



North Carolina

# Commission of Indian Affairs

Annual Report 2024-2025



**NC DOA**  
Department of Administration  
**Commission of  
Indian Affairs**

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## Our Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs is to instill a positive vision for American Indians by preserving cultural identity while promoting and advocating for the rights, beliefs and opportunities which impact the quality of life.

## Message from the Executive Director

The NC Commission of Indian Affairs (Indian Affairs) is dedicated to serving North Carolina's tribal communities, providing programs and services that enhance the lives of more than 130,000 American Indians who call North Carolina home. Since its establishment in 1971, Indian Affairs has become the largest American Indian agency in the United States, with 21 employees advocating and providing programs and services that support education, social, and economic development.

This report provides a comprehensive summary of the division's work, programs, activities, and accomplishments during the 2024-25 state fiscal year. With \$12,937,222 in funding and continued support from local, state, and federal agencies, Indian Affairs achieved its intended goals and objectives during this fiscal year and seeks to expand its current staff and programs for the upcoming year. Of course, none of this would be possible without the continued support from our state and federally recognized tribes and Urban Indian Organizations – each of which is represented on the Commission.

We also extend a special thank you – on behalf of Indian Affairs and the Commission – to Governor Josh Stein, Administration Secretary Gabriel J. Esparza. Their predecessors, Governor Roy Cooper and Secretary Pamela B. Cashwell as well as members of the NC General Assembly and the residents of North Carolina for supporting our efforts throughout the year.

With warm regards,

Gregory A. Richardson  
Executive Director  
North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs





## About the Commission

The Commission of Indian Affairs is comprised of one representative from each of the eight state or federally recognized Indian tribes and four Urban Indian organizations, five state officials, and one appointee each by the Speaker of the NC House of Representatives and the President of the Senate. Ex-officio members include one representative each from three other organizations: the North Carolina Native American Youth Organization, and an ad hoc representative from the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources State Archaeology.

Housed within the North Carolina Department of Administration (pursuant to G.S. 143A-6(b) and (c)), the Commission employs an executive director to lead the day-to-day responsibilities and business of the Commission. The executive director, who serves at the pleasure of the Commission membership, employs staff to oversee and manage programs and provide administrative support to the NC Commission of Indian Affairs. The director must discharge his or her responsibilities in accordance with the administrative, budget, and management policies of the North Carolina Department of Administration and guidelines associated with state and federal programs administered by the Commission. The director reports to the secretary of the North Carolina Department of Administration with respect to the Commission's administrative functions and the Commission's membership concerning the work of the Commission.

Th Commission held four quarterly members in September and December 2024 and March and June 2025. During each meeting, Commission members addressed issues concerning the needs of North Carolina's American Indian citizens and received reports from standing committees, the executive director and Commission staff.

# Commission of Indian Affairs Members

Chairman: Greg Bryant, Metrolina Native American Association

Vice Chairman: Craig D. McMillian, Speaker of the House Appointee

Secretary-Treasurer: Nadine F. Patrick, Waccamaw Siouan Tribe

## Members

- Noelle Talley, designee for Secretary Gabriel J. Esparza, NC Department of Administration
- Emily Roach, designee for Secretary Lee Lilley, NC Department of Commerce
- Debra Farrington, designee for Secretary Devdutta Sangvai, NC Department of Health and Human Services
- Jeff Hart, designee for Secretary D. Reid Wilson, NC Department of Environmental Quality
- Chris Bullard, designee for Commissioner Luke Farley, NC Department of Labor
- Gerald Goolsby, President Pro-Tem Appointee
- Craig D. McMillian, Speaker of the House Appointee
- Isabell Freeman-Elliott and Lenora Locklear, Coharie Indian Tribe
- Tina Dicke and Harrison Jones, Cumberland County Association for Indian People
- Jarrett Crowe and Michael Lambert, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- DeVane Burnette, Sr. and Perry Lynn Hunt, Jr., Guilford Native American Association
- Alfred Ray Richardson and Pamela Sunshine Richardson, Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe
- Ricky Burnett, Larece Hunt and Vernanda (Vee) Oxendine, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina
- Constance B. Mitchell, Meherrin Indian Tribe
- Walter David (WD) Baucom, Metrolina Native America Association
- William Anthony (Tony) Hayes, Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation
- Dorothy Stewart Yates, Sappony Indian Tribe
- Danny Bell, Triangle Native American Society
- Elton Ray Jacobs, Waccamaw Siouan Tribe

