

2017 SESSION

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 882

Offered February 6, 2017

1
2
3 *Commending the Mathomank Village Tribe.*

4
5 Patron—Tyler

6 WHEREAS, the Mathomank Village Tribe has a rich heritage in what is now Isle of Wight County,
7 and its members have made many valuable contributions to life in the Commonwealth over the course
8 of more than 445 years of documented history; and

9 WHEREAS, the Mathomank Village Tribe traces its roots to the village of Mathomank, the capital of
10 the Warraskoyack Tribe, which was one of the 30 tribes forming the Powhatan Empire; the tribe's
11 territory was located south of James River, and Warraskoyack means "point at the end of a river" in the
12 Algonquian language; and

13 WHEREAS, in 1571, a missionary named Robert Poole settled on Mulberry Island in Warraskoyack
14 territory; after the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in France in 1572, many French Huguenots fled to
15 the area as refugees, and Robert Poole established the Rushmere community in 1582; and

16 WHEREAS, in 1607, the English explorer John Smith encountered the Warraskoyack Tribe while
17 mapping the shore of the James River, and he was welcomed into Mathomank when he returned to the
18 area in 1608, 1610, and 1611; and

19 WHEREAS, during the Anglo-Powhatan Wars, Mathomank was burned and destroyed by the English
20 in 1622, but many of its inhabitants fled away from the shorelines and sought shelter with other tribes;
21 Chippokes Plantation State Park is named after a respected chief of the Quioughcohannock, who was
22 killed during the massacre at Mathomank; and

23 WHEREAS, the Hughes family arrived in the area in 1624, and by 1642, members of the Bailey,
24 Hughes, Johnson, King, Poole, and Rowlett families served as interpreters in the area and lived among
25 the Native Americans in what had by then been renamed Isle of Wight County; and

26 WHEREAS, around this time, John King and others successfully negotiated on behalf of the
27 Warraskoyack Tribe to achieve licenses allowing the members of the tribe to farm, fish, and hunt freely
28 in the area; and

29 WHEREAS, in the late 1600s, Isle of Wight County adopted the Act of Tolerance to allow
30 cohabitation between Native Americans and European settlers, and the inhabitants of the reformed
31 Mathomank village embraced their cultural diversity, incorporating traditional practices with new
32 techniques and technologies from the English and the French; in 1690, Ferguson Wharf was established
33 as the Warraskoyack port at Mathomank; and

34 WHEREAS, members of the Warraskoyack Tribe taught E. M. Todd the art of preserving hog
35 products with salt, and the information spread throughout the local settlements, giving rise to the
36 region's proud tradition in ham production that endures to this day; and

37 WHEREAS, during the Revolutionary War, French maps identified the Village of Warrasqueak and
38 Warrasqueak Bay, variations of Warraskoyack, as being separate from Isle of Wight County and
39 Smithfield; and

40 WHEREAS, between the 1600s and 1800s, the area had one of the largest populations of free Native
41 Americans and African Americans in the country, and during the Civil War, the Hughes family played a
42 pivotal role on the Underground Railroad; and

43 WHEREAS, the history and heritage of the Warraskoyack Tribe became harder to trace as a result of
44 the Dawes Commission, when some members of the tribe were converted to the Civilized Virginia
45 Cherokee Roll and remained in the area and others were sent to the Midwest on the Trail of Tears;
46 during the 1920s, the vital records of many Native American residents in the area were tampered with
47 and changed to read "black"; and

48 WHEREAS, many descendants of the Warraskoyack Tribe who continued to live in the area worked
49 as watermen and oyster farmers in and around Mathomank; after the devastation of Hurricane Hazel in
50 the 1950s and the kepone spill in the James River in the 1970s, many local residents turned to
51 shipbuilding to make their living; and

52 WHEREAS, many current residents of Isle of Wight County and Surry County can trace their
53 lineage through documentation, pictures, and DNA research to indigenous Native Americans or early
54 European settlers and African Americans who lived in the area, and they still hold positions of authority
55 and make valuable contributions to the community just as they did hundreds of years ago; and

56 WHEREAS, in 2003, when Isle of Wight County sought to remove the remaining watermen to
57 develop a private marina, in violation of the Treaty of 1646, which prevented development within five
58 miles of a Native American town, the Rushmere Community Development Corporation organized

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59 descendants of the Quioughcohannock and Warraskoyack tribes to preserve their heritage in the area;
60 and

61 WHEREAS, the National Park Service awarded Rushmere Community Development Corporation a
62 technical assistance grant to validate the remnants of the Quioughcohannock and Warraskoyack tribes
63 and preserve their way of life; and

64 WHEREAS, in 2014, the Mathomank Village Tribe was incorporated in Isle of Wight County,
65 comprising the living descendants of the members of the Quioughcohannock and Warraskoyack tribes,
66 and in 2016, the Mathomank Village Tribal Council petitioned for official recognition as a tribe; and

67 WHEREAS, the members of the Mathomank Village Tribe are Rosa Holmes-Turner, Thomas
68 Hughes, Jane Hill-Hughes, John King, Elizabeth Bailey, William Howlet, Sidney Johnson, Otelia
69 Holloway, Cheryl Rowlett-Dotson, John Rowlett, Owcie Rowlett, Maude Lillian Bailey, Ernest Poole,
70 Payton Jones, Jr., Louie Wilson, Jr., and Michael Young; now, therefore, be it

71 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby
72 commend the Mathomank Village Tribe for its many contributions to Isle of Wight County and the
73 Commonwealth; and, be it

74 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution
75 for presentation to Rosa Holmes-Turner, chief of the Mathomank Village Tribe, as an expression of the
76 General Assembly's admiration for the tribe's unique place in the history of Virginia and the early
77 United States.