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## STATE-RECOGNIZED INDIANS OF NORTH CAROLINA, INCLUDING A HISTORY OF THE WACCAMAW SIOUX

*Patricia Barker Lerch*

**T**his chapter is on the Indians of North Carolina. In the first section, I describe the geographic distribution and size, the surname pattern, the religious structure, and the political organization of four contemporary Indian groups known as the Lumbee, the Coharie, the Waccamaw Sioux, and the Haliwa-Saponi. This necessarily brief section can only introduce the subject of Indians in North Carolina today. For a historical account of the Indians of North Carolina, one should consult Theda Perdue's useful publication *Native Carolinians* (1985). In the second section, I present a case study of the Waccamaw Sioux Indian group. Certain issues that have been important in achieving recognition provide themes around which to describe events in the history of the Waccamaw people. I have chosen the annual Indian powwow, a contemporary Indian event, to demonstrate the saliency of Indian identity and heritage in community life. In order to make sense of the Waccamaw struggles to gain recognition, I suggest that the concept of articulation (Lurie 1971) may assist us in understanding how this Indian people managed to persist until the present.

One of the most important themes in the history of Indian-white relations in North Carolina is that of recognition. I am using recognition in this chapter in the sense that it refers to the state of affairs in which a governing body grants certain rights and privileges to an Indian group. I would like to suggest a typology of Indian people in North Carolina even though I am aware that this makes a complex situation overly simple. But some readers may be unfamiliar with Indian people in North Carolina,

and this typology may help them see how the Indians are defined in part by whether or not they have recognition.

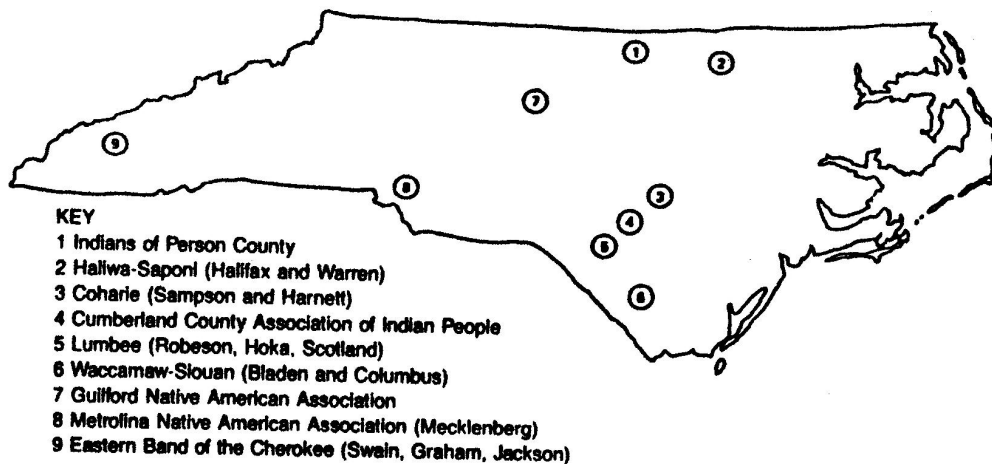
Recognition is the yardstick with which Indians are measured in North Carolina, ranging from those who have full or partial federal recognition to those who have state recognition to those who have no recognition by any level of government. First, there are Indians who live on a federal reservation and who have legal rights to the services and programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Eastern Cherokee are the only representatives in the state of this type. They can be said to have full federal recognition. Second, there are Indians whose existence has been officially noted by the federal government but who do not receive any of the services or assistance offered by the programs of the bureau. The Lumbees are in this category; the federal act (70 Stat 254) designating them "Lumbee Indians" does not extend a federal trust relationship to them nor does it provide the basis for the services reserved for recognized tribes. Third, there are Indians who live in named communities and groups or who affiliate with urban Indian associations who have legal recognition from the state of North Carolina. These groups and associations are assisted economically, socially, and politically by the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs. The Waccamaw Sioux, the Coharie, the Haliwa-Saponi, and the Lumbee are in this category (this list is not meant to be exhaustive). Finally, in the fourth category there are Indians who live either in communities or groups or are dispersed throughout the general population but who have neither federal nor state recognition. Seeking the rights associated with recognition by either the state or the federal government is a major theme in the history of the Indians of North Carolina.

