

Two Sparrows Town

Western Carolina University remains committed to a growing, dynamic partnership with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) through the sharing of knowledge, offering of community and signifying of place.



**Western
Carolina**
UNIVERSITY

Knowledge i&w&t (v-ga-ta-hv-i)

As an institution of higher education, WCU offers unique resources and programs for deep learning of Cherokee history, culture and language.

Perhaps the most comprehensive program is the **WCU Cherokee Studies program**, an interdisciplinary program with options at the undergraduate and graduate level. Undergraduates can earn a minor in Cherokee Studies, and undergraduates and graduates can earn a certificate from the **Culturally-Based Native Health Program**, headed by program director Lisa Lefler. Graduate students can also earn a graduate certificate in Cherokee Studies, or a Master of

Arts in American History on the Cherokee Studies track. WCU offers the **T.J. Holland Memorial Cherokee Studies scholarship**, in honor of beloved EBCI enrolled member, alumnus, scholar and cultural preservationist T.J. Holland.

The Cherokee Studies program also collaborates on the **Cherokee Language Revitalization Project**, a 10-year initiative to develop Cherokee language learning resources and curriculum materials through the **WCU Cherokee Language Program**, led by program director Sara Snyder. The Cherokee Language Revitalization Project operates through WCU funding and a series of grants from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation and collaborates with the New Kituwah Academy, a K-6 Cherokee language immersion school on



EBCI enrolled member Sonny Ledford gives a presentation for the 2017-18 campus theme: "Cherokee: Community. Culture. Connections."

Fluent speaker and former Cherokee Language Program director Tom Belt and graphic design professor Mary Anna LaFratta look on as Cherokee students Dre Crowe, Keyonah Lambert and Gabby Thompson play a Cherokee boardgame.

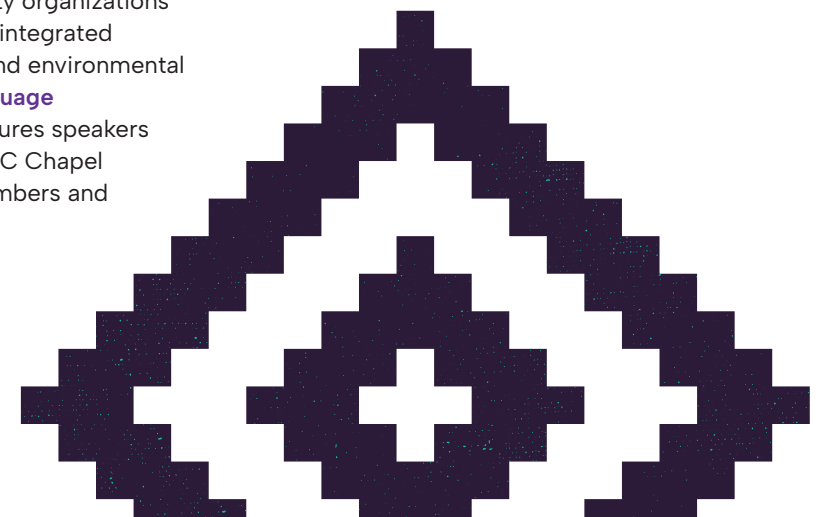


the Qualla Boundary. Fluent speaker and former Cherokee Language Program director Tom Belt translates documents for the Cherokee Language Revitalization Project. Belt was bestowed the highest honorary degree, a doctorate of humane letters, at the 2021 WCU spring commencement ceremony. Fluent speaker Wiggins Blackfox also performs priceless translation work for the project.

