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Carolina Indian Voice

Robeson County

"Building communicative bridges in a tri-racial setting"

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Jeffrey Brooks announces candidacy for Town Council

Jeffrey A. Brooks has announced his candidacy for a seat on the Pembroke Town Council. Brooks released the following statement:

"After much duration of time, I have decided to enter the race for town council. Folks, we need a change in the government of Pembroke. We are simply off course. Town officials spend more time year round with the concerns of electing the governor and senators than they do on operating town affairs.

"It is not more factories and employment that is needed in Pembroke. My friends, we now need to turn our attention toward the disease of alcoholism and drug addiction. Pembroke must share in the blame for the number of alcoholics and drug addicts in the town. Years ago the town boasted of its gain of revenue from their kind of money...the A.B.C. store. Now we must work to rid the minds of alcoholics of the thirst for drugs and liquor.

"We need to be mean to bring about the change which is needed to close up the a.b.c. store. We need to be mean about insisting that all personnel live within the city limits to help bear the expense of labor. No employee of Pembroke needs to be furnished a personal automobile to drive to and from work. We need to get mean and say there will be no more sitting around the restaurant drinking coffee. It is time to roll up our sleeves and do the work that we have promised to the citizens of Pembroke.

"We need to be mean for change and check all personnel salary and see where we can cut and see where cuts can be made and in doing so we can add more people to our work force.

"The state of North Carolina and locals are already cutting back and learning to share. It is not more taxes that are needed. Let's share. Share together and we can have love for our neighbors. God bless you and your vote will be appreciated."

John C. "Candy" Brooks family reunion held

Tradition runs deep; cultural awareness, high among Native American descendants of the late John C. "Candy" Brooks.

Last Saturday afternoon 150 of them gathered for their third annual family reunion at Evans Cross Roads Community Building adjoining the fire department.

"Candy" Brooks was descended from John Brooks (1760), a Native American who fought in the American Revolutionary War.

According to family historian, Elisha Locklear, among those present at the afternoon event were descendants representative of a ninth generation of patriarch John Brooks.

Relatives traveled from as far away as Ohio to take part in the celebration honoring the lives of their ancestors who were native people of Robeson County.

Elisha Locklear, a maternal grandson of "Candy" Brooks, served as master of a short pre-luncheon ceremony which included a brief family history; a special prayer of blessings on the mid-day meal by Rev. Timothy

Creel, pastor of Mt. Olive Pentecostal Holiness Church. N.C. Representative Adolph L. Dial delivered a brief history of the Indians of Robeson County with emphasis on the Brooks family who settled around what is known locally as "Brooks' Landing" on Lumbee River, west of Pembroke.

John C. "Candy" Brooks was the son of D.B. Brooks and Callie Locklear Brooks.

His first wife was Hattie Deese, daughter of Ellen Deese. John and Hattie's children were: Dora A.; Bessie M.; Callie B.; William D.; Lillian D.; Myrtle E.; and Jewel.

Hattie Brooks died during childbirth on July 14, 1924. John C. Brooks took Effie Locklear, daughter of Nelson and Sallie Locklear, as his second wife. To this union were born two daughters, Betty R. and Sallie Ann.

Three daughters of John C. Brooks were in attendance at the reunion. They are Lillian Jones; Myrtle Deese; and Sallie Ann Graham.

Spirit of new play brings people together



Playwright Scott Meltzer, left, in study session with Council of Knowledge members Mary Sanderson, center, and Raymond Clark and Barbara Braveboy-Locklear.

by Barbara Braveboy-Locklear
Special to The Carolina Indian Voice

For too many years now the Native people of Robeson County have witnessed the coming and leaving of persons purporting to have genuine interest in the history, culture, and tradition of the Indians of the county.

And the Indians observed and smiled. It becomes never difficult for Natives to separate the grain from the chaff when it involves opportunists.

The recent relocation of Scott Meltzer, a young playwright, to the area gives Robeson County Indians reasons to lay out the welcome mat. The 24-year-old Mecklenburg County native says his interest in race relations brought him to the county ten months ago.

"For whatever reason, race relations in how people get along or do not get along today, motivates me to write," Meltzer says.

His senior year at Brown University found Meltzer involved in community projects. It was in Providence, Rhode Island that the honor student in English and Creative Writing observed the plight of the northern city's homeless people.

Drawing on his scholastic training and the situation, Meltzer enlisted the oppressed people in a play project which involved participation through writing and acting.

"When I write about a problem, or people, I go directly to the people living the situation," he explains of the project. "The problem of these people was real - not abstract, and the play had to involve those living the problem," he says of the successful project which developed into a citywide touring production.