## Indians of North Carolina

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It is difficult to write in general terms about the Indians of North Carolina because each group has its own special history and a good deal of this history remains to be written. While many Indians are dispersed throughout the general population, most inhabit identifiable communities that are named and known as "Indian" to the residents and their neighbors. These little communities are further organized into named groups like Lumbee, Coharie, Waccamaw Sioux, and Haliwa-Saponi. Family and kinship, common schools, churches, and political organization define the group boundaries. Yet, some of these same institutions cut across community and group lines, linking individuals to Indian people across the state through intermarriage, religious denomination, and Indian politics. A

### North Carolina Indian Tribes



Locations of Modern Indian Groups in North Carolina (Courtesy of North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs)

good place to begin, then, is with a description of the location and the geographic distribution of the Indian population.

### Geographic Distribution

According to the 1980 federal census, 64,536 people of American Indian descent live in North Carolina, including 4,844 on the Eastern Cherokee reservation (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1984:15). Most North Carolina Indians live in rural areas (50,275), but many (14,261) live in metropolitan regions (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1982:14). Twenty-five counties appear listed in the census with 200 or more people of Indian descent within their borders: Bladen (321), Buncombe (295), Columbus (1,175), Cumberland (3,644), Davidson (205), Forsyth (451), Gaston (257), Graham (379), Guilford (1,348), Halifax (1,217), Harnett (487), Hoke (2,578), Jackson (2,411), Mecklenberg (1,404), Moore (316), New Hanover (258), Onslow (589), Randolph (252), Richmond (443), Robeson (35,528), Sampson (884), Scotland (2,062), Swain (2,502), Wake (505), and Warren (640) (1982-83:18-19). The urban Indian population is concentrated in Fayetteville (3,644), the Greensboro-Winston-Salem-High Point area (2,303), Charlotte-Gastonia (1,837), and Jacksonville (589) (1982:18-19). The Indian people of Graham, Jackson, and

Swain counties are primarily Cherokee (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1984:24).

Most of the North Carolina Indians live within two major geographical areas: a southeastern ten-county cluster and a north-central four-county cluster just south of the Virginia state line. Within these two areas are identifiable and distinct communities for each of the state-recognized Indian groups. The largest, with forty thousand people, is the Lumbee group, which lives primarily in thirty-three separate communities in Robeson County. The four major Lumbee communities are Prospect, Pembroke, Fairgrove, and Magnolia. In addition, Lumbee people have migrated to the surrounding counties of Hoke, Cumberland, and Scotland. The Coharie group, which numbers between three and four thousand, lives in several small clusters in Sampson County including Holly Grove, New Bethel, Shiloh, Harrells, and Averyborough, and, in Harnett County, they live in the community of Dunn. The fifteen hundred Waccamaw Sioux have settled into three major communities: Ricefield, in Bladen County; Buckhead, which straddles Bladen and Columbus counties; and St. James, in Columbus County. The Haliwa-Saponi group's Halifax-Warren community has about three thousand members.

City of  
Dunn in  
Averyborough

The state's urban Indians are served by the Cumberland County Association of Indian people in Fayetteville, the Metrolina Native American Association in Charlotte, and the Guilford Native American Association in Greensboro. The Cumberland County Association of Indian People reaches approximately fifteen hundred people in the Fayetteville urban area and throughout Cumberland County. The Metrolina Native American Association in Charlotte works with forty-six hundred people in a ten-county area, a majority of whom are Lumbee Indians (Lerch, Berde, and Levy 1986:3-7). In Greensboro, the Guilford Native American Association offers programs to about three thousand people originally drawn to the region in the 1970s by jobs in the furniture markets and textile mills (Revels 1981:65). These three urban associations are recognized by the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs as official Indian organizations.

