

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MIKE McINTYRE
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
7TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NORTH CAROLINA
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2003**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding federal recognition for the Lumbee Indians, and a special thanks to my North Carolina colleagues, Senator Dole and Edwards, for their work and leadership on this critical issue.

In the late 1500's, when English ships landed on the shores at Roanoke Island on the North Carolina coast, the Englishman discovered Native Americans. Included among those Native Americans were both the Cheraw and Pee Dee Indians, who are direct ancestors of the Lumbee Indians. Later, in 1888, the Lumbees made their first effort at gaining federal recognition. For at least 500 years, Lumbee Indians have been inhabitants of this land, and for over half of the time that our country has been in existence, 115 of the 227 years, the Lumbee Indians have been

seeking the recognition and respect that they deserve. As the largest tribe east of the Mississippi and the largest non-recognized tribe in America, it is unfathomable that this tribe of 55,000 people has never been fully recognized by our government. Mr. Chairman, the time for Lumbee recognition has come!

I was born and reared in Robeson County, North Carolina, the primary home of the Lumbee people. I go home there every weekend, and I have the high honor of representing approximately 40,000 Lumbees who live in my home county. In fact, there are more Lumbees in Robeson County than any other racial or ethnic group. The Lumbee Indians, many of whom are in the audience today, are my friends, many of whom I have known all my life. They are important to the success of everyday life in Southeastern North Carolina, and their contributions to our society are numerous and endless. From medicine and law to business and banking, from the farms and factories to the schools and the churches, from government, military, and community service to entertainment and athletic accomplishments, the Lumbees have

made tremendous contributions to our county, state, and nation. In fact, my sheriff, my clerk of court, my register of deeds, my county commissioners chairman, and my representative in the state legislature, as well as two of my district court judges and one of my superior court judges are all Lumbee Indians.

Mr. Chairman, those contributions are being recognized by my colleagues in the U.S. House through their support of HR 898, legislation that I have introduced to grant the Lumbees federal recognition. I am pleased to report to the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, that 225 members of the U.S. House have co-sponsored Lumbee recognition!

Lumbee contributions are also being recognized at home by both the public and private sector. From City Councils to County Commissioners, from the Chamber of Commerce to the Southeastern Regional Medical Center - all have endorsed the effort to grant the Lumbees federal recognition.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, let me urge this Committee, and this U.S. Congress, not to delay any more on this issue.

Justice delayed is justice denied! As you will hear from the next panel, the evidence is clear, cogent, and convincing. It is time to say “yes”- yes to dignity and respect; yes to fundamental fairness; yes to decency; yes to honor; yes to federal recognition! It’s time for discrimination to end and recognition to begin!

Thanks again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to working with you and the committee for this long overdue recognition. May God grant that justice finally be done! With your help, I am confident that it will!