



## Virginia Indian Commemorative Commission

### *News Release*

**For Immediate Release:**

April 17, 2018

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## **Governor, Commission dedicate monument recognizing legacy of Virginia's Indian tribes** ~ *Mantle is newest monument on Capitol Square* ~

**RICHMOND, VA** – Governor Ralph Northam, the Virginia Indian Commemorative Commission and the Virginia Capitol Foundation today held a dedication ceremony for *Mantle*, a tribute to Virginia's Indian tribes and the newest monument to be erected on Capitol Square.

*Mantle* recognizes the lasting legacy and significance of American Indians in the Commonwealth. Numerous members of Virginia's 11 state-recognized Indian tribes attended the dedication ceremony, which included the cutting of a leather ribbon and a blessing of the monument by Ken Adams, Chief Emeritus of the Upper Mattaponi Tribe.

“This monument honors the winding path of our native Virginians, who have called this land home for thousands of years,” **Governor Northam said**. “It acknowledges the suffering and mistreatment of native Virginians, as well as their courage and resilience, giving the tribes a place of honor and recognizing their continuing importance in the fabric of Virginia.”

**Del. Christopher Peace, vice chair of the Virginia Indian Commemorative Commission**, added: “*Mantle* is a tribute to Virginia's native peoples and a celebration of their contributions and culture both past and present. We are delighted with its completion and that visitors to Capitol Square will be able to walk through this unique space and reflect on a part of Virginia's story that often goes untold.”

The Virginia Indian Commemorative Commission was established by the General Assembly and former Governor Tim Kaine in 2009 with the purpose of installing a permanent monument on Capitol Square to recognize the courage, determination, and cultural values of Virginia's Indians.

For **artist Alan Michelson**, a Mohawk member of Six Nations of the Grand River, *Mantle* has many meanings: “*Mantle* refers to Powhatan’s Mantle, the 400-year-old deerskin embroidered in spiral-shaped clusters, whose shape I borrowed for the monument. In mollusks, mantle is the organ that forms, maintains, and repairs the shell, and adds to it to increase its size and strength. In geology, mantle is the mostly solid layer of the earth between crust and core. And in politics, mantle refers to the robe of office and the roles and responsibilities that go with it. I tried to convey all of those meanings in *Mantle* — in its connection to the land and history, in its size and solidity, and in the Native worldview it expresses that includes obligations to the land and all of life on it.”

*Mantle* features a winding footpath rising from and returning to the earth, a continuous stone wall that serves as a bench, an infinity pool, and natural elements that are significant to the region and its native inhabitants. The water within the pool reflects the river culture existing within these native tribes, and the names of the rivers are inscribed in the fountain.

The monument was built through private donations raised by the Virginia Capitol Foundation, whose mission is to support the restoration, preservation and interpretation of the Virginia Capitol, Capitol Square and Executive Mansion. It will be maintained by the Department of General Services, which manages Capitol Square.

For more information, visit <http://indiantribute.virginia.gov>.

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