Meltzer says after graduation he felt he had to get out of the North because, as he admits, the area suffered too great a concentration of social ills - "obvious problems" for him to remain.

He'd heard of the plight of the Indians in Robeson County while a student at Brown University and says his inner feelings brought him to visit. The need to work also influenced his decision to come and live in the rural Deep Branch community alongside the dark waters of the Lumbee River.

Aided in part by a grant from the N.C. Humanities Council, the playwright is busy working on a project designed to take the history, culture and traditions of the Indians of Robeson County and put them into a play which would then be produced and taken around the county to schools, churches and community centers.

The Robeson County Indian Play Project is a joint venture primarily sponsored by Lumbee Regional Development Association and the Title V, Compensatory Education Program and co-sponsored by the North Carolina Indian Cultural Center and the Tuscarora Tribe of NC, Inc.

"We will tell the story of the people who make their home along the banks of the 'Lumbee' River in the form of a pageant, an evening of related scenes creating an overview of the history and culture we aim to portray. The play might best be described as a celebration, because we surely want to create a positive and meaningful message.

"It might could even be further called a celebration of Native American identity because one of the primary purposes of the project is to show the history as a

progression from pre-colonial times to the present, and that Native American people of Robeson County are no less 'real' Indians than their ancestors were four hundred years ago.

"The message we hope to give the children who see the play, and adults, too, is that they are truly the first American people, and they can and should be proud of their history and cultural heritage," the playwright adds.

And though he brings his talent and training as a writer to the project, Meltzer emphasizes that it's not his play, but that of the Indian people of Robeson County.

"I call them the Council of Knowledge," he says of the project participants. "The positive spirit and nature of the play should bring Indians of the county together... laying aside political issues."

Meltzer says the project is designed to take the knowledge of scholars and community people about the history and culture of Native American people in the county and turn it into a play that will be toured throughout the area. This, he says, will be accomplished by using a method he calls scripting, and is a process that allows the diverse voices of a people to come together as one.

The process begins with the formation of a writing group of about 20 people. Then, those people will attend a series of seminar/discussion where the history and culture of the Indians will be outlined from before the arrival of Columbus to the present. There will also be sessions on writing and playwriting as well as on the Native American tradition of storytelling.

"After this initial 'learning phase' the writing group will divide up according to their individual interest, and in these smaller sub-groups the play will unfold and hopefully, bloom.

"In the end, we will have the script to an evening of various segments that will hopefully tell the story of a people, and more than that, the 'true' story of the people that the people write themselves.

"I see the final production as a celebration of Native American identity in Robeson County - a play that will lift the people, and especially the children and allow them to say 'I am Indian. I know where I came from, and I'm proud,'" he comments.

Meltzer says the project is open to any person who feels they can bring a knowledge of any of the topics to the project. He especially encourages participation in the writing group. The playwright says he expects the project to come to fruition by next summer.

To the Indian people in Robeson County Scott Meltzer is a welcomed opportunist. With his coming the non-Native American playwright brings an abiding interest in the history of the county's Native Americans.

He is offering them the opportunity to write their history in their own words.

That in itself affords them one of the few reasons for celebration of the upcoming 500th anniversary of the Columbus Discovery. (sic)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Those interested in participating in the Robeson County Indian Play Project may contact Scott Meltzer at LRDA Education Project, P.O. Box 68, Pembroke, NC 28372 or call him at 919-521-8902.

LOOKING BACK...

1936...Aaron Brooks Family



In 1936, members of the Aaron Brooks family gathered for a photograph. They are, seated, his son, Colon Fannie Brooks; and his wife, Dalsedia Brooks.



McDuffie Cummings, left, town manager of Pembroke, and Dr. James B. Chavis, vice chancellor for student affairs at PSU, are leaders in the planning for "Pembroke Day" at PSU on Wednesday, October 2, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. It is an effort to continue building strong rapport between the Town of Pembroke and PSU. This sign at the entrance to the town emphasizes the relationship between the town and PSU.

Mayor Milton Hunt supports drug awareness program

Mayor of the Town of Pembroke, Milton Hunt, is shown right, discussing a recent proclamation with Sgt. Waddell, local Army Recruiter. The proclamation was to designate September 23-27 as "Stay in School/ Stay Off Drugs Awareness Week" in North Carolina. The proclamation by the Mayor of Pembroke, further commends the efforts of the Raleigh Recruiting Battalion for its commitment and dedication to the well-being of our youth.

