

Lumbee River Fund Update

May, 2003

Spring is finally here, and we continue our work of collecting, preserving, and promoting the history and culture of Robeson County's Indian communities. Since last summer, I have been absorbed in studying and taking my comprehensive exams, one of the last requirements for my Ph.D. before starting my dissertation. They're finally over, however, and in addition to starting my dissertation research, I can turn some of my attention to the LRF over the next year.

Thanks to the work of some of our volunteers and advisory board members, though, the Fund's work hasn't completely gone by the wayside. Below, you'll find more detail on recent happenings and projects underway:

1. Website updated
2. TNAS Gala Photo Exhibit
3. LRF Organizational Structure Revised & Archive Established
4. LRF featured in upcoming N.C. Humanities Council publication
5. Oral history projects on school desegregation, with SOHP
6. Elmer Hunt archive preservation
7. National Council of Churches Lumbee religion project
8. UNC Press book proposal

I am especially thankful for the work of Linda Oxendine, Jeff Currie, Chad Locklear, Lawrence Locklear, Jo Humphreys, Kim Dial, Roger Brown, Lillian Brewington, Elinor Foster, Glen Burnette, and Waltz Maynor. Each of you has kept things going, and we've made some important progress in the last nine months.

In addition to the works-in-progress, you will find a list of future project ideas. I am curious to know which of these projects you find the most compelling, what we should raise money for, and how you think we should proceed in planning them. What helps us best accomplish our goals? With the Fund's restructuring, a greater focus on the archive, and my growing dissertation priorities, I am interested in targeting LRF's energies specifically on one or two initiatives, and fundraising accordingly.

Lumbee History and Federal Recognition

Studying for these exams has shown me that history seems isolating and irrelevant when one only interacts with it through books. I have missed working on LRF on a daily/weekly basis, because this is the kind of project that consistently demonstrates what the study of history should be—it should promote active dialogue about identity and should show us how to address the challenges we face. It is commonly said around home that it is important to know “who we are” as a people, to understand “our culture.” I am often graciously complimented for being so involved with educating our own people and others about who we are. I am grateful for such praise and to make sure I deserve it, I try to work harder and harder.

But in our current economic and political climate, people in our community are understandably focused on more pressing concerns and worries and using culture and history to

address these issues is not always obvious. “Getting and spending” is an American occupation, one that is necessary to live in the modern world. It makes history seem irrelevant and isolating. *Giving*, not getting, drives the LRF. Many of you have given generously of your time and resources to enhance the LRF’s work and our presence both within and outside the Indian community. We must continue giving and strengthen our connection to the past if we are to survive as a people, engaged equally with our own cultural priorities and with the larger American culture.

The current fight for federal recognition embodies our future challenges. We can use the opportunities that federal recognition gives us to further reduce poverty and raise our health and education levels. When the government recognized us the first time around, in 1956, we used that recognition to augment our people’s economic and educational opportunities. The results have been tremendous, so much so that Bill Clinton’s Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Ada Deer, told me, “I wish they’d hurry up and recognize the Lumbees so Lumbees could show everyone else how to do it.” “It” being negotiating the bureaucratic system with a high level of sophistication and intelligence. I doubt any of us would want to go back to the life we had prior to 1956.

The 1956 Lumbee Bill was a double-edged sword. While it technically “recognized” us and made us an “Indian tribe” in the eyes of the government, it prohibited the government from providing us with goods and services and recognizing our sovereignty. It classified us as simply yet another minority group, entitled to some funds designated for Indians but limiting how far we could go. But we are not just another American minority group, sandwiched in between all the groups looking for services and benefits from the government. Our history gives us a special status, different from other Americans. Our ancestors earned that status; they cooperated with the earliest European settlers and gave up our land for settlers to live on and pursue economic development for themselves. After having been so generous, it is now our turn.

The new Lumbee Recognition Bill submitted by Senator Dole moves us forward in some ways, but still limits us. The bill contains a provision to give the state of North Carolina jurisdiction over all civil and criminal matters that occur within our territory and among our people. This provision goes against the tradition of federal recognition, under which the federal government holds jurisdiction over most criminal matters among Indian tribes and the tribes themselves hold jurisdiction over civil matters. In other words, federally-recognized, sovereign Indian nations hold a position *above* the states in which they reside. As a sovereign nation, the Lumbee Tribe is not subject to North Carolina’s authority except when the tribe decides to give such authority to the state, or Congress specifically mandates it. What is the purpose of the bill’s provision? Has the tribe ceded its civil jurisdiction to North Carolina? Why has Dole mandated it? There is no obvious need for Lumbees to again accept second-class status, as we did in the 1956 Lumbee Bill.