WCU offers several lectures, symposiums and facilities dedicated to preserving and revitalizing Cherokee history and culture. Since 2016, WCU has hosted the annual **James A. "Jimmy" Cooper Memorial Lecture in Cherokee Studies**, established in honor of James A. "Jimmy" Cooper (1929-2016), an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians who served on the WCU Board of Trustees. WCU also hosts the annual **Rooted in the Mountains Symposium** in collaboration with EBCI community organizations like Cherokee Choices to discuss integrated Indigenous knowledge in health and environmental issues. The annual **Cherokee Language Symposium**, hosted by WCU, features speakers from universities like Stanford, UNC Chapel Hill and Duke, as well as tribal members and

community organizations, to discuss Cherokee language revitalization. The symposium ends with a historic site tour of Cherokee mounds led by Brett Riggs, our **Sequoyah Distinguished Professor in Cherokee Studies**.

The **Tali Tsisgwayahi Archaeological Collections Curation Facility** is a resource for Cherokee archaeological inquiry and preservation. The Hunter Library Special Collections hosts photographs, maps, pamphlets and more with Cherokee history, language and culture dating back to the 1500s. The Mountain Heritage Center provides an exhibition space for displaying Cherokee material culture on campus.



Community

SSY

(Ga-Du-Gi)

Tali Tsigwayahi, as a Cherokee township, is a place of community and kinship. WCU honors that space of community.

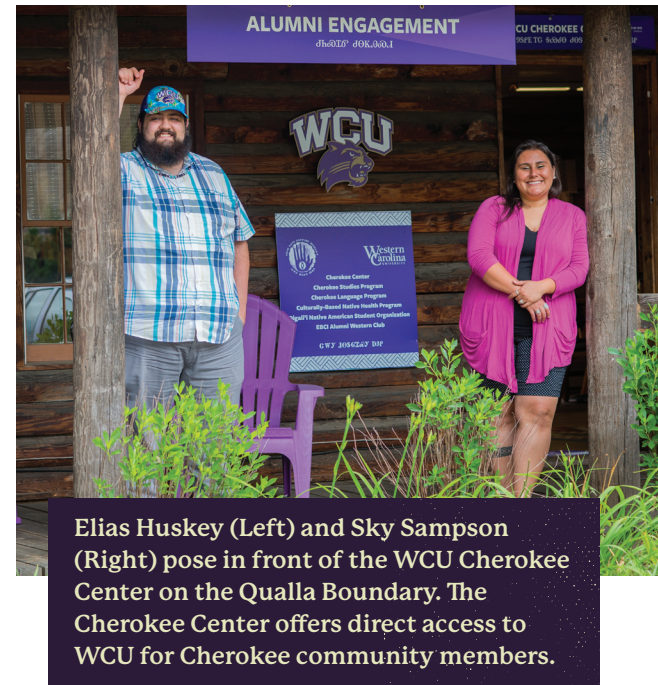
The Cherokee community is the foundation for our larger campus community. WCU wants to continually offer this campus as a place of community and fellowship to Cherokee community members. The **WCU Cherokee Center** is perhaps the most visible program linking WCU and the EBCI. Led by dedicated director Sky Sampson and administrative support associate Elias Huskey, the Cherokee Center provides a headquarters on the Qualla Boundary for Cherokee community members to feel instantly connected to WCU. As enrolled members and passionate

community liaisons, Sampson and Huskey head several programs and events for the EBCI at WCU, including signing days at local high schools, EBCI Day at WCU sporting events, the annual **Rock Your Mocs Walk** during Native American Heritage Month, college fairs and active recruitment, alumni engagement, cultural festivals and performances on campus, and much more.

One of the best ways to offer community at WCU is ensuring that Cherokee students see a direct pathway to earning their degree at WCU. Through the **EBCI and WCU Memorandum of Understanding**, WCU promises continued collaboration with the EBCI, providing a solid foundation for Cherokee students to feel a sense of belonging on campus. WCU also has **Shadow Cats**, a job shadowing program for EBCI high

