

Editorial and Opinion Page



Editorially Speaking

LRDA and Tribal Council should work toward peaceful resolution to the controversy in Indian community

Sometimes it is necessary to state certain things for the record. The controversy between LRDA and the tribal council has become one of those times. Some people seem to have short memories when it comes to the Carolina Indian Voice. At times the tribal council appears spitefully angry with us and some of them have questioned whether or not we support the Constitution. On the other hand, LRDA has been spitefully angry with us for several months because we supported the Constitution. Both sides have tried, in our opinion, to make statements about the Carolina Indian Voice through their letters to the editor and paid political advertisement in the daily newspaper. While we do take note that both sides appear to want to see the Carolina Indian Voice out of business, we are not going to be intimidated into picking sides when two Indian factions are publicly attempting to destroy and discredit each other. We find the backbiting, name calling, innuendos and what appears to be a power struggle between the two entities embarrassing and, in our opinion, detrimental to a cohesive effort toward federal recognition.

For the record, we support the Constitution of the Lumbee Tribe. We believe that the people have a right to draft, adopt and elect leadership under the auspices of that Constitution. Government for the people, of the people, and by the people is an old philosophy, and it is a good one. We believe that the issue of who is tribal government for Lumbee people was resolved with the adoption of the Constitution and the election of a Tribal Chairman and Tribal Council. We do not feel that the Governor of the State, the Attorney General, the Indian Commission or any court can legitimize that document. We, the voting members of the Lumbee tribe certified and legitimized the document. The power is ultimately with the people. And the people spoke in 1994.

Our support for the concept of tribal government under the auspices of the Lumbee Constitution is not support for the tribal government to supplant LRDA, a private non-profit corporation with no members. We believe that any monies that are "set-aside" to deliver services to Indian people should be administered by the Tribal Council. That is right and proper.

For months now the tribal council has given the appearance of having one agenda—the destruction of LRDA. We cannot support that concept as activity to be considered by our tribal government. In the first place, there is nothing in the document that gives them the authority. Recently, Tribal Chairman Dalton Brooks wrote a letter to the Attorney General asking him to investigate LRDA's charter. There was assumption that they had overstepped their authority under their state charter. This action bothered us. Again, tribal government should not be seeking to revoke the charter of a private, non-profit corporation. If they are allowed to do that, then the next time they get angry with the Carolina Indian Voice they might consider that alternative. This is not the way to get people to behave in the manner that you wish them to. It is a fact that if a charter is revoked, people will be unemployed. The problem with LRDA, as we see it, is with the Board of Directors, especially their executive committee, and the executive director. These problems should be dealt with. But people who are only employees should not have to worry about their jobs. LRDA should open their board up for elections. That is the right and proper thing to do. The decisions on that board, in our opinion, should be made by the full body, not the executive committee. If we have problems with individual board members, we should be afforded the opportunity to vote for or against them. More importantly, we should have the opportunity to run for a seat on that board, if we are so inclined.

Recently, the Lumbee Support Group, with Rex Hubbard Lowry serving as Chairman, has become actively involved in the upcoming EMC election. Certainly they have a constitutional right to involve themselves in any election they choose. This Group, as we understand it, was formed to support the tribal council. Their close association with the Tribal Council, in our opinion, gives the appearance of impropriety to our tribal council. Again, individual members of the tribal council have a constitutional right to support any candidate that they choose. But when they appear to be speaking as one body as they do with the Support Group, they again, in our opinion, have deviated from their elected role as tribal government. We encourage our elected tribal council to busy themselves with tribal government, not elections to other boards and entities. We further editorially call on the seven ministers who are elected to our tribal council and our Tribal Chairman, who is also a minister to work toward a peaceful resolution to the controversy that is dividing the Indian community. We call on the other 14 elected council members to do likewise. It appears to us that too much time is being spent on "taking over" local agencies. The appearance is first of all the tribal government wishes to "take over" LRDA and now they are working to "take over" LRDA/EMC. As an enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe, we wonder what either of these two actions has to do with tribal government. If they indeed are successful in "taking over" LRDA and EMC, the natural question is, what next? We submit to them that tribal government in itself is a time-consuming job and if they are careful to enforce the Constitution as it is written, they will do well.

One other note on the tribal council: Dr. Sam Wynn who represents Cumberland County seems to be under scrutiny by some other folks who live there. They are questioning whether Dr. Wynn is a resident of Cumberland. There is accusations that he has moved to nearby Hoke County. We have questioned whether Dr. Wynn could serve on the tribal council and the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs. We base our question on the provision in the Constitution that prevents a person who serves on a governing body from being seated on the tribal council. Publicly, we ask Dr. Wynn to do the ethical thing in this situation. If he is a resident of Hoke County, we ask him publicly to withdraw as a candidate for re-election to the Tribal Council, representing Cumberland County. We ask Dr. Wynn, and the twenty other members of the tribal

council to abide by the document, as it is written.

