

County of Buncombe

Proclamation

Native American Heritage Month

WHEREAS, Buncombe County is committed to creating an inclusive community that celebrates diversity and ensures all residents have equitable opportunities to lead healthy, peaceful, safe and sustainable lives; and

WHEREAS, in honoring the cultures, traditions and accomplishments of Native Americans that have shaped our country, we also acknowledge our nation's history of colonialism that has inflicted discrimination, deprivation, violence and genocide upon indigenous people; and

WHEREAS, the area currently known as Buncombe County, North Carolina rests on land that was first inhabited by the Cherokee, their ancestors, and other indigenous peoples; and

WHEREAS, the traditional territory of the Cherokee covered more than 100,000 square miles of what today is western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, northern Georgia, and upstate South Carolina; and

WHEREAS, in the early 18th century, the estimated population of the Cherokee People was 36,000 but by 1770 was only about 7,000 due to forced relocation, consolidation of towns, and smallpox outbreaks; and

WHEREAS, white settlers began arriving in what would become Buncombe County in the 1760s and laying false claim to Cherokee land; and

WHEREAS, following a massacre led by Griffith Rutherford, leader of the Sailsbury district militia, virtually no indigenous inhabitants were left in the present-day Buncombe County region; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee people endure to this day, having survived catastrophic diseases, loss of their ancestral lands, forced relocation to a reservation, long-term mismanagement at the reservation, family separations through the removal of children to boarding schools, and termination; and

WHEREAS, more than 8,000 members of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee now live in the Qualla Boundary just to our west; and

WHEREAS, we recognize and honor the generous contributions of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to our economy, culture, and community; and

WHEREAS, we seek to repair the trauma of past oppression and broken trust—both locally and regionally—by lifting up indigenous cultures and voices and striving together to build a future of shared hope and promise for all;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that on this 16th day of November 2021, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim November 2021 as **Native American Heritage Month**, a time to celebrate the rich and diverse cultures of indigenous people, to raise awareness about our shared history, to recognize that truth must come before reconciliation, and to acknowledge the important contributions that Native Americans have made to our community and our nation.



Brownie Newman
Chairman, Buncombe County Board of Commissioners