

# Along the Robeson Trail

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

(Note: This segment was co-authored by Dr. Linda E. Oxendine. Along with the last three segments and the next few segments, it will soon be published as a chapter in *Native American Studies in Higher Education: Models for Collaboration between Universities and Indigenous Nations*, edited by Duane Champagne and Jay Stauss.)

Three weeks ago we began a series which looks at the history of American Indian Studies at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. This is part four of the series.

More than a century has passed since that small Indian school began with fifteen students. Today the University of North Carolina at Pembroke has over 3,000 students, fifty-five major programs, forty-one minor programs, nine graduate programs and twenty-two academic buildings. The University of North Carolina at Pembroke is the only school in the University of North Carolina system which offers an American Indian Studies major, and is one of only two institutions east of the Mississippi River which confers an undergraduate degree in American Indian Studies (the other is Dartmouth). Today the University of North Carolina at Pembroke continues to grow and progress in curricular offerings as well as physical facilities.

Back in the 1970s, one of the people who was involved in the saving of Old Main was Dr. Adolph Dial, then professor of history at the University. Dial realized that something more than just the preservation of the building was needed to augment recognition of, and pride in, the school's origins as an educational institution for Native Americans. He knew that with the celebration of heritage comes the

acknowledgment that such a legacy of the past would also be the challenge of the future.

Professor Dial had been teaching American Indian history courses for some time, but he knew that in order for true justice to be done to such a complex topic as the study of Native America it would be necessary to develop and offer more than a few courses. From the department's formalization in 1972, a multidisciplinary approach was taken. Professors were incorporated from Philosophy and Religion (Robert Gustafson), from Art (Ralph Steeds), from History (David Eliades) and from Communicative Arts (Robert Reising).

The Old Main Commission, founded in 1973 in response to the plan to destroy the landmark, and led by local community members, provided the perfect complement. Professor Dial's vision was shared by the Commission, and together they worked to establish a museum focusing on Native America as an enhancement to the nascent academic department of American Indian Studies. But it would be eleven more years before the department would grow sufficiently to offer a baccalaureate degree.

Dial's vision of the department was that it should seek to appreciate Native America from as many angles as possible — history and culture to be sure, but also prehistory, literature, art, philosophy and so on — seeing Native Americans not only as the central figures in ancient America, but as active participants in present-day and future America. He and others foresaw a museum and an academic department of American Indian Studies which would literally stand in the gap between the proud Native American heritage of the University and the bright future which lay ahead,

as the school negotiated the mainstream of North Carolina's University system.

The next major step in the collective vision of Dial and the Old Main Commission was the opening of the Native American Resource Center in 1979. What began as a collection focusing on the local Native American community gradually expanded to include art and artifacts from other areas of Native America. Exhibits were developed to help the public glimpse the world of the Eastern Woodlands, the Southwest and the Plains. From north of the Arctic Circle to south of the Equator, exhibit items came to tell the story of diverse Native American cultures.

As time went by, the Native American Resource Center developed into a multifaceted museum and research institute of the University. The Center's mission is to educate the general public about the prehistory, history, culture, art and contemporary issues of American Indians, with special emphasis on the Robeson County Native American community; to conduct scholarly research; to collect and preserve the material culture of Native America when appropriate; to encourage Native American artists; to support and enhance the American Indian Studies Department; and to cooperate on a wide range of projects with local, regional, national and international agencies concerned with Native America.

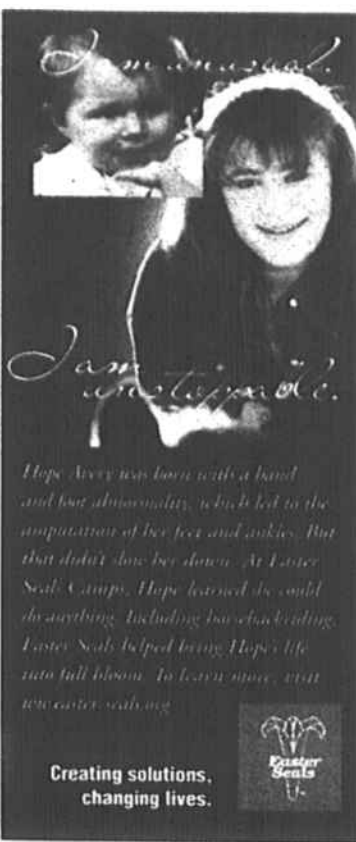
Next week we will continue looking at the history of American Indian Studies at UNC Pembroke. For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in historic Old Main Building, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke (our Internet address is [www.uncp.edu/nativemuseum](http://www.uncp.edu/nativemuseum)).

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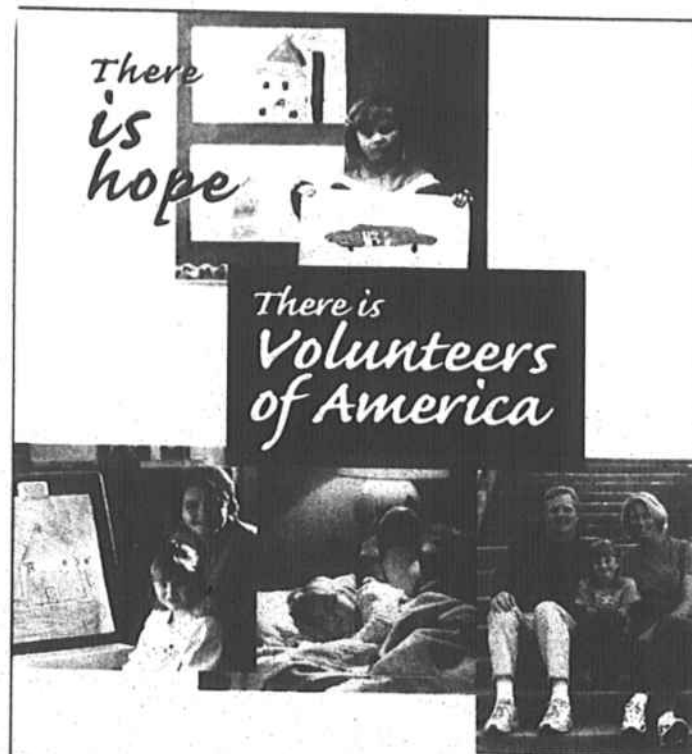


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### INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

at the Indian Education Resource Center  
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located next door to UNC-Pembroke chancellor's residence)



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INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH FOR 2001

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a documentary film

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Thursday, November 8, 2001, 1:30 PM  
Native American Resource Center  
Old Main, UNC Pembroke  
Discussion with Malinda Maynor

How would you feel if someone tried to drive a truck through your church? In *In the Light of Reverence*, an award-winning documentary film, addresses this threat to religious freedom and cultural tradition for three American Indian communities: the Lakota at Devils Tower in Wyoming, the Hopi in the Four Corners area of the Southwest, and the Wintu at Mt. Shasta in California. Robert Redford says of *In the Light of Reverence*, "This beautifully-crafted film is a wake-up call for everyone who cares about the environment and human rights."

For more information, go to [www.sacredland.org](http://www.sacredland.org)  
Watch the broadcast on UNC-TV:  
Tuesday, November 27, 9:00 PM (check local listings)