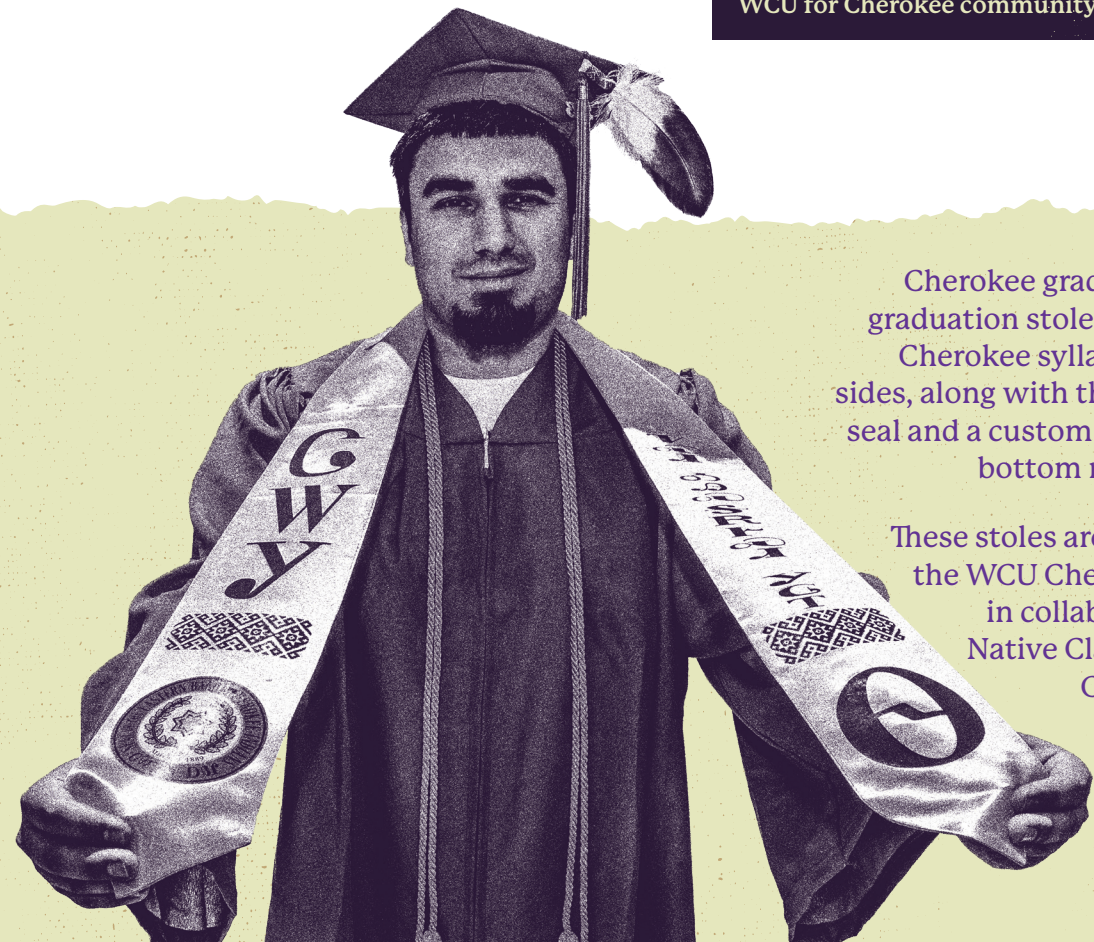
school students. The **Digali'i Native American Student Organization** on campus provides a student community for Cherokee students to find support and fellowship. At least one seat on the **WCU Board of Trustees** is reserved for an enrolled member of the EBCI. Currently, that seat is held by Casey Cooper, chief executive officer of Cherokee Indian Hospital, giving the EBCI direct representation for campus governance.

WCU student organization Intercultural Affairs also provides space for Cherokee students, faculty and staff on campus, particularly with their gallery exhibits including the **My Culture is Not a Costume** exhibit during Halloween, and the **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women** exhibit on May 5, the national day of recognition for MMIWG.



Elias Huskey (Left) and Sky Sampson (Right) pose in front of the WCU Cherokee Center on the Qualla Boundary. The Cherokee Center offers direct access to WCU for Cherokee community members.

