



# Editorial and Opinion Page

## Along the Robeson Trail

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

(Author's Note: This is the eleventh in a series of articles about contact between English colonists and early Algonkian Indians in coastal North Carolina, based on the writings of Barlowe in 1584, Lane in 1585-86 and Harriot in 1587.)

Last week we began to look at Harriot's 1587 descriptions of the Native Americans themselves — their physical appearance and the clothing they wore. Harriot apparently only encountered coastal Algonkian people (and not the more inland Eastern Siouan and Iroquoian people), but his descriptions are the best we have of any Native people in the Carolinas in the sixteenth century. This week we turn to some of the customs of these early Native Carolinians.

Harriot spends a lot of time writing about the variety of foods which the people ate — meat and fish and fowl, vegetables and fruits, tubers, nuts, seeds and herbs. But how did they cook their food?

"Their women know how to make earthen vessels with special cunning, and...so large and fine that our potters with...wheels can make no better; and then remove them from place to place as easily as we can do our brass kettles. After they have set them upon a heap of earth to stay them from falling, they put wood under, which being kindled, one of them taketh great care that the fire burn equally round about. They...fill the vessel with water, and then put in fruit, flesh and fish and let all boil together.... Then they put it out into dishes, and set before the company, and then they make good

cheer together.... Their manner of feeding is in this wise. They lay a mat...on the ground and set their [food] on the midst thereof, and then sit down round, the men upon one side and the women on the other.... They are very sober in their eating and drinking, and consequently very long lived because they do not oppress nature." John White's drawing of this cooking method shows a pottery vessel at least two feet high and almost as wide (vessels of this size have been recovered from archaeological sites in the Southeast).

Being coastal people, these Algonkians ate a great deal of fish. Their method of fishing was so unusual to Harriot and the other Englishmen that he described in detail how it was done: "They have...a notable way to catch fish in their rivers, for whereas they lack both iron and steel, they fasten onto their reeds or long rods the hollow tail [spike] of a certain fish...[as] a point, wherewith by night or day they strike fishes and take them up into their boats.... They also make weirs, with setting up reeds or twigs in the water, which they so plant one within another that they grow still narrower and narrower.... There was never seen among us so cunning a way to take fish, whereof sundry sorts they found in their rivers unlike unto ours.... It is a pleasant sight to see the people, sometimes wading, and going sometimes sailing in those rivers, which are shallow and not deep, free from all care of heaping up riches.... content with their state, and living friendly together off those things which God of His bounty hath given unto

them.... "After they have taken store of fish, they get them unto a place fit to dress it. There they stick up in the ground four stakes in a square...and lay four poles upon them, and others [poles] over...the same like unto a hurdle [a wickerwork rack].... and laying their fish upon this hurdle, they make a fire underneath to broil the same.... And when as the hurdle cannot hold all the fishes, they hang the rest by the fire on sticks set up in the ground.... They take good heed that they be not burnt. When the first are broiled, they lay others on that were newly brought...until they...have sufficient."

White's drawing of this activity (reproduced in the engravings of Theodor de Bry) shows Indian men carrying large baskets full of large fish to the broiling rack. His drawing of the actual fishing process shows people spear-fishing from canoes as well as some wading, while others collect fish from weirs. Even though these descriptions are of Algonkians, we can safely assume that other Native Carolinians of the period used similar methods of taking, and cooking, their food. In comparison to the war-torn Europe of the time, the lives of these Indian people ("free from all care of heaping up riches") must have seemed to Harriot something like a garden of Eden.

In the next segment, we will look at more customs of these early Native people. For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in Old Main Building, on the campus of Pembroke State University.

## Native American Youth Conference Scheduled

OKLAHOMA CITY—Officials of the United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc. (UNITY), a Native American youth leadership organization, announced today that OKLAHOMA CITY is the site of its upcoming 22nd national conference which is expected to attract more than 1,000 American Indian and Alaskan Native youth.

According to J.R. Cook, executive director of UNITY Conference is for Native American youth ages 15-24 seeking to enhance their leadership skills. During the five-day event, youth leaders will take in an in-depth look at issues impacting them such as education, alcohol and drug abuse, teen pregnancy, cultural heritage, prejudice/racism and gang violence.

Under the banner theme "Celebrate UNITY!", the conference is scheduled for June 21-25 at the Clarion/Comfort Inn Hotel and Conference, 4345 Lincoln Blvd. cALL (405) 528-2741 for hotel reservations.

All conference activities and workshops are designed to equip youth with skills they need to take charge of their lives and become contributing

members of their communities. Workshops will be offered on how to develop communication skills, set goals, develop a healthy self esteem, and improve problem solving and organization skills.

Several youth participants will have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience while serving as speakers, group leaders, hosts, facilitators and emcees of conference activities.

Conference registration is \$55 per youth or advisor received by June 1. Late or on-site registration is \$65. For more info about the National UNITY Conference and registration forms, contact UNITY at (405) 424-3010 or P.O. BOX 25042, Oklahoma, OK 73125.

Based in Oklahoma City, UNITY is a national, non-profit organization that has provided leadership training to American Indian and Alaska Native youth since its inception in 1976. UNITY's mission is to foster the spiritual, mental, physical and social development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth and help build a strong, unified and self-reliant Native America through involvement of its youth.

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