We cannot just “get,” we also must “give.” The federally-funded economic development that “new” recognition would bring could easily drive us away from our sense of ourselves as a distinct people, with a culture, heritage, and value system unique in American history. We have a special history of our own that deserves to be recognized and appreciated, not just by the government, but by *ourselves*. Federal recognition can be used to maintain our distinctiveness

and promote economic development. But maintaining both will not happen automatically. We are in control of our destiny, and we must be conscious of our past successes and mistakes in order to prevent us from selling ourselves short. For me, these concerns have always shadowed LRF's more public, everyday activities to collect and preserve Indian history. Perhaps we can play a more prominent role in encouraging our people to use our past to ensure the best possible future.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

1. Website updated

Thanks to Lawrence Locklear and Chad Locklear, many GREAT things have been added to our website, including new links to our Advisory Committee's organizations, on-line versions of the multimedia projects completed by the Duke University students last spring, and all of our project updates. Please check it out and give us your feedback! Our web address is: <http://www.uncp.edu/lumbeeriverfund>. More updates will be coming soon, as I get back into the swing of things.

2. TNAS Gala Photo Exhibit

In August of 2002, Jeff Currie and Kim Dial organized a photo exhibit of pictures collected by the LRF for the Triangle Native American Society's annual gala in Raleigh, NC. They exhibited about two dozen photographs that mainly focused on family groups. The exhibit received a warm reception from gala attendees. Perhaps we'll do it again this year?

3. LRF Organizational Structure revised & Archive established

Since November of 2002, Jo Humphreys and myself have been in negotiations with members of the UNC-P community to revise and sign the original donor agreement that initiated the Fund. The final draft of the agreement has not yet been approved, but it contains provisions for a separate "Governing Board" (9 members) and "Advisory Board" (no less than 10 members). It also specifically outlines Sampson-Livermore Library's involvement in managing and processing the collection. More information will be forthcoming as we continue to work on this document. If you have specific questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

4. LRF featured in upcoming N.C. Humanities Council publication

Thanks to Harlan Gradin (Associate Director, N.C. Humanities Council), Barbara Braveboy-Locklear, Chad Locklear, and Jeff Currie, LRF is set to be featured in the fall issue of CROSSROADS, the N.C. Humanities Council's quarterly magazine. The issue will include photographs we've collected and excerpts from our oral history interviews. This is a wonderful honor for us, as the magazine is distributed state-wide and NCHC uses it to highlight the projects it is proud of. People all over North Carolina will know more about the work we're doing and perhaps be inspired to do this kind of work in their own communities.

5. Oral history project on School Desegregation, with SOHP

LRF will collaborate with the Southern Oral History Program at UNC-Chapel Hill to conduct a year-long oral history project focused on school desegregation in Robeson County. I hope to interview forty to fifty people of all different ethnicities who were close to the events. I

welcome your suggestions for folks to interview, and others who would like to participate in conducting interviews or coordinating the project are welcome. This topic, for example, might be of interest to high school or college students who are conducting community service or research projects. The main themes I plan to address are:

- How did desegregation happen? What did it feel like? What were the rapid and slow changes that occurred? What were the main strategies for pursuing or resisting desegregation? How were these strategies decided upon?
- How was race discussed before and after this period? How did ethnic identification shift? What were the before-and-after perceptions of each of the other racial and tribal groups in the county?
- What kinds of resistance emerged in this period? Who or what were people resisting, and why? Were ongoing alliances or organizations created? If not, why not? What characterized those alliances? What are their legacies?

The SOHP is interested in this project as part of its larger plan to focus on the aftermath and outcomes of the intense period of social change of the 1950s and 1960s. This is the period that gets the most attention in studies of the civil rights movement, but in many places such as Robeson County, the events that truly transformed our everyday lives took place in the 1970s. Tapes and transcripts from the project will be deposited in both the LRF archive at UNCP, and in the Southern Historical Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill. We are also having discussions about a more public component of the project, perhaps a magazine-type publication or a video project.

6. Elmer Hunt archive preservation

In Fall of 2002, American Indian Studies at UNCP received a donation of truly monumental historical significance. Elmer Hunt's son Bill donated all of his father's photo negatives to the University. After a meeting with Karen Glynn, Duke University Library's photo archivist, we determined that the collection was in fairly good shape and contained thousands of photographs. The collection ranges from the late 1940s to the 1980s, and activities covered include family reunions, birthday parties, LRDA events, *Strike at the Wind!*, and numerous other public and private occasions. It is a phenomenal record of our life and culture in the twentieth century—most tribes would love to have a collection of this size, completeness, and significance. Linda Oxendine has taken charge of preserving the collection, and over the next several months will procure the necessary materials to store and scan the negatives, and students and interns will sort, describe and catalog the negatives. At some point in the future, we hope to be able to host an event where our community can come and view the photos, identify individuals, and tell some stories about Mr. Hunt and the marvelous work he did. Eventually, the photos will be stored at UNCP's library.

