

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, who flourished here for thousands of years, as well as the Catawba People; 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 took land from the Cherokee that was not ceded nor paid for; and,

WHEREAS, following a massacre led by Griffith Rutherford, leader of the Salisbury 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, the Buncombe County Register of Deeds collaborated with Cherokee counterparts to collect information for the website "As Long as the Grass Shall Grow," featuring the history of Cherokee land cessions that created Buncombe County; 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 to our economy, culture, and community; and

WHEREAS, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners supports renaming the Great Smoky Mountains National Park's "Clingmans Dome" to its Cherokee name "Kuwohi;" 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 15th day of November 2022, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim November 2022 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