

# Along the Robeson Trail

by Dr. Stanley Knick  
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In our continuing discussion of the Lumbee in context, and specifically the prehistoric part of that context, last week we began looking at the linguistic diversity of the Woodland ancestors of the Lumbee. We saw that the three language families of eastern North Carolina were Algonkian, Iroquoian and Eastern Siouan, and that some ancestors of some segments of the modern Lumbee population probably came from the Algonkian and Iroquoian language families. This week we turn to the third and probably largest linguistic contributor to the Lumbee — the Eastern Siouan language family.

The homeland of the Eastern Siouan language family apparently covered a large portion of eastern North Carolina (and well into South Carolina). The southern coastal plain (including present-day Robeson County) and most of the Piedmont were home to numerous Siouan languages (Western Siouan languages such as Lakota and others are distantly related). These original Carolina languages included Tutelo, Cheraw, Catawba and Woccon (probably the same as Waccamaw), as well as Saponi, Occaneechi, Santee, Wateree and others.

The Woodland archaeological sites found in Robeson County fall within the geographical and chronological distribution of the Eastern Siouan language family in the Carolinas. That is, they occur in the same region at the same period of time. Thus it seems probable that the core ancestral language of Native Americans here along the Lumbee — the ones who left so many Woodland archaeological sites here — was also an Eastern Siouan language.

Aside from the fact that some people like to know about their ancestral linguistic stock, why is this diverse linguistic background — with its three language families and many distinct languages — important for understanding the Lumbee in context? Perhaps one of the most significant reasons is that when we comprehend just how linguistically diverse the ancestors of the Lumbee were then we may better understand why no single Indian language dominated into the twentieth century. Looked at another way, if only one Native language group had been the source of the modern Lumbee population, it would have been much more likely for that Native language to have survived.

Thus the great linguistic diversity of the Woodland ancestors of the Lumbee may have been a contributing factor to the complete replacement of Indian languages with English. As the colonial conquest of America proceeded, many tribal remnants (greatly diminished in population by smallpox and other epidemics) coalesced with remnants of other tribes in isolated areas. One such geographically isolated area was the land of the Lumbee, in what came to be known as "the Settlement" to the Indians of the early 1800s (Evans 1971).

Situated as it was near the geographical intersection of three language families, "the Settlement" was a place where Indian people speaking different languages came together (probably as many as four Eastern Siouan languages, and at least one each from Iroquoian and Algonkian). As small remnant groups — sometimes as few as a single extended family — joined the pre-

existing Lumbee community at "the Settlement," old language barriers had to melt away in order for the people to survive together. With only a few members of some groups remaining after the massive epidemics, some whole languages disappeared.

Encouraged by the desire *not* to have to learn the language of a traditional opponent (such as a Siouan speaker being forced to learn an Iroquoian language); encouraged by missionaries who promised the Indians an English-speaking God who would protect the people from epidemic diseases; and encouraged by an increasing need to trade with Europeans for products only available in English, the Indian people of "the Settlement" soon adopted English. It became, as they say in West Africa, the *lingua franca*, the common language of trade.

In the process, all that would remain of the (probably Eastern Siouan) Lumbee language was the word itself: Lumbee. This would be true of many other Carolina Native languages (i.e., Machapunga, Coree, etc.) By the mid-1700s when non-Indians began to establish permanent settlements here along the Lumbee River, the Indians were already speaking a kind of broken English (at least they spoke it to their new European neighbors) (Dial and Eliades 1975).

In the next segment we will continue to look at the prehistoric context of the Lumbee. 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.

## Sen. David Weinstein completes first session with accolades from Senate Pro Tem Marc Basnight

Dear Editor,  
We concluded a historic session of the General Assembly last month and I wanted you and your readers to know how impressed we were by the hard work and leadership of your new state senator David Weinstein.

The North Carolina Senate started this session with promises. A commitment to the quality of our children's education, to cleaning up our state's waters and to helping North Carolina families. We finished having kept our pledges.

In our commitment to better education we passed the Excellent Schools Act which requires tougher standards for teachers and stops the flood of teachers leaving the profession by aiming to raise their salaries to the national average. The Senate also took the lead in boosting the ABC's program to reward the best schools and offer incentives to improve student performance. And the Senate initiated the Safe Schools Act to give teachers and principals the tools they need to maintain discipline in the classroom. Senator Weinstein's advocacy on behalf of the Univer-

sity of North Carolina at Pembroke was invaluable.

We also pushed a two-prong approach to cleaning our state's rivers and streams. The Senate's Clean Water Responsibility Act, which conservationists call the most significant piece of environmental legislation in our state's history—will hold everyone who uses our waters accountable for keeping them clean.

And senators fought successfully for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the first and only dedicated fund for environmental preservation in the history of our state. Despite attempts by the House to cap the Trust Fund and raid it for other uses, we preserved it for future generations, and Senator Weinstein was a strong advocate for these clean water programs.

Other initiatives will help North Carolina families find good day care with new training for day-care workers and quality ratings for day-care centers, and will help them ensure children are healthy and ready to learn through the expansion of Smart Start to the state's 100 counties. For example,

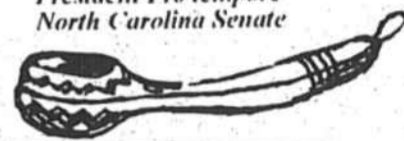
Robeson County will move into its third year with \$1.3 million in new funding. Cumberland County will continue its model program and Bladen, Hoke and Sampson counties have planning money to start their partnerships.

The Senate also continued the crack down against drunk drivers with a clear message that is violators continued to drink and drive we will put them in jail and take their car. Plus, we led the way with a state-wide registry for sex offenders that will be open for public review.

Without Senator Weinstein's leadership as vice chairman of the Transportation Committee and as a member of the Senate's Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Finance Committee our accomplishments would have been far less.

I am proud of his thoughtful deliberation and his hard work, and the people of the state's 30th Senatorial District should be, too.

Sincerely,  
Marc Basnight  
President Pro tempore  
North Carolina Senate



Say You Read It In The Carolina Indian Voice.

**Public Announcement**  
The Lumbee Tribe/Lumbee Regional Development Association will conduct elections on December 4, 1997 for Districts 4, 5, and 8 to serve on the LRDA/Council/Board of Directors. Specific candidate criteria will be announced later.

**Chicken and BBQ Plate Sale**  
10 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
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