

'Ethnic pride is very important. We hope to instill in our members the pride of being an Indian.'

Joey Bell

DTH/Scott Sharpe



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Lumbee Indian dancers perform in the Pit ... part of spring 1980 Indian Culture Week

Lumbee are reported to be of the Mississippi River, he believes that all Indians ride the river," Bell said. "Some also have reservations and don't come to campus."

of thinking has been one of the low retention rate for Indians who enter college are only slightly higher

I believe that all Indians have a strong home ties, rather than a strong home ties, rather than a strong home ties.

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up here are not used to questioning their Indian identity. I come up to me and say 'Indian, man. You look more like a white man.' Back home, no one

ina Indian students is 30 percent Indian population. When they return home after their first year, they maintain strong ties, rather than a strong home ties, rather than a strong home ties.

en last year who had grade point averages below 3.0. They all dropped out of college. I want to see them maintain strong ties, rather than a strong home ties, rather than a strong home ties.

The Circle has tried to establish close links with incoming freshmen in an effort to raise the retention rate. Through such programs as the Minority Advisers Program and Project Uplift, Indians find someone to relate with on campus. Bell said the Circle also works with administrators in the recruitment of Indian high school students.

The Circle was started in 1975. At the time, there were only 10 to 15 Indian students on campus.

Some students handle the change of environment well by realizing they are different and taking pride in that difference, Bell said. Others feel there is too much pressure and that they can't do the work.

Tanuel Kerns, a sophomore, said that the Circle was a major influence in helping her to remain at Carolina. "If they had not been here, I would have gone back home. I still have real strong family ties."

KERNS said the Circle must educate the campus about the Indian culture. "Some people think it's neat to be Indian, while some people still think that I live in a teepee. I tell them it's not like that."

While Kerns' transition from one environment to another has been relatively smooth, some Indians experience a rough time. Ricky Oxendine, a senior, said his past years at Carolina have not been trouble-free.

"When I first got here, I found out that some phrases that we use back home are not used here. I used to say things like 'It bees rainin today.' I got embarrassed when someone laughed. I began to laugh along with them, but I hurt inside. "From then on, I changed some of my ways. I was very careful when I spoke," he said.

Oxendine said he also experienced the feelings of exclusion because of other cultural differences. "The guys on the hall would be talking about things like water skiing and snow skiing that they did over the weekends. I couldn't identify with this."

During his freshman and sophomore years, Oxendine said that he repressed his Indian identity somewhat. But the Circle has helped Oxendine realize that he is not alone in his attempts to stay in touch with his heritage. Still, he does get angry when his background is challenged.

"If you're black, every one knows that. I don't like having to defend the fact that I'm an Indian just because I don't look like one to some people. People should treat you for who and what you are and let it go at that."

'Some people think it's neat to be an Indian, while some people think that I still live in a teepee. I tell them it's not like that.'

Tammy Kerns

During the first weeks of each semester, the Circle tries to contact incoming Indian students to ease their transition to college life. According to the UNC Office of Records and Registration, there were 82 Indians on campus during the spring semester of 1980. Only 45 students belong to the Circle. Bell said some people simply do not claim their Indian heritage.

"More than likely, they come from a predominantly white community. It's all a matter of how you're raised," he said.

"But there are also those who lay false claim to Indian backgrounds. This poses a problem to the Indian population on campus, sources said, as administrators

are convinced that they are improving minority enrollment. Thus, there may be more students registered as Indians at Carolina than really have Indian blood.

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"It is something that occurs with some frequency, but not to a great extent," said Collin Rustin, assistant director of undergraduate admissions. "There is some consistency."

One reason for possible inflated estimates may be the wording of the ethnic identification portion of matriculation cards. The cards list "native American or Alaskan Eskimo" as an ethnic background. Many students think that "native American" means that they were born in America and check this option, said UNC Registrar Lillian Lehman.

"According to federal government's definition, we classify people according to how they consider themselves. We have to take what students put on the matriculation cards," she said.

Bell said the Circle will work more closely with the administration to increase future Indian enrollment, and will advocate curriculum changes such as the addition of a course in native American studies. In the meantime, the Circle will remain a source of personal contact and advice for Indian students.

"The Circle is here for somebody to lean on, to let them (Indian students) know that they can be a vital part of this campus."

Melodee Alves is a staff writer for The Daily Tar Heel.