey Chief William Miles, Plecker 'came very close to committing statistical genocide on the Native Americans of Virginia'. As expressed by Rappahannock Chief Anne Richardson 'we were not allowed to be who we are in our own country, by officials in the government'.<sup>75</sup> Because of Plecker, the extensive paper trail

generally required for Federal Recognition simply does not exist for many Virginia native communities. Between 2006 and 2007, the following groups presented letters of intent to pursue Virginia State Recognition: Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia; Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe of Southampton County, Virginia; Appalachian Intertribal Heritage Association, Inc.; United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Inc.; Blue Ridge Cherokee, Inc. and the Tauxenent Indian Nation of Virginia.<sup>76</sup>

North Carolina boasts the largest native population in the East, numbering approximately 100,000 persons. A significant percentage of this number are members of the Federally recognized Eastern Band of the Cherokee, the descendants of the Iroquoian-speaking peoples who survived the forced removal of the Cherokee, known as the Trail of Tears, in the 1830s. Other tribal groups and associations in North Carolina include the Coharies, Haliwa-Saponis, Lumbees, Meherrins, Occaneechi-Saponis, Indians of Person County, Tuscarora and Waccamaw-Siouans. Unlike the Cherokee, these groupings are the result of 20th-century re-tribalization, with names selected by community members. For example, the name Haliwa-Saponi comes from a combination of the names of the counties where the community members were located, and the adoption of the historic tribal designation of Saponi.<sup>77</sup>

Illustrating the complexity of contemporary native North Carolinian identities, and the dichotomy between native perspectives and that of officialdom, is the 1930s effort of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to determine whether or not those who self-identified as Indian in Robeson County were in fact native. Previously, the group then calling themselves Indians of Robeson County, and now known as Lumbee (after the Lumber River) had called themselves Croatans. Croatan was dropped as a name because of the derogatory use of the shortened version 'Cro' by whites in reference to Jim Crow legislation and the desire to label the Indians as black or 'coloured', as was the case in Virginia. The BIA sent Harvard anthropologist Carl Seltzer to North Carolina, where he proceeded to measure the facial features of the Robeson County Indians to determine their identity. Seltzer decided that only 22 out of 100 volunteers possessed any Indian ancestry. His determinations have rightly been described as 'comically illogical', as in several cases he rejected the Indian identity of the parents and siblings of those he declared likely of Native American heritage.<sup>78</sup>

Seltzer's own statements illustrate the complexity of identity, which he believed resided solely in genetic structure: 'Our task was made difficult at the outset by the fact that these people did not have a clear understanding of the term Indian ... . They considered anybody who lived in their community as one of them.' Frustration with stringent genetic criteria for recognition is not uncommon, as expressed by Mervin Savoy, Tribal Chair of the Piscataway Conoy tribe, 'Just because somebody says I'm not an Indian doesn't mean I'm not. Just as long as I walk this Earth I'll be Indian,' and by Patawomeck Chief Robert Green: 'I have no idea what my blood quantum is. When someone tells me they are pure Indian, I doubt that there are any pure Indians in this part of the country ... . To me, blood quantum doesn't matter.'<sup>79</sup> Identity is indeed a mutable concept. Whether it is genetically or socially constructed, it is no less meaningful at the individual as well as community level. In 1985, the Lumbee Nation of North Carolina

and America was formally denied Federal recognition, while the Piscataway Conoy tribe was denied recognition by the state of Maryland. The Patowomeck still seek recognition by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**Conclusion**

The words of Chickahominy Chief Stephen Adkins, spoken at the 2006 Senate hearings on the Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act S-480 of the six Virginia tribes, serves as an appropriate conclusion to this discussion:

I would say, that without the hospitality of my forebears, the first permanent English settlement would not have been Jamestown... The fact that we were so prominent in early history and then so callously denied our Indian heritage is the story that most don't want to remember or recognize... I want my children and the next generation to have their Indian heritage honoured.<sup>80</sup>

Similar quotes from other Virginia chiefs appeared at the close of the *New World* exhibit, reminding us that just as these images served as a powerful tool in the past, be it as purely economic propaganda, or as indicative of the early modern commodification of nature, or as illustrative of the burgeoning and rapacious appetites of naturalists, they now serve as a potent tool in the revitalization and the public promotion of the identity and character of contemporary Virginia Indians. The arguably intentionally 'positive' portrayal of the 16th-century North Carolina inhabitants in the White watercolours serves the aims of today's native population just as they served the aims of colonial propagandists. Today's Indians see themselves in the images, as many others envision the 16th-century English in the images. John White's watercolours of the New World reflect all these desires and continually provoke memories of an ever-changing past.

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  - 21 E.R. Turner III and H. Rountree, *Before and After Jamestown: Virginia's Powhatans and their Predecessors*, Gainesville, FL, 2002, 15. In the 1980s, I participated in the replication of a *yahecan* based on a find from the Great Neck site (Virginia Beach) at the Jamestown Settlement Museum in Williamsburg, Virginia. This structure was far more stable than the rectangular reproductions, which tended to sag in the centre. However, this may be more a problem of contemporary inability to replicate native technology rather than any inherent flaw in the use of arches.
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