North Carolina Indian people live outside the state, too. Over the years, Lumbee, Waccamaw, Coharie, and Haliwa-Saponi Indians have left their home communities for such cities as Baltimore, Detroit, Los Angeles, Richmond, Newport News, Hampton (Virginia), and Virginia Beach. According to Makofsky (1982:76), perhaps as many as four thousand Lumbees are in Baltimore alone. Many were attracted by the prospects of employment, many have gained skills in business, and many have returned to their home communities to establish local Indian-run enterprises (Richardson 1976:31).

While the majority of the state's Indian people are affiliated with one of the above groups or associations, there are other communities of Indian people in North Carolina. Among these are the Person County Indians, who were recognized by the state in 1913, and many others that do not have state recognition. The latter include the Meherrin Indians of Hertford County, the Eno-Occaneechi of Alamance and Orange counties, the Tuscarora of Robeson County, and the Hoke County Cherokees. Less is known about these people, and the discussion that follows does not include information on any of the currently unrecognized state groups. Thus, a need exists to extend research interests into this area.

### Common Surnames ---

The Lumbee, Coharie, and Waccamaw are located in a southeastern ten-county cluster (Bladen, Columbus, Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Moore, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, and Scotland). Their proximity to each other has increased intermarriage and facilitated exchanges of ideas and strategies of adaptation throughout their history. Some hint at the linkages can be observed in the surnames common to each group. A brief survey of the surnames found in each group reveals a pattern of overlap. A degree of overlap also occurs among the three groups and the urban associations, although no single Indian group shares its surname list completely with any of the others. However, we do not know the frequency of intermarriage in the present or the past. Based upon a sample of households from the Waccamaw group, the frequency of intermarriage is extremely low today: Waccamaw-Lumbee 3 percent and Waccamaw-Coharie 1 percent. The Haliwa-Saponi do not share their surnames with any of the other three Indian groups or with the urban associations perhaps because of their relative isolation from the others in the north-central area just south of the Virginia state line (see Table 2). It is typical to find that within the Indian groups three or four surnames dominate the group because of endogamy, or the practice of marrying someone from one's own family or community. Endogamy, group name, and geographic location promote group solidarity. Intermarriage, even at a low rate, and church membership connect members of one local group to another.

### Religious Expression ---

The Christian religion is the dominant religious expression of the Lumbee, Coharie, Waccamaw Sioux, and Haliwa-Saponi. The major de-

**Table 2. Geographical Distribution of North Carolina  
"Indian" Surnames by Regional Associations**

<i>Surnames</i>	<i>Indian Associations</i>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Brooks		X			X
Bell		X			
Blanks	X	X			
Brewington		X	X		
Carter		X	X		
Freeman	X	X			
Graham	X	X			
Hammonds	X	X		X	
Hunt	X	X		X	X
Jacobs	X	X	X	X	X
Locklear	X	X		X	X
Lowry		X			X
Maynor		X		X	
Moore	X	X			
Oxendine		X			X
Strickland	X	X			X

- \*CODE 1 = Waccamaw Siouan Development Association  
 2 = Lumbee Regional Development Association  
 3 = Coharie Indian Tribe  
 4 = Cumberland County Association of Indian People  
 5 = Metrolina Native American Association

Note: This table shows the overlapping pattern in Indian surnames occurring in the five associations; it does not reveal either the frequency of surnames within regions or the entire complement of surnames characteristic of individual Indian groups.

nominations include Baptist, Methodist, Church of God, Holiness, and Freewill Baptist. Lesser known are the Lumber River Holiness Methodist, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Freewill Holiness, Bible Freewill, Primitive Baptist, Assembly of God, and Church of Christ. In one listing of Indian churches ( $N = 141$ ), most had Indian ( $N = 115$ ) pastors (Brewington 1976:19).