Recently the Attorney General wrote a letter to the NC Commission of Indian Affairs giving an advisory opinion relative to the question, "Does the Indian Commission have the authority to recognize a tribal government?" The attorney general states that there is no statute in North Carolina that gives the Commission that authority. Based on this opinion, the Commission rescinded their earlier motion recognizing the tribal council as the tribal government for the Lumbee Tribe. The letter states, "We find no authority in law for the Commission to serve as a quasi-judicial forum for the determination of the present dispute between the new tribal council and LRDA."

The letter went further and states, "In the case of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, it is not clear that any tribal government has been established in accordance with constitutional guarantees of equal protection of the laws with due process afforded to all tribal members. The 'Lumbee Tribe of Cherokee Indians' has not been statutorily recognized as a tribe or group by the General Assembly of North Carolina nor has it sought such recognition through established procedures of the Commission."

The designation as Cherokee Indians was part of the legislation that would have given us federal recognition. According to the attorney general's letter, this designation could be a problem for us. If so, why not amend our constitution and remove that designation? It is something worth considering and would appear to us to be more productive and in line with tribal government than some of the other things that seem to occupy the council's time.

We have editorially stated our position. Again, the attorney general does not have the authority to tell us whether our tribal government is legitimate. We can draft and adopt a constitution as we have done, and we can elect tribal officials as we have done. We have that right. We have exercised that right. We have a duly elected tribal government. We are aware, of course, that time will take care of some of the problems we see and by no means do we wish to discourage anyone who is a part of our tribal government. We only attempt to get them to re-focus on what they were elected to do.

Having stated our opinion, we now wait to see how long it takes both sides to once again become spitefully angry. While we are not looking forward to more backbiting, innuendos and threats from either side, nevertheless we feel that we would be derelict in our duty as editor not to state a public opinion on this controversy. We remind both sides that our opinion is on the issues as we see them, not on personalities. We are acutely aware, however, that many of our folks cannot separate the two. Be that as it may, we still believe in the collective wisdom of the masses. And the people have adopted a constitution and elected tribal officials. That is our tribal government and LRDA remains a private, non-profit corporation with no members.

Letters to the Editor

Director of Missions publicly commends Madie Rae Locklear

There are many aspects to social ministry. As Director of Missions of the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association, I have had the privilege of expanding the social ministry of the Association. Social ministry is not a complicated issue, it involves seeing about the physical needs of people in our community. There is much poverty and need in our county. Many people struggle to meet their monthly obligations of electric bills, food for their families, medical bills and other essentials. The number of people in need is astounding. We are called on almost daily to assist with electric bills and other essentials. When this happens, we are required to make referrals to other agencies because we do not have the funds to meet the needs of people. During my tenure here as Director of Missions, I have had the privilege of working with some really fine people in various agencies in our county. It is always encouraging to call upon these agencies and be met with compassionate, caring individuals. One of the agencies that has been of tremendous help in our endeavor to meet the needs of hurting people is the Red Springs Neighborhood Service Center. That Center is a part of Four County

Community Services, Inc. and is staffed with dedicated and sensitive employees. The Center is supervised by Ms. Madie Rae Locklear. In the many years that I have found it necessary to call her for assistance, Ms. Locklear has never refused to assist. She has proven herself very knowledgeable of resources that are available for the needy. She has always been concerned, professional and dedicated in her efforts to assist. There are many resources that provide services, but they are virtually of no effect, if people do not know how to access them. Ms. Locklear knows how. I have witnessed her commitment to helping others and her concern for hurting humanity. I have watched as she goes beyond the call of duty, time and time again to help others. She is knowledgeable, concerned, committed and dedicated to meeting the needs of others. She has demonstrated a personal sensitivity for the elderly and the physically challenged. She will go out of her way to assist in these situations and never expects or asks for compensation.

I have been so impressed with her efforts on behalf of the elderly and the handicapped. For the past few months, Ms. Locklear has been out on leave, yet she has continued

to help others from her home. She is always ready and available any time that I call on her at home to do her share. She has been instrumental in assisting our elderly and disabled in receiving their disability, food stamps, medical stickers, home repair, funds for emergency food and electric bills. When the Lord said, "In as much as you have done it to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me," he was speaking about feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and visiting the widows and orphans. Ms. Locklear is a testament to these words spoken by our Lord. She is willing, able and available to help. We at the Baptist Building are grateful to the agencies who assist us and are particularly grateful to Ms. Locklear and the staff at the Center. It is people like Ms. Locklear who offer hope to others. I am convinced that assisting others is her special gift from God and she is one of a few people who take their gift seriously and dedicate their lives to doing what God has commanded us all to do, love one another. She puts her love for others into action and we salute Ms. Locklear and her staff and felt a need to publicly thank her.

