



North Carolina
Department of Administration
Commission of Indian Affairs

Machelle Sanders
Secretary

Gregory A. Richardson
Executive Director

December 4, 2019

Subcommittee on the Indigenous People of the United States
H.R. 1964 the Lumbee Recognition Act

The Honorable Ruben Gallego
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Indigenous People
of the United States
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Cook
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Indigenous People
of the United States
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Comments in Support of H.R. 1964, the Lumbee Recognition Act

Chairman Gallego, Ranking Member Cook, and members of the Subcommittee on the Indigenous People of the United States. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments regarding H.R. 1964, the Lumbee Recognition Act.

I am Gregory Richardson, Executive Director of the NC Commission of Indian Affairs. I am an enrolled member of the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe, located in the territories of Halifax and Warren Counties of North Carolina and I am a Viet Nam Veteran! The Commission was created almost half a century ago by the State of North Carolina, and it includes representatives of the State Legislature, and each of the Indian tribes recognized by the State of North Carolina.

The purpose of these comments is to express the Commission's strong support of H.R. 1964, the Lumbee Recognition Act, and to provide the Subcommittee with a prospective on the long-standing Government to Government relationship that has existed between the state of North Carolina and the Lumbee Indian Tribe of North Carolina.

First of all, the Commission adopted a resolution in support of Lumbee recognition in June 2017, and a copy of that resolution is attached to my testimony. It is my understanding that Governor Roy Cooper has submitted to this Committee a statement of support directly on behalf of the State. A news article referencing Governor Cooper's support for federal recognition can be found at: <https://www.fayobserver.com/news/20190108/cooper-high-time-lumbee-tribe-given-full-recognition>. In all of our views, federal recognition of the Lumbee Tribe is very, very overdue.

The Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina has a long-standing and historical record of fighting for federal recognition and has simultaneously worked to create programs and provided services for the Indian Community.

Through that effort the tribe has developed programs and a historical track record of providing services for the Lumbee people, either directly by the tribe or through other partnerships and collaborations. The tribe has been instrumental in the establishment and development of education programs or education attainment programs. The tribe supports religion and cultural preservations efforts, economic development, political engagement strategies has worked to ensure that its religion and culture is preserved. The following are a few examples of the tribe's accomplishments:

- **Indian Education and Schools**– At the request of the Lumbee community, the NC General Assembly created Croatan Normal School on March 7, 1887. The name was changed in 1911 to the **Indian Normal School** of Robeson County, and again in 1913 to Pembroke Indian Normal School, which is now the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, A Historic American Indian University. This historic effort has resulted in the Lumbee Tribe having the greatest number of educators/teachers of any tribe in the state of North Carolina and perhaps the southeast. As a result, Lumbee teachers were recruited and sent to the Coharie, Haliwa-Saponi and Waccamaw-Siouan Indian communities, in the early 1900 to teach students in their schools. My first-grade teacher, for example was Mrs. Lela Jane Clark and was from the Lumbee community of Robeson County, NC. Other teachers taught school at East Carolina Indian School in Sampson County, North Carolina, other teachers' taught school at the Wide-Awake Indian School in Columbus County, North Carolina. Lumbee teachers additionally taught at many other schools during this time period. Today, Pembroke Indian Normal School is the home of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, which is a part of North Carolina's University System and Dr. Robin Cumming, a member of the Lumbee Tribe, is chancellor of that institution.
- **Religion and Cultural Preservation** - Religious leaders in the tribe formed the Burnt Swamp Baptist Church Organization on October 2, 1877. This organization still exists and is one of the largest Baptist Church organizations in North Carolina, with affiliated Indian churches located in Indian communities in Robeson County, Warren County, Sampson County, Columbus County and many other locations.
- **Economic Development** – Lumbee leaders established the Lumbee Regional Development Association, a non-profit organization in 1968. The purpose of that organization is to provide socio-economic services for the **Lumbee** Indians; including such services as Employment and Training, Head Start, Housing, and Daycare Services continues to do so to this day.
- **Economic Development Continued**-Lumbee's leaders established a State Chartered Bank, Lumbee Bank in 1971. Today that bank has 13 branch offices and continues to expand.
- **Political engagement**-Members of the Lumbee tribe have excelled in political engagement in local and state government and hold seats on state boards and commissions. One member of the tribe, Representative Charles Graham is a member of the NC General Assembly. Several members hold offices as District and Superior Court Judges. A member of the Tribe holds a seat on the NC Department of Transportation Board.
- **Boards and Commissions – Members of the Lumbee Tribe hold seats on the following State Boards and Commissions:**
 - NC Commission of Indian Affairs**- The Tribe holds 3 seats on the Commission, pursuant to NCGS 143B-407.

-NC Indian Housing Authority – The tribe holds a seat on the Indian Housing Authority as required pursuant to NCGS 157-66.

-NC Department of Veteran and Military Affairs - A tribal member holds a seat on the Veterans and Military Affairs Advisory Commission. Legal authority **Senate Bill 613**.

-United Tribes of North Carolina – The Tribe has on seat on the Board of Directors. In fact, the president of that organization is a member of the Lumbee Tribe.

-State Advisory Council on Indian Education – The tribe hold as seat on the Advisory Council. The Council was created under General *Statute 115C-210*.