Religion offers a structure that both strengthens and circumvents community and group ties and loyalties. Indian pastors connect congregations of people in distinct communities and in different Indian groups. Pastors are rarely hired full-time by one congregation but travel between two or more churches. Thus, pastors link one community to another and sometimes link one named Indian group to another, too. For example, one pastor may travel between a Lumbee community church and a Waccamaw community church and through him, his sermons, and his activities, the members of these two different churches may become acquainted. Indian church associations also connect congregations of people in distinct communities and in different Indian groups. Indian churches can be connected to each other because they belong to a denominational association of Indian churches. Such associations have played an important role in the history of North Carolina Indians. The Burnt Swamp Baptist Association is a good example of how religion cuts across group loyalties and defines the boundaries of that part of the population that is of Indian descent.

The Burnt Swamp Baptist Association, surveyed in the 1970s, is predominately a Lumbee association. Of the forty-eight churches affiliated with this association, forty-four are Lumbee, two are Waccamaw, one is Coharie, and one is Haliwa-Saponi (Brewington 1976:21). The association was organized in 1875 specifically for Indian churches; and, as the second article of its 1910 constitution read, "this association shall be comprised of members chosen by the different churches in our union, who shall be known, designated and styled as Indians or lineal descendants of Indians."<sup>1</sup>

It may seem unusual for a church association to be in the business of giving formal recognition to Indian churches. But as the history of the Waccamaw Indians, covered later in this chapter, shows, recognition as Indian has always been an important feature of Indian history in North Carolina. Designating a church as "Indian" is seen as problematic today when the membership of most Indian church congregations is multi-ethnic. Despite a preference for "marrying in," interracial marriages remain a characteristic of many Indian congregations (Brewington 1976:19).

The Burnt Swamp Baptist Association gave the Indian churches a voice in religious affairs within the state. In addition to organizational ties that united these Indian congregations in the various denominations, the Indian

communities lying in close geographical proximity to each other long enjoyed traveling to each other's church revivals in late summer and fall. This intermixing has promoted common ties and political alliances among the state's Indians.

**Published Sources.** Some readers may wish to learn more about specific Indian groups. The Lumbees receive more attention from scholars and writers than any of the other three groups (see Blu 1980; Dial and Eliades 1975; Evans 1971; Makofsky 1980, 1982; McPherson 1915; Perdue 1985; Ross 1987; Swanton 1934; Tamarin 1974). Throughout their modern history, they have been known variously as the Croatan (1885–1911), Indians of Robeson County (1911–13), Cherokee Indians of Robeson County (1913–53), and Lumbee Indians (1953–present) (Perdue 1985:61–68). Karen L. Blu (1980) details the social history of Lumbee ethnicity in her book *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People*. A more recent in-depth historical account of Lumbee origins is presented in the Lumbee petition for federal acknowledgment prepared by the Lumber River Legal Services (LRLS). The petition clarifies Lumbee tribal origins and traces their ancestry in large part to the Cheraw and other Siouan-speaking tribes of the Carolinas (LRLS 1987:2). Other than general references in historical accounts of North Carolina Indians (Lee 1965; Milling 1969), only the Haliwa-Saponi (Dane and Griessman 1972) and the Waccamaw (Alexander 1950; Lerch 1988) are covered in separate studies.

Because the Indians of North Carolina have Indian, white, and, sometimes, black ancestors, they have been described in general sociological and geographical surveys, along with many other peoples, by terms such as “mixed bloods,” “American isolates,” “tri-racial isolates,” “folk societies,” “racial islands,” and “marginal peoples.” These labels obscure differences among such groups by grouping those in which the Indian ancestry is the most vigorously maintained along with those who do not maintain a strong Indian identity. The survival of these so-called marginal groups is attributed to a number of factors, including their physical isolation from whites, their structural isolation from whites and blacks based on practices of endogamy, and their close-knit community life (Gilbert 1946; Price 1953; Berry 1963, 1978; Pollitzer 1972; Thompson 1972; Frazier 1966; Dane and Griessman 1972; Griessman 1972).

Earlier studies took an important first step by tracing the geographical distribution of people with mixed heritage and by identifying some of the features of their environment that contributed to their persistence through time. But now, because we know more about those who maintain their Indian ancestry and identity above all else, we must take the next step by



researching the social dynamics within specific Indian communities and groups. Developing a taxonomy of human societies is a function of social science. Looking for differences within larger categories is also an important goal of social science. In other words, I am arguing in favor of more specific social and historical studies on groups such as these.

