

DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL AND
CULTURAL RESOURCES

STRATEGIC PLAN



NORTH CAROLINA
AMERICAN INDIAN
HERITAGE COMMISSION



2025-2030



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Background

The North Carolina American Indian Heritage Commission (AIHC) was created by the N.C. General Assembly in the 2021 State Budget Act under §G.S. 143B-135.5 to advise and assist the Secretary of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) in the preservation, interpretation, and promotion of American Indian history, arts, custom, and culture. The powers and duties of the AIHC as stated in the legislation are to:

- Assist in the coordination of American Indian cultural events;
- Provide oversight and management of all State-managed American Indian historic sites;
- Promote public awareness of the annual American Indian Heritage Month Celebration;
- Encourage American Indian cultural tourism throughout the State of North Carolina; and
- Advise the Secretary of Natural and Cultural Resources upon any matter the Secretary may refer to it.

To build a strong foundation, the AIHC engaged in a strategic planning process in 2024. Using input from a wide range of stakeholders that was inclusive of the American Indian tribal communities across North Carolina, we developed this strategic plan which is designed to guide the work of the Commissioners and its leadership team over the next five years. This plan is structured to be a living document by establishing clear, multi-year strategic priorities and goals, as follows. The AIHC's role is focused on cultural preservation, education, and advocacy, and does not include authority over tribal sovereignty or governance matters, which remain the purview of individual tribes.



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Mission

Our mission is to promote a thorough understanding of American Indian history, arts, customs and culture in North Carolina.

Vision

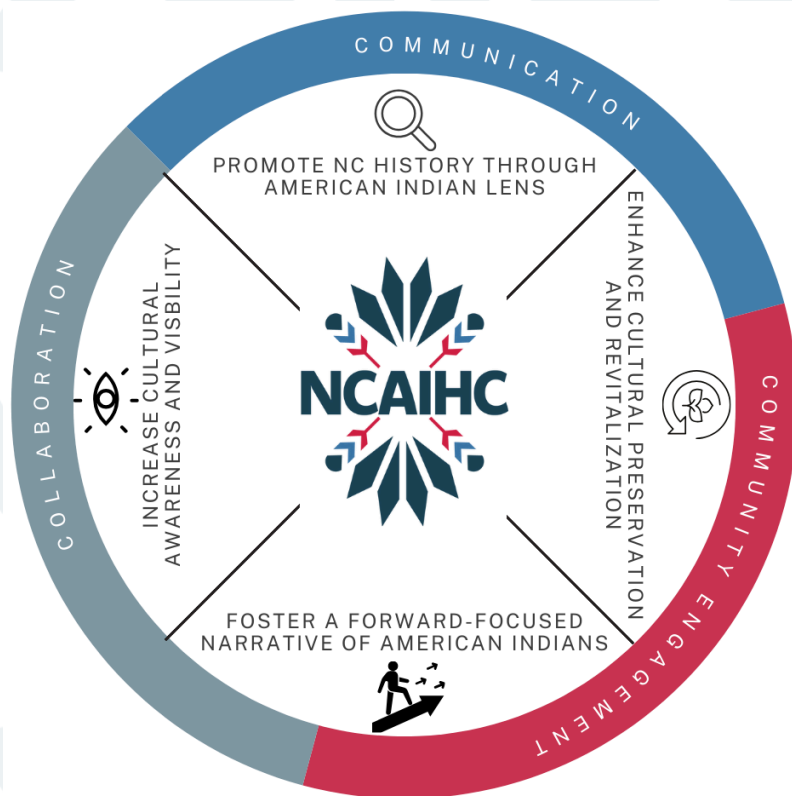
Transform North Carolinians' understanding of American Indian history, arts, culture and traditions from the past to present.

Value Statements

- Truth & Accuracy
 - Promoting and disseminating accurate and authentic information about American Indian history, arts, customs, and culture in North Carolina, ensuring that narratives and representations are based on factual and reliable sources.
- Education
 - Providing educational opportunities and resources that increase understanding and knowledge of American Indian history, arts, customs, and culture among all North Carolinians, fostering awareness, appreciation, and respect.
- Sovereignty
 - Acknowledging and respecting North Carolina tribes and working collaboratively with tribal communities to support their cultural efforts.
- Unity & Inclusiveness
 - Creating a sense of unity and inclusiveness among North Carolina tribes, encouraging collaboration, dialogue, and mutual support to address shared challenges, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen the collective voice of Native peoples.
- Visibility
 - Striving to enhance the visibility and representation of American Indian history, arts, customs, and culture across North Carolina, ensuring that Native peoples are recognized, celebrated, and given platforms to share their stories, perspectives, and contributions.

