UNIQUE LIFE OF POCAHONTAS CELEBRATED 400 YEARS AFTER HER DEATH IN THE UK

- US Ambassador Matthew Barzun marks anniversary in Gravesend with his final official speech as Ambassador
- Event launchess year-long activity which includes a public exhibition, conference and school resources
- Artist from her tribe has created a striking gourd being used as the logo, depicting Pocahontas in the afterlife according to traditional Pamunkey beliefs

Sign up on the website for updates: www.pocahontas2017.org #Pocahontas2017

Big Ideas Company are proud to announce Pocahontas 2017: a public season marking the 400th anniversary of the presence in England of an extraordinary Native American woman who lived and died at the collision of two very different worlds. Her compelling story enables us to reflect on issues still relevant to us all.

The project was launched with a special ceremony at St George’s Church in Gravesend, believed to be the site of Pocahontas’ grave. At the event, the Ambassador was joined by Mayor of Gravesham Cllr Greta Goatley, direct descendant John Rolfe, Crow Creek Cultural Ambassador to the UK Stephanie Pratt and Cllr Jordan Meade, Cabinet Member at Gravesham Borough Council, who at 21 is the same age as Pocahontas was when she died.

Before the ceremony the Ambassador, direct descendants, Stephanie Pratt, Gravesham Mayor, Cllr Jordan Meade and students from Thamesview School laid 21 roses (for 21 years of Pocahontas’ life) at the statue of her at St George’s Church.
The story of Pocahontas contains far more than the uplifting – and hugely popular – animated films from Disney. The daughter of paramount chief Powhatan, Matoaka was born in what is now Virginia state around 1596, and known then and since as Pocahontas. She was an influential figure in her community and lived through a period of exceptional change as the English established a permanent settlement in the ‘New World’.

Big Ideas Company are working in consultation with the Pamunkey Tribal Council (the same tribe as Pocahontas), and the Pocahontas 2017 logo is a photograph of a gourd created by Pamunkey tribe member Ethan Brown. The gourd depicts a Powhatan story of the afterlife and an image of Pocahontas on her path to the spirit world.

We may never recover the ‘real’ Pocahontas, but we can explore the issues her history presents and bring both the shared history of Britain and America and current themes including native rights, cultural appropriation and multi-racial identity into clearer focus today.

“We have heard today how Pocahontas’ bridge building inspires people…Heading home, I am so full of hope from today and inspired by Pocahontas and her example.”

Ambassador Matthew Barzun

“This event marked a unique moment in history reminding us that English-US relations go back to the time of Pocahontas, and we’re delighted the US Ambassador was able to join us and share his reflections”. Virginia Crompton, CEO Big Ideas Company

The 2017 programme includes a public exhibition, a conference at the British Library, and the production of an international resource for schools with the British Council.

--END--

For further press information, please contact:
Virginia Crompton, CEO Big Ideas Company
E: virginia.crompton@bigideascompany.org
T: 07957 572 095

Emily Hadwen, Assistant Director Big Ideas Company
E: emily.hadwen@bigideascompany.org
T: 07805211520

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About Big Ideas
Big Ideas Company (BICO) is an agency which develops and delivers projects for public participation. We specialise in projects which bring groups together and create new experiences and relationships. Local, national and global. We work in partnership. We innovate.
BICO makes big ideas happen, tackles big issues, empowers everyone, engages people who aren’t included, connects locally nationally and globally, has a global reach, removes barriers to participation, transforms understanding, opens new possibilities, creates new platforms. Be part of something bigger.

Big Ideas Company is the Creative Director for the programme managing the partnership, liaising with the Pamunkey Tribal Council and creating an online platform for the anniversary and delivering community engagement initiatives throughout 2017. www.bigideascompany.org

About the programme
British Council in partnership with Big Ideas Company will develop an education resource for schools, exploring the theme of Pocahontas as a global citizen and connecting schools around the globe to discover and respond to her story. www.britishcouncil.org

Institute for Historical Research, and the Eccles Centre for American Studies at the British Library will host an academic conference in March 2017, bringing together global academics to debate the varying narratives of her life and its relevance to contemporary cultural identity in the UK and US today. http://www.history.ac.uk/ http://www.bl.uk/eccles/

British Museum will host a special lunchtime lecture in March 2017 to be presented by Max Carocci. http://www.britishmuseum.org/events

Visit Gravesend and Gravesham Borough Council are planning a series of commemorative events throughout 2016 and 2017 to give due recognition to Pocahontas’s historic and cultural significance in their region. Pocahontas was buried under the chancel of the original parish Church of St George’s Church in Gravesend. For more information and updates on the commemorative programme please visit www.pocahontas400.co.uk