


FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
 by Dr. Barry Harding
 Public Schools of Robeson County



The novelty may be gone but it still takes a little bit of concentration to realize that a new school year has arrived and our students are already attending classes and we're barely into the month of August.

A new school year affects virtually everyone in the county. It goes without saying that it's true for teachers and everyone else associated with the school system along with the students and their families- especially their parents. Also affected, though, are the motorists who must recognize their duty to drive very carefully when those orange school buses are on the road they're driving on. Those motorists must also be on the lookout for children waiting for their bus who may be too close to the road or who are walking home along the road.

The students, for the most part, view the return to school with mixed feelings. Their age and grade in school affect their feelings. For the older students, returning to school after a summer of fun and possibly, a summertime job, it's a time when they know they have to buckle down to work in the classroom. If they are seniors, they may realize its their last opportunity to work towards making themselves eligible to attend a good two or four year college when they graduate.

Young students probably view the return in a kind of happy way even though they will have to give up the freedom to play that they had. Students in between those two groups are affected pretty much by how they feel about education.

Most parents are probably pleased about school being back in session. That may be especially true for parents of younger children who may have run out of ways to keep the youngsters occupied. Now, though, the parents have other responsibilities. The word "transportation" comes to mind. It could be transporting their child to and from school if bus transportation is not an option or driving them to various activities. Speaking of those activities, it's important that parents lay out a schedule for proper balance between those activities and time required for their studies. While there's no doubt that many activities are important to the development of a child, it should be remembered that the major reason for being in school is to learn. Thus homework and the like should account for the lion's share of that schedule to ensure the child's academic success.

Teachers have really not had as much time off as have students and parents. When you consider the fact that teachers have work to do after the students' last day of school and have to report a week before the students return to school, it's easy to see that their summer is quite a bit shorter. Additionally, many a dedicated teacher uses at least a part of the summer to devote to attending meeting of educators or enrolling in summer courses to improve themselves in such a way to be able to contribute to their students' education in a meaningful way. If they spend a part of the summer taking a vacation, they often visit places which they can discuss with their students so that the students are able to learn about places which they may not get the opportunity to visit themselves.

Everyone looks forward to the start of a new school year to one degree or another. Let's hope that everyone contributes to making it a happy and successful one.

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Along the Robeson Trail

By Dr. Stan Knick, Director-UNCP Native American Resource Center

One of the most fascinating elements of human culture to me has always been words — their meanings; their spellings; where they came from and how they are used; how they change through time. Perfectly ordinary English words which we use in everyday conversation sometimes have undergone such changes in meaning through time that when we read the same words in a text from long ago we may not know how they were being used at the time of the original writing.

Take the word "silly" for example. "Silly" comes to us from Old English *sælig*, which meant happy or blessed. By the time of Middle English it had become *seli* or *sili*, meaning blessed or innocent. *Webster's New World Dictionary* reports that in modern usage "silly" originally meant plain, innocent or helpless. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that the word was used by Shakespeare and other writers of his period to mean "deserving of compassion or sympathy." However it happened, "silly" went from meaning "happy" to meaning "blissful" to meaning "unaware of reality" to meaning "foolish," which is the way we generally use it today (as in, "Ask a

silly question, you get a silly answer"). It's the same word, but it has had many meanings.

One way that words change meaning or usage through time is by a process called "folk etymology." This describes "the change that occurs in the form of a word over a period of prolonged usage so as to give it an apparent connection with some other well-known word (*Webster's New World Dictionary*)." This is the process by which "cole slaw" has in some areas come to be called "cold slaw." "Cold" made more sense to someone along the way, and the change stuck. Similarly, some people refer to "Alzheimer's disease" as "Old Timer's disease." It makes a kind of sense, and it sounds enough like the original word to work its way into usage.

One of my favorite examples of folk etymology is the name of a community in southern Indiana. It was settled by a Frenchman long ago named Norbonne (pronounced nor-bun), and travelers in the area came to call the settlement by his name. Many years later, when someone wanted to write down the word (maybe to put it on some official map), the local pronunciation and explanation had changed so much that it came to be known as Gnaw Bone. And now, there

it is: Gnaw Bone, Indiana. The locals knew what it meant to "gnaw a bone," so it made more sense to them.

So what does folk etymology have to do with Native Americans in Robeson County, North Carolina? It is one possible explanation for how the Lumber River came to be recorded as "Lumber" River in the early 1800s.

Hamilton McMillan and Angus McLean both wrote in the late 1800s that the ancient name of the river was Lumbee. Is it possible that the earliest white settlers who moved into the area heard local Native Americans call it *Lumbee*, and when it came time to write the word down on a map they changed "the form of the word...to give it an apparent connection with some other well-known word" as in folk etymology? Some of the founders of Lumberton were in the lumber business, and maybe it just made more sense to them — through folk etymology — to call it "Lumber" River. It's an interesting possibility.

For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in historic Old Main Building, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke (our Internet address is www.uncp.edu/nativemuseum).

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