Theory of Action

If the AIHC consistently prioritizes clear, measurable, and community-driven outcomes while actively engaging with tribal communities and other stakeholders, **then** it can increase awareness and understanding of American Indian heritage in North Carolina, enhance cultural preservation and revitalization efforts, and foster a more inclusive and equitable society.



Communication, Community Engagement and Collaboration are embedded in all that the AIHC does. What this means is...

Communication

The AIHC will:

- Communicate clearly and transparently about its plans, activities, and progress, ensuring that all communications are accurate, authentic, and respectful.



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- Utilize diverse communication channels, including social media campaigns, the development of a comprehensive toolkit for cultural promotion, a speakers' bureau, an online platform for Native artistry, and a documentary showcasing modern tribal life, to reach various audiences.
- Assess communication efforts regularly through engagement metrics to ensure that stakeholders and the general public have the information they need to engage with the AIHC and learn more about American Indian heritage.

Community Engagement

The AIHC will:

- Prioritize regular and meaningful engagement with tribal communities, including consultations, listening sessions, and collaborative decision-making processes on projects such as the installation of the North Carolina Indian School Trail Markers.
- Build a vibrant community of advocates across the state, including tribal communities, educators, artists, and the general public, through events and programs.
- Elevate the voices and contributions of tribal communities by providing platforms for them to share their stories and perspectives.

Collaboration

The AIHC will:

- Build partnerships to leverage resources and expertise, collaborating with tribal communities, state agencies, educational institutions, and cultural organizations.
- Foster collaboration to address shared challenges, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen the collective voice of Native peoples.

By implementing this theory of change, the AIHC can create a more inclusive and equitable approach to promoting American Indian heritage in North Carolina. The focus on communication, community engagement, and collaboration will ensure that the AIHC's work is relevant, impactful, and sustainable.



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Strategic Priorities

- **Promote North Carolina history through American Indian lens**
- **Increase cultural awareness & visibility**
- **Enhance cultural preservation and revitalization**
- **Foster a forward-focused narrative of American Indians**

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Strategic Priority #1

Promote NC history through American Indian lens

- **Develop and Launch a Digital Archive**

- By December 2029, create a digital archive featuring 144 oral histories from tribal communities, with 48 oral histories collected annually ensuring broad representation and accessibility.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Annual progress reports documenting the completion of 48 oral histories each year.*
 - *Documentation of broad tribal representation in the archive, with at least one contributor from each state-recognized tribe.*
 - *Public launch of the archive by December 2030, with demonstrated user engagement (e.g., website analytics showing 10,000 visits in the first year).*
 - *Accessibility features implemented, including search functionality and closed captioning for all video/audio entries.*

- **Implement a Comprehensive Educational Curriculum**

- By June 2029, develop and disseminate an educational curriculum that integrates American Indian perspectives into at least 25 K-12 lessons, in partnership with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Education Division and in collaboration with NCCIA, NCDPI, SACIE, and Tribal Councils, with pilot testing in 10 school districts by Year 3.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Distribution of at least 25 K-12 lessons integrating American Indian perspectives by June 2029.*
 - *Successful pilot implementation demonstrated by positive feedback from participating teachers and administrators on its effectiveness and impact.*
 - *Evaluation reports showing increased understanding of American Indian history and culture among students in participating pilot school districts.*
 - *Executed collaboration agreements with the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, State Advisory Council on Indian Education, and Tribal Councils documented through meeting minutes or MOUs.*

- **Enhance Teacher Professional Development**

- In collaboration with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Education Division, partner with NCDPI to deliver professional development workshops to 1,000 teachers by 2029, equipping them to implement American Indian-focused educational materials, with annual evaluations of teacher feedback and curriculum impact.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Documentation of teacher participation in workshops, with a breakdown of*