Rev. Mike Cummings,
Director of Missions
Burnt Swamp Baptist Assoc.

Reader believes tribal attorney has overstepped bounds

To the Editor:
Being a long time advocate for Indian rights, I thought I had seen and heard everything there was to see and hear relative to Indian politics. Recently, I read a letter to the editor in the Robesonian that made me stop and wonder if I knew anything. I refer specifically to a letter by Arlinda Locklear of Maryland, who is supposed to be the Attorney for the Lumbee Tribe via the Tribal Council. Ms. Locklear wrote to us "uneducated," "illiterate," and "non-thinking" people to tell us who to vote for in the upcoming EMC election. When she did so, I felt compelled to respond. How dare she sit in Maryland and insult the intelligence of the Indian people? She as good as said in her letter, that we who reside in EMC territory and have done so for decades, do not know how to conduct our own business affairs. I resent her inference that she is the only one who is capable of making decisions for us. Unfortunately, some of us were on the battle field long before Ms. Locklear was born. I say this as humbly as I know how, we made it without her. We as a people have accomplished many good and honorable things.

Maybe I have misunderstood Ms. Locklear's role. I thought that she was retained to advise the tribal council relative to tribal government matters. Obviously, I was wrong. Apparently, she has decided that she also has to think for

us and instruct us step by step on how to vote and who to vote for. This is unacceptable behavior from a tribal attorney. I would recommend to the tribal council that they seek another attorney who will stick to what they are retained to do.


I recall recently when one Indian was running for a county position, Clerk of Court. At that time, another Indian was running for Sheriff of the county against a non-Indian. During this crucial election, that could only benefit all Indians, Arlinda Locklear chose to remain silent. However, when there is a local, EMC election (which by the way only allows EMC members to vote) where three Indians are being challenged by other Indians, Ms. Locklear comes down from her lofty seat and tells us how to vote. Number one, she is not a member of EMC. Number two, she was not born and raised here. Therefore, the only thing she knows about the Indian struggle day by day is what someone tells her. I resent her interference and her implication that we cannot make decisions on our own.

One of the problems that we, as a people, have had is Indians who do not reside here assuming that they are smarter than we are and that they know what is best for us. I'm sorry, Ms. Locklear, you should stick to your area of expertise, Federal Recognition. I can't understand why you would cause dissension and division in our Indian community and then on the

other hand say you are working for federal recognition. You of all people know that federal recognition will not come while we are divided. Have you fallen into the age old trap by our enemies—divide and conquer? Perhaps you are receiving monetary compensation from those who would love to see us divided? It makes me wonder if perhaps LRDA was right in their assessment of your professionalism. How dare you be condescending and patronizing and pass judgement on any of my people (and your own), especially those that you have not met? I am sorry to inform you, but someone has woefully misled you. You are not a demigod or a Savior. I thought at one time you were a good attorney, now I question that.

What are you doing? Building a power base? Is it your intention to eventually move to Robeson County and become the attorney for EMC? Is that why you seem to be building a power base? It appears to me that you have overstepped the bounds of professionalism and in doing so you have offended many Indians. I am the only one who will say so publicly. Do us a favor in Robeson County, stay out of our local politics. And I assure you that we will not send letters to Maryland to tell you how to vote for your Mayor, Governor, or any other elected official.

ELIAS ROGERS
Red Springs



LUMBEE GUARANTY BANK
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Lumbee Guaranty Bank hereby announces the availability of 75,757 shares of Lumbee Guaranty Bank Common Stock at \$17 per share.

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Larry R. Chavis, President/CEO
Lumbee Guaranty Bank

Alcohol Kills! Choose a Better Drink



Madie Rae Locklear has been an advocate for the economically disadvantaged, especially the elderly and the handicapped. She has a proven record of dedication and commitment to helping those who are less fortunate than others. As a wife and a mother, she understands the difficulties that occur in maintaining a household budget. She is the only woman serving on the 12-member board. Keep a woman working for you. Re-Elect Madie Rae Locklear on October 3, 1995 at the PSU Performing Arts Center.

Re-Elect Madie Rae Locklear
To the EMC Board of Directors
At-Large
October 3, 1995
PSU Performing Arts Center
Registration 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
Keep a Woman Working for You!

