

Kayaking on the Mattaponi River

AN EXPERIENCE IN ECOLOGY AND CULTURE WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL

The Environmental Club of West Point High School enjoyed an experience emerged of ecology on the Mattaponi River from an indigenous perspective. There were 28 students who participated in the kayak adventure and workshop on pottery. Students learned about the indigenous plant and animal species unique to the area, while hearing the oral traditions of the tribal people who relied on this habitat for subsistence over the centuries. After enjoying an Indigenous lunch, students were instructed by a tribal elder on how she and her ancestors extracted clay from the riverbanks to make pottery.

School administrators and members of the West Point School Board also joined us for lunch and a presentation by Eastern Woodland Revitalization, an indigenous operated non-profit, that taught the students the importance of sustaining the waterways and its cultural significance. It was an exciting experience of learning in nature. Many students commented that it was the “best” field trip they had ever been on.

We want to thank the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation for their generous support by funding this learning experience. Through this work, we realized how much we enjoy mentoring students in ecology and the sustainability of our waterways. For the students, many had never been on a river or a kayak before. It was a wonderful opportunity for the students to experience learning in the great outdoors, while creating lasting memories with their peers.