

Editorial and Opinion Page

Editorially Speaking

Tribal Chairman Dr. Dalton Brooks Sends Mixed Message to Tribe

Our Tribal Chairman, Dr. Dalton Brooks, has succeeded in making the Associated Press with the controversy surrounding our tribal government. We are surprised and a little disappointed in Dr. Brooks. He keeps sending mixed messages to us, the members of the tribe.

The Constitution was adopted in 1994 and Dr. Brooks was elected as the Tribal Chairman. The documents itself empowered Dr. Brooks, and 21 members of the tribal council to serve as the governing body of the tribe. This empowerment, seemingly was not sufficient or satisfactory for Dr. Brooks and the council. They then decided, as one of their first official acts, to sue the local Lumbee Regional Development Association, Inc., a private, non-profit corporation. By their action, Dr. Brooks and the council said, "We will let the courts decide who our government is."

Then on Saturday, while the issue is still in litigation, Dr. Brooks hosted a Summit on Federal Recognition. We were astounded! Dr. Brooks is sending a mixed message to the members of the tribe. On one hand, he says by his actions, "I am not sure that I have the authority to be tribal government. We will let the courts decide." Then before the issue is resolved by the courts, his choice of resolving the issue of our government, he again by his actions said, "I think I'll go ahead and exercise my power as the top ranking Lumbee official. I will hold a summit on federal recognition." And he proceeds. Our newly-elected Congressman Mike McIntyre is invited, apparently to talk about new strategies for federal recognition. Michael Anderson with the Bureau of Indian Affairs also shows up to participate in the summit. Afterwards, reportedly, he also met with members of the board of directors of Lumbee Regional Development Association.

After an embarrassingly low attendance at the Summit, we publicly ask Dr. Brooks what was the purpose? There are over 40,000 Lumbees in Robeson and surrounding counties, and less than 100 turned out for the "Summit." We assume that 22 of them were elected and appointed members of the tribal council and the chairman. We are embarrassed again by such public exposure of an issue that our tribal government has determined to be a matter for the courts. Common sense should prevail at some time. It is not feasible to think that the Congressman is going to introduce a bill on federal recognition when the issue of our government is tied up in the courts. Even the seemingly naive McIntyre wouldn't make that tactical error. We need the appearance of unity among tribal members, if we are to successfully work toward federal acknowledgment. One has to wonder if federal recognition is an issue that we all agree on. Dr. Brooks and the tribal council should either withdraw their law suit and assume the role of tribal government, or they should "let the courts decide" for them. Dr. Brooks, you cannot do both. You must stop sending mixed messages to those of us who look to you for leadership. Either lead in a positive and productive manner...and lead all of us, not just a faction...or move out of the way. We editorially recommend that as Tribal Chairman Dr. Brooks, by executive order, which he has the authority to do under the Constitution, withdraw the lawsuit and assume his rightful role in our leadership. We ask that you do so hurriedly before we have any more publicity on the "controversy" in Lumbee country. We editorially state that it is embarrassing and we believe that men of good will should be able to sit down together and resolve this issue and resolve it internally. My government is not a matter for the courts to decide. That

decision has been made. The chairman and the council should be courageous enough to do what they were elected or appointed to do, or move out of the way. As we look at it today, some of our leaders seem to be impeding progress instead of leading us in a positive direction. We are embarrassed and, quite frankly, tired of defending you to people who read about our controversy and call to ask us what the problem is. The problem, as we see it, is that no one in leadership positions has demonstrated the courage needed to resolve an issue that should never have been an issue.

In the meantime, there are other issues that need to be dealt with. We refer now to the name, "Lumbee Tribe of Cheraw Indians." Legally, we are not the Lumbee Tribe of Cheraw Indians. We are legally by the state and federal government recognized as Lumbee Indians. Had the Lumbee Bill passed in the Senate we would legally have been named the "The Lumbee Tribe of Cheraw Indians." We suggest that the Chairman and the council find a strategy to either legally make us the "Lumbee Tribe of Cheraw Indians," or take the necessary steps to remove the name from the official document. That is another issue that can be resolved at home. We urge you to do it hurriedly. And we are not gullible enough to believe that our Congressman will make that a part of the bill when he introduces it. Our Congressman is an attorney and we are assured that he understands what it means for an issue to be under litigation. We Lumbees have no way of knowing whether Congressman McIntyre will be supportive of our efforts for federal recognition because we have muddied the waters for him. Our law suit gives him a perfect reason not to do anything. And who can complain? Again, we editorially ask Dr. Brooks to do the right thing. Bring people together. Do not continue to cause division and controversy among your own people.

