



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

October 14, 2022

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

The inaugural meeting of the American Indian Heritage Commission (AIHC) was convened on October 14, 2022, at the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) in Raleigh. The meeting was called to order by Secretary Reid Wilson, who welcomed attendees and set the tone for this historic occasion.

Attendance

The meeting was attended by the following AIHC commissioners:

- **Coharie Indian Tribe** – Greg Jacobs
- **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

The following commissioners were not in attendance:

- **Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians** – Birdie Harlan
- **Cumberland County Association for Indian People** – Tiffany Pearson

Swearing-In Ceremony

The meeting commenced with the formal swearing-in of commissioners, conducted by Judge Angelica McIntyre. Commissioners took the oath of office, pledging to uphold the Constitution and faithfully serve the AIHC.

Moment of Silence and Opening Remarks



Following the swearing-in, Secretary Wilson requested a moment of silence to honor the victims of a tragic incident in Raleigh the previous day. He then provided an overview of DNCR's role in preserving North Carolina's cultural heritage and emphasized the significance of the AIHC's mission in advising the department on the preservation, interpretation, and promotion of American Indian history, arts, customs, and culture.

Governor Roy Cooper's Address

Governor Cooper expressed his pride in the establishment of the AIHC, highlighting the critical role of American Indian communities in shaping North Carolina's history. He underscored his administration's commitment to diversity and inclusion, as reflected in his appointments of American Indian leaders to key state positions. He also noted the importance of ensuring that American Indian heritage is accurately represented and promoted throughout the state.

Blessings and Cultural Acknowledgment

- Commissioner Marty Richardson provided a welcome in the Tutelo-Saponi language.
- Commissioners Sandon Jacobs and Marty Richardson performed an Honor Song to recognize ancestors and all Indigenous people of North Carolina.
- Commissioner Greg Jacobs offered a prayer, seeking blessings for the work ahead.

Commission Leadership Election

Under the guidance of interim Chair Nancy Strickland Fields, the commission elected its first Chair:

- **Chair:** Sandon Jacobs (Triangle Native American Society)
The election was unanimous, and Chair Jacobs expressed deep gratitude for the trust placed in him by his peers. He reflected on his personal connection to North Carolina's Indian schools and his commitment to honoring American Indian history.

Director's Report

AIHC Director Kerry Bird provided an overview of the commission's legislative foundation and mission, as established by the 2021 General Assembly. He introduced Associate Director Quinn Godwin and highlighted the AIHC's key responsibilities:

- Coordinating American Indian cultural events.
- Advising DNCR on the management of state-supported American Indian historic sites.
- Promoting awareness of American Indian heritage and cultural tourism.

Introduction of Commissioners



Associate Director Quinn Godwin introduced each commissioner, detailing their backgrounds, tribal affiliations, and areas of expertise. The commissioners bring a diverse range of knowledge in history, education, cultural preservation, and governance.

AIHC Project Proposals

Director Bird and Associate Director Godwin outlined initial projects for the commission's consideration:

1. AIHC Branding and Outreach

- Development of a website and social media presence.
- Creation of a beadwork-inspired logo.
- Plans for a quarterly newsletter.

2. Promotion of American Indian Heritage Month

- Strategies to increase statewide recognition of American Indian Heritage Month in November.
- Increased engagement with media outlets.

3. Historic and Cultural Markers

- Collaboration with the NC Historical Marker Program to establish markers for North Carolina's eight state-recognized tribes.
- Documentation of historical Indian school sites and potential GIS registration for protection.

4. Reinterment of Native Human Remains

- Advocacy for the respectful reburial of Native remains currently housed in the Office of State Archaeology.

5. Oral History Project

- Collection of oral histories from tribal elders and leaders to document American Indian history and contemporary experiences.

6. American Indian Education and Curriculum

- Collaboration with Carolina K-12 to develop educational resources for teachers.
- Establishment of an **American Indian Leaders Booklet** featuring historical and contemporary figures.



Commissioner Discussion and Additional Proposals

The commissioners engaged in a robust discussion, offering additional ideas and refining existing proposals. Key points included:

- **Ensuring representation of urban American Indian communities** in AIHC initiatives.
- **Expanding American Indian storytelling** to include 20th and 21st-century history, countering the misconception that American Indian culture is only historical.
- **Increasing American Indian visibility year-round** through tourism, public events, and partnerships with local governments.
- **Addressing challenges in historical documentation** due to erasure and lack of records, emphasizing the need for accurate and inclusive historical narratives.

Committee Formation Discussion

To effectively manage AIHC's projects, commissioners discussed the formation of committees. Proposed committees included:

- **History & Research**
- **Marketing & Tourism**
- **Public Relations & Outreach**
- **Education & Curriculum**

The commission agreed to finalize committee structures at the next meeting, allowing time for further deliberation.

Action Items:

- **Chair Jacobs** – Oversee the structuring of AIHC committees and ensure input from all commissioners.
- **AIHC Staff** – Finalize branding materials, including logo development and website launch.
- **Commissioners** – Provide recommendations for historical markers and oral history interviewees.
- **Director Bird & Associate Director Godwin** – Continue collaboration with DNCR leadership to advance AIHC initiatives.

Closing Remarks & Adjournment



Chair Jacobs closed the meeting by reaffirming the commission's commitment to its mission. He expressed gratitude for the collaborative spirit of the commissioners and state officials. The meeting was adjourned at **12:30 PM.**

This inaugural meeting set the foundation for AIHC's future work in preserving and promoting American Indian heritage across North Carolina.