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- annual participation rates.*
 - *Aggregated feedback showing at least 80% of teachers report increased confidence in integrating American Indian-focused materials into their classrooms.*
 - *Documentation of measurable impact on curriculum use, such as lesson plans or classroom activities, shared by participants.*
 - *Annual workshop reports, including topics covered, attendance, and actionable outcomes.*
- **Foster Cross-Functional Collaboration**
 - Establish a cross-functional collaboration mechanism within the DNCR by Year 2, including quarterly planning meetings, and at least five cross-divisional projects involving three or more divisions annually starting in Year 3.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Establishment of a quarterly planning committee by Year 2, with attendance records showing participation from multiple DNCR divisions.*
 - *Completion of at least five cross-divisional projects annually starting in Year 3, documented through project charters, timelines, and outcomes.*
 - *Documented feedback from DNCR staff indicating improved interdepartmental communication and collaboration.*
 - *Publication or public unveiling of collaborative projects, such as exhibits or events, with demonstrated community engagement.*
- **Institutionalize Native Representation in DNCR Projects**
 - By December 2029, integrate Native representation into 10 agency-wide initiatives, such as educational programs or exhibits, and ensure all divisions feature land acknowledgements on their websites by Year 3.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Integration of Native representation into 10 DNCR agency-wide initiatives by December 2029, evidenced through project documentation and impact reports.*
 - *Land acknowledgments posted on all DNCR division websites by the end of Year 3, verified through a website audit.*
 - *Surveys or focus groups indicating increased awareness of Native representation within DNCR programs among stakeholders and the public.*
 - *Examples of tangible initiatives, such as museum exhibits or educational programs, showcasing Native culture and contributions.*

Strategic Priority #2

Increase Cultural Awareness and Visibility

- **Install NC Indian School Trail Markers & Build Tribal Capacity**
 - By December 2029, collaborate with tribal communities to install 40 North Carolina Indian School Trail Markers, completing 10 markers annually in Years 1-4 and the final 10 in Year 5.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Installation of 10 markers annually in Years 1-4 and the final 10 in Year 5, verified through installation reports and GPS mapping.*
 - *Detailed financial reports confirming funding secured and utilized through the Pomeroy Foundation to support marker installations and capacity-building activities.*
- **Promote Tribal-Led Historical Marker Submissions**
 - Encourage tribal communities to submit 10 approved applications for the North Carolina Historical Marker Program by 2029 and monitor progress to ensure the applications are aligned with tribal priorities and requirements. Simultaneously, build tribal capacity by hosting annual workshops and offering one-on-one technical assistance.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Departmental data benchmarking application submissions by tribal communities through the Highway Historical Marker Program by 2029.*
 - *Participation records from at least five annual workshops, demonstrating attendance by representatives from all NC-recognized tribes.*
 - *Mid-year and annual progress reports demonstrating alignment of submissions with tribal priorities, based on consultation feedback and project milestones.*
 - *Evidence of public engagement, including media mentions, community events, and increased awareness of the markers' significance.*
- **Expand Awareness and Engagement Around American Indian Heritage Month**
 - By November 2029, increase statewide engagement in the annual American Indian Heritage Month Celebration by 30% through partnerships with tribal communities, schools, and cultural organizations. Develop and launch at least three supplementary programs annually, such as workshops, social media campaigns, or community events, to support local November celebrations. Track engagement metrics to ensure participation reaches 10,000 individuals annually by Year 5, with a 5% year-over-year growth in event attendance and resource utilization.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Achievement of a 30% increase in participation, reaching 10,000 individuals statewide annually by 2029, tracked through event attendance records and online engagement metrics track.*

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- *Documentation of at least 15 new supplementary programs (three per year) supporting local November celebrations, including workshop agendas, promotional materials, and participant feedback.*
 - *Demonstrated 5% year-over-year growth in social media campaign impressions and resource downloads.*
 - *Partnerships established with schools, tribal organizations, and cultural institutions, evidenced by MOUs, joint events, or collaborative programs.*
- **Create a Toolkit for Cultural Promotion**
 - By December 2026, develop and distribute a comprehensive toolkit, including a speakers' bureau, a vetted list of artists, and resources for cultural promotion. Encourage representation from all North Carolina tribes, with at least one speaker from each tribe targeted for expertise and aligned with specific audience needs.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Toolkit distribution logs verifying delivery of resources to all NC-recognized tribes, schools, and cultural organizations by December 2026.*
 - *Representation of all NC tribes in the speakers' bureau, with participant profiles and topic areas tailored to audience needs.*
 - *User feedback surveys indicating at least 80% of toolkit recipients found it effective in promoting cultural awareness and engagement.*
- **Launch a Statewide Speakers' Bureau**
 - By 2028, establish a statewide speakers' bureau featuring representatives from all tribal communities. Coordinate at least 10 speaking engagements annually, targeting schools, museums, and community organizations, to promote American Indian cultural awareness and education.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Completion of 10 speaking engagements annually by 2028, verified through event records, schedules, and participant feedback forms.*
 - *Demonstrated reach of the bureau, with reports showing diverse audiences, including schools, museums, and community organizations.*
 - *Documentation of participation by representatives from all NC-recognized tribes, with profiles highlighting their areas of expertise and contributions.*
 - *Survey results from host organizations indicating a minimum of 90% positive feedback on the impact and relevance of the speaking engagements.*

