


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



There was, of course, no way of predicting that the start of this school year would coincide with what is, undoubtedly, one of the hottest stretches of weather we've had in recent years. That goes not only for Robeson County but virtually for all of the nation. Everyone is sweltering in the heat doing their best to stay comfortable in whatever way they can. I don't have to tell you that, for our school system, it means trying to see to it that all of our schools have air conditioning that is in good working order so that our students' ability to study and learn is not impaired by being uncomfortable in the classroom.

Before school actually got underway, our maintenance people did what you did at your home. They turned on the air conditioners to make certain that they were in working order. After a winter of not being used, there's always the possibility that they might not start up. If they didn't, the workers immediately tried to find out what was wrong and did what they needed to do to fix the problem. Sometimes it meant ordering new parts- some major- some relatively minor. If you've had such problems, you know that it often involves delays in the arrival of those parts in which case there is also a delay in being able to get the equipment running properly. In the meantime, they make whatever adjustments could be made while waiting for the parts delivery so that, when they do arrive, there is little delay in getting the cooling process underway.

Another thing needs to be understood and that is that a central air conditioning system does not do the whole cooling job for the whole school in every case. Sometimes there are multiple units in a school. What that means, of course, is that each is susceptible to having problems. That, in turn, means that there may be areas in a school which have air conditioning while other areas do not. It's also important to understand that many classrooms are served by window units which means there are a large number of such units that are susceptible to breaking down and therefore need attention. In every case, though, the maintenance people are going all out to get all of them working as quickly as possible.

I know that there's a tendency on the part of some parents to be less patient with the delays in getting the air conditioning working at their child's school. I can understand their concern by complaining to the news media can't possibly get our people to work harder or faster than they are now. If the delivery of parts has been delayed, there is nothing that they can do but wait. When they arrive, they're installed as quickly as possible. You must keep in mind, also, that we have 41 schools in our system and, whole each of them does not necessarily have air conditioning problems, we, likewise, don't have anything like 41 people trained to work on air conditioning. We have only 4 on our maintenance staff which means that, because of the number of problems we've encountered, we've had to bring in private air conditioning people to help. In spite of that, there is always the possibility of some delay and we can only hope that you'll understand and be patient. Know the our people are working just as quickly as they can. As I said earlier, it's just unfortunate that the air conditioning should break down when we are in the middle of the kind of heat wave that we're experiencing. Mother Nature may not be cooperating but we're doing our level best to keep her at bay.

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## Along the Robeson Trail

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

Old Grandmother still makes her quilts with patches. She knows that nowadays some folks only use one big piece of cloth for the whole face of the quilt, just stitching around the different patterns on that one piece of cloth. "That kind of quilt will keep your body warm, alright" Old Grandmother says, "but it won't warm your spirit the same way." For Old Grandmother the patches — the little pieces of bright red or old gingham — are one of the best things about a quilt. She says they keep the memories of the quilt.

Old Grandmother remembers learning from her grandmother how to make a quilt. She would always start by collecting pieces of cloth — this one from an old shawl that got too stained on one end to be any good; this one from one of Russell's old shirts that just couldn't be repaired any more times; this one from a dress that Old Grandmother outgrew last summer when she turned eleven and suddenly got so much taller and that had already been handed down three generations anyway.

The collecting part might take quite a while, and usually her

grandmother would just keep adding to a sack of torn and worn-out bits of cloth for a long time before she would have enough pieces to get started on a new quilt. Sometimes the other quilters — Aunt Mary or Miss Eva or Miss Angeline — would bring their own sacks of patches and they would lay them all out on the porch and look for good combinations.

Sitting around the quilting frame was a good part, too. All the talking and the stories made the fingers just fly, and hours might pass before someone noticed that it was getting a little too dark to see the fine stitches they were making. It was around that quilting frame that Old Grandmother had heard the story the first time about Andrew Strong and how brave he was when he refused to testify against his brother Boss and Henry Berry — that time when the Law had Andrew locked up in Lumberton back in 1870 for supposedly being mixed up in the death of Sheriff King.

"And this piece of cloth right here," Miss Eva would say, "came from the very shirt Andrew was wearing when he told that district

attorney he'd just as soon stay in jail as tell a lie on a member of his family. My Aunt Nell was a cousin of his wife Flora, and she swore that was the very shirt he was wearing. Ain't that right, Miss Angeline," Miss Eva would say," and Miss Angeline would always say, "You know that's right, Sis."

Old Grandmother had thought for a long time that she would never have heard that story if it hadn't been for that quilting frame and that little piece of thin gray cloth there in the middle of the center pine cone pattern of that quilt. And even though she heard that story several times, she never asked how that shirt got passed from hand to hand and wound up in pieces in quilts all over the county. She knew that patches were like stories, and they were liable to turn up just about anywhere. Old Grandmother still makes her quilts with patches.

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](http://www.uncp.edu/nativemuseum)).

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