

Student Org Spotlight: Carolina Indian Circle



Note: Carolina Indian Circle is hosting an Indigenous Peoples' Day celebration on October 8th at 6pm. The event will be held at The Gift on the Carolina Union Plaza, and will feature food and performances. The Carolina Union Activities Board is an event partner.

Forty-four years ago, when there were fewer than 10 American Indians enrolled at UNC, a small group of students with Native heritage came together to form Carolina Indian Circle. Today, CIC is a thriving student organization that leads efforts to foster and advance Native cultures at Carolina.

"We want to provide a family for Native students on campus," Gabrielle James, President of CIC, said. "That's why we were founded and that's our ultimate goal. We also want to make UNC a home for Native students, so educating the campus and educating the broader North Carolina community about American Indian people is important."

Native students often arrive at college and feel isolated or like their culture isn't recognized by others, so CIC plays an important role in establishing a presence on campus to help students feel a sense of belonging, as well as create understanding among the broader UNC community.

"When I got to college, I felt overwhelmed by the amount of people that did not understand my experience or did not acknowledge that my ethnicity was valid," said Lexy Locklear, a member of the group. "It's something I face in the classroom and in life on campus. Staying on top of your studies and having a social life while always having to present your side of the conversation and being the only person there to present that side creates an emotional toll."

By building a presence, CIC hopes to alleviate pressures Native students can feel to represent their cultures and identities. "That's why the educational part of what we do is so important, and we want to connect with everyone on our campus," Locklear said.

CIC hosts several events throughout the year that both celebrate and educate. These include:

- Indigenous Peoples' Day celebration (October 8, at The Gift on the Carolina Union Plaza)
- The CIC Cultural Show (November 26, Carolina Union's Great Hall)
- The CIC Powwow (held in March at Fetzer Gym)

James emphasized that CIC and its events are open and welcoming to all students, regardless of cultural or ethnic heritage. In fact, their mission to educate makes participation of others an essential component to CIC's success.

"It's important to have non-Native people involved," she said. "There can be a misperception that advocacy against cultural appropriation means that our group or events aren't meant for others. But it's the opposite. We want to share our culture and we encourage participation from everyone. So come to our events, come to our celebrations, and always feel welcomed to get involved with our group."

Students who want to get involved with CIC can join a group meeting, held every Tuesday at 6:30pm in Room 2423 of the Carolina Union.

Carolina Indian Circle Snapshot

President: Gabrielle James

Email: unccic1974@gmail.com

Heel Life: <https://heellife.unc.edu/organization/carolina-indian-circle>

Twitter: @CIC_UNC

Note: Student Org Spotlights are a recurring series on the Carolina Union website that showcase UNC student organizations. If you would like your student organization to be considered for the Spotlight series, please email design@unc.edu with the subject line ?Student Org Spotlight Request?.

Source URL: <https://carolinaunion.unc.edu/news-and-events/news/student-org-spotlight-carolina-indian-circle>