



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

**January 26, 2023**

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

The American Indian Heritage Commission (AIHC) convened its quarterly meeting on January 26, 2023, at the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) in Raleigh. Chair Sandon Jacobs called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees.

### **Attendance**

The meeting was attended by the following AIHC commissioners:

- **Coharie Indian Tribe** – Greg Jacobs
- **Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians** – Birdie “Lynne” Harlan
- **Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe** – Dr. Marvin Richardson
- **Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina** – Nancy Strickland Fields
- **Meherrin Indian Tribe** – Chief Jonathan Caudill
- **Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation** – Forest Hazel
- **Sappony Indian Tribe** – Kara Stewart
- **Waccamaw Siouan Indian Tribe** – JD Moore
- **Guilford Native American Association** – Jennifer Revels Baxter
- **Metrolina Native American Association** – Rebecca LaClaire
- **Triangle Native American Society** – Sandon Jacobs (Chair)

The following commissioner was absent:

- **Cumberland County Association for Indian People** – Tiffany Pearson

### **Opening Remarks & Department Updates**

The meeting began with the reading of DNCR’s Land Acknowledgment Statement. Chair Jacobs then introduced Secretary D. Reid Wilson, who provided departmental updates, including:

- Acknowledgment of Associate Director Quinn Godwin’s birthday.
- Overview of DNCR’s recent engagements, including the TOTA Conference, Dix Park Powwow, and American Indian Heritage Celebration.



- Affirmation of DNCR’s continued support for AIHC’s work.

Following Secretary Wilson’s remarks, DNCR Legislative Director Deans Eatmon presented a legislative update, covering:

- The NC budget and legislative priorities.
- The Indian Affairs Committee and newly elected NCGA Representative Jarrod Lowery.

### **Meeting Logistics & Ethics Statement**

Chair Jacobs read the Commission Ethics/Conflict of Interest Statement and asked commissioners to report any conflicts. None were asserted. He then introduced the proposed meeting dates for the remainder of 2023. Associate Director Godwin explained that until the dates were finalized, AIHC meetings would be classified as “special” and require different public notice procedures.

After discussion, commissioners voted to approve the following meeting dates: **April 20, July 20, and October 26, 2023.**

### **DNCR Program Presentations**

#### **America 250 Initiative**

State Archivist Sarah Koonts presented an overview of the America 250 initiative, emphasizing that it is a commemoration rather than a celebration. She outlined DNCR’s planning efforts and invited input from tribal communities.

Commissioners provided various insights:

- **Commissioner Strickland Fields** emphasized focusing on the 1800s, a pivotal time for NC tribes, and proposed a supportive resolution from AIHC.
- **Commissioner Richardson** highlighted the opportunity to tell the story of what freedom meant for American Indian communities.
- **Commissioner Stewart** suggested working with the NC Commission of Indian Affairs (NCCIA) to align commemoration efforts at the national level.
- **NCCIA Executive Director Greg Richardson** shared his involvement with America 250 and suggested focusing on themes of civil rights, education, and military service.
- **Commissioner Hazel** stressed that American Indian experiences in the Revolution varied significantly by tribe and should not be portrayed as monolithic.
- **Commissioner Baxter** inquired about funding, to which Koonts responded that DNCR is pursuing a mix of state and federal grants.



### Oral History Project

State Oral Historian John Horan provided an update on the AIHC Oral History Project, including a preview of interviews with:

- **NCCIA Executive Director Greg Richardson**
- **Danny Bell**
- **Dr. Otis Lowery**

Commissioners discussed strategies for expanding the project:

- **Commissioner Hazel** suggested involving Native students in oral history research.
- **Commissioner Richardson** supported youth engagement and tribal partnerships for training.
- **Commissioner LaClaire** inquired about the total number of oral histories planned, with Director Bird estimating two to four interviews per month.
- **Associate Director Godwin** emphasized the importance of ensuring American Indian representation in all interviews.

### NC Highway Historical Marker Program

Research Supervisor Ansley Wagner provided an overview of the effort to establish historical markers for all eight state-recognized tribes, with a goal of completion by **November 2023**. Commissioners were tasked with coordinating with their respective tribes to finalize language and submit applications by early April.

Commissioner discussions included:

- **Commissioner Stewart** inquired about a marker for a Sappony tribal school.
- **Commissioner Moore** suggested aligning historical essays with NCCIA to ensure consistency.
- **Commissioner Harlan** asked about revising outdated or problematic language on existing markers. Wagner advised raising such issues with the Highway Historical Markers Commission.
- **Deputy Secretary Tracey Burns** encouraged AIHC to consider publishing tribal stories, akin to the NC African American Heritage Commission's **North Carolina A-Z**.

### Honoring John Black Feather Jeffries

Chair Jacobs acknowledged the passing of **John Black Feather Jeffries** of the Occaneechi Band of Saponi Nation. Commissioners Hazel, Baxter, and Caudill shared reflections on his legacy.

### Director's Report – Kerry Bird



Director Bird provided updates on AIHC initiatives, including:

- **Historical Marker Project** – Encouraged commissioners to submit recommendations.
- **Oral History Project** – Asked commissioners to nominate interviewees, prioritizing elders who attended Indian schools.
- **Tribal Consultations** – Sought commissioner assistance in scheduling meetings with tribal governments and urban Indian organizations.
- **Indian School Markers** – Potential partnership with the **Pomeroy Foundation**.
- **Upcoming AIHC Events:**
  - **Hardaway Site Visit (Feb. 25, 2023)**
  - **Spring Equinox Ceremony at Town Creek Indian Mound**
  - **NC Civil Rights Trail Opportunities** – AIHC can propose sites for inclusion.
  - **NC Indigenous Artist Festival (April 22, 2023)** – Commissioners encouraged to recommend artists.
  - **AIHC Strategic Planning Session (April 20-21, 2023)** – Two-day session with an American Indian consultant to develop a multi-year framework.

#### **Election of AIHC Vice Chair**

Chair Jacobs opened nominations for Vice Chair. Commissioner Stewart expressed interest, was nominated by Commissioner Hazel, and seconded by Commissioner LaClaire. Commissioner Caudill moved to close nominations. The commission **elected Commissioner Stewart as Vice Chair by acclamation**.

#### **Associate Director's Report – Quinn Godwin**

Associate Director Godwin provided updates on:

- **AIHC Facebook Page & Website** – Debuted **December 15, 2022**.
- **HBCU/MIHE Internship Program** – Applications due **February 3, 2023**.
- **AIHC Logo Development** – Presented drafts from DNCR's Marketing Division.
- **Social Media Guidelines** – AIHC focuses on promoting state-recognized tribal events.
- **Addressing Problematic Comments on AIHC Social Media** – Discussion on moderation policies.

#### **Board Discussion & Legal Updates**



- **Open Meetings Law & Quorum Requirements** – Commissioners must comply with public meeting laws.
- **AIHC Committees** – Commissioners agreed to delay formalizing committees.
- **NAGPRA & Repatriation Issues** – State Archaeologist **John Mintz** invited to speak at the **NC Commission of Indian Affairs March 9-11 meeting**.

#### **Closing & Adjournment**

Chair Jacobs concluded the meeting, and commissioners sang **Happy Birthday** to Associate Director Godwin. The meeting was adjourned at **1:34 PM.\*\***