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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 7

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 12, 2022

Acknowledging with profound regret the existence, acceptance, and perpetuation of the dispossession of lands and the racist and assimilationist policies designed to erase the identity, culture, and sovereignty of tribal nations in the Commonwealth.

Patrons—McQuinn, Carr, Clark, Glass, Hope, Jenkins, Keam, Kory, Maldonado, Rasoul, Reid, Shin, Simon, Simonds and Watts

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is home to the tribal nations that are Virginia's first people, who were firmly established on ancestral lands long before the English arrived in 1607 at what would become known as Jamestown; for centuries prior to English colonization, Algonquian, Siouan, and Iroquoian speaking people flourished on these lands; and

WHEREAS, on these lands existed intricate systems of government, agricultural systems, commerce and trade networks, culture, and heritage; and

WHEREAS, the arrival of English colonizers was the beginning of four centuries of conflict, trauma, dispossession, and failed treaties for Virginia Indians; and

WHEREAS, since European contact, the Colony and the Commonwealth have dispossessed these nations of their land and sought to erase their identities; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's tribes had their land seized and their reservations disbanded as a result of legislation, mismanagement by trustees, excessive taxation, and other means in spite of the promise to respect the boundaries of these reserved tribal lands in perpetuity guaranteed in Articles III and IV of the 1677 Treaty of Middle Plantation; and

WHEREAS, tribal nations have fought for centuries to maintain their identities in the face of racist and assimilationist policies; and

WHEREAS, the 1744 Treaty of Lancaster ceded indigenous lands in western Virginia without the consent of all of the affected tribes; and

WHEREAS, the Racial Integrity Act of 1924, backed by eugenicist Walter Plecker, perpetrated a demographic erasure of Virginia's indigenous population by requiring that each person's race be recorded at birth as either "White" or "Colored"; and

WHEREAS, as a direct result of these and other policies, several of the Virginia nations were only federally acknowledged in recent years, despite being the first to come into contact with Europeans; and

WHEREAS, it was not until the late 20th century that Virginia created a process for reaffirming the government-to-government relationship with tribal nations in the Commonwealth through a formalized state recognition process, beginning with legislative recognition by the General Assembly in 1983; and

WHEREAS, in recent decades, the Commonwealth has strengthened its relationship with tribal nations, now acknowledging that tribal nations have always been integral to the cultural and historical fabric of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, it was not until 2018 that tribal nations in Virginia first received recognition from the United States government; there are now seven federally recognized tribes indigenous to the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the legacy of racist and assimilationist policies designed to end the identity, culture, land ownership, and sovereignty of tribal nations in the Commonwealth has yet to be properly acknowledged and uprooted, and this dark and painful chapter in American history must be understood and acknowledged, and the seemingly irreparable breach mended with Virginia's indigenous people, tribes, and nations; and

WHEREAS, the most abject apology for past wrongs cannot right them; yet the spirit of true repentance on behalf of a government and, through it, a people can promote reconciliation and healing and avert the repetition of past wrongs and the disregard of manifest injustices; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates hereby acknowledge with profound regret the existence, acceptance, and perpetuation of the dispossession of lands and the racist and assimilationist policies designed to erase the identity, culture, and sovereignty of tribal nations in the Commonwealth; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the chiefs of the federally recognized and state recognized tribes of the Commonwealth, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the House of Delegates in this matter.

INTRODUCED

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