

Out of This World

VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOLERS BEAM TV 'FIELD TRIP' TO FIVE MILLION STUDENTS BY STEPHEN POTTER

A gentle mist fell over Indian Point as the drum beats and chants of Virginia's Mattaponi tribe opened the live satellite field trip "First People: The Early Indians." Produced by Media Production Services of the Prince William County schools, the trips take students—via the county's satellite network—to places they might never see, where they interact with expert guests.

■ This trip, one of two titled "Archeology in Action," aired from Patawomeke, a Virginia Algonquian village visited by Captain John Smith in 1608. The purpose was to introduce students to the science of archeology by visiting a dig in progress. At Indian Point they learned about the 12,000 years of Indian history in Virginia and listened to the Mattaponi Indians explain their traditions. A series of pre-taped mini-field trips was also shown during the broadcast, enabling students to visit other sites important to the state's native heritage.

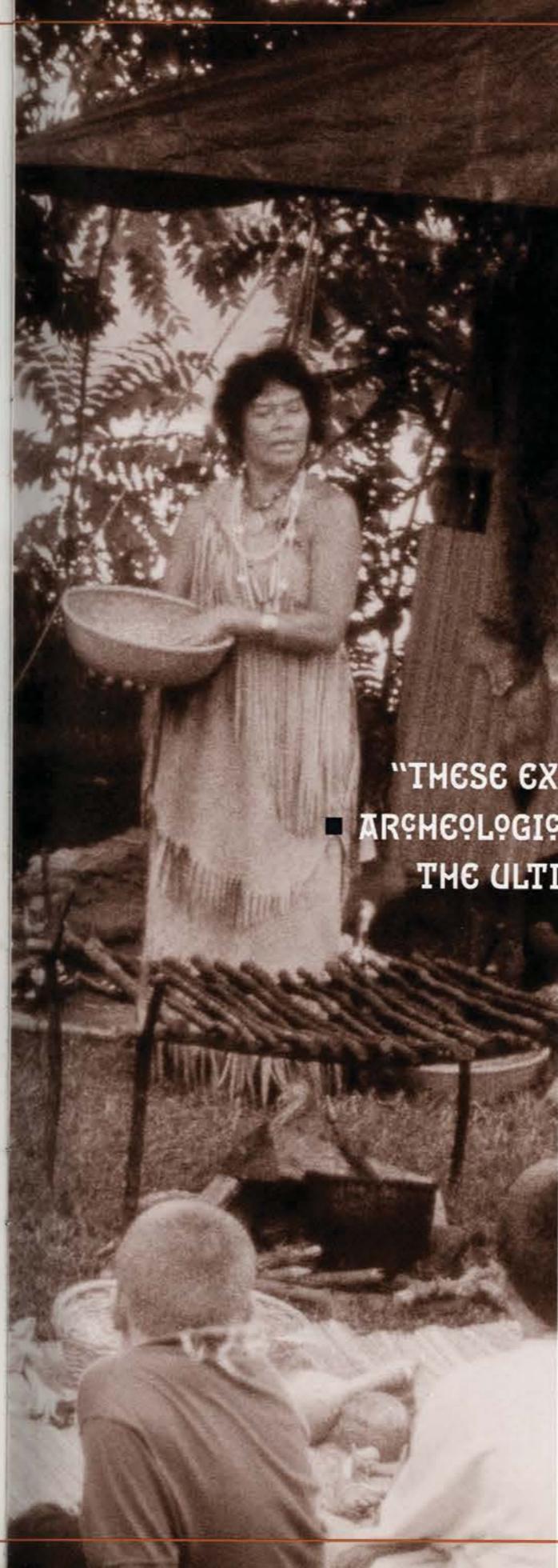
The show's host, educator Jon Bachman of Prince William County, authored an activity guide for teachers to explore the world of archeology with their students before, during, and after the satellite trip. It contains nine activities, a vocabulary list, references, and other background. Both guide and trip were available at no cost to the schools who registered to take part, thanks to funding by the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, the Virginia Foundation for the



Humanities, and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.

As the regional archeologist for the Park Service—and someone with a long-standing interest in the Algonquian-speaking peoples of Chesapeake Bay—I was one of the expert guests. I provided an overview of Virginia's Powhatan Indians and introduced taped trips to the Thunderbird site, a Paleoindian campsite and quarry (9,500-8,000 B.C.); Daugherty's Cave, an Archaic period site (8,000-1,000 B.C.); Ely Mound, a Mississippian culture temple mound of the Woodland Period (A.D. 1400-1550); and the Salem Ball Field site, a village occupied during the 1600s.

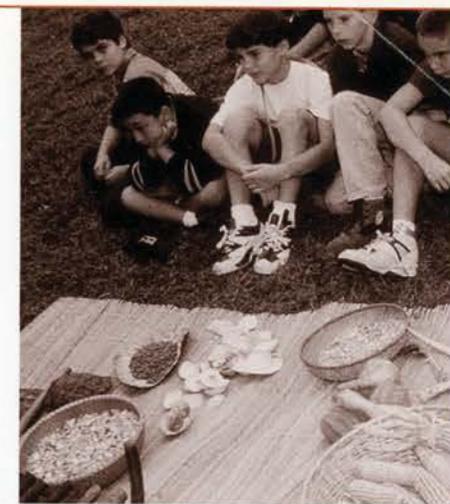
With mobile cameras capturing the live action, Joan Walker of the Thunderbird Research Corporation and E. Randolph Turner of the Virginia department of historic resources supervised students from King George Elementary School excavating part of the Indian Point site. Shirley "Little Dove" Custalow and other Mattaponi Indians made a marvelous live presentation. In the video segments from other sites, Walker and Jeffrey Hantman of the University of Virginia appeared with elementary students, and



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Michael Johnson, of the Fairfax County park authority's archeological services, demonstrated stone tool manufacture.

A half-hour Q & A capped the show. Students from Maine to Texas, calling toll free, asked Walker, Turner, Custalow, and me to respond to questions running the gamut from "Why do archeologists dig square holes?" to "What classes should I take to become an archeologist?" My favorite was posed by a little boy from King George Elementary School, who wanted to know how arche-



"Archeology in Action" won a national award in 1996. At an annual gathering of teleconference professionals, the program was judged second in the the best distance learning K-12 program category. Not bad for a public school production, particularly when 1st place went to Turner Network Television!

ologists could be so patient when looking for artifacts.

Several months after the program, I learned that 551 registered broadcast sites, representing school divisions with nearly five million students, had tuned in. Not only was the audience impressive, so was the professionalism of the TV production students from C. D. Hylton High School, one of the few in the country that trains young people to produce nationally broadcast television. However, the icing on the cake came when

The award demonstrates the importance of public archeologists participating in distance learning, which can reach hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of students. These excursions are a way of using archeological sites on federal lands as the ultimate outdoor classrooms. Toward that end, the people at the network and I are discussing a broadcast from a national park near our Nation's Capital.

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FAR LEFT: At the cameras. NEAR LEFT: Demonstrating Mattaponi traditions. ABOVE RIGHT: The live audience takes it in.

REACHING OUT TO THE PUBLIC

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