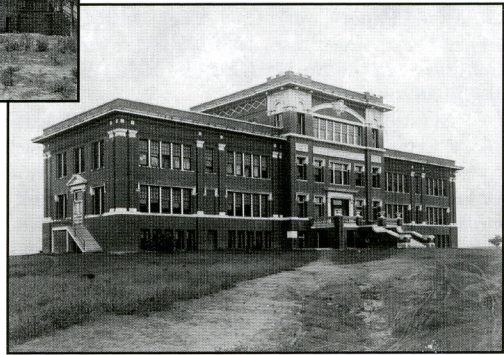
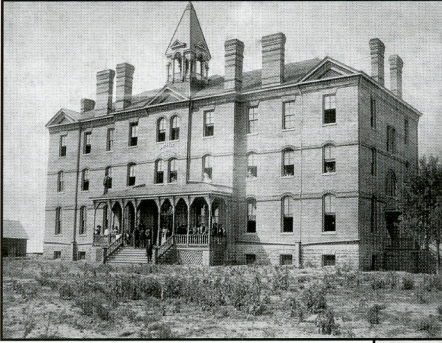


One Succeeded, One Did Not: Bacone College and the Oklahoma Presbyterian College, 1910–1980



*By Steven J. Crum**

In the first half of the twentieth century, two unique American Indian colleges existed in Oklahoma: Bacone College, formerly called Indian University, and the Oklahoma Presbyterian College (OPC). As a two-year junior college, Bacone initially served Indian students in Oklahoma but ended up enrolling native students from across the United States. The Oklahoma Presbyterian College was a women's junior college serving primarily young women from the Choctaw tribe and, to a lesser degree, the Chickasaw and Seminole tribes, also from southeastern Oklahoma. The college later admitted Indian men.¹

Although both Indians and other groups considered Bacone and OPC as Indian colleges, neither was completely operated or controlled by the tribes themselves. The Baptist denomination ran Bacone College. However, it actively involved tribal members as teachers, recruiters, and it even hired three American Indians as president from its

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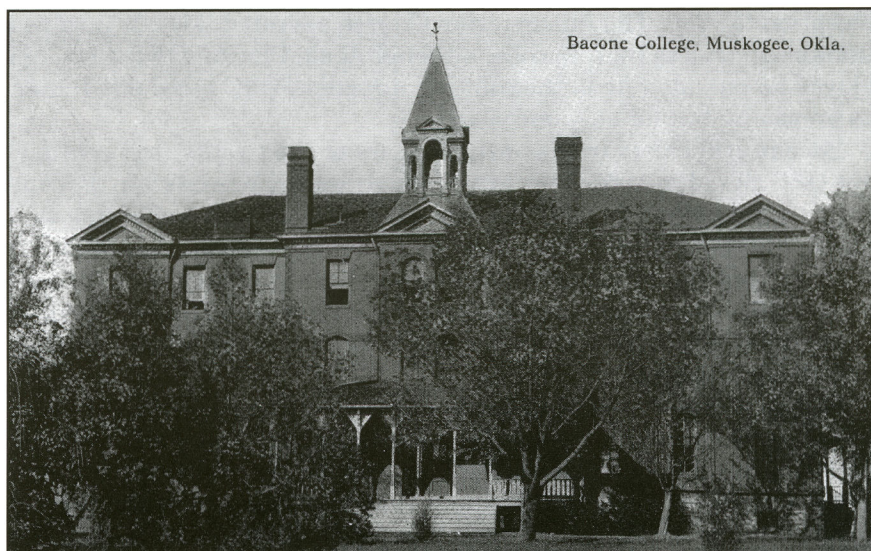
inception to 1980. The Presbyterian Church operated OPC. It involved Indians much less than Bacone, although some Choctaw tribal leaders played an outside role in the college's direction. OPC hired one Indian as president, but for only one year.²

Bacone still exists in the opening years of the twenty-first century, but OPC closed in 1966. This article identifies the reasons why Bacone survived and why the OPC did not. Institutional survival is due to a number of factors, including effective leadership, continuous financial support, and the return of alumni to serve their alma mater. In contrast, an institution can die because of a limited and reduced funding base and also because it cannot compete against other nearby postsecondary institutions.