2021-2022 Miss Cherokee Tyra Maney rocks her mocs in a traditional friendship dance around the Wi sculpture on campus.



Cherokee graduates wear a graduation stole with custom Cherokee syllabary on both sides, along with the EBCI tribal seal and a custom design at the bottom right and left.

These stoles are provided by the WCU Cherokee Center in collaboration with Native Clans Design in Cherokee, NC.

Place O'VR&T (U-do-sv-hv-i)

WCU is a Cherokee place. WCU is Tali Tsisgwayahi.

The **WCU Land Acknowledgment**, signed in 2021 by Chancellor Kelli R. Brown and EBCI Principal Chief Richard G. Sneed, was a major step in respecting and honoring that rich history and active culture, but it will not begin and end with the land acknowledgment. WCU is committed to an active partnership with the EBCI that recognizes the living Cherokee culture at WCU.

Associate dean of the College of Arts and Science, Carmen Huffman, is in collaboration with the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, WCU faculty, staff and students, and most importantly Cherokee organizations and community members, to create a master plan of exhibits across campus.

The John W. Bardo Fine and Performing Arts Center, which features Cherokee architecture and interior design elements, is also in the final implementation phase of a multi-year effort to exhibit bilingual educational information in both Cherokee syllabary and in English, with various art installations and a multimedia component that will allow visitors to experience the Cherokee language. The Bardo Arts Center also exhibited the **"We Will Not be Silenced: Standing for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women"** in the fall of 2022, which featured the photographs and art of several Cherokee artists.

Other signified Cherokee places on campus include **Judacula Hall**, named after the ancient giant and teacher from Cherokee legend, as well as the **"Wi" campus sculpture** featuring a Cherokee syllabary character that colloquially represents the "whee" in Cullowhee. During archaeological excavations for the construction of Apodaca Science Building in 2017–2018, several Cherokee archaeological remains were found, including post holes for two ancestral Cherokee homes, which are now signified in the ground at Apodaca. Cherokee artist Joel Queen created a series of masks for the Hinds University Center and Apodaca Science Building.

A series of archaeological digs led by Sequoyah Distinguished Professor Brett Riggs and associate professor Jane Eastman revealed the artefactual remains of Two Sparrows Town.



The EBCI and WCU have curated their partnership through tribal and campus leadership.

From top left: Chancellor Kelli R. Brown and Principal Chief Richard G. Sneed signing the 2021 Land Acknowledgment.

Chief Sneed poses with Chancellor David Belcher, Cherokee Beloved Man Jerry Wolfe, and former member of the WCU Board of Trustees and first female chief of the EBCI Joyce Dugan '75 MAEd '81, in front of the Judacula Hall dedication in 2017.

Former principal chief Michell Hicks and Chancellor John Bardo sign a memorandum of agreement for Cherokee language revitalization efforts at WCU in 2008.



WCU is a place of Cherokee knowledge and community. To be a Catamount is to know that when you walk across campus, you are walking across ancient Cherokee land. You are walking in the footprints of Cherokee people, who lived and worked and learned here, just like you. Recognizing WCU as Cherokee is enriching not just for EBCI tribal members who have long known this place as Cherokee, but for the campus community at large who can gain a new understanding of their college education and their alma mater. Thank you to the Cherokee community for sharing knowledge with us in this Cherokee place.

We look forward to more courageous exploration of Tali Tsisgwayahi.



Tali Tsisgwayahi, Two Sparrows Town, is the ancient Cherokee land on which WCU operates.

WCU is proud to be a home of Cherokee knowledge, community and place. WCU is excited to continue growing in its dedicated partnership with the EBCI, in honor and recognition of Two Sparrows Town, and the larger Cherokee home of Western North Carolina. As a regional university, we acknowledge the breadth of Cherokee culture and communities ingrained in these mountains.