7. Lumbee religion project, with the National Council of Churches

Gary Locklear, Bob Mangum, and others at the United Methodist Church have launched a project in collaboration with the National Council of Churches and LRF to document Lumbee religious belief and expression. After a meeting that included Linda Oxendine, Gary Locklear, Denise Long (from the NCC), Trina Locklear, and myself, we decided to hold a series of informal conversations among Lumbee religious leaders to uncover and discuss some of our religious values and our methods of worship. Our first meeting was held at the end of April at

UNCP. Attending were Emma Lee Locklear, Rev. Simeon Cummings, Kathern Dial, Gary Locklear, Denise Long, Dolly and Theodore Lowery, Bob Mangum, Linda Oxendine, and James Woods. We enjoyed the conversation, which was video- and audiotaped by Trina Locklear and myself. Our next meeting is scheduled for May 22. The final outcome of this project is undetermined at this point, but we have decided to let the group's conversations dictate where it should go—it may be a book, series of articles, a video, who knows? The possibilities are endless. If you have suggestions for this process or would like to participate in our meetings, please let me know.

8. UNC Press book proposal

Linda Oxendine and I have decided to collaborate on a book proposal for UNC Press that covers the oral traditions of Indian people in Robeson County. We plan to have some discussions over the summer about what the book should include, but I am very interested in your suggestions for its content and format. What topics should be covered? Which storytellers should be included?

FUTURE PROJECT IDEAS

Lumbee Homecoming 2003

Currently I am gauging interest for the LRF to host a book, video, and music table to sell hard-to-find works by and about Lumbees and Tuscaroras. The table could perhaps be located in or in front of Old Main or at the Literary Voices reading on parade day. Among the books we've discussed having available are *Nowhere Else on Earth* (Jo Humphreys), *Playing Before an Overflow Crowd* (Bruce Barton and Tim Brayboy), *Fine in the World* (Walt Wolfram, Clare Dannenberg, Linda Oxendine, Stanley Knick), and many others. I know that there's lots more out there we could include. Authors would receive the proceeds from their books, except what they might choose to donate to the LRF, and they would be responsible for getting their books to the event. Do you have ideas for publications we should include? Please let me know ASAP.

Need for these projects

In the past few months, a small group of advisory board members has come up with a variety of project ideas to focus on and raise money for in the next year or so. While our work to enhance the LRF archive will continue to go on through individuals' work and local meetings, the goal of these events is to bring together community members, scholars, artists, and others to increase local and statewide awareness and appreciation of the history, culture, and tremendous talent of Robeson County's Indian people. We felt it was important to pursue projects that would be fun and educational, exposing people to ideas and trends that are perhaps new to the area and reminding us that we don't have to leave our own backyards to see and hear some of the best film, art, music and literature produced anywhere in the country. We can also provide reasonably-priced alternative activities for high school and college students, families with

children, and retirees. Furthermore, some of these projects might generate revenue and eventually become self-supporting, if we can obtain the initial capital to produce them, and others promote skill acquisition and, indirectly, economic development. Which of these projects are most appealing to you? Should we focus on one big event, or a series of smaller events? I need your input and advice about how to proceed.

1. History conference

We could host a two- or three-day conference at UNCP bringing together all the work that's been recently done on Lumbee history. There's quite a bit of it, as most of you know, from students, community members, and professional scholars alike. There are also several scholars we might honor who have been dedicated to the work for quite some time and received little formal recognition from the community. Included in the conference could be panel sessions or roundtable discussions that are focused on pressing political or economic issues, giving historians an opportunity to interact with leaders and decision-makers, and giving the audience an opportunity to hear multiple perspectives on some of these issues. We could also include training sessions on genealogy research, oral history documentation, and video. A publication of conference papers could also emerge from this event, which would be a valuable contribution to the literature on Lumbee history.

2. Weekend workshops

A weekend-long craft/art workshop would give local artists a chance to display their work and teach others. Sessions might include carving, beadwork, basketmaking, pottery, storytelling, language, traditional medicine, jewelry, singing, sculpture, dancing, painting/drawing, collage, etc. etc. We could host a gospel sing, dance demonstration, or art exhibit to accompany the workshops. Warren-Wilson College conducts something similar with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians that could serve as a model—see <http://www.swangathering.com/Catalog/CH/sgchsched.html> for their schedule of events.