Bacone College existed in name only as a college for several years in the early twentieth century. Known as Indian University since its founding in 1880, Bacone's earlier four-year degree granting status became a victim of the rapid changes that took place once the federal government ended Indian Territory in 1907 and replaced it with the state of Oklahoma. University instruction ceased and the administrators gave the campus a new name, Bacone College, in 1910. Bacone lost many potential students who found it convenient to attend other newly emerging colleges and universities in the region. By 1911 Bacone had only one college freshman. When he left, Bacone became an elementary and high school serving primarily natives and a few non-native students for several years. Those high school students who desired a college education were encouraged to attend Des Moines College in Iowa, Dennison University in Ohio, or Ottawa University in Kansas.³ Although not a college or university, Bacone did become one of the few Indian high schools that existed before World War I. It must be remembered that the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) did not transform its large off-reservation schools into full-scale high schools until the 1920s.⁴

However, Bacone College did survive owing to several important factors. One was stable leadership created by Dr. Benjamin D. Weeks, who served as president for twenty-three years, from 1918 to 1926 and from 1927 to 1941. This long-term leadership allowed him to implement several initiatives that made Bacone grow as an institution. Weeks and his subordinates became successful recruiters of Indian students. If Bacone's predecessor Indian University enrolled primarily tribal students from northeastern Indian Territory, then Oklahoma, up to 1910, Bacone College enrolled Indian students from all over the country. Weeks first recruited students from western Oklahoma and then went after Indian students from several far-western states. Im-

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Bacone College (19687.SC.IN.BA.1.1.B, Chester R. Cowen Collection, OHS Research Division).

mediately after World War I, Bacone had students from fifteen different tribes. By 1922 it had students from twenty-one different tribes from five states, including students from as far north as Montana. Bacone's recruitment efforts became so successful that the college limited enrollments to only Indian students beginning in 1925.⁵

Several of the high school graduates desired a higher education and pursued it at various colleges and universities. The following Baconians earned bachelor's degrees from Ottawa University in Kansas: Eunice Vail (Choctaw) in 1917; Richard Aitsan (Kiowa) in 1926; and Alice Frost (Crow) in 1928.⁶ They went to Ottawa because it was Baptist-affiliated like Bacone, and located in nearby Kansas. Bacone also continued to exist because its financial support came from several sources. Besides the continuous support from the Baptist church, it also received private donations from a few wealthy Indian donors in northeastern Oklahoma. In the early twentieth century, Indian landowners, after they were given full legal title to their land allotments, allowed oil drillers to test their land allotments for mineral wealth, and several became rich from oil deposits under their land. Some of the Creek tribal members in turn made generous donations to Bacone College because they either had children or relatives who had attended Bacone, or they remembered the original history of Indian University as a postsecondary institution for the Creeks.⁷

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Mary Stone McLendon, also known as Ataloo. Chickasaw singer and Bacone College Professor, c. 1920 (20288.73.29, Chickasaw Council House Collection, OHS Research Division).

Increased monetary donations and successful recruitment made it possible for Bacone to once again become a postsecondary institution. But instead of returning to the earlier four-year, degree-granting university, Bacone became a two-year junior college in 1927 with the addition of the freshman class followed by the sophomore class one year later. The college curriculum included regular general education courses. The students could major in two areas: religious instruction and public school teaching.⁸

Bacone's teaching program was unique because it was the only junior college in the state of Oklahoma allowed to have a teacher education program. The state permitted it because of the need for teachers to serve Indian students in public schools within the state. Students majoring in teaching could easily gain practical experience by observing or teaching in Bacone's elementary school, which continued to exist. The teaching program received an added boost in 1935 when Northeastern State Teacher's College (now Northeastern State University) located in Tahlequah, twenty-five miles to the east, sent its education majors to gain teaching experience at Bacone.⁹

Bacone College also flourished because it hired qualified Indian staff and faculty. By the late 1920s it had ten Indian faculty members, in-

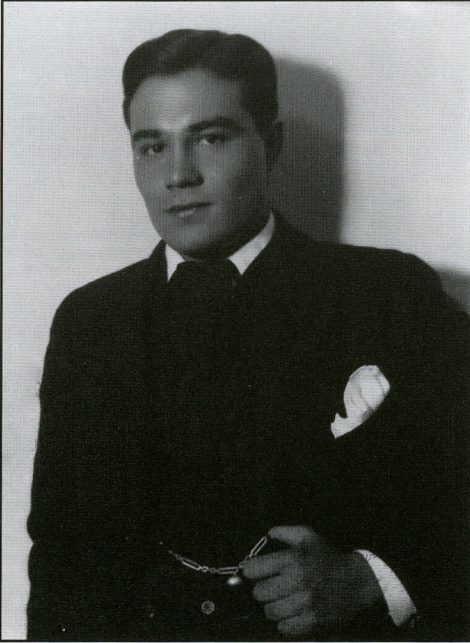
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cluding the following who were either college-educated or had college degrees: Eunice Vail (Choctaw), Alice Frost (Crow), George Walker (Creek), George Gourd (Cherokee), and Mary Stone McLendon (Chickasaw) who went by her tribal name of Ataloo.¹⁰ As noted previously, some of the Indian faculty had graduated from the Bacone high school earlier, including Vail, Frost, and Walker. They returned to their alma mater for teaching purposes. Returning to Bacone as professional instructors became a visible pattern that helped Bacone to survive as a postsecondary institution in the twentieth century.