## Ex-Officio Members

- State Official Ex-Officio for Cultural Resources Advisor Chris Southerly, Chief Archaeologist
- Kaylee Evans, NC Native American Youth Organization (NCNAYO)

## Funding Summary

Program	Grant Program Award	Term	Type	Awarding Agency
NC Commission of Indian Affairs General Fund	\$734,938	7/1/24-6/30/25	State	State Appropriations
DOA Community Services Project NC Indian Cultural Center Fund	\$24,000	7/1/24-6/30/25	State	Office of Lieutenant Governor
Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program	\$4,764,117	7/1/24-6/30/25	Federal	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Emergency Housing Voucher Program	\$4,922,991	7/1/24-6/30/25	Federal	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Mainstream Voucher Program	\$633,696	7/1/24-6/30/25	Federal	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program	\$5,731	7/1/24-6/30/25	Federal	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Section 8 Software Upgrade	\$200,750	12/31/24-12/31/26	Federal	U.S. Department of Treasury
Low Income Energy Assistance Program	\$87,736	7/1/24-6/30/25	Federal - Pass Through	NC Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health
Supporting Undergraduate Native Students CSBG	\$47,541	7/1/24-6/30/25	Federal - Pass Through	NC Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health
Workforce Invest Act Program / Workforce Innovation and	\$420,024	7/1/24-6/30/25	Federal	U.S. Department of Labor

Opportunity Act Section 166 Program				
Family Violence Prevention & Services Act - Grant	\$126,492	12/1/24-9/30/25	Federal - Pass Through	NC Department of Administration's Division for Women and Youth
Family Violence Prevention & Services Act - COVID Grant	\$122,807	08/1/24-08/31/25	Federal - Pass Through	NC Department of Administration's Division for Women and Youth
Core Victim Services	\$218,875	10/1/24-9/30/25	Federal - Pass Through	NC Department of Public Safety - Governor's Crime Commission
Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)	\$199,999	10/1/23-06/30/25	Federal - Pass Through	NC Department of Public Safety - Governor's Crime Commission
Indian Child Welfare Program	\$100,000	1/1/24-12/30/25	Sponsorship	Blue Cross Blue Shield NC
NC Indian Tobacco Use Survey Grant	\$268,564	12/1/24-12/30/25	Federal - Pass Through	NC Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health
Empowering Tribal Comm-Victim Services Training and Outreach	\$1,656	-	Pass Through	-
DOA Tribal Business Home Development Project	\$57,305	-	Federal	U.S. Department of Agriculture
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$12,937,222</b>			

## Program Update

Indian Affairs' programs focus on developing partnerships and collaborations with local, state and federal resources to develop and implement services for American Indians. Programs address a variety of needs faced by senior citizens, veterans, families, children, and students, as well as those native residents experiencing life-changing circumstances including victimization.

### American Indian Adult Tobacco Survey

The American Indian Adult Tobacco Survey (NCAIATS) officially launched in July 2023, to gain a better understanding of commercial tobacco use among North Carolina tribal communities. Thanks to continued funding, during the 2024-25 fiscal year, the NCAIATS program received 2,771 survey responses from nine tribal communities including the Coharie, Eastern Band of Cherokee, Haliwa-Saponi, Lumbee, Meherrin, Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, Sappony, Waccamaw Siouan, and Catawba Nation Indian tribes. The NCAIATS team promoted and administered the survey at multiple events held throughout the year including powwows, health fairs and conferences such as the annual NC Unity Conference. Unfortunately, due to loss of federal funding, the NCAIATS program was unable to continue its promotional efforts after March 25, 2025. However, with state funding, the program held tribal circles throughout the fiscal year targeting American Indian youth. The talking circles encouraged discussion on commercial tobacco use and nicotine dependence. During the fiscal year, the talking circles garnered 135 participants from four tribal communities and one Urban Indian Organization.