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A message from United National Indian Tribal Youth

ALONG the ROBESON TRAIL
by Dr. Stan Knick, Director
UNCP Native American Resource Center

(Author's Note: The series focusing on *Native Heritage: Personal Accounts by American Indians 1790 to the Present* [edited by Arlene Hirschfelder] which began in last week's segment will continue soon, following two special announcements.)

The Native American Resource Center and the American Indian Studies Department are pleased to co-sponsor a presentation by Dr. Kimberly Blaese, which will happen in The Center at 1:00 PM on Friday, 7 February 1997. Dr. Blaese is an Anishinaabe Indian who grew up on the White Earth Reservation in Northwestern Minnesota. She is a widely published scholar, poet and storyteller. Her presentation will be a lecture on "Ghost Dance Literature" — The Survival of Native Voices, and will include reading of some of her own works.

Dr. Blaese is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Native American Literature and Creative Writing. In 1996 she published a critical study of the works of another Native American writer; the book is called *Gerald Vizenor*:

Writing in the Oral Tradition (University of Oklahoma Press). Her other publications include a collection of her own poetry entitled *Trailing You*, which won the 1993 First Book Award from the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas. She has also published poetry, fiction, essays and scholarly articles in numerous anthologies and journals.

Kim Blaese is a wonderful poet. Her poetry springs from her own nature-grounded experience into delightful luminescent pools of color, image and sound. The plants and animals are all there. She can turn a walk in the forest into a visionary occurrence — a spell woven of butterfly wings and flower blossoms:

"...And it was I who fit and saw one minute so clearly / and then stumbled blind the next / that made me think we are all always finding our place / in the great sphere of creation / that made me know I could learn a way / to pull the world around me too / to color myself with earth and air and water / and so become indistinguishable / to match my breath to the one / to pulse in and out with the mystery / to be both still and wildly alive in the same moment / to be strangely absent from myself /

and yet feel large as all creation / to know / to know / to know and to belong / while the spell holds / learning to hold it a little longer each time..." (excerpted from "Where I Was That Day")

Her words can be soft and round or sharp and hard. They can be serious or funny, plain or complex. Her subject matter embraces all that is small as well as all that is profound. She can make a poem out of almost anything:

"Walked into Pinehurst, sunburned, smelling of fish, / Big Indian man paying for some gas and a six-pack, / Looking at me hard. / Dreamer, I think. Too old for me. / Heads right toward me. / "Jeez," he says, "You look just like your mom / You must be Marlene's girl." / Pinches my arm, but I guess it's yours / he touches. / Hell, wasn't even looking at me. / Wonder if I'm what they call living history?" ("Living History")

We hope you will join us in The Center to welcome and enjoy this exceptional writer and scholar. Refreshments will be served. For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in historic Old Main Building, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

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Some things you need to know about HIV/AIDS

by Brenda Jones, PWA/Advocate

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is still growing and we are all affected. Children and adolescents in North Carolina have been diagnosed with HIV disease. In the category between birth and 20 years old, 135 persons have been diagnosed with AIDS and 317 persons have been diagnosed with HIV. The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia states that if these numbers were multiplied by 10 it would be more of an accurate account.

This epidemic is not someone else's problem. It is not the problem for people of a particular sexual orientation, race or class. It is a challenge for each of us. The numbers are a proxy for the loss of our society from the dissemination of human potential. Directly or indirectly, this disease threatens us all. Every sector of our society that denies the threat and refuses to admit that the disease endangers each of us, must be challenged. The battle against HIV and AIDS is more often than not a battle against sexism, homophobia, racism and class bigotry.

"Mothers' Voices," a national, grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to mobilizing mothers as educators and advocates to end AIDS, reports:

*Heterosexual transmission became the leading cause of HIV infection in women, accounting for 18% of all new AIDS cases in 1994. The disease is spreading almost six times as quickly among women.

*AIDS cases among adolescents (ages 13-19) grew by 88% in 1992 and 1993. It is now the leading cause of death among people ages 15 to 24.

*By the year 2000, it is estimated that 300,000-400,000 children will be orphaned as a result of the loss of their parents to AIDS.

We must as a community and county fight for AIDS education, the promotion of abstinence or safer sexual behavior, expand research for better treatment and a cure, and compassion for every person living with HIV and AIDS.

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