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May 2026 Lunch & Learn:
Indigenous Sovereignty in the 18th Century and Today:
The View from Yakni Patafah (“The Land that Stretches On”)
By Dr. Matthew Sparacio

The Georgia Archives will host its May Lunch & Learn presentation, *Indigenous Sovereignty in the 18th Century and Today: The View from Yakni Patafah (“The Land that Stretches On”)*, presented by Dr. Matthew Sparacio. The program will take place on Friday, May 8, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Georgia Archives (5800 Jonesboro Road, Morrow, GA 30260). This event is free and open to the public—no registration required.

Sovereignty is often viewed and understood through a modern legal lens, but it denotes a status that has always existed for Indigenous peoples across the world. This presentation will outline the interrelated and interdependent elements of sovereignty in the eighteenth-century Native South and how these defining characteristics of sovereignty could, in very exceptional circumstances, accelerate factionalism within tribes. By examining how men and women understood sovereignty in Yakni Patafah, the name for the Choctaw homeland, we can learn important lessons about how claims to sovereignty continue to shape Native politics today.

About the Speaker

Matthew Sparacio is a lecturer in Early American History at Georgia State University. He earned his PhD in Native American history from Auburn University in 2018. Before moving to Atlanta, he lived in the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for four years, where he taught at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. His first book, *The Choctaw Civil War: Justice and Sovereignty on the Franco-Choctaw Frontier*, will be published in 2027 by the University of Alabama Press as part of its “Indians and the Southeast” Series. He has published articles and book reviews in *Ethnohistory*, the *Journal of Southern History*, the *Journal of Military History*, the *Alabama Review*, and the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, and he currently serves as the Second Book Workshop Coordinator for the Southern Historical Association’s Professional Development Committee.

America250 Programming

This event is part of the Georgia Archives' America 250 programming, which commemorates the nation's 250th anniversary by exploring Georgia history and its connections to the broader American story. For more upcoming programs, visit: tinyurl.com/GAArchivesPrograms2026.

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The Georgia Archives is a unit of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The Georgia Archives identifies, collects, manages, preserves, provides access to, and publicizes records and information of Georgia and its people, and assists state and local government agencies with their records management.