-National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) – **The Lumbee tribe is a member of NCAI and participates in their conventions.**

Conclusion

The State of North Carolina has been aware of the Lumbee Tribe since long before the Department of the Interior’s federal acknowledgement process was even conceived. We know this Tribe not only to be deserving of federal recognition, but to have suffered for generations because of the federal government’s failure to fully extend that recognition.

As highlighted in our resolution, the Lumbee Tribe has petitioned Congress at least ten times over more than a century seeking federal recognition. It is long past time for the federal government to do what the North Carolina government did well over a century ago -- formally and fully recognize the Lumbee Tribe. We urge the Subcommittee on the Indigenous People of the United States to move H.R. 1964 out of Committee and to advocate that the Lumbee Recognition Act is enacted into law. Only then can the process of healing and reconciliation begin for Lumbee Indians.



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North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs
Resolution in Support Of
Federal Recognition of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs was created and authorized in 1971 by the North Carolina General Assembly (N.C.G.S. 143B-406) to study Indian needs, to deal effectively with Indian issues, and to bring local, state, and federal resources into focus for the implementation or continuation of meaningful programs for Indian citizens of the state, to assist in social and economic development of Native American communities, and to promote recognition of and the right of Indians to pursue cultural and religious traditions considered by them to be sacred and meaningful to Native Americans; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina is home to more than 122,000 American Indians (2010 U.S. Census), and has eight recognized American Indian tribes; and

WHEREAS, the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina is an officially recognized American Indian tribe in the State of North Carolina (N.C. General Statutes 71A-3, [1953, c.874; 1977, 2nd Sess., c.1193,s.1.; 2003-54, s.1]); and

WHEREAS, as a legally recognized American Indian tribe in the State of North Carolina, the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina has tribal representation on the North Carolina State Commission of Indian Affairs, as established by the North Carolina General Assembly (N.C.G.S. 143B-407); this tribal representation and statewide American Indian leadership has been exercised since the inception of the Commission of Indian Affairs in 1971; and

WHEREAS, as a legally recognized American Indian tribe in North Carolina, the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina holds membership on the NC Indian Housing Authority (N.C. General Statutes 157-68 & N.C.G.S. 71A-3); and

WHEREAS, as a legally recognized American Indian tribe in North Carolina, the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina holds membership on the State Advisory Council on Indian Education (N.C.G.S. 115C-210.1[b]); and

WHEREAS, the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina is governed by a twenty-one-member Tribal Council and a Tribal Chairman, which are duly established and authorized through public election by enrolled tribal citizens in accordance with the Lumbee Tribal Constitution, and has the responsibility for legislative and executive governance of tribal affairs and advocating the needs and rights of tribal citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Lumbee Indian people have resided in the area that is now Robeson, Cumberland, Hoke, and Scotland counties and surrounding areas since the mid-1700s, and continue to live in these territories today; and

WHEREAS, today more than 62,100 members comprise the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, giving it the largest tribe in North Carolina, the largest tribe east of the Mississippi River and the seventh largest in the nation.

WHEREAS, in 1887 the North Carolina General Assembly established an Indian normal school in Robeson County, dedicated to training Indian teachers for Indian schools (N.C. General Assembly 1887, Chap. 254). This institution is now known as the University of North Carolina at Pembroke; and

WHEREAS, due to severe underfunding of the Indian Normal School, in 1888 tribal leaders submitted a petition to Congress for recognition and assistance for the tribe's schools. Congress referred the petition to the Department of the Interior's Commissioner of Indian Affairs, who ultimately denied the request, citing insufficient resources.

WHEREAS, tribal leaders made additional attempts to gain federal recognition through petitions to Congress in 1899 (see H.R.4009, 56th Cong., 1st Sess.), 1910 (see H.R.19036, 61st Cong., 2d Sess.), 1911 (see S.3258, 62nd Cong., 1st Sess.), 1913 (see Hearings before the Committee on Indian Affairs, House of Representatives on S.3258, Feb. 14, 1913), 1914 (see S.Res.410, 63rd Cong., 2d Sess.), 1924 (see H.R.8083, 68th Cong., 1st Sess.), 1932 (see S.4595, 72d Cong., 1st Sess.), 1933 (see H.R.5365, 73d Cong., 1st Sess., and Rep.No.1752, House of Representatives, 73d Cong., 2d Sess.), 1934 (see Rep.No204, Senate, 73d Cong., 2d Sess.), and 1956 (see H.R.4656, 84th Cong., 2d Sess.).

WHEREAS, in 1956 Congress passed the Lumbee Act, which recognized the tribe as Indian; however, the Act withheld the full benefits of federal recognition from tribal members (see Pub.L.570, Act of June 7m 1956, 70 Stat.254); and


NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the membership of the NC Commission of Indian Affairs, at its June 2, 2017 quarterly meeting in Pembroke, North Carolina, authorized this resolution in support of federal recognition of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NC Commission of Indian Affairs urges the United States Congress to grant federal recognition, to the fullest extent, to the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina.

This action was taken during a duly called meeting of the NC Commission of Indian Affairs, held in held in Pembroke, North Carolina on June 2, 2017, with a quorum being present and voting.



Furnie Lambert, Chairman
North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs



Isabell Freeman-Elliott, Secretary/Treasurer
North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs