

I Want and Need Your Vote May 2nd

PAUL BROOKS

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS,
SUGGESTIONS OR CRITICISMS, CALL ME
521-1121

FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.

by Dr. Barry Harding
Public Schools
of Robeson County



For the next couple of weeks, Robeson County citizens are being asked to participate in our annual cleanup of the county. The effort, dubbed "Robeson County Spring Clean 2000" is being embraced by virtually all government agencies—both city and county, Chambers of Commerce, and thousands of individuals who are aware of what the appearance of the county can mean to its livability.

Another major county agency which is offering its support, I'm proud to say, is our own Public Schools of Robeson County. Since back in 1995 when our School Board adopted a resolution indicating our agreement to cooperate with the Robeson County Clean Community Plan, our system's schools have conducted various activities in individual schools which are intended to contribute to the campaign. In order to make the students aware of the annual clean-up, thousands of pencils emblazoned with its name, have been distributed in the schools by the campaign. Poster contests are conducted by some schools with prizes offered to the students whose posters best encourage fellow students to partake in the effort.

Principals and teachers encourage students to get involved with cleaning up their campuses as, not only a contribution to the appearance of the county, but also to set an example for those people driving by to see and follow around their own homes. Often there is competition among classes at a school to see which one does the

best job. One school undertook a project to collect aluminum cans last year and it was so successful with thousands of cans collected that the school is repeating the campaign again this year.

Older students who drive are encouraged to pick up litter bags available at various places for their cars to help cut down on highway litter. I might add that, using such bags can also forestall the possibility of attracting fines for littering which, of course, is illegal. Ways in which students can participate in the drive to clean up the county are only limited by the imagination of the principals and teachers in our school.

The important thing, though, is to instill in the students the importance of being involved in making our county a better place to live. While courses in good citizenship are taught in the classroom it's important that the principles that are taught are put into practice. I would hope that, by being involved with a program that has been implemented for the good of the county and being a part of its success can give our students an interest in other things which may also benefit themselves, their families, and the entire area.

I hope that "Robeson County Spring Clean 2000" will see all our students and employees joining with all Robeson County citizens in making the period between April 7th through April 20th an outstanding success.

Registration planned at Union Elementary

Union Elementary School's Pre-K-Kindergarten registration will be held Wednesday, April 12, 2000 from 9:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. in the School Gymnasium. Please bring original birth certificate, social security card, immunization record, tribal enrollment card. Your child must be 5 years old on or before October 16, to enroll in Kindergarten. Register early to participate in a drawing for a plus bunny!

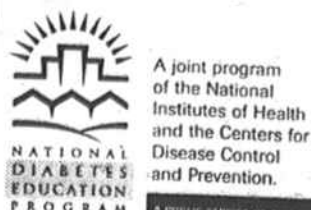
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Along The Robeson Trail

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

Last week we looked at "termination" as a policy of the federal government which proved incapable of assimilating the Indians and solving the "Indian Problem." This week we turn to another federal policy that still affects Native Americans: "compensation."

Long before "compensation" became an official policy of the government, it was being used by colonists and settlers as a way to deal with the Indians. The infamous purchase of Manhattan Island could be seen as an attempt at compensation (defined by Webster as "anything given as an equivalent, or to make amends for a loss"). The other "purchases" of land from the Indians during the growth of the United States also fit into this category. However, it is obvious that in most of these situations what was "given" by the colonists and settlers was not "equivalent" to the real value of the land taken from the Indians in this way. But the colonists and settlers often said they were "compensating" the Indians for their land.

Even though a Court of Claims was established in 1855 to which suits against the federal government could be brought, an 1863 amendment prevented Native Americans from using this Court to file claims for land or money. The only way a tribe or nation could hope to recover land or money from the government was by passage of congressional legislation,

which was (and still is) extremely difficult for Native Americans to accomplish. A few cases were "settled" through this congressional avenue, but the vast majority of Indian claims were denied.

In 1946, under considerable political pressure from assimilationists (people who want Native Americans to blend in with the rest of society) as well as from some Native people, the U. S. Congress finally passed the Indian Claims Commission Act. This Act created a board that was intended to hear claims by Native Americans against the federal government. But Congress only allowed ten years for all Indians to state their claims, and it further stipulated that only money would be given as compensation to the Indians — no land was to be returned!

Of course many Native American groups did not want money, because they believed that money was not fair compensation for the loss of their lands. For example, the people of Taos Pueblo refused the government's offer of \$10 million in exchange for giving up their claim to 50,000 acres of land and their sacred Blue Lake.

The U. S. Justice Department (in this instance, ironically named "justice") decided to become an adversary for the government in the proceedings of the Indian Claims Commission. The Justice Department regularly delayed the process of claims,

making it even more difficult for tribes and nations to gain "compensation." According to Olson and Wilson (in their book *Native Americans in the 20th Century*), "between 1946 and 1960 the Commission completed work on 105 separate claim dockets, disqualifying 88 of the claims and awarding [only a total of] \$20 million in 17 claims."

Even when a tribe or nation "won" their claim, they were very poorly compensated. In 1963 the Pit River Indians of California were offered 47 cents per acre as "compensation" for their land! The Miami Indians got \$1.15 per acre for their land in Indiana, but only after appealing the government's original offer of 75 cents per acre!

The Indian Claims Commission ended its operations in 1978, having "settled" 285 of the 850 claims which had been filed by Native groups. The original goals of the assimilationists — to bring Indians into the mainstream of American society and solve what they saw as the now-500-year-old "Indian Problem" — were clearly not accomplished by the policy of "compensation."

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 (our Internet address is www.uncp.edu/nativemuseum).

It took almost seven years but George Meegan of Great Britain walked the nearly 20,000 miles from the southern tip of South America to Prudhoe Bay in northern Alaska.

E-mail the editor at brayboyconnee@hotmail.com. Tell the Carolina Indian Voice what's happening with you. Or write to the Carolina Indian Voice at P.O. Box 1075, Pembroke, NC 28372. Telephone us at (910) 521-2826 or simply send us a fax at (910) 521-1975.

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