



American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month



The first American Indian Day was celebrated in May 1916 in New York. The event culminated an effort by Red Fox James, a member of the Blackfoot Nation who rode across the nation on horseback seeking approval from 24 state governments to have a day to honor American Indians. In 1990, more than seven decades later, then-President George H.W.

Bush signed a joint congressional resolution designating the month of November "National American Indian Heritage Month." Similar proclamations have been issued every year since 1994 to recognize what is now called "American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month." -

www.census.gov

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**John, ECAC Youth Advisory Team Member
shares about the Haliwa-Saponi Pow Wow**



John is a 16 year old member of the Haliwa-Saponi tribe. He is also an active and valued member of ECAC's Youth Advisory Team. John was the recipient of the 2021 NC Council for Exceptional Children's YES I CAN! Award which is awarded to students with disabilities to recognize their accomplishments. The category in which John won is self-advocacy.

Haliwa-Saponi Pow Wow by John R.

A Pow Wow is a Native American Ceremony that happens every year. The Haliwa-Saponi Pow Wow first started in 1965. It is a three-day event that happens on the third week of April every year, at the Haliwa-Saponi Tribal School. The Pow-Wow features Native American arts, crafts, dance, food, history, music, songs, games, and more! Fry Bread is the most popular food at the Pow Wow. It is similar to an elephant ear, and they are really delicious with honey, and powdered sugar.

What I like to do at the Pow Wows, is to watch the dancers dance at the grounds, play archery by shooting the arrows at the balloons, and winning a bow and arrow. My favorite pow-wow food is Alligator nuggets. They are made with alligator meat, then they are fried, and they taste just like chicken nuggets.

Ever since Covid-19 happened, we had to cancel our Pow Wow. Hopefully next year, the Pow Wow will happen. Pow-Wows are open to the public, and people from every background are welcomed to attend to the Pow Wow. The Haliwa-Saponi is a very welcoming, and hospitable tribe. I really hope that some of you will attend the Pow Wow next year. You'll have a very wonderful time!!!



Q & A

In honor of American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month, ECAC reached out to NC American Indian exceptional families and the professionals who serve them to share about their experiences and how they honor and celebrate their heritage and why it is important.



***Rick Oxendine**, member of the Lumbee tribe, is the Executive Director of the Guilford Native American Association (GNNA) in Greensboro, NC. GNNA was founded in 1975 and serves as a community resource for Native American/Indigenous individuals in Guilford, Randolph, Rockingham, Alamance, Forsyth, Davie, Davidson, Stokes, Surry, Yadkin, Rowan, and Chatham counties.*

How do you celebrate your heritage?

We often have dance performances, gatherings, and powwows throughout the year. There is also the annual American Indian Heritage Celebration, which is facilitated by the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, NC.

How can the general public learn more about the Lumbee Tribe?

The stories have been passed down from generation to generation, but most recently, information has been gathered and documented within the last 30 years. This is all maintained at the tribal offices and University of North Carolina Pembroke. This information is made available to the general public. The North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs also has a wealth of information about our tribe.

What can you share about any challenges faced by the disability community or youth?

GNNA was actually founded all those years ago because local Native



***Angela Caudle** is an affiliated member of the Haliwa-Saponi tribe located in Hollister, North Carolina. She currently serves as an Exceptional Children's Program Specialist and North Carolina State Improvement Grant Coordinator for Nash County Public Schools. She yields over fifteen years of experience as an educator for students with disabilities.*

How do you celebrate your heritage?

I celebrate my heritage by spending time with my family and friends. I love sharing and celebrating local entrepreneurs and artists' expressions of their gifts and talents. Celebrating our heritage by attending our annual Powwow and seeing the various tribes come together as a people is a wonderful experience!

How does American Indian history enrich the lives of American Indians and others throughout the state today?

American Indian history can enrich the lives of others throughout the state by providing learning opportunities for individuals to learn more both personally and professionally on how to become more culturally responsive to our

American students were under-performing and facing challenges in public schools. We recognized that indigenous individuals who reside in urban areas do not always have the same support as those who reside in tribal areas. These children are not always able to experience the sense of community or have the chance to learn from the tribal elders. A lot of issues they face often pertain to identity. Their identity is often challenged based upon how they look or how they dress, based upon stereotypes. This is tough for children to experience, so the founders wanted to provide a home away from home for them. We teach them their tribal customs and history, even though they don't live in their tribal communities. We help families with disabilities by putting them in touch with the organizations who can provide services to them. These are all efforts to help families establish a much-needed sense of belonging.

What do you want people to know about your heritage and culture?

We are resilient. There are approximately 120,000 indigenous people in North Carolina. We are still here and thriving. Native Americans experience the same issues and hardship as everyone else, but we are proud of our sense of community, survival, and the ability to rely on each other as family.



Kisha Jeffries, member of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, is a co-founder of Handewa Farms. Handewa Farms is an Afro-Indigenous led farming effort to provide fresh, quality food to insecure households and communities.