Strategic Priority #3

Enhance Cultural Preservation and Revitalization

- **Develop a Comprehensive Cultural Preservation Toolkit**
 - By December 2026, create a Cultural Preservation Toolkit in collaboration with DNCR and tribal communities. This resource will include three culturally tailored modules on archiving, genealogy research, and language revitalization. The modules will be distributed to tribal communities, libraries, and schools statewide.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Completion of a culturally tailored toolkit by December 2026, with at least three modules covering archiving, genealogy research, and language revitalization.*
 - *Distribution records showing that the toolkit was delivered to tribal communities, libraries, and schools statewide.*
 - *Feedback from at least 80% of recipients indicating that the toolkit is practical, accessible, and relevant to cultural preservation efforts.*
 - *Increased use of the toolkit, as measured by a minimum of 100 downloads or requests for physical copies annually after distribution.*
- **Expand State Archives with Tribal Histories**
 - By December 2029, offer support to each of the eight tribes to digitize and archive their cultural and historical materials. Begin with the Sappony Digital State Archives Project as a pilot in Year 1, completing at least one tribe's digital archive per year, ensuring access to all archives through an online portal by Year 5.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Successful digitization of cultural and historical materials from all eight state-recognized tribes by December 2029, starting with the Sappony Digital State Archives Project.*
 - *Annual reports document the completion of at least one tribe's digital archive each year, with supporting evidence such as project timelines, digitization logs, and collaboration agreements.*
 - *Creation of an online portal for public access to all archived materials by Year 5, with analytics showing at least 1,000 unique visits in the first year.*
 - *Collaboration reports and meeting minutes reflecting active partnerships with each tribe, ensuring the materials are representative and culturally accurate.*



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- **Host Annual Cultural Revitalization Workshops**

- By the Fall of 2026, organize annual workshops focusing on cultural preservation techniques such as archiving, transcribing digital stories, and supporting language and dialect revitalization. Aim to engage 100 participants annually, with recordings and toolkits made available online for broader access.

- Evidence of Success:

- *Documentation of at least 100 participants engaging in annual workshops by Year 1, with evidence of diverse tribal community involvement.*
- *Workshop materials, including presentation slides, videos, and handouts, archived online for broader access by Year 2.*
- *Annual participant feedback surveys indicating a minimum of 85% satisfaction with the quality of workshops and their application to cultural preservation efforts.*
- *Evidence of ongoing engagement, with participants using the resources in their communities, tracked through follow-up surveys and reports.*

- **Support Young Adults in Cultural Preservation**

- By 2028, implement a mentorship program to engage young adults from tribal communities in cultural preservation work, such as language revitalization, storytelling, and digital archiving. Provide at least two training workshops annually to build their capacity and ensure continuity of preservation efforts.

- Evidence of Success:

- *Successful implementation of a mentorship program by 2028, with at least 25 young adults from tribal communities participating.*
- *Records of at least two annual training workshops, including curricula and attendance logs, to build the capacity of young adults in cultural preservation.*
- *Mentorship success stories, including case studies or testimonials, documenting the growth of young adults' skills in areas like language revitalization, storytelling, and digital archiving.*
- *Evidence of continuity in preservation efforts, such as mentees taking on leadership roles or initiating cultural projects within their communities.*

- **Enhance Cultural Literacy for Educators and Librarians**

- By June 2028, develop and deliver a series of educational workshops for librarians and teachers, featuring recommended books, literature, and digital resources on American Indian culture and history. Host at least 5 workshops statewide, reaching a minimum of 250 educators by Year 3, with follow-up evaluations to measure impact.

- Evidence of Success:

- *Completion of at least 5 statewide workshops by June 2027, with a total of 250*



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educators and librarians participating documented by attendance rosters.