NCAIATS will receive additional state funds during fall 2025, with hopes to continue program promotional and outreach efforts within North Carolina's tribal communities.

Type of Events	Total Number of Events
Tribal/Urban Indian Org (UIO) Powwows	7
Health Fair	8
Homecomings/Heritage Celebrations	3
Conferences	6
Tribal/District/Indian Ed. Meetings/Culture Class/Other	10
Presentations	4
Talking Circles	10

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Catawba	407	15%
Coharie	145	5%
Eastern Band Cherokee	209	8%
Haliwa-Saponi	104	4%
Lumbee	1570	57%
Meherrin	28	1%
Occaneechi Band of Saponi Nation	17	<1%
Other	123	4%
Sappony	19	<1%
Waccamaw Siouan	148	5%
<b>Grand Total</b>	2770	100.00

## American Indian Workforce Development Program

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) help job seekers access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Approved by Congress in 2014, the WIOA Section 166 program is a federal grant program dedicated to serving the employment needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

To meet the needs of North Carolina’s American Indian population, the WIOA program serves 64 counties associated with native communities that comprise of the eight state and federally recognized tribes.

The WIOA program strives to reach and serve as many American Indian participants as possible. In FY 2024-25, the WIOA program served 83 participants, just shy of its target goal of 84 participants (total of 36 new enrollments). The WIOA program director and three program coordinators worked diligently to promote the program’s services such as financial help with tuition, books and fees, and help with career counseling, job searches and resume preparation. Staff attended in-person community events, as well as webinars and virtual meetings. The WIOA program team also participated in the Annual National Indian and Native American

Employment and Training Conference in Orlando, Florida and the NC Works Partnership Conference in Greensboro, North Carolina.

This year, \$420,024 in WIOA program funds helped 13 American Indian students ages 18 and up with employment training needs. Eleven program participants graduated with degrees in the fields of electrical systems and technology, dental assistance, computer programming, respiratory therapy, phlebotomy and commercial driving.

In December 2024, the WIOA program co-hosted an academic success workshop at Campbell University in conjunction with Indian Affairs' Supporting Undergraduate Native Students program (SUNS). The workshop featured topics on etiquette, financial literacy, and American Indian culture among others. The event also honored WIOA program graduates who excelled in the classroom.

The WIOA program continues to accept new applicants as it prepares for the new grant cycle.

## Economic Development Program

Throughout the 2024-25 fiscal year, the Economic Development Program continued elevating resources in the American Indian community through its online directory and news publication.

Launch in 2023, the American Indian business online directory helps promote economic growth and opportunities within North Carolina tribal communities. As of 2025, there are more than 100 businesses listed in the directory. All information presented in the directory is self-reported from business owners who are enrolled members of North Carolina American Indian tribes.

In June 2025, Indian Affairs released the second edition of the electronic newsletter, THRIVE (Tribal Heritage Reshaping Indian Ventures Economically). Launched in January 2024, the newsletter is designed to empower American Indian communities with essential information and resources to help them succeed in the business world.

During the fiscal year, the Economic Development Program also introduced two new business networking events.

In September 2024, Indian Affairs proudly launched the inaugural Business Symposium, held at Robeson Community College. Designed to empower American Indian entrepreneurs and foster economic growth, participants received resources from the Small Business Center Office, learned of business opportunities with the NC Department of Transportation as well as information on various business certification programs – including the historically underutilized businesses, disadvantaged business enterprises and small business enterprises certifications.