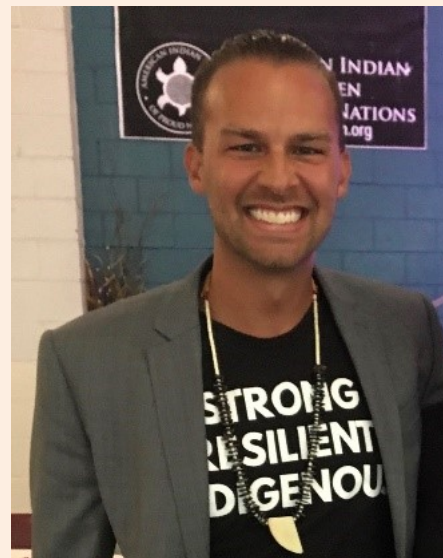
students, parents, and educators. It is important to teach students about American Indian history from a level of confidence, knowledge, and cultural awareness in order to inform, engage, and encourage others to help us celebrate our history!

What can you share about your experiences supporting American Indian children?

I believe all children can be successful regardless of their zip codes, ethnicity, or background. In supporting American Indian children, representation is very important within our communities. We have collective and individual voices that sometimes become overshadowed by the negative depictions of misguided perceptions of who we are as a people. As a member of my District's Equity Council, I support American Indian children by ensuring our voices are heard as a diversified group of decision makers.

What do you most want people to know about your heritage and your life as an American Indian in North Carolina?

I want people to know that as an American Indian in North Carolina, our heritage and legacy is rich and can be seen throughout the world. We are strong, resilient and possess grit to overcome societal challenges.



Stephen Bell, member of the Lumbee

How do you celebrate your heritage?

Celebrating my heritage is a spiritual experience. I connect with the earth, visit the sacred lands, meditate, and connect with the creator. I am also intentional about teaching my children the history of our tribe, in addition to continuing to read and research more about our heritage.

What can you share about the disability community in your culture?

There are some families who do not have the information and resources they need in order to support their children with disabilities. This was certainly true in my case. My son, who is now an adult, was born with several health issues including cerebral palsy and blindness. I was a working mother with other young children to take care of, and information on how to best advocate for my son was not readily available at that time. It was incredibly challenging for me to seek out these resources on my own. Parent centers such as ECAC are needed for this reason. Through time and persistence, I learned how to advocate for my son, but I know that his life skills could have grown more if we were aware of the proper resources and information.

What do you most want people to know about your heritage and your life as an American Indian in North Carolina?

I want people to know that we are peaceful people. We strive to treat people right and we believe in the importance of loving and caring for everyone. Our culture heavily embraces the concept of giving and supporting each other. All of these characteristics describe the true nature of Native Americans.

What makes you the most proud of your heritage?

I feel that my heritage is an honor. My family played an important role in

tribe, currently serves as the American Indian Education Coordinator for Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, NC. Stephen specializes in working with and supporting American Indian youth, particularly in school settings, to help them build a sense of cultural awareness, strength, and pride.

How do you celebrate your heritage?

One of the ways that I celebrate my heritage is through building relationships and sharing our culture and history with our Native students.

What makes you the most proud of your heritage?

Even though our people have faced incredible trauma and hardship...WE ARE STILL HERE.

What can you share about your experiences supporting American Indian children? Are there any unique challenges?

A general lack of awareness and education of Native history, identity, and communities has a huge impact on our students and families. It often leads to stereotypical messaging and assumptions, which leaves our students often feeling unseen, or worse, unwelcome or harmed.

How does American Indian history enrich the lives of American Indians and others throughout the state today?

Many of our words, foods, roads, government practices, and others have been adapted from traditional Native culture, the "original southerners" (Dr. Malinda Maynor Lowery).

How can the general public learn about the history of your tribe?

There are lots of resources on the Lumbee Tribe website and social media pages. I would also encourage

making sure I knew about my heritage. They shared the stories that were passed down through the generations, and we would attend Powwows and other gatherings. I learned that our tribe were mediators and peace keepers, and they had an integral role in trading. I have so much respect and admiration for those who came before me.

folks to check out their local American Indian Education program and/or urban native organization in their area/county. (In Greensboro, there is the Guilford County Schools American Indian Education Program and Guilford Native American Association.)



Radene Locklear Caison, member of the Waccamaw-Siouan tribe, is an Exceptional Children's teacher at Rex-Rennert Elementary School in Shannon, NC. In addition to supporting students with disabilities, Radene also has disabilities of her own, which uniquely allows her to relate to her students and their families.

How do you celebrate your heritage?

I celebrate my heritage by volunteering with my tribe (the Waccamaw-Siouan), attending powwows, attending various cultural events, and speaking at non-cultural events.

What makes you the most proud of your heritage?

Despite all of the obstacles and determination to destroy our heritage, we are still here, we are strong, and we continue to pass our customs and traditions down to the next generation.

What can you share about your experiences supporting American Indian children? Are there any unique challenges?

As a culture, we are taught that everything we do affects seven generations. I keep this in mind when working with my students. Just like every culture is different, every tribe is different. It is important to be aware of indigenous and tribal norms in the area(s) that you work.

