



Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

Self-Determination & Governance



Over and again, the Lumbee have demonstrated purposeful determination to move forward despite daunting challenges and barriers.

An indistinguishable strength of will enabled the People to survive years of war, disease and oppression. Likewise, the indomitable spirit that propelled Henry Berry Lowrie to fight for justice is the same spirit that mobilized the People to seek an education for their children – on their own terms.



At the Heart of the Matter
by Hatty Ruth Miller

Lumbee people determine their own course and they place a high value on the freedom to do so. They have engaged in self-determination and self-governance throughout their history.



After the creation of the Indian school system and the Normal School, Lumbee ancestors actively determined who attended both their primary and Normal schools.¹ In 1921, the NC Legislature recognized the Indians' self-governance by creating a law that stated without qualification their authority to determine admission into their schools. In 1929, the General Assembly expanded that law to include the Normal School.²

Pictured Left: Indian Normal School - In 1909, the state appropriated \$3,000 for construction of this new building. The Indians determinedly raised the remaining needed funds themselves, "again demonstrating their dedication to the Normal School and Indian education in Robeson County."³

The Lumbee are a deeply spiritual people and 'church' has a central place in many of their lives for not only spiritual reasons, but for social and cultural reasons as well. During the early 1800's, ancestors of the Lumbee moved from brush arbors and riverbanks where they congregated for religious activities into churches and buildings that they established for themselves.⁴ The bonds of kinship and place that are so integral to the identity of the Lumbee found a fertile soil in which to manifest and grow within the environs of the Indian churches.



Prospect United Methodist Church: The left building was constructed in 1895 after the previous one was destroyed by fire. The building at right is the most recent sanctuary for the growing church.⁵ Prospect is the largest American Indian United Methodist Church in the United States.



Societies known as Red Men's Lodges functioned as a political and social structure in the Indian communities around the early 1900's. In addition to conducting ceremonies and rituals, these societies maintained order in the community, policing morality and conduct. The Red Men's Lodges were composed of leaders from within the respective communities.



Burnt Swamp Baptist Church: This is the original church of the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association, "set up for Indians by Indians". Beginning with four churches in the late 1800's, the BSBA today includes seventy Baptist churches whose membership still consists primarily of Indian peoples.⁶



Above: Aaren Spencer Locklear, Red Men's Lodge member and editor of the *Indian Observer*.⁸



Above: Red Men's Lodge that met at Antioch School near Ten-Mile church.⁷

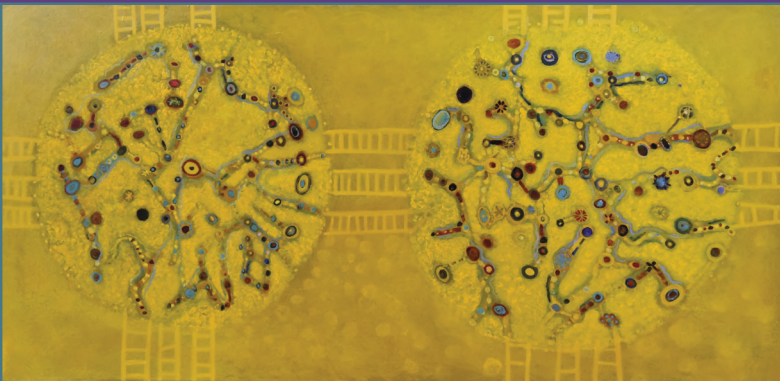
In 1968, the Lumbee Regional Development Association, Inc. was established to serve the Lumbee people through various programs and services. It functioned as the tribal governing structure until 2000 when enrolled Lumbees came together to create a tribal constitution. This constitution was adopted in 2001 and thus secured the Lumbee Tribal government that exists today. Today, 21 members sit on the Tribal Council representing 14 districts in the tribal territory. The Tribal Chairman heads the government and represents the People.



Right: **Lumbee Tribal Housing Complex - "The Turtle"**
Created in the shape of a turtle, this building houses many tribal services, the Chairman's office, and tribal chambers for council meetings.



Lorna McNeill - Miss Lumbee 1994



Between Two Worlds by Hatty Ruth Miller



Lindsey Oxendine - Miss Lumbee 2016