

Along the Robeson Trail

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

A lot has been written by and about Lumbees. From colonial times to this week's newspaper, folks have been and still are sharing and spreading their opinions. Sometimes, even facts are included which help us form our own opinions. It seems that while there may be a shortage of facts, there is hardly ever a shortage of opinions.

This is not to say that opinions are less important than facts. That's not true. But it is nice when the opinions and the facts have at least something to do with each other.

If you want to keep up with the latest things (or even the earliest things) written on the subject, an excellent place to start is Glenn Ellen Starr-Stillings' website: "The Lumbee Indians: An Annotated Bibliography Supplement" (<http://linux.library.appstate.edu/lumbee/>). Starr-Stillings worked for a long time here in Pembroke, and published the irreplaceable hardbound research guide, *The Lumbee Indians: An Annotated Bibliography* back in 1994. Since then she has kept up the good work with her frequently-updated website.

The site is admirably arranged. There are sections on new sources, recommended sites, notable Lumbees, Robeson County statistics, key

sources, an index to *The Carolina Indian Voice* which covers twenty years, and others. There are also direct links to a long list of subjects such as education, language, literature, art, folklore, religion, health, tribal origins, federal recognition and many more. In all of these, there is an abundance of both facts and opinions.

Two items on the "new sources" list struck my mind recently. Both of these originated in *Indian Country Today*, a nationally-distributed newspaper (and web resource) operated by the Oneida Nation of New York.

The first was a reference (added to the Starr-Stillings website in July 2004) which came from 1988. It is an article by Elmer Savilla (Quechan), former director of the National Tribal Chairman's Association, in which Savilla speaks out in support of Lumbee federal recognition efforts. There are some strong words coming from a very distinguished gentleman, among them this notable quotation:

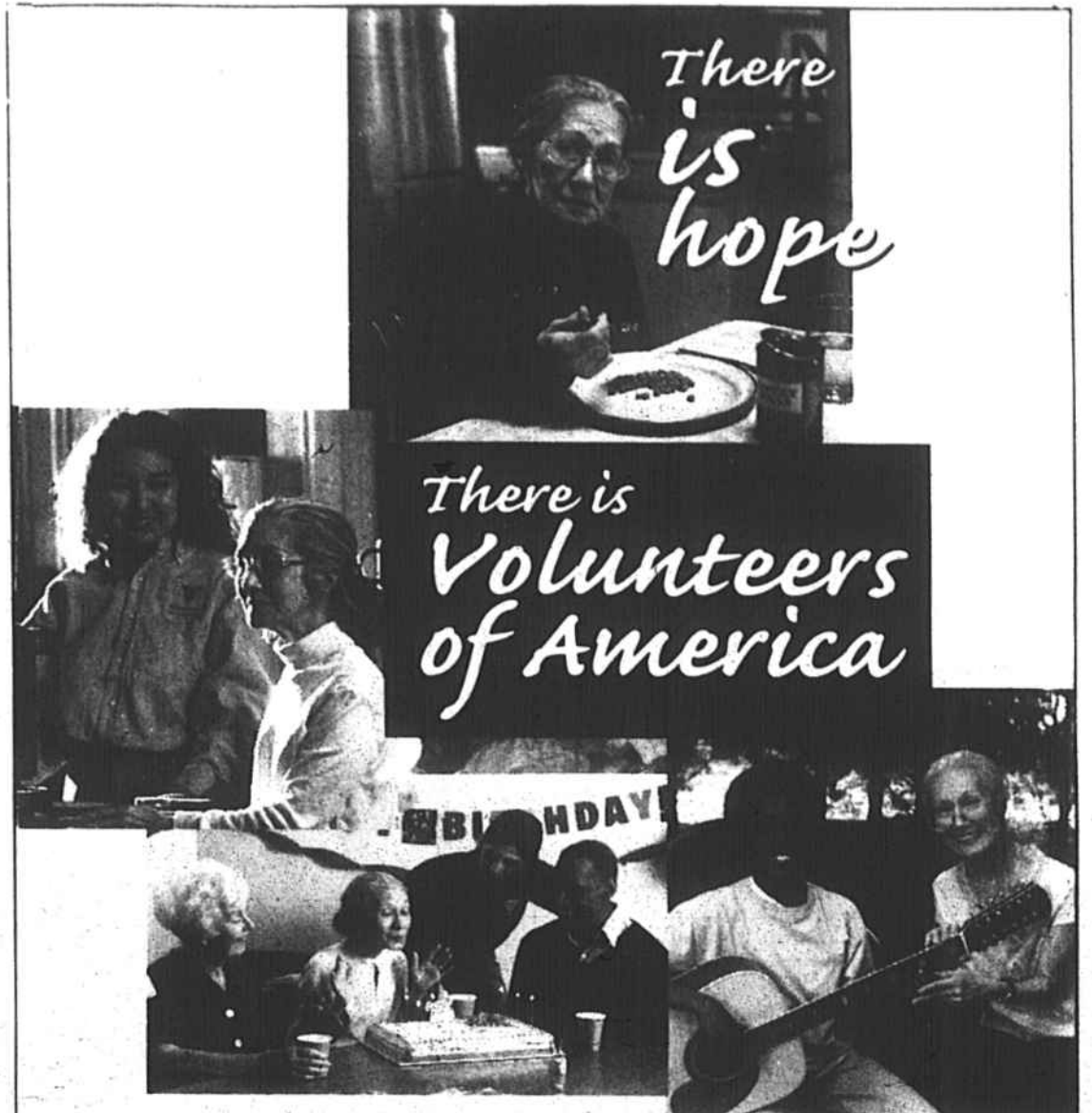
"One argument for tribes to support federal recognition of the Lumbee is that politically we are a very small minority. Politically, we need their numbers. That is only one important practical reason to support them in their bid.

