

Virginia Capitol Foundation

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NEWS RELEASE

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Groundbreaking Celebration for Indian Tribute on Capitol Square with Special Guest Olympic Medalist Billy Mills

RICHMOND, VA – On Saturday, June 24, 2017, the Virginia Indian Commemorative Commission and the Virginia Capitol Foundation will host the groundbreaking celebration for the Virginia Indian Tribute being constructed on Capitol Square. This monument, entitled *Mantle*, recognizes the lasting legacy and significance of American Indians in the Commonwealth.

The featured speaker at the groundbreaking celebration is Billy Mills, member of the Oglala Lakota (Souix) tribe and the Olympic gold medal winner of the 10,000 meter run in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. The groundbreaking ceremony will take place at 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 24, in Capitol Square, located at 1000 Bank Street in Richmond. The public is invited to join in the groundbreaking ceremony.

Nearly \$400,000 has been raised to date, thanks to a recent \$100,000 matching grant from the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation. “Due to the support of several individual donors, corporations, and private foundations, we were able to meet this challenge grant in three weeks,” explained Colleen Dugan Messick, Executive Director of the Virginia Capitol Foundation, the organization coordinating the fundraising efforts for *Mantle*. In particular, NewMarket, Dominion, the Windsor Foundation, Titan Americ, and the Running Strong for American Indian Youth Foundation were key supporters. “We have also just received a 2:1 matching grant from the Cabell Foundation, which means once we raise \$200,000, Cabell will match that with \$100,000 – and we’re hoping individual donors can help us reach this goal today,” said Messick. “The total cost for the monument is nearly \$900,000, and we are very excited with the momentum and progress we’ve made so far,” explained Messick.

The Virginia Indian Tribute will serve as a meditation space where visitors can either walk the labyrinth or sit and contemplate. It will also be a lovely, informal spot for people to meet. As a communal area, *Mantle* creates a respectful relationship with the surrounding natural world, reflecting the positive values which set the Indians apart from other cultures.



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. “The goal is to recognize the Virginia Indian tribes’ lasting legacy and significance, as well as to ensure that the rich and inspiring stories of our native peoples will endure,” explained Delegate Christopher K. Peace, Vice Chair of the Commission.

An artistic competition was held in 2013, and the Virginia Indian Commemorative Commission selected artist Alan Michelson’s *Mantle* as the winning design. As Michelson explains, “*Mantle* requires the visitor to neither look up nor look down, but invites one to enter – from the east – and participate in it. It is not conceived as a static monument to be venerated but an active one to be experienced by moving off the everyday grid and into the American Indian circle.”

In the shape of a Nautilus, *Mantle* will feature a five-foot wide winding footpath that will follow the outline of the monument, rising from and returning to the earth. In addition to the path, there will be a continuous, smooth stone wall, which will also serve as a bench. Natural landscaping, an infinity pool, and other natural elements that are significant to the region and its native inhabitants will be incorporated.

The groundbreaking celebration is made possible by the Running Strong for American Indian Youth Foundation, co-founded by Billy Mills to help American Indian people with their immediate survival needs and strengthen American Indian communities across the nation.

The Virginia Capitol Foundation is the nonprofit advocate for the Capitol, Capitol Square, and Executive Mansion, enhancing the educational, cultural, and economic potential of Capitol Square’s historic treasures through program development, community engagement, and fundraising.

For information about the Virginia Indian Tribute or to make a donation in support of *Mantle*, go to www.VirginiaCapitol.gov.

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