What can you share about the disability community in your culture? Do you feel they are adequately supported? Do you feel they are sufficiently aware of any services and resources that may be available to them?

I feel that we, as a culture, do not often recognize mental health disabilities the same way as physical disabilities. I do not feel that they are adequately supported, partially due to a lack of Indigenous people in decision making positions. I believe that most of our people are unaware of available services and resources which hinders us from thriving even more as a people.

What do you most want people to know about your heritage and your life as an American Indian in North Carolina?

We have persevered through adversity, even some that still exist today. I have three degrees, one from a community college, one from a HBCU, and one from an out of state university. One to two generations ago, as an indigenous woman, I would not have been allowed to attend any of these. We have made progress, but we still have a long way to go.

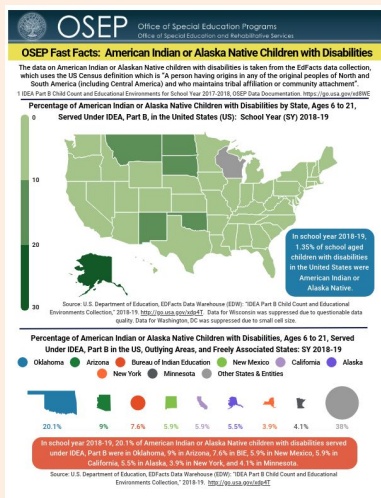
**A Proclamation on
National Native American Heritage Month, 2021**



BRIEFING ROOM

"During National Native American Heritage Month, we celebrate the countless contributions of Native peoples past and present, honor the influence they have had on the advancement of our Nation, and recommit ourselves to upholding trust and treaty responsibilities, strengthening Tribal sovereignty, and advancing Tribal self-determination."

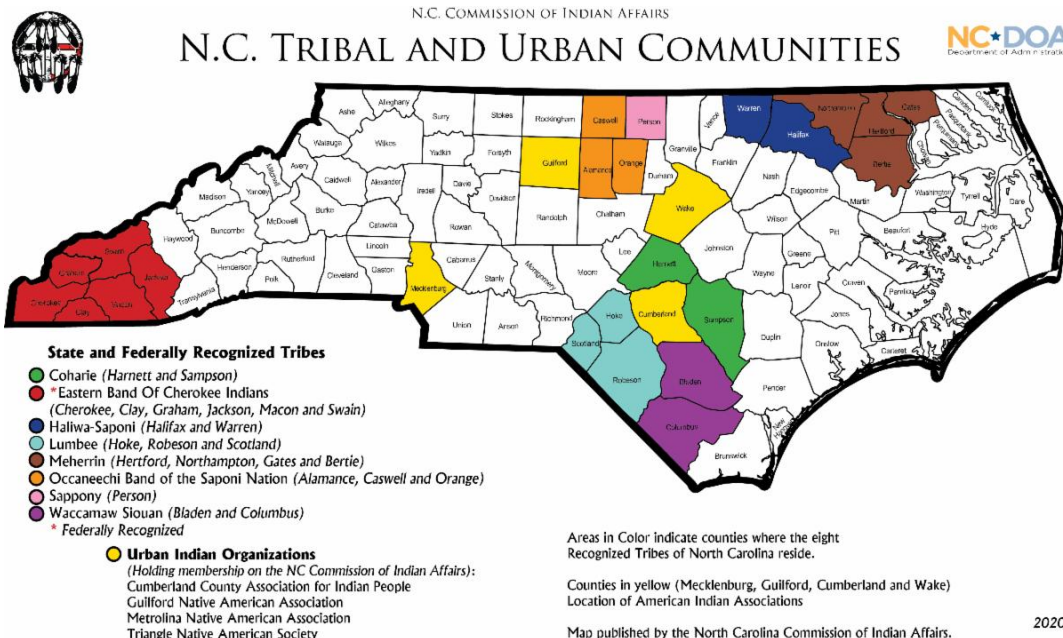
[Click Here to Read the Full Proclamation](#)



OSEP Fast Facts: American Indian or Alaska Native Children With Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Education collects data from states about infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities who receive early intervention services, special education or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Office of Special Education Program's Fast Facts summarizes key facts related to specific aspects of the data collection.

[CLICK HERE FOR OSEP FAST FACTS on American Indian or Alaska Native Children with Disabilities](#)



FREE WEBINAR from:



Windows, Mirrors & Doors: The Importance of First Nations Representation in Children's Literature

**Tuesday, November 20, 2021
7pm to 8pm**

In honor of Native American Heritage Month, ParentChild is offering a virtual series, where children's book authors and advocates will lead in a compelling discussion on indigenous representation in children's literature. The discussion will focus on First Nations people, and will shine a light on the impact representation has on the well-being and social-emotional development of indigenous children, and all children. It will highlight the importance of all children and families learning about indigenous peoples, beliefs and culture; the importance of indigenous children seeing themselves in the books they encounter; the ways in which we can equip parents and caregivers to access these books and share them with the children in their lives, and how we can all advocate for improvements in indigenous representation.

**CLICK HERE TO LEARN
MORE**



ECAC, 1-800-962-6817, www.ecac-parentcenter.org



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