However, the most important reason is a moral one: because it's the right thing to do."

The other is a reference (added to the Starr-Stillings website in June 2004) which came from just last year. It is an article by David Wilkins (Lumbee), professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota. This one is also about federal recognition, but Wilkins brings into the discussion questions of tribal sovereignty and racial discrimination. This scholarly piece is very informative, and concludes with this profound statement:

"Let us, then, as First Nations, form a realistic understanding and appreciation of our respective and diverse tribal histories that draws from rather than shirks or denies any aspect or component of our cultural, genetic, political, or legal past or present. Let us choose not to act from bigotry and racism. There is enough of that still being leveled on us psychologically, emotionally, and structurally by the larger state and society."

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/native/museum).



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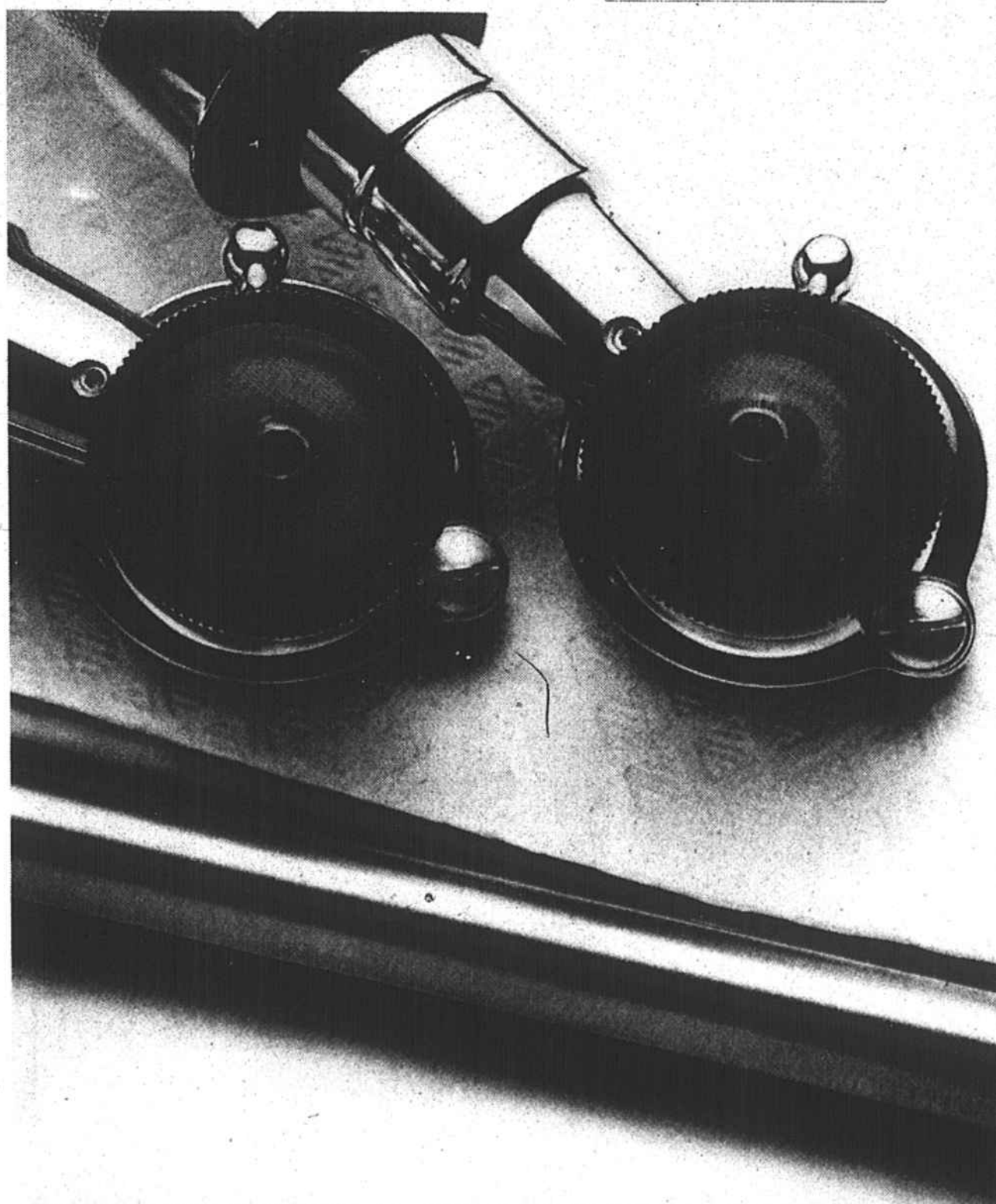
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