

Technology Tells a Story

For thousands of years, people moved through this region, trading and drawing resources from the land and river. Alexandria has more than 30 archaeological sites containing Native American artifacts and features. Artifacts from these sites, like the stone tools below, are one way to see over 10,000 years of people using this land.

Colonization permanently changed Indian ways of life through displacement, disease, and decimation. The communities endured and today's descendant groups and state and federally recognized tribes and nations include the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), Chickahominy, Chickahominy Eastern Division, Mattaponi, Upper Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Nottoway, Pamunkey, Patowomeck and Rappahannock.

This map shows the traditional Algonquian, Siouan and Iroquoian language territories and the location of tribal headquarters today.



Technology Changes Over Time



Archaeologists study changes in artifact technology to help figure out the age of an archaeological site and how it was used. Native Americans made projectile points differently over time. Analyzing the length, width, thickness, and other characteristics can show when a point was made.

What Am I?



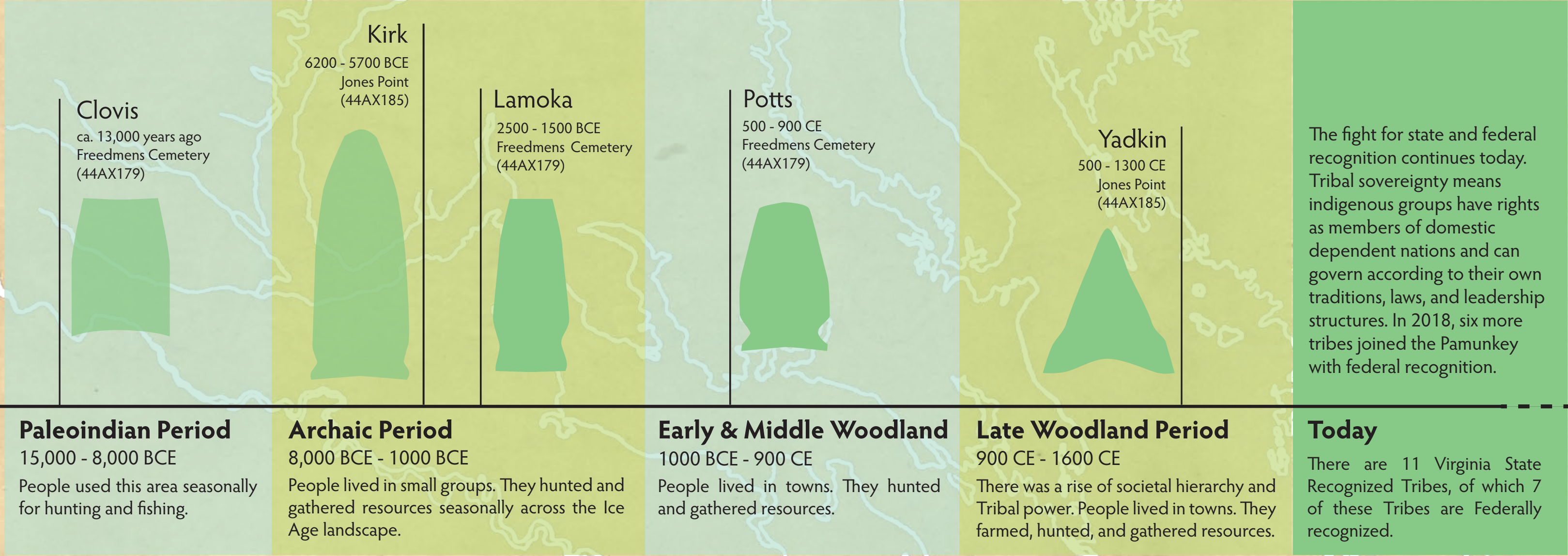
The stone tools below are projectile points. These tools are made by removing small stone flakes. The final shaped stone is then attached to a spear or arrow.



Spearpoint or Arrowhead?



Most of the points in this exhibit were used with an atlatl (spearthrower). People did not use bow and arrows until around 600 CE.



Is this a Clovis point?



Only the base of this point remains. Breaks like this are common and make identification difficult. Other artifacts found in the same place can help with identification, but this one was found alone. Analyzing the length, width, thickness, and other characteristics suggests that this is a Clovis point. Clovis points are identified by the shape of the base, blade, and flute of the channel.

Where are these artifacts from?



These points are from two archaeological sites: Jones Point and Freedmens Cemetery. The sites were desirable locations near water. Archaeologists conducted work at both sites as part of the Wilson Bridge project.

Jones Point Site is on the banks of Hunting Creek. The site included artifacts from the Archaic Period, as well as evidence of two Woodland Period structures. The Freedmens Cemetery Site is on a bluff overlooking Hunting Creek. It had evidence from the Paleoindian, Archaic, and Woodland Periods. The historic cemetery was not excavated during the project.

There is so much more to the story than stone tools. Virginia Native American heritage spans more than 10,000 years and continues today. Archaeologists, working collaboratively and respectfully, can contribute evidence of a history that has been forgotten and distorted over centuries of racism.