



# INDIAN TIMES NEWSLETTER

## North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs



Commission of Indian Affairs' Director  
Greg Richardson

### **A LOOK INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

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- Upcoming Events

Stay connected to the latest Commission news and updates by reading the *Indian Times Newsletter*, visiting our [website](#) and following us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn (@NCDOA). We appreciate your support!

### **From the Executive Director**

By: Greg Richardson

#### **We're in Our New Home**

As reminder, the Commission is now on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the Albemarle Building on 325 North Salisbury Street. Our mailing address remains 1317 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1317.

#### **Quarterly Commission Meeting Recap**

The Commission held its quarterly meeting in Charlotte on March 7 ahead of the Annual NC Indian Unity Conference. Discussion topics ranged from how to avoid scams and fraud, to rural development programs and services to improving North Carolina tribal engagement with the National Congress of American Indians. Guest speakers included NC Department of Justice Outreach Specialist Sarah Welsch, U.S. Department of Agriculture State Director Reginald Speight and Northeast Vice-President of the National Congress of American Indians Lance Gumbs.

#### **Unity Conference Summary**

This year's 49<sup>th</sup> NC Indian Unity Conference was a success! With more than 450 registered attendees, it marked the largest Indian Unity Conference in recent years. Held at the Charlotte Hilton University Park, the conference included a series of general assemblies, workshops, a reception hosted by the UNC Pembroke and a gospel singing program. A Pow-Wow rounded out the festivities. Tribal representatives from the states of Georgia, South Carolina and New York also participated, with the Catawba Nation of South Carolina sending the largest number of out-of-state tribal representatives.



**Be in the know! Check out the Commission's [calendar of events](#).**



# Legislative Report

By: Greg Richardson

## Proposed Indian Legislative Day at the NC General Assembly

The Commission's Legislative Committee is planning an American Indian Legislative Day slated for this spring. The purpose of the event is to educate members of the General Assembly about North Carolina American Indians and tribes and to secure support for the Commission's legislative agenda. Stay tuned for more details.

## National American Indian Veterans (NAIV) Charter Legislation

A [congressional charter](#) for the National American Indian Veterans Organization was recently adopted by U.S. Congress and signed by President Biden. This new legislation will give American Indians a greater platform and voice in congress to express the needs of military veterans in tribal communities.

A meeting was held in Washington, DC, on March 13, 2024, to commemorate the signing of this legislation. A delegation of American Indian veterans from North Carolina participated in the meeting, which included the Haliwa-Saponi and the Eastern Band of Cherokee - the only North Carolina tribes that sent representatives to the meeting.

We are pleased that Greg Richardson, executive director of the NC Commission of Indian Affairs, has been appointed as the east coast commander of the Native American Indian Veterans Organization. A meeting will be held soon to begin the initial setup for this new, non-profit organization.

# Staff Achievements and Appointments

Commission Deputy Director Candace Lowry was reappointed to the Native American Employment and Training Council, a national organization that advises the Secretary of Labor on the administration and operation of American Indian programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Her term runs through March 2026.

Candace also recently received the 40 Under 40 Award from the National Center for American Indian Enterprise and Development. The prestigious award recognizes 40 emerging American Indians from across the country who have demonstrated leadership, initiative, and dedication and made significant contributions to businesses and their community.

Also, Commission Director Greg Richardson was reappointed to the Governor's Advisory Council on Historically Underutilized Businesses on February 1, 2024. Commission Board Member Tony Hayes was also appointed to the Council. The HUB Advisory Council works with the HUB Office to eliminate barriers that impede equal opportunity and encourage historically underutilized businesses to do business with the state.





# Tribute to Carolyn Hunt Crocker— Dedicated Student Advocate



The NC Department of Administration mourns the loss of Carolyn Hunt Crocker, an 18-year employee with the Commission of Indian Affairs, who passed away on January 1, 2024. Known for her kind demeanor and impeccable work ethic, Carolyn worked offsite in the Commission's Bolton, North Carolina office.