3. Roundtable discussions

The LRF could host a monthly roundtable discussion on issues that affect our local area. Some examples might include farming, Lumbee recognition, economic development, religion, environmental issues, education, etc. Most of the information we get about these issues is through local newspapers and TV stations, whose budgets and time allocations prevent in-depth coverage. Local and statewide experts might be invited to give their perspectives, and the format would be free-flowing and conversational, less presentation-oriented, possibly with smaller group discussions included. We could also create a historical component, where participants would bring family photos or stories to talk about how farming, for example, has changed in our community, or how the landscape has changed.

4. Concert series or festival

Recently I attended the Shakori Hills Grass Roots Music Festival near Siler City, NC, where several Indian musicians from Robeson County (Willie Lowery, Pura Fé Locklear, David Locklear and Mark Deese) performed along with Indians from all over the country. Willie and I began discussing a similar event or event series to be held in Robeson County and would feature our local musical talent, from many genres, as well as nationally-known Indian musicians (such as Floyd Westerman, Keith Secola, Ulali, and many others). We could, of course, include local

and regional non-Indian talent as well (the Lumber River Regional Bluegrass Association, for example, already does these kinds of events at the N.C. Farmer's Market and showcases local and national recording artists). Such an event would not only attract Robeson County residents but folks from all over the state to the area. These events are complicated and expensive, but expertise exists to plan and promote them, and I think that this would be a good opportunity to show both Indians and non-Indians how our culture is inseparable from our art and our lives as Indian people. Possible venues include the N.C. Indian Culture Center or the Farmer's Market.

5. Outdoor Films

During the warmer spring and fall months, we might sponsor evening outdoor film showings, where we screen movies of local interest. For example, there have been several recent documentaries about tobacco farming which would be of great interest to those who used to or still do work in tobacco, or we might show some of the recent films made by Indian directors that have not made it to the Lumberton movie theaters or video stores, like *Skins* or *The Business of Fancydancing*. Furthermore, there is a host of classic movies to show that feature Indian stories—*Powwow Highway*, *Dance Me Outside*, *Grand Avenue*, *Smoke Signals*, *Medicine River*, *Little Big Man*, *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*—just to name a few.

6. Photo/Art exhibits

We have so many fine Indian artists and photographers that it seems logical to sponsor an event or events that showcase their work. Painting, sculpture, pen and ink, photography, mixed media, and collage are the mediums that just the artists I know are working in...I'm sure there are lots of others that I'm leaving out, not to mention the folks that work in more "traditional" forms mentioned in #2, above. A historical dimension could be added to this project by exhibiting, for example, all of the paintings that feature Henry Berry Lowry as a theme, or a photography exhibit of Elmer Hunt or Doris Ullman's work.

7. Small publications

Along the lines of the Humanities Council's *Crossroads* publication, or some of the pamphlets published by the Duke Center for Documentary Studies, we might produce a series of short, low-cost pamphlets that feature different aspects of Indian history and culture. They could be given away for free at locations around the region and state, and would have text, photographs, and oral history excerpts. Examples of topics to cover might include: biographies of influential people (Julian Pierce, L.W. Jacobs, Dexter Brooks, Jo Jo Hunt, Janie Maynor Locklear, English Jones, John L. Carter, there are millions), a series on special places (the river, the churches, the cemeteries, Indian communities like Prospect, Hopewell, Deep Branch), a series on medicinal plants and herbs, a series on language...

8. Compact Disc Recordings

Similar to the pamphlet publications, we might produce audio CDs of Indian preaching, storytelling, a gospel music sampler, or an anthology of local powwow music. CD duplication is so inexpensive now that they could be sold for a very low cost (\$4-5).

9. Field School/Multimedia Training

In collaboration with the Duke Center for Documentary Studies, we applied to the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation last August to fund a documentary "field school" to train people in

the local area and across the state to use oral history and photography to promote social change and awareness. ZSR didn't fund the project, but we might think about re-conceptualizing it to suit a larger number of people in the local area and make it an ongoing multimedia skills-training project that would be suitable for high school students and working adults. Classes and workshops could be provided to teach folks technical and creative skills in media production, an occupation that requires training in camerawork, sound, computer editing, project management, finance management, grant writing, and a host of other entrepreneurial skills.

10. Educational Partnerships

Expanding on the Field School idea, we might partner with tribal organizations, the Robeson County Public Schools, and universities (RCC, UNCP, Duke, UNC, Wake Forest, others) for community-based learning projects. We could offer classes in Indian history, oral history, politics, religion, culture, and the financing for teachers, tuition, and project expenses could be jointly obtained by the institutions involved. The possibilities for good course material are endless. The expertise of LRF's advisory board members, University faculty, and tribal program administrators could provide students with new experiences (such as community internships and new skills) and relieve teachers from some of the challenges of guiding them through new material and methodologies.