Moreover, in March 2025, Indian Affairs hosted a Business Mixer at the Greensboro Train Station. This event brought business leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals from across the state together to network, and explore business opportunities. From small businesses to large corporations, this event connected American Indian entrepreneurs with key stakeholders and industry partners including the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMPTO),

NCDOT Office of Civil Rights, and Businessman Johny Helms, who was among the list of presenters.

In addition to nurturing businesses, the Economic Development Program remained committed to providing resources for American Indian students to fulfill their educational goals. The Supporting Undergraduate Native Students (SUNS) Program helps foster generational wealth by making college dreams a reality for American Indian students across the state. The SUNS Program helps income-eligible students to enroll full-time in an accredited North Carolina-based community college or university. Each fall and spring semester, the program provides scholarships, incentive payments, and supportive services to help students achieve their educational goals. Scholarships cover tuition, fees, books, supplies, equipment, and uniforms for enrolled classes. The SUNS program is funded through the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Economic Opportunity's annual Community Services Block Grant, which provided \$55,000 during the 2024-25 fiscal year. Program funding supported 21 college students, including five graduates, during the fiscal year.

The Economic Development Program hopes to continue providing these services and more in the coming fiscal year.

## Housing Assistance Program

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is funded annually by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide affordable, safe and sanitary housing via rental assistance. Subsidized payments are paid directly to each landlord on behalf of the tenant with the amount of assistance determined by each family's income and family size. Indian Affairs Housing Assistance Program offered five distinct voucher services this fiscal year.

- Housing Choice Vouchers provide versatile housing solutions.
- Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers address the housing needs of veterans.
- Mainstream Vouchers help people under 62 years of age who are disabled.
- Emergency Housing Vouchers offer critical assistance for the homeless and those in domestic violence situations.
- Stability Vouchers provide housing for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness

Throughout the fiscal year, the Housing Program demonstrated continued operational strength while advancing its mission to provide affordable, safe, and sanitary rental assistance through HUD-administered voucher programs.

Indian Affairs received more than \$10.5 million in annual funding and proactive cost-containment measures to provide housing assistance and utility reimbursement payment to more than 1,600 eligible low-income families during the 2024-25 fiscal year. Rental assistance was provided to eligible families living in Columbus, Halifax, Hoke, Granville, Person, Sampson and Warren counties.

Throughout the fiscal year, the program expanded landlord recruitment efforts, strengthened partnerships with real estate professionals and service providers, and enhanced housing search assistance for participants. Continued collaboration with Southeastern Integrated Care improved access to housing for underserved American Indian households. Leadership also coordinated quarterly outreach and educational initiatives and advanced planning for the agency's inaugural housing conference.

Additional staff were also hired to strengthen operational capacity. The program initiated the process of upgrading its housing software system, evaluated more efficient operational methods, and conducted a review of non-essential expenditures. Annual funding allocations included resources dedicated to software acquisition and system upgrades, as well as staffing support to ensure successful implementation of these modernization efforts.

The accomplishments of fiscal year 2024–25 reinforced the program's capacity, accountability, and collaborative framework. Building on this success, the program remains committed to innovation, partnership development, and advocacy to further expand housing stability and long-term outcomes for North Carolina communities.

## Indian Child Welfare Program

The Indian Child Welfare Acts (ICWA) of 1978 is a congressional U.S. federal law to protect the rights of American Indian families and children. ICWA was established as a response to many decades of American Indian children who were forcibly removed from their homes, families, and tribal territories. Many were placed in residential schools and other non-native homes. Unfortunately, many of these children never made it back to their homes, families, or tribal territories; many were never heard from or seen again. The forced removal of American Indian children resulted in the loss of culture and traditions for many generations resulting in historical trauma.

ICWA ensures that if an American Indian child is taken into custody by child protective services or is the subject of child custody, foster, or adoption:

- The tribe must be notified about the situation,
- Placement of the child with extended family and/or keeping the child in the tribal territory within their culture and traditions is a priority.
- Tribes have the right to intervene in state court proceedings and even request a transfer to tribal courts.

