At the Henry Owl Building Dedication on May 13, 2022. Speech of UNC junior Juanita Paz-Chalacha (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians)

Siyo nigada, walela dagwadoa. Tsalagi ayeli wayohi digwenvsv(I)

Hello everyone, my name is Juanita Paz-Chalacha, and I am from the Wolftown community in Cherokee, North Carolina.

I am a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and a member of the Carolina Indian Circle here at UNC.

Today, we are all gathered here to honor Henry Owl, an Eastern Band Cherokee historian, and a teacher. One who made it his purpose to correct America's understanding of Indigenous people during his time and advocate for Indian civil rights. That was Henry Owls' legacy, one that Native students here at UNC still carry on.

I am here before you all today, not with a multitude of praise for this event, but with hollow and exhausted anger. Yes, this event is a significant step forward in the Carolina community for Native representation on campus. Yet, it's still one long-overdue step. Yes, seeing a building renamed after a Native scholar would make us feel seen on campus for a short period. Then what? Most of the representation we get here has to be created by the Native students themselves. That is not representation; that is our survival. We are seen at this event for the duration of time we are here. But, afterwards, now that this building has been renamed, what are you, the university administration going to do to give proper representation going forward among your Native students and faculty, actively in the present day? Because the fact that you can't keep Native professors and those who teach Native studies shows where your stance lies regarding proper representation on a systematic level, never mind at a student level. So, as we move forward, let the name Henry Owl, remind you of what he fought for and the barriers he faced in his life as an Indigenous scholar and apply that to today. There are more Indigenous students on campus now, but our support is mainly from each other, not from UNC. Remember that sentiment because we live it every day.

Thank you for your time and consideration.