

# Editorial and Opinion Page

## North Carolina Teacher Pay Increase Bill Passes House of Representatives

Raleigh - Representatives Ron Sutton, Douglas Yonque and Donald Bonner, representing Robeson, Scotland and Hoke Counties, joined a majority of the House last Wednesday in voting for a bill designed to keep the best and brightest teachers in North Carolina's classrooms.

The measure, the Excellent Schools Act, sets the goal of raising teacher salaries to the national average by the year 2000. In return, teachers must meet tougher standards and more rigorous evaluations.

"North Carolinians want better schools, and raising teacher salaries --- while also holding teachers and students more accountable --- could be the boldest step yet to improve education," Representative Sutton said.

Governor Jim Hunt made raising teacher salaries to the national average a cornerstone of his legislative package this year. Democrats enthusiastically supported the bill.

"We do not want the teaching profession to be a hunting ground for industry," House Minority Leader Jim Black, a Democrat from Mecklenburg County, said during the floor debate. "We use tax money to train teachers, only to have them picked off by industry. This is a good first step toward improving the re-

wards of teaching so that good teachers no longer leave the field for greener pasture."

The Excellent Schools Act is designed to help North Carolina attract and keep the best teachers. Studies show the state needs to do both.

Within a few years, the state will have to hire almost 9,000 new teachers each year to handle booming school enrollments.

Keeping teachers in the classroom also is a problem. North Carolina leads the country in the percent of teachers leaving the profession, according to state officials. Thirty percent of the new teachers move into another field in their first three years. Many of them cite low pay as a major reason.

The Excellent Schools Act would raise the salary for beginning teachers from \$21,330 to \$25,000 by the year 2000. Top pay for the most experienced and qualified teachers would increase to more than \$53,000.

Teachers who pass a tough, national board certification would receive a 12 percent bonus. Those with a master's degree would get a 10 percent bonus when the plan was fully implemented.

Other bonuses would be tied to performance. Teachers would receive

\$750 when their schools met their goals under the ABCs plan, and \$1,500 when they exceeded those goals. The ABCs plan is designed to reward schools that perform well and provide help for those that do not.

Teachers also would receive more money for additional work, such as serving as mentors for new teachers and working extra days. Other provisions would make it tougher for teachers to get tenure, and easier for school boards to get rid of bad teachers.

"This bill did not just give teachers a pay raise," Representative Sutton said. "It linked the higher salaries with tougher standards and higher expectations."

The bill now goes to the Senate, which passed a different version of the measure earlier in the session. Negotiators from the House and Senate are expected to work out the differences in the two proposals. "I am somewhat disappointed that the bill doesn't effectively address the issue of classroom discipline and the need to have an alternative program for disruptive students," Rep. Sutton said. "Until all our classrooms have an environment conducive to learning our schools can never be all we want them to be." These issues are due to be addressed in other bills before the General Assembly.

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

A few weeks ago we had the great pleasure of a visit by Dr. Joseph Bruchac, the Abenaki scholar, poet and storyteller. He had come to the Native American Resource Center as the inaugural presenter in the new Adolph L. Dial Lecture Series in American Indian Studies. He left us with many fond memories of his performance and his stories. He also left his new book with us, entitled *Tell Me A Tale: A Book About Storytelling* (1997; Harcourt, Brace and Co.).

In this book, Bruchac walks the reader through a step-by-step process toward the development and telling of stories. The journey begins with listening:

"There are stories everywhere around us, but many people don't notice those stories because they don't take the time to listen. Or if they hear a story being told that is one they've heard, they stop listening. 'I've heard that before,' they say. Yet if we listen closely to any story, we may hear new things almost every time it is told."

Bruchac suggests that we may

need to re-learn how to listen well. One way to do that is through an exercise he learned from the Cherokee poet, Norman Russell. The exercise involves finding a place, preferably outdoors, where it is relatively quiet. It should be a familiar place --- the back porch, for example --- where you can sit for a while without being disturbed and just listen to what goes on around you.

Begin by thinking of an imaginary circle surrounding you. With your eyes closed, try to listen for any sounds within the circle. It might be a sound you are making (i.e., heartbeat, creaking chair), or some nearby sound made by the cat or the wind. When you open your eyes, you may not be able to see everything you heard, but you will know it is there.

