

Helen Maynor Scheirbeck

Doctor of Laws

Helen Scheirbeck, a native of Lumberton and a member of the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina, recently retired as senior advisor for museum programs and scholarly research at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. She is a nationally renowned educational leader, a champion of Indian rights and self-determination, and a highly effective advocate for Indian education from Head Start to tribal colleges. Scheirbeck began her career as a staff member of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights chaired by Senator Sam Ervin. On her recommendation, Ervin began to hold hearings on the rights of American Indians. The hearings culminated in the Indian Bill of Rights, which extended to Indians for the first time the protections of the Bill of Rights. Scheirbeck left Washington in 1966 to become assistant to the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin, where she served as a liaison to that state's Native communities. She returned to Washington in 1968 to direct the Office of Indian Education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Her leadership there secured passage of the Indian Education Act of 1975. That same year, President Ford appointed Scheirbeck to the American Indian Policy Review Commission. She chaired the commission's education task force and wrote its report, which profoundly reshaped United States policy in relation to our Indian citizens by embodying the principle of tribal self-determination. One of her most significant accomplishments was the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978. Later she helped organize the White House Conference on Children and Youth for President Carter, served as founding director of the North Carolina Indian Cultural Center in Pembroke and directed the Indian Head Start program. Scheirbeck received her bachelor of arts degree from Berea College (1959) and her doctorate in educational policy and public policy from Virginia Polytechnic and State University (1980).

For outstanding accomplishments in the fields of education, civil rights, and public service, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is pleased to confer on Helen Maynor Scheirbeck the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causi*.