ICWA protects the rights of Indigenous people and ensure American Indian children can grow up within their tribal territory and stay connected to their traditional ways, thus protecting and sustaining the culture of American Indian people across the country.

Even though ICWA primarily pertains to federally recognized tribes, G.S. § 143B-139.5A , states for the NC Division of Social Services, Indian Affairs, and other organizations (Guardian ad Litem, case workers, etc.) to collaborate to ensure the following:

- Tribe is notified when a tribal affiliated child has been taken into child protective services for foster/adoption
- American Indian families are recruited for foster certifications and culturally relevant training is provided to families as well as adoption/foster agencies and child welfare workers
- American Indian children in the welfare system are identified

Since majority of the tribes in North Carolina are state recognized only, it is imperative for the Indian Child Welfare program (ICW) to help bridge the gap, and bring American Indian children home.

On November 21, 2024, a sponsorship agreement was made between Blue Cross & Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) and Indian Affairs to provide \$100,000 to support the ICW Program. Laury R. Chavis was hired in June 2025 to serve as the ICW Program director and has worked to fulfill the programs goals of:

- Completing the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting training
- Expanding foster care resources to ensure timely placements for American Indian children in foster care
- Actively perform outreach and encourage community engagement including the annual ICW Gathering

During the 2024-25 fiscal year, the director formed an ICW Gathering Working Group comprised of various stakeholders and tribal leaders and is planning an ICW Tribal Listening Tour to meet and address the needs concerning ICW across the state.

## Low Income Energy Assistance Program

Funded by the NC Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Social Services through Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) federal grants, this education and outreach program promotes awareness among American Indian communities about potential funding assistance for energy-related household costs. Specifically, LIEAP staff worked to reach eligible American Indian households in Bladen, Columbus, Cumberland, Halifax, Harnett, Sampson and Warren counties. The goal was to ensure that families – especially those with elderly, disabled individuals and/or younger children – are informed and encouraged to apply for LIEAP services through county social services departments.

During the 2024-25 fiscal year, staff hosted energy education events in American Indian communities and promoted LIEAP at major tribal events such as the NC Indian Senior Citizens Coalition Conference, NC Museum of History American Indian Heritage Month Celebration, NC Indian Unity Conference, annual Lumbee Homecoming, various powwows and other community meetings. They also shared program information at churches, community centers and civic and non-profit organizations within designated service counties.

The LIEAP program director maintains ongoing communication with County Departments of Social Services and meets with Department of Social Service (DSS) staff annually to remain informed of program updates, application timelines, and additional energy-related services. The LIEAP program director also participates in weatherization training provided by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to enhance program knowledge and coordination.

Outreach efforts included meetings, phone calls, emails, direct mailings with posters and other educational materials were placed in businesses, churches, community/civic centers and tribal offices across the seven counties. Through these efforts, more 7,000 families across the seven-county area received information on LIEAP services and other Indian Affairs' programs.

## Victim Services Program

During the 2024-25 fiscal year, the Victim Services Program provided post trauma services and culturally grounded treatment to American Indian tribal communities across the state. Thanks to funding from the Victims Crime Act (VOCA), Violence Against Women Act and Core Victim Services through the Governor's Crime Commission as well as funding from the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) via the NC Department of Administration's Division for Women and Youth, the Victim Services Program continued its mission of assisting and advocating for those experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault and/or human trafficking, offering resources and referrals to those in need.

The program received \$122,000 from FVPSA and \$126,491 in additional funding to establish an Indian Child Welfare and Family Protection Task Force to ensure proper kinship placement and culturally appropriate care for American Indian children in the child welfare system. The task force will bring Tribal enrollment offices, county departments of social services, law enforcement, and victim service providers together to discuss and address family protection concerns including service delivery and violence protection.

In addition to the task force, funding was used to maintain the annual, culturally based healing and talking circles. Despite a reduction of more than 50% in VOCA funding, the Victim Services Program sustained many of its program initiatives throughout the fiscal year.