During her time with NCDOA she worked with the Waccamaw Siouan as well as other tribes and agencies to ensure American Indian students had the opportunity to enroll in programs supporting employment and education assistance such as the American Indian Workforce Development Program and SUNS Program.

An avid advocate for the American Indian community, she served on various commissions and boards including the Cape Fear Council of Government and the United Tribes Scholarship Committee just to name a few.

Throughout her career, Carolyn worked in several capacities including as an intake officer for the Columbus County

Department of Social Services. However, as Commission of Indian Affairs Director Greg Richardson describes it, it was her time with NCDOA that she found her true calling. "I have heard how she would stop people in the grocery store to talk about her program and ask parents and students to contact her about enrolling in our workforce program and registering for community college," he said. "Carolyn's journey has left quite a legacy for all to follow, and her contributions have made and will continue to improve the lives of many."

We were blessed to have Carolyn Crocker as part of the DOA team. She will be missed.

[Obituary for Carolyn \(Hunt\) Crocker | Worthington Funeral Home](#)

# A Student Spotlight—SUNS Program Participant, Caleb Messer



Meet Caleb Messer, a SUNS program participant and graduate of East Carolina University's Honors College, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Construction Management. A member of the Lumbee Tribe, Caleb hails from Fayetteville, North Carolina and recently accepted a full-time superintendent position with Metcon, a place where he served as an intern for two years. Metcon is a Lumbee-owned and operated construction company.

Caleb is grateful to be able to work for Metcon and help build the company and community that supported him through his college journey. Congrats Caleb!



# Program Updates

## American Indian Workforce Development

Are you looking for a new career or resources to sharpen your professional development skills? If so, the American Indian Workforce Development Program (WIOA) may be the resource for you! This federally funded program is dedicated to serving the employment needs of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian individuals. The program serves 63 counties with tribal communities known to be associated with the eight state-recognized and one federally recognized tribe.

The program, thus far, has received 15 new program enrollments and provided a total of \$376,895 in funding to 91 participants. Funds were used to assist students aged 18 and older with employment, education, and training needs.

Want more information? Check out the Commission's [WIOA website](#) or contact WIOA Director [Maria.Richardson@doa.nc.gov](mailto:Maria.Richardson@doa.nc.gov) for more details.

## Economic Development Program

In January, the Commission launched a new economic development digest called THRIVE, which stands for Tribal Heritage Reshaping Indian Ventures Economically. This quarterly newsletter is designed to promote economic development and empower American Indian communities with the knowledge and resources needed for financial success. You can find the newsletter on the Commission's website under announcements and [Economic Development Program page](#).



Together, let's THRIVE and reshape the economic landscape for a brighter future.

## American Indian Business Survey Reminder

Are you a business owner and an enrolled member of an American Indian tribe? If so, be sure to complete the American Indian Business Survey. By doing so, you will receive notifications of training opportunities, events and activities including possible funding opportunities. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete.

Simply scan the QR code (located to the right). The Economic Development Program created this survey to better understand the American Indian business community, their needs and to help promote their companies.





## Supporting Undergraduate Native Students (SUNS) Program— Fall Graduates

Congrats to these SUNS program participants who each graduated in Fall 2023.

- Mackenzie Carr, BS Exercise Science (Magna Cum Laude), UNC-Wilmington
- Mercedes Yanick, BS Biology, Biology/Chemistry, UNC-Pembroke
- Caleb Messer, BS Construction Management, East Carolina University

## Learn About Other Programs & Services Offered by the Commission

- [Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking Program](#)
- [Housing Assistance Program](#)
- [Indian Child Welfare Program](#)
- [Low Income Energy Assistance \(LIEAP\)](#)
- [Tribal Recognition Program](#)

# Community News

## Miss Indian North Carolina Pageant Recap

In February, three outstanding American Indian women – Amya Richardson (Haliwa-Saponi), Kearston Page Freeman (Lumbee), and Zianne Richardson (Haliwa-Saponi) – competed for the title of Miss Indian North Carolina. Sponsored by the United Tribes of North Carolina, the pageant was held at the Sampson Expo Center in Clinton, where Zianne Richardson was named this year's Miss Indian North Carolina.