## Political and Economic Goals ---

Let's return now to our overview of the Indian groups and organizations of North Carolina by looking at their political structure. We will begin with the largest, the Lumbee. The Lumbee Regional Development Association (LRDA), chartered in 1968, is granted authority by the state to act as an interim governing body until the Lumbees succeed in their petition to obtain full federal status. The LRDA is controlled by an elected seventeen-member board of men and women. This board oversees state and federal programs and administers economic development projects for the Lumbees. The Lumbees have never had a tribal chief. LRDA is headquartered in Pembroke, Robeson County. Similarly the Coharie Intra-Tribal Council, organized in 1975, is the present governing body of the Coharie people of Harnett and Sampson counties. Seven members, three from each county and one rotating chairman, are chosen in a popular election held during the annual Coharie festival. As early as 1944, the Coharie organized and operated the state-funded East Carolina Indian School where Indian children from surrounding counties, who were eligible to attend this school, boarded in the homes of Coharie people. The Waccamaw Siouan Development Association (WSDA), established in 1970 to represent the Waccamaw Sioux of Columbus and Bladen counties, is governed by a seven-member board elected to serve for terms of three years. In addition, WSDA has a hired staff. The Waccamaws have had a chief since the early part of this century who offers leadership in community affairs and advises the board. The Haliwa-Saponi Indians organized a governing council in 1954 to help meet the educational needs of the Indian children, and the first tribal school opened in 1956. After its closing in 1968, the school building became the site of community functions. The Haliwa-Saponi Indians are governed by a chief and an eleven-member council elected by the group members.

**North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs.** Responding to pressing social problems of poverty and illiteracy, in 1970 members of the North Carolina Indian groups persuaded the political leaders of the state to establish a commission of Indian affairs. A planning committee, with mem-

bers from the Lumbee, Coharie, Waccamaw, Haliwa-Saponi groups, and from the urban associations, met to discuss the organization and goals of the soon-to-be formed North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs (Maynor 1976). The commission's purpose, as outlined in legislation passed in 1971, is to act as a liaison between federal and state programs and the state-recognized Indian tribes and associations, to provide aid and protection to all Indians, to assist Indian communities in social and economic development, and to promote recognition of, and the right of, Indians to pursue cultural and religious traditions considered by them to be sacred and meaningful. The commission includes representatives from the governor's office and the state-recognized groups and associations.

The North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs is empowered by the state to extend official state recognition to Indian groups. Thus, after its formation, the commission granted recognition in 1971 to the Coharie, the Waccamaw, the Metrolina Native American Association, the Guilford Native American Association, and the Cumberland County Association of Indian People. Prior to this date, the state extended a similar recognition to the Lumbee in 1953 and the Haliwa-Saponi in 1965. (The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians may participate in the commission if they so choose.) Until the formation of the commission in 1971, the state had reacted slowly to the needs of the Indians of North Carolina (Perdue 1985:56-57).

In 1979 the commission reported the administration of several federal programs supporting the social and economic development of the state-recognized Indian tribes and organizations. These programs covered job training, social services, literacy, and housing (Jones 1979). For example, in 1978-79, one-half of the commission's budget came from the popular CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) program that provides funds for public service jobs, short-term work experiences, classroom training, job counseling, and a variety of support services. Through federal funding, the Coharie, Waccamaw, and Haliwa-Saponi Indians began to provide day care, meals for the elderly, and other services to their communities. Literacy levels were raised through the help of VISTA community workers. The Housing Assistance program (Section 8) of HUD assisted low-income families in acquiring standard rental housing on the open market. The economic, educational, and health problems of the 1970s plagued many Indian groups on into the 1980s (Presti 1981:1-3). While some programs have continued until 1990, many people believe that solving these problems is tied to achieving federal recognition as Indian tribes.

