

# ALONG THE ROBESON TRAIL

by Dr. Stan Knick, Director,  
PSU Native American Resource Center

When we think about slavery in the Americas we automatically see images of African people being brought to the South to work on big plantations, growing cotton and other crops, and serving their owners in any other way demanded. This is a justifiable image of slavery in the Americas, but it is an incomplete one. A good friend from Chitimacha territory, Larry Richard, recently pointed out that much more study needs to be done into the historical enslavement of Indian people.

Richard is beginning research which looks at Indian slavery in North, Central and South America. He has pulled together some impressive numbers: for example, his research indicates that in one Bolivian mine, Potosi, as many as four million Indian slaves worked (and died). Listening to Richard talk about this topic, and looking over what he wrote about it, started me to wondering what other evidence I might be able to find here at Pembroke State University concerning Indian slavery in the Americas.

From the very beginning of European contact with Native Americans, the "explorers" were thinking of Indian people as potential slaves. Christopher Columbus wrote back to Spain that this new land he had found could supply as many Indian slaves as the king and queen might require. The Portuguese explorer, Gaspar Corte-Real, took shiploads of Indian slaves from Labrador in 1501 (the word Labrador translates to "a place from which labor material comes").

Aytlón took Indian slaves in the Carolinas in the 1520s. When Cabeza de Vaca and Estevanico left the

Southeast in the 1530s and headed for what is now New Mexico, they were met by a column of Spanish soldiers who were out on a slave-raiding expedition from Mexico. When de Soto marched around from Florida to the Carolinas in the 1540s, he took many Indian slaves as porters for his equipment and as concubines for his soldiers.

French colonists also were heavily involved in Indian slavery. So many Pawnee Indians were sold by Apache, Osage and Comanche raiders to the French settlers in the Mississippi Valley that the settlers believed the French word for Pawnee (*Pani*) meant all Indian slaves in general.

English colonists also got into the act. From New England to Georgia during much of the 17th and 18th centuries, Indians were being enslaved. Some of them were put to work here in the colonies, while many others were sold in Boston and Charleston and sent to the plantations of the Caribbean. After animal furs, Indian slaves were the second most common item offered in trade by Indians seeking to conduct business with colonists.

Some of the English colonial traders became so greedy that they actively encouraged "friendly" Indians to make raids on other Indian nations solely for the purpose of taking Indian slaves to be sold in Charleston (for example, the case of Long and Wiggan, who convinced the Cherokee to make a slave raid on the Yuchi in 1714). This problem became so rampant that the Board of Commissioners of the Indian Trade ruled that Indian slaves could not be sold in Charleston if they had been seized on these purely slave-raiding expeditions. The Commissioners

further stated that Indian slaves could be sold only if they had been taken in ordinary warfare between tribes (whatever that may have meant), and only if they had been held by their Indian captors for a period of three days prior to their being sold. This suggests that a very great many Indians were being enslaved during this period.

The American Revolution and the founding of the United States of America would not be the end of Indian enslavement. Some Indians who resisted removal to Oklahoma in the period surrounding the infamous "Trail of Tears" were enslaved (see Angie Debo's *History of the Indians of the United States*). When California became a state in 1850, some of its first state laws allowed Indians to be enslaved, and prohibited them from testifying in court. Debo cites a California newspaper article from 1854: "Abducting Indian children has become quite a common practice. Nearly all of the children belonging to some of the Indian tribes in the northern part of the state have been stolen. They are taken to the southern part of the state and there sold (1972; page 165)."

Thus for more than 350 years of the earliest written history of America, Indian slaves were a constant part of the picture. There is no reliable way to calculate precisely how many Indians were enslaved during this long period, but it is clear that the number must have been very large indeed.

For more information about Native Americans and slavery during historic times, visit the Native American Resource Center in Old Main Building, on the campus of Pembroke State University.

# Ol' Wiz

Wisdom from the Country

Dear Miss Connee:

Now, we've got a whole passel of folks running for tribal council and tribal chairman. That's the way a democracy works, Miss Connee. Everybody gets a chance to throw in their name. According to what our delegates have done, a candidate has to get 40% of the vote if 3 or more are running for the same seat. Ol' Wiz agrees with this, even though he hates the idea of having to go back and vote again. But, when you got so many candidates running for the same seat, ain't much you can do but let the people weed them out. Its a job no one wants, but its a job that has to be done and our constitution lets the people do just that.

The boys at the store said some of these candidates are courting these delegates mighty hard for their support. Now, these here candidates ought to have better sense. Miss Connee. They ought to know that the people running an election can't be taking sides with any of these here candidates. And, the way Ol' Wiz heard it, the delegates and their advisors have told some of these candidates this, but some of these candidates ain't listening too well. If these delegates are giving a little upset at some of these candidates who want to use their good name to promote their own campaigns, Ol' Wiz can't say that he blames them.

