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Alexandria  
 COMMUNITY MEDIA

# Alexandria's Native American past

Thousands of years before Alexandria's founding in 1749, humans occupied the area where Alexandria stands today. During the past 275 years, the city has undergone much construction and development. Yet archaeologists continue to find parts of this Native American past buried beneath the city.

More than 30 sites in Alexandria have been identified with Native American artifacts. More continue to be uncovered.

The earliest evidence of human activity in Alexandria is a Clovis Point from the Paleo-Indian period, approximately 15,000 to 8,000 B.C. Often called a spear tip, the artifact was excavated at the Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery Memorial. Probably unknown to gravediggers in the 1860s, the cemetery stands on an important Native American site. Besides the Clovis Point, archaeologists have discovered thousands of artifacts from American Indians.

This suggests that stone tools were manufactured at the site for centuries. Archaeologists base this conclusion on the variety of stone tools discovered, which span multiple archaeological periods, including the Paleo-Indian, the Archaic and the Woodland periods.

The second-oldest artifact



Potomac Creek Pottery.

PHOTO/ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

found in Alexandria is a Kirk Point from the Archaic Period – approximately 8,000 to 1,000 B.C. – found at the Jones Point site. Formed from quartzite, the Kirk Point's characteristic serrated edges contrast with the smoother Clovis Point.

Like the Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery Memorial, Jones Point Park is an area of significant archaeologi-

cal interest and is now owned by the National Park Service. Both early artifacts were discovered during excavations necessitated by the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project, linking these historic sites through modern development.

It wasn't until the Woodland Period, approximately 1,000 B.C. to 1,600 C.E., that pottery made a regular ap-

pearance in this area, marking a shift in both manufacturing techniques and materials. While some pottery was found at the Jones Point site, another excavation site rich with Potomac Creek Pottery is the Shuter's Hill Site. On the grounds of the George Washington Masonic Memorial, the Shuter's Hill Site has yielded a Native American hand axe and other stone tools from more recent Native American history.

Native Americans are not confined to Alexandria's long-ago past; they are part of this area today. Currently, federally recognized tribes and nations in Virginia include the Pamunkey, Chickahominy, Chickahominy Eastern Division, Upper Mattaponi, Rappahannock, Monacan, and Nansemond.

Virginia's state-recognized tribes and nations are the Cherokee (Nottoway), Chickahominy, Chickahominy Eastern Division, Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Nottoway, Pamunkey, Patawomeck, Rappahannock and Upper Mattaponi.

*The City of Alexandria celebrates Indigenous People's Day on Oct. 13. To see a schedule of services for that day, please visit alexandriava.gov/news-citywide.*

*Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.*