- *Follow-up evaluations showing that at least 80% of participants apply the knowledge gained in their professional practices, such as incorporating recommended books or resources into lesson plans or library collections.*
- *Documentation of additional resources developed for educators, including lists of recommended readings and digital resources.*
- *Feedback indicating increased cultural literacy among educators, evidenced by improved understanding and teaching of American Indian culture and history.*

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Strategic Priority #4

Foster a Forward-Focused Narrative of American Indians

- **Assist in the sale of Native Artistry**
 - By December 2026, assist with the promotion and sales of Native artistry from North Carolina tribal artists by providing technical assistance for at least 15-20 artists by Year 2 and aim to feature 50-75 artists from all state-recognized tribes by Year 5.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Documented consultation with other DNCR divisions that have existing retail spaces to partner and promote Native artistry.*
 - *Documentation of technical assistance provided to at least 15-20 artists in Year 2, including training materials, support logs, and follow-up surveys from participating artists.*
 - *Evidence of platform engagement, with sales data and website analytics showing at least 50-75 artists listed by Year 5, with an attempt to represent all state-recognized tribes.*
 - *Feedback from artists indicating a measurable increase in visibility and sales due to the platform, with at least 75% of artists reporting satisfaction with their experience.*
- **Produce a Documentary Showcasing Modern Tribal Life**
 - By 2028, create a feature-length documentary, *Here We Are*, highlighting contemporary stories, achievements, and cultural contributions of North Carolina's tribal communities. Include individual segments on each tribe, with input from tribal leaders, and premiere the film at a statewide cultural event by Year 4.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Completion of the feature-length documentary, *Here We Are*, by 2028, including individual segments for each tribe and input from tribal leaders.*
 - *Premiere of the documentary at a statewide cultural event by Year 4, with at least 200 attendees, and evidence of widespread media coverage (e.g., news articles, social media mentions).*
 - *Positive feedback from tribal communities, with at least 80% of respondents indicating that the documentary accurately reflects modern tribal life and contributions.*

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- *Distribution of the documentary through multiple platforms (e.g., streaming services, educational institutions), achieving at least 5,000 views or engagements by the end of Year 5.*
- **Develop a Social Media Campaign for Contemporary Narratives**
 - Starting in January 2025, implement a monthly social media campaign featuring videos, interviews, and success stories from all eight state-recognized tribes. Aim for 20,000 total engagements annually and release at least one individual video spotlighting each tribe by Year 3.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Successful launch of the monthly social media campaign in January 2025, with regular content featuring videos, interviews, and success stories from each of the eight state-recognized tribes.*
 - *Achievement of 20,000 total engagements annually, tracked through social media analytics (likes, shares, comments, etc.).*
 - *Creation of at least eight individual spotlight videos, one for each tribe, released by Year 3, with measurable increases in engagement for each tribe's video.*
 - *Evidence of growing followers and engagement across social media platforms, with a year-over-year increase in the number of people reached.*
- **Host an Annual Lecture Series on Contemporary Tribal Issues**
 - Beginning in 2025, organize an annual lecture series featuring prominent Native scholars to discuss modern tribal developments, governance, and contributions. Each event will target 200 attendees and produce a recorded session to be shared online for educational purposes.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Organization of the first annual lecture series in 2025, with documented attendance from at least 200 participants per event.*
 - *Recordings of each lecture session made available online, with at least 750 views per lecture by the end of Year 3.*
 - *Participant feedback showing that at least 85% of attendees find the lectures valuable for understanding contemporary tribal issues.*
 - *Documentation of the impact of the series, with educators, students, and community members using the lectures as educational resources.*
- **Support the Creation of a North Carolina Native Artist Directory**
 - By 2027, facilitate the formation of a North Carolina Native Artist Directory to connect tribal artists, foster collaboration, and provide technical resources. Host an annual showcase event starting in 2026, with the goal of enrolling 25 members from diverse tribal communities by Year 3.
 - Evidence of Success:
 - *Successful formation of the North Carolina Native Artist Directory by 2027, with*



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a formal membership of at least 25 artists from diverse tribal communities.

- *Execution of an annual showcase event, with at least 50 artists featured and an attendance of at least 200 community members and visitors.*
- *Feedback from directory members showing that 90% of artists feel the directory has helped them with networking, resources, and professional development opportunities.*

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