



Trump calls on the federal government to recognize North Carolina's Lumbee Tribe

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By
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Supporters hold "Lumbees for Trump" signs as President Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally at the Robeson County Fairgrounds in Lumberton, N.C.

Chris Seward/AP

President Trump on Thursday signed a memorandum asking the Department of the Interior to move towards fully recognizing the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina as Native American. It's a move that could provide legitimacy and federal benefits to the tribe, whose identity has long been scrutinized by other Native groups.



ELECTIONS

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The Lumbee Tribe has more than 55,000 members, making it one of the largest Native groups in the United States. Located in the impoverished and diverse [Robeson County](#), Trump had pledged during his 2024 campaign to recognize the tribe and won the county with 63% of the vote.

"I love the Lumbee Tribe," Trump said to reporters before signing the order. "They were with me all the way."

The tribe has long sought recognition by the federal government to classify them as Native American, which would grant them resources like federal funds towards housing and education.

In a press release praising Trump for the order, Lumbee Tribal Chairman John Lowery said the group was "thrilled" to be moving closer to federal recognition.

"The Tribal Administration expresses deep appreciation to President Trump as he moves forward with this executive action," Lowery said. "This action is a direct follow through of the campaign promises made by the President and shows his dedication to the Lumbee people."

While the tribe has been recognized by the North Carolina government since the 1800s, they have faced pushback, especially from other Native American groups, who say that the group are not a legitimate Native people.

According to their [tribal history](#), the Lumbee people are "survivors of tribal nations from the Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Siouan language families, including the Hatteras, the Tuscarora, and the Cheraw."

Whereas other tribes remained [relatively isolated](#) from surrounding communities, the Lumbee tribe assimilated to the surrounding culture, speaking English, practicing Christianity and intermarrying with their Black and white neighbors.

But groups like the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians say that the Lumbee have no right to claim Native identity.

"We understand President Trump's desire to conduct due diligence in exploring federal recognition for the Lumbee. That instinct is correct," Principal Chief Michell Hicks said in a [statement](#).

But, he continued, "The Lumbees have a history of shifting claims, including claiming Cherokee ancestry and other historical tribes, and experts have repeatedly found that their claims cannot be verified through historical or genealogical evidence."

"Any process for evaluating the Lumbee's claims must be rooted in objective standards and a thorough, evidence-based review. Self-identification and sincere belief of Indian ancestry, while meaningful on a personal level, cannot mean tribal nationhood and sovereignty."

But the Lumbee say they will continue the fight for recognition, as they have for the last 100 years.



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