Next think of a bigger circle, and repeat the listening process with your eyes closed again. Try to identify all the sounds you hear, or at least to locate them within the circle. Always try to remember the sounds you heard in the smaller circle, too. You can

repeat this process with larger and larger circles until you can hear things that you might not ordinarily hear. The point is to train your ears, and your mind, to listen to every sound around you.

Bruchac follows the school of thought (expressed by novelist Gerald Vizenor and many others) that the use of our imagination to create pictures in our minds is less limited than simply watching the images offered to us by movies and television. He quotes a second grader who once heard him telling stories and said he liked Bruchac's stories more than television because "the pictures are better in my mind."

Next week we will look further into Bruchac's book on storytelling, and find out where stories originate and what the next step is along the way to good storytelling. 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.

## Being Indian is not just race; there is a great deal of politics involved, says reader

Dear Editor: You guys back in Robeson County may not believe this, but one of the hardest things about living in the city is that once other people discover you are a native person, they begin to tell you about their great-grandmother who was full blooded. Because of my personal friendship with the Cherokee, I will not tell you that this great-grandmother is also a princess. (Thought I was going to say it, didn't you?)

Anyway, this topic gets me in a great deal of long conversations that I don't care to conduct about why that doesn't make them Indian. After saying all this, I can now state my point in writing. As always, some of you will disagree. And that is fine. Anyone who knows me well will tell you I am not into popularity contests. I just want to give you something to think about.

Ever since "Dances With Wolves" came out, people suddenly remembered their great grand mothers who were all Indian Princesses. Did the movie "Dances with Wolves" jar their memory? What do they think it makes them now? I have never heard of an instant Indian. I always thought you were or were not Indian. It is that simple. My question is why do these people feel a need to make such statements. If a person is raised black or white, that is who they are. I, for one, don't care how many books you read, how many cemeteries you go to, nor

how many pictures of long lost relatives you come up with. You are who you are. It's just that cut and dried and nothing more. Besides, most of these people just want to be accepted for a while and then they go back to being who they really are. They fail to realize we don't have that pleasure of being accepted by whites one minute and then by someone else the next. Then again, society today is into escapism. No one wants to take responsibility for anything. It seems every one wants to be something else. Even as a child I wanted to be a cowboy just to be on the winning side.

Most people fail to understand that being Native American is not like being another minority. We are citizens of the Indian Nations. These Indian Nations have clear criteria for who can and who cannot be members of the Nation. Look at it this way, you cannot be a United States citizen and a citizen of a foreign country. You are clearly one or the other. You can continue the ethnic practices of that foreign country, but you are no longer a citizen of that country when you become a U.S. citizen. Being Native has nothing to do with race, or racism. It goes way beyond ethnic practices or a certain look. It is not the beads and feathers that grants one citizenship. It is that particular Indian Nation's tribal enrollment procedures or regulations that make you Indian or not. Also, there can come a point when

one stops being Native American, if they select a certain path. One area is the lack of relationship with the Indian homeland and the people. I know children who think because they are Lumbee that means that their ancestors came from Lumberton. I am not saying it is impossible, but my point is that some of these kids have hardly any contact with their people back home. All they know is the cities they live in. It is our continuous relationship that keeps us part of our people. The only exception to this rule is if one was adopted, then one can't be held accountable to this rule of not having a continuous relationship.

If one leaves their Indian homeland and they marry outside of their people and their children continue this practice, eventually there descendants stop being Indian. This process is called blood quantum and is decided by the tribe. Many tribes now realize that having a higher degree of blood quantum is the way to go. This is in part due to some federal programs that require a certain degree of Indian blood to be eligible for services. Tribes must verify the degree of Indian blood. Some Native people feel this issue has been forced on them, yet now it is slowly becoming a necessary evil. It is the tribe's irresponsibility to offer services to its enrolled members. Due to limited funding one must either limit their services, or increase the degree of blood quantum and cut off services to