One of the many initiatives carried out this fiscal year included the Healing Generations event, featuring traditional American Indian cuisine and wellness activities. This year's theme was "Bridging Past and Present for a Healthier Future," and was sponsored by Robeson County Rape Crisis Center, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC and CORE. In addition to promoting health and wellness, the Victim Services Program hosted four "diapers and wipes" giveaway events throughout the fiscal year within North Carolina tribal communities. During these events, families received not only supplies but information on sexual assault, domestic abuse and how to build and maintain healthy relationships. To round out the fiscal year, other events included a targeted outreach fair in the Waccamaw-Siouan community, a health and wellness

gathering in collaboration with Pembroke Hardware, and a Jiu-Jitsu self-defense session held in partnership with the Lumbee Tribe.

In addition to outreach events, the Victim Services Program launched a Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign in February 2025 in conjunction with the NC Department of Transportation's Rail Division. The purpose of this campaign is to give passengers and transit employees access to vital information on human trafficking, posting awareness materials in trains and at their respective stations.

The Victim Services Program seeks to continue enhancing services and resources to American Indian communities in the next fiscal year.

## Event Highlights

Indian Affairs collaborates with state recognized tribes, external agencies and organizations each year to co-sponsor various activities and events throughout the state. Key events from the past year are summarized here:

### **NC American Indian Heritage Celebration**

The Annual American Indian Heritage Celebration was held in Raleigh, November 22-23, 2024, at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. Due to renovations of the North Carolina Museum of History the event moved locations this year, with activities taking place on the Bicentennial Plaza and inside the Museum of Natural Sciences. The celebration highlights traditional and contemporary artistic, historical and cultural contributions of American Indian communities in North Carolina. This annual celebration is made possible with support from community partners, the Commission of Indian Affairs and the North Carolina American Indian Commission.

### **North Carolina Indian Unity Conference**

The 50<sup>th</sup> Annual North Carolina Indian Unity Conference was held in Greensboro, March 6-8, 2025, and consisted of general sessions, workshops, and an awards banquet. It is known as one of the largest American Indian conferences in the state. The conference is sponsored by the United Tribes of North Carolina in collaboration with the Commission, state tribes, and urban organizations.

## Tribes and Organizations Represented on the Commission

Membership Tribes	Membership Organizations
<p>Coharie Indian Tribe 7531 N. U.S. Hwy 421 Clinton, NC 28328 Phone (919) 564-6909 Fax (919) 564-2701</p>	<p>Cumberland County Association for Indian People 2173 Downing Road Fayetteville, NC 28301 Phone (910) 483-8442 Fax (910) 483-8742</p>
<p>Eastern Band of Cherokee Nation PO Box 455 Cherokee, NC 28719 Phone (828) 497-7000</p>	<p>Guilford Native American Association PO Box 5623 Greensboro, NC 27435 Phone (919) 273-8686 Fax (919) 272-2925</p>
<p>Haliwa-Saponi Tribe PO Box 99 Hollister, NC 27844 Phone (252) 586-4017</p>	<p>Metrolina Native American Association 8001 N. Tryon Street Charlotte, NC 28262 Phone (704) 926-1524 Fax (704) 347-0888</p>
<p>Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina PO Box 2709 Pembroke, NC 28372 Phone (910) 521-7861 Fax (910) 521-7790</p>	<p>Triangle Native American Society PO Box 26841 Raleigh, NC 27611 Phone (919) 996-9822</p>
<p>Meherrin Tribe PO Box 274 Ahoskie, NC 27910 Phone (336) 227-4594</p>	
<p>Sappony Indian Tribe PO Box 3265 Roxboro, NC 27573 Phone (434) 585-3352</p>	
<p>Waccamaw Siouan Indian Tribe PO Box 69 Bolton, NC 28423 Phone (910) 655-8778 Fax (910) 655-8779</p>	