In case the people don't know, we got us 7 people running for tribal chairman. Now, that's a lot of people for one seat, Miss Connee. And, it's one of those seats where no more than one person can sit in it at a time. But, I reckon Ol' Wiz feels good about the fine people who have stepped forward for this seat and the council seats. This is what a democracy is all about. Now, our job is to weed them out by figuring out which one of them is the best for the seat.

I reckon people might be looking for Ol' Wiz to tell them which way to vote, but I ain't going to do it, Miss

Connee. I'm like those delegates on this one. People just got to make up their own minds. But I will say this: The best way to judge any man or woman is on his record, because only God knows what is in his heart. Now, Ol' Wiz ain't supporting any candidate that was against our constitution. As for these people who have jumped on the band wagon and didn't lift a finger to help us on our constitution when them boys at the LRDA was fighting against it, I just ain't got a whole lot of respect for them either. The way Ol' Wiz sees it, any man or woman that voted against our constitution just shouldn't be sitting in any seat where he has to uphold it. And, any man or woman that couldn't support the people when they needed their help just ain't the kind of person that Ol' Wiz can have any confidence in. But, the people should make up their own mind about these things, Miss Connee, just like Ol' Wiz has made his mind.

Speaking of them LRDA boys, Ol' Wiz picked up a rumor that the LRDA is wanting to close down our Indian paper. According to what Ol' Wiz heard, they've put the Sanchez man up there next to the Hardin man and he's suppose to shut down our Indian paper. That's what I heard, Miss Connee. Course, Ol' Wiz, never believed in the first place them boys were for the people. Instead of helping our people stay in their business, they want to put them out of business. At least, that's the way Ol' Wiz sees it. But, if I were you, Miss Connee, I wouldn't worry too much about them boys. They just don't like what they read in the paper, but the rest of us sure likes it. And, if it's any relief to you, there's sure more of us than these LRDA boys. But, I believe we need to look into this, Miss Connee. The way I see it, there's got to be law against people taking our taxpayers' money and using it to suppress the freedom of speech, if that's what they're up to, Miss Connee.

Old Wiz will just have to check into that. It gets mighty frustrating, Miss Connee, when we know our tax money is being used by these LRDA boys and they keep wanting to use it against the people. Now, Miss Connee, if Ol' Wiz reads something in the Indian paper he don't like, and sometimes I do, I just throw the paper in the trash. Ol' Wiz ain't never even considered closing down the Indian paper just cause he didn't like what he read. But I reckon, Miss Connee, that Ol' Wiz just ain't as mean as some of them LRDA boys seem to be. That's the headiest thing I ever heard. But Ol' Wiz is old and he's seen a lot and heard even more than he's seen. I'm gonna just keep praying for them LRDA boys, Miss Connee, and hope that some of them's praying too. Ol' Wiz is still praying for our delegates and our attorney and gonna pray too for them candidates and all of us that's gonna vote on our tribal council and tribal chairman.

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## Application

## Municipal Association Elects Officers

### Deadline

### Extended

The application deadline for the Junior Miss Lumbee Pageant has been extended until July 31, 1994. Applications may be obtained at the Main Office of Lumbee Regional Development Association in Pembroke. For additional information, contact James Monroe Chavis at (910) 521-8602.

The Robeson County Municipal Association, at its meeting in Maxton on June 30, 1994 elected its officers for fiscal year 1994/1995. Elected as President/Chairman, to serve in the office held by Robeson County Commissioner, Mr. Noah Woods, is Pembroke's Mayor, Milton R. Hunt. Elected as Vice President/Chairman to serve in the office held by Proctorville's mayor, Hal D. Ivey, is

Rowland's Mayor, Mitchell H. Walker. Appointed as Secretary for the Robeson County Municipal Association, in the office held by Robeson County Manager's Office Records Specialist, Mr. Kenneth R. Prevatt is Pembroke's Town Clerk, Ms. JoAnn Neville. The next meeting of the Association will be held in September and will be hosted by the Town of Fairmont.

**Elect Gary Wayne Locklear**  
District 10  
(North Pembroke)  
**Lumbee Tribal Council**  
Saturday, August 27, 1994  
6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.



**Vote for Emma Lee Locklear**  
District 13  
(Prospect Community)  
**Lumbee Tribal Council**  
Saturday, August 27, 1994  
6:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.



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**Vote for and Elect Jerry Ray McNeill**  
**Lumbee-Cheraw Tribal Council**  
District 5  
(Rennert & Red Springs Precincts)  
Saturday, August 27, 1994  
6:30 A.M.-6:30 P.M.



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