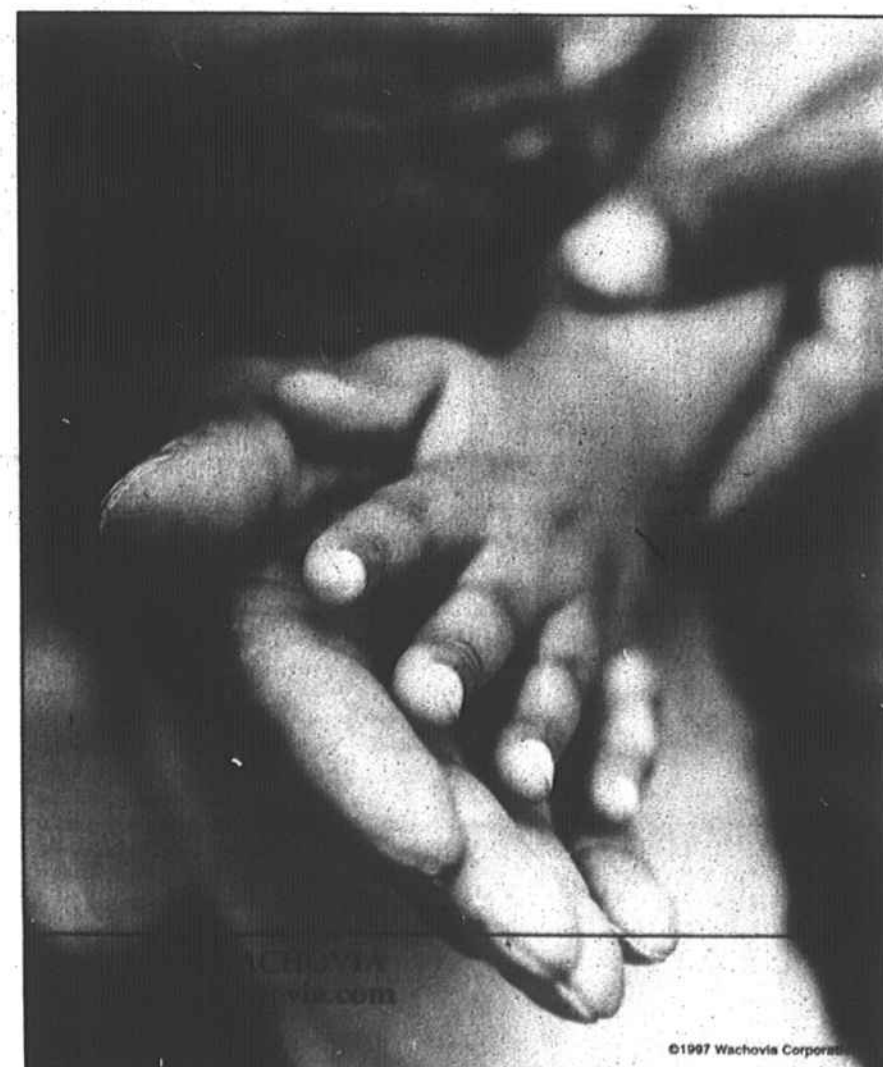
those with less Indian blood. This allows a degree of better services for enrolled members who meet their criteria for services. Some tribes cut off services to any member who lives off the tribal homeland. Certain tribes also have a blood quantum which decides who is eligible to live on tribal land. The average person doesn't realize that a person could have Indian blood lines from a number of various tribes and not be eligible for any tribal roll, yet be a full-blooded Indian.

So, as one can see, being Indian is not just a race. There is a great deal of politics in being Indian. There are Indian people who don't want to be Indian, if the truth be told. It is hard for me to understand these people.

As for all those instant Indians, why were they not Indian when it wasn't popular? But I have come up with a simple rule for the instant Indians. It goes like this: If you need a movie to jar your memory or a pow wow or someone else who is Indian, or if you need some graduate student to tell you you are Indian, here's a rule of thumb to go by: If you were white or black before the movie started, then guess what, you still are. No matter how much Bingo money that tribe makes.

As always, I hope I've given you something to think about. Maybe you can understand why I want to get out of this town so bad.

In the True Way,  
Derek Lowry



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Location: Old Pembroke Senior High (now Pembroke Middle School)

Price: \$20.00 per couple

(late fee: \$25.00 after deadline of May 30)

Dress: Semi-formal

When: June 27, 1997

Contact persons:

Dollar Bill Oxendine 422-8129

Ramona Locklear 521-0579

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## Lumbee Guaranty Bank Common Stock Offering

Lumbee Guaranty Bank hereby announces the availability of 230,770 shares of Lumbee Guaranty Bank Common Stock at \$13 per share.

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This offering expires September 30, 1997 or when all available shares are sold.

Larry R. Chavis, President/CEO



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