



## Virginia Indigenous Nations in Higher Education (VINHE)

We are a collective dedicated to collaborative instruction, research, engagement, and capacity building activities that support Indigenous access and equity in higher education.

### ***Our Focal Areas:***

These themes emerged from conversations with Virginia's Indigenous Tribal Nations, culminating in a Listening Summit on March 24, 2023, in which leaders and representatives from Virginia Tribes and colleges and universities participated. Broad areas in which higher education can engage and support Tribes include:

- Preparation, Access and Success in Higher Education
- Land, Watershed Management, and Conservation
- Cultural Resources, History, Archives, and Restorative Justice
- Legal Issues and Business Development
- Embracing Tribal History in VA K-12 Education Standards
- Tribal Community Health

### ***Specific Actions and Initiatives that Universities Can Pursue:***

- All universities designate one tribal liaison as the principal point of contact
- Commonwealth-wide Consultation Policy that all Universities use when partnering with Native Nations (e.g. FPIC, data sovereignty protections, etc.)
- A public, web-based portal that serves as a clearinghouse for information about University programs: ensures transparency and clear communication about activities, contacts, and initiatives geared towards Indigenous communities.
- Create a culturally-appropriate academic preparation program state-wide that would be based in tribal communities, preparing tribal youth for university
- Offer and recruit Native students into degree programs (on campus and online)
- Hire and retain more Native faculty and staff at VA universities
- A public accounting of what Universities and Museums have in their collections and their archives pertaining to VA Native Nations

- Universities using their Schools of Education and social capital to change the K-12 educational standards in VA to teach about living Indigenous culture, developing standards in dialogue with VA Tribes
- Collaboration in Tribal-led documentation of oral history and culture, using a variety of methods and disciplines, using Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles
- Greater support and enlarged spaces for Indigenous student groups
- Reform or add curriculum at universities that is culturally-responsive to the unique perspective of VA tribes
- Value tribal mental health through culturally-appropriate and trauma-informed care on campuses
- Support tribal initiatives in nutrition and food sovereignty
- Assist in training and support of Tribal Health Clinics (two being founded soon in VA, with Federal Gov't support)
- Support grant-writing and grant management, budgets, etc.
- Assist Tribes in writing Tribal Constitutions and other legal matters
- Law clinics brought to VA tribal peoples
- Support business and economic development in partnership with the VA Tribes
- Admission to MBA programs and continuing education programs so that older tribal citizens can acquire new skills
- Collaborative research on landscape restoration, fisheries and water management, especially with an eye towards Indigenous-led management of lands and waters
- Environmental training for Tribal citizens that braids together environmental science and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), Indigenous science
- Climate change and ecosystem resilience modeling in collaboration with Tribes
- Co-advocacy: universities can partner with Tribes to achieve their goals at legislature in Richmond and vis-a-vis the federal government, too, for example in co-managing public lands, parks, management areas, etc.
- Adopt a policy supporting statewide access to higher education for students who are enrolled members of VA Tribes. Public universities could adopt a tuition waiver policy, which may require legislative approval in Richmond. A commitment from University Presidents to seek this legislation would be welcome.