**Recognition.** The issue of recognition excites the North Carolina Indian tribes and groups as no other in recent history because through recogni-

tion, they believe, their economic and social development goals will be realized. When the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs was established in 1971, the commissioners set guidelines for the future recognition of state Indian groups. These guidelines call for rather stiff requirements, including providing documentation in support of the petitioning group's Indian status from other Indian groups within the state with whom the petitioning group may be related, from county, state, and federal authorities, and from anthropologists and other scholars. Documented evidence of traditions and evidence of participation in grants from sources or programs designated as "for Indians only" are also acceptable. In addition, unrecognized Indian groups petitioning for state Indian status must demonstrate descent from an Indian tribe indigenous to North Carolina within the last 200 years and show that their members are one-quarter Indian blood. These rather rigorous regulations underscore the significance recognition receives within the state.

Some sentiment exists among those yet to be recognized that these regulations are unreasonably tough. At the same time, federal recognition imposes equally rigid requirements on the tribes and groups seeking it. According to the guidelines set forth by the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, recognition means acknowledgment of the Indian tribe by the secretary of interior that results in a special "government-to-government" relationship under which the acknowledged tribe may seek government services and funding reserved only for such federal tribes. At both state and federal levels, recognition provides access to special funds and programs reserved for Indian tribes and organizations to aid in their social and economic development.

### **Articulation Vs. Assimilation in Waccamaw History** ---

Indian–non-Indian interactions in the state of North Carolina are best understood as an example of what Nancy Lurie calls "articulation" in interethnic relations. Lurie (1971:419) defines the meaning of articulation as it refers to Native American communities. A minority community articulates its cultural identity each time it uses that identity in its interaction with the dominant society. It gives expression to its cultural identity as a minority. This expression prevents the minority from being totally assimilated into the dominant society.

Articulatory relations must be consciously maintained. Community members cannot allow others to define them but must assert themselves before the representatives of the dominant society. Some individuals choose the easier path of assimilation. Articulation becomes one means to

identity maintenance. Peterson (1972) discusses a similar pattern in the Mississippi Choctaw communities where assimilation, separation, and out-migration offer choices in minority-majority relations. Peterson's separation concept is closest to the concept of articulation as it is used here. The Waccamaw Siouan Indian community illustrates the complexities inherent in managing articulatory relationships with the dominant society. We begin with a brief overview of the early history of the Waccamaw.

### Probable Ancestry of the Waccamaw \_\_\_\_\_

The first person to make a serious study of the history of the Waccamaw Sioux people of Columbus and Bladen counties was a young man named James E. Alexander. Alexander became acquainted with members of the Freeman Indian family when in 1949 he moved to Whiteville, North Carolina. In exchange for his room and board, he agreed to research the origins of the Indian people of the tiny communities of Buckhead and Ricefield whose governing body called itself the Council of the Wide Awake Indians. He worked closely with the Reverend R. T. Freeman, chief spokesman for the community. (Their efforts to win federal recognition through legislative action are discussed below.)

Alexander's research (1950) led him to the conclusion that the Indians were descendants of the historic Waccamaw and Cape Fear Indians, two tribes classified with others speaking a Siouan language who once inhabited the same land.<sup>2</sup> Three kinds of evidence support this conclusion. First, there is similar territory and location. Second, there is evidence that household heads representing the prominent Indian families deeded land in this area as early as 1800.<sup>3</sup> Third, there is support for Indian ancestry in the special census category in which the household heads and their families were being placed.

The movements of the historic Cape Fear and Waccamaw Indians can be traced before the beginning of the nineteenth century when the named ancestral families of the modern Waccamaw began to register deeds to land in the area. The territory and hunting grounds of the historic Waccamaw and Cape Fear Indians extended from the coast as far inland as the Great Green Swap, the Waccamaw River, and Lake Waccamaw, bordering the communities of the modern Waccamaw. Today the land is drained, but in the past the Indians inhabited small islands of high ground where they farmed, fished, and hunted. A Spanish explorer, Gordillo, visited the Cape Fear coast in 1521 and described the first encounter with the historic Waccamaw. According to John R. Swanton (1946:203), "Guacaya" (pronounced "Waycaya" in English), a word that sounds like Waccamaw,





















