



## **Minutes of the American Indian Heritage Commission (AIHC) Quarterly Meeting**

**April 20-21, 2023**

**NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources Building, Raleigh, NC**

The American Indian Heritage Commission (AIHC) convened its quarterly meeting in the form of a two-day strategic planning workshop facilitated by ImaginED Partners. The purpose of this workshop was to establish a foundational framework for the commission's mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities, aligning with the commission's legislative purpose and the broader mission of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR).

### **Attendance**

The meeting was attended by the following AIHC commissioners:

- **Coharie Indian Tribe** – Greg Jacobs
- **Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina** – Nancy Strickland Fields
- **Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation** – Forest Hazel
- **Sappony Indian Tribe** – Kara Stewart
- **Cumberland County Association for Indian People** – Rebecca Locklear
- **Metrolina Native American Association** – Rebecca LaClaire
- **Triangle Native American Society** – Sandon Jacobs (Chair)

**Note:** Between the January 2023 and April 2023 meetings, the Cumberland County Association for Indian People replaced Commissioner **Tiffany Pearson** with **Rebecca Locklear** as its representative on the AIHC. The meeting was attended by AIHC commissioners and DNCR leadership, along with facilitators from ImaginED Partners.

### **Opening & Context**

Chair Sandon Jacobs called the meeting to order and welcomed commissioners and guests. The session began with an overview of AIHC's legislative foundation, responsibilities, and role within DNCR, as well as the intended outcomes of the strategic planning process.

### **Strategic Planning Overview**

The workshop was designed to guide the AIHC in developing a clear mission, vision, and values while identifying strategic priorities to shape its work over the next five years. The facilitators led commissioners through a series of discussions and interactive exercises aimed at articulating AIHC's identity, role, and goals.

### **Mission, Vision, and Values Development**



Through collaborative dialogue, commissioners drafted the following statements:

### **Mission Statement**

AIHC's mission is to promote an accurate and thorough understanding of American Indian history, arts, customs, and culture in North Carolina by increasing visibility and awareness through education and partnerships with tribal communities. The commission seeks to ensure that all North Carolinians have access to quality information and resources that accurately represent Native people both past and present.

### **Vision Statement**

AIHC envisions a future in which North Carolina's American Indian heritage is honored and celebrated. The commission strives to be a leader in fostering greater awareness and understanding of Native experiences, ensuring that American Indian voices and contributions are accurately represented and valued throughout the state.

### **Core Values**

Commissioners identified the following key values to guide AIHC's work:

- **Truth & Accuracy** – Commitment to authentic, fact-based representation of American Indian history and culture.
- **Education** – Dedication to increasing awareness through educational initiatives and accessible resources.
- **Sovereignty** – Recognition and respect for the self-governance and rights of North Carolina's tribes.
- **Unity & Inclusiveness** – Promotion of collaboration and collective support among tribes.
- **Visibility** – Ensuring Native peoples and their histories are widely recognized and integrated into public awareness.

### **Strategic Priorities**

Commissioners identified five strategic priorities to guide AIHC's work:

1. **Enhancing Communication with Tribal Communities** – Developing open and transparent communication channels, including newsletters, social media, and regular meetings with tribal representatives.
2. **Sharing Opportunities with Tribal Communities** – Ensuring tribes have access to funding, training, and partnerships that promote cultural preservation and economic development.
3. **Increasing Cultural Awareness & Visibility** – Expanding outreach efforts through partnerships with museums, schools, and media to promote American Indian heritage.



4. **Understanding the Intersectionality of Tribal Experiences in NC History** – Engaging in research and historical documentation to accurately depict the diverse experiences of North Carolina’s tribes.
5. **Ensuring Tribal Participation in AIHC Initiatives** – Establishing mechanisms for tribal leaders and community members to engage in AIHC’s decision-making processes.

### **Next Steps & Community Engagement**

To further refine these strategic priorities, commissioners agreed to conduct **Listening Circles** within tribal communities. These community-based discussions will:

- Gather input on AIHC’s proposed mission, vision, and priorities.
- Identify specific ways AIHC can support tribal communities.
- Provide a platform for broader participation in the commission’s work.

Additionally, AIHC will develop a **statewide survey** to collect feedback from tribal members on how the commission can best serve their needs.

### **Action Items & Timeline**

- **June 2023:** Commissioners will review the strategic planning summary and submit community contacts for Listening Circles.
- **August 2023:** AIHC will begin conducting Listening Circles and distributing surveys.
- **August – December 2023:** Data from community engagement efforts will be synthesized to inform AIHC’s final strategic plan.
- **Ongoing:** Commissioners will work with DNCR to expand outreach efforts and implement short-term priorities.

### **Closing & Adjournment**

Chair Jacobs and facilitators from ImaginED Partners thanked all commissioners for their participation and emphasized the importance of continued collaboration. The meeting was adjourned following a final discussion on next steps in the strategic planning process.

This workshop set the foundation for AIHC’s long-term strategic planning efforts, ensuring alignment with its legislative purpose and the needs of North Carolina’s American Indian communities.