

## **Mar-Lu-Ridge Land Acknowledgement**

### **Fall 2020**

A land acknowledgement is a statement that reckons with the history of the land we find ourselves on today and the often brutal, exploitative means by which we find ourselves on it. It formally recognizes and celebrates the continuing connection of indigenous people to their native lands – past, present, and future-- and supports the urgent, enduring work of decolonization as a practice of social justice.

Mar-Lu-Ridge resides on the ancestral territory of the Paskestikweya (Pist-ka-tanh-wah) or Piscataway (Conoy) people – meaning “the people where the rivers blend.” The Piscataway established a principal village on Heater’s Island in the Potomac near Point of Rocks, a few miles south of Mar-Lu-Ridge. During this time, they relied on both agriculture – including corn, beans, melons, pumpkins, and squash cultivated by women—and the plentiful bear, elk, deer, wolves and smaller game hunted by men, supplementing with fishing and oyster and clam harvesting. The land Mar-Lu-Ridge cares for would have been used for hunting, fishing, firewood gathering and transit, with the streams along the valley floor that flow north to south towards Point of Rocks, used as a guide for travel.

The Piscataway were historically a Confederacy of Tribes, under the authority of a Tayac or Emperor, with land extending from the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay to the watershed of the Potomac river and from present-day St. Mary’s County north to Baltimore. Piscataway land was colonized first by Leonard Calvert who arrived in 1634 on the Ark and Dove, leading over the next decades to growing conflict with the English in the 1660s. In 1666, a Treaty between Lord Baltimore and Piscataway tribal leadership established a reservation called Piscataway Manor. Eventually this treaty was broken – part of a cycle of broken treaties and seized reservations during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beyond that led angry and frustrated tribal members to migrate north to Pennsylvania, where they were given the name “Conoy” by the Iroquois.

The tribal members who chose to remain were placed under the authority of local mediators and established communities throughout Calvert, Prince Georges, and Charles Counties. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Piscataway people retired from mainstream society, building on skills as farmers, guides, and fishermen and using their expertise to buy land to expand their community and property holdings. In 1974, the Piscataway incorporated as the Piscataway Conoy Indians Inc. to lobby the Maryland government to form the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs. After considerable persistence, the Piscataway were finally recognized by Maryland in 2012 as two tribes – the Piscataway Indian Nation and the Piscataway-Conoy Tribe – the first to be officially recognized by Maryland. Today, the Piscataway-Conoy Tribe is led by Francis Gray, the Tribal chair, and the Piscataway Indian Nation is led by Billy Redwing Tayac.

We humbly offer our respect and gratitude to the ancestors and living citizens of the Piscataway Indian Nation and the Piscataway-Conoy Tribe, as well as to future generations.

We recognize that a land acknowledgement is merely a beginning – a way to remind ourselves that we occupy sacred ground and to promote the visibility and voices of Indigenous people who have been systematically erased by colonialism and whose struggle for recognition, self-

determination, and equal justice is on-going. We commit ourselves to listen to, promote, and serve these voices.