Still another factor that helped Bacone College to survive was its acceptance of new ideas. For example, in the 1920s and 1930s increasing numbers of people, both Indian and non-Indian, had come to reject the federal government's assimilation that had been applied to American Indian people since the nineteenth century. Reformers rejected assimilation and began to push for cultural pluralism, or for Indian people to perpetuate some of their traditional practices and values, including art, tribal languages, and religions. One of the earliest advocates of pluralism was John Collier, a non-Indian reformer who founded the American Indian Defense Association in 1923. Collier and his associates promoted Indian art and favored religious freedom for all Indians.¹¹ Even the authors of the Meriam Report favored pluralism to a certain extent when it recommended the teaching of Indian subject matter in OIA schools in its famous report of 1928.¹² By the early 1930s even the OIA had come to support pluralism to a lesser degree. In 1932 the administrators of the Santa Fe Indian School allowed the teaching of Indian art, and Dorothy Dunn, a non-Indian art instructor, encouraged young Indian painters to develop a specialized style of Indian painting at the Santa Fe school.¹³ When Franklin D. Roosevelt selected John Collier as the new commissioner of the OIA in 1933, Collier logically carried out a program of cultural pluralism for Indian people. This included the teaching of Indian subject matter in various OIA schools.¹⁴

As for B. D. Weeks and his colleagues, especially Mary Ataloo Stone McLendon, they too were influenced deeply by this larger movement of cultural pluralism, despite the fact that Bacone still existed as a church-affiliated college. Beginning in 1932 Bacone, for the first time in its institutional history, introduced Indian-oriented courses. The college's new curriculum included four major areas designated as Indian. One was labeled "American Indian history." It was not a specialized Indian history course, but the inclusion of Indian history into already existing college courses. A second area was "Indian Art," which included six new art courses. A third was "Indian Legends, Music, and Drama" with two courses. The fourth area was "Indian Art and His-

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Acee Blue Eagle, a Creek artist. Photo by Maurice Seymour (21699.1, Dr. Harry Deupree Collection, OHS Research Division).

tory” with several new courses.¹⁵ Ataloo taught one of these courses entitled “Capturing and Recording Indian Culture.” The instructors taught the Indian courses in a new all-purpose facility called Ataloo Lodge, also built in 1932 and named after Mary McLendon.¹⁶

Bacone went even further by hiring a well-known Indian artist, Acee Blue Eagle (Creek-Pawnee) to teach the art courses beginning in 1935. Blue Eagle, who had attended Bacone in the late 1920s, taught for four years in the second half of the 1930s and trained a number of well-known Indian artists, including Richard West (Cheyenne), Fred Beaver (Seminole), and Solomon McCombs (Creek). The art program at Bacone became known as the “Bacone School.”¹⁷ Both Weeks and Ataloo were key persons who pushed for the art emphasis in the mid-1930s.

In 1938 Bacone introduced a new two-semester course on “American Indian History” taught by Marc J. Smith, a non-Indian who was acting dean as well as a social science instructor. This course became only the second Indian history course established in the United States at the postsecondary level. The first course was established some years earlier, in 1930, by history professor Edward Dale in the history department of the University of Oklahoma. Dale had earlier served as a member of the Meriam report team that recommended the teaching of Indian subject matter.¹⁸

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Bacone Indian University, 1907-08, full-blooded American Indian students (15208, E. N. Collette Collection, OHS Research Division).

Bacone went further by creating a new position, the chair in Indian history, to teach the above course and also to head Bacone's new Department of Indian History. These new developments were the result of a \$4,500 grant given to Bacone by the Rockefeller Foundation in New York. The college used most of the funds to pay the salary of the chair, Marc Smith, and the remainder went to purchase books on Indian history and culture. These sources are now part of Bacone's Indian Collection.¹⁹ The new chair of Indian history was the joint effort of Smith and Weeks. As early as February 1937 Smith expressed an interest in developing Indian history at Bacone. Weeks granted him release time to pursue a PhD in history at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, to help him to become more competent in the field.²⁰ Weeks also expressed his philosophical views regarding Indian history. He stressed that Indian history needed "to be written accurately and importantly from the Indian's as well as from the white man's point of view."²¹ He was critical of the writings on Indian history that emphasized a victimization perspective on one side and a romantic perspective on the other. To Weeks, Indian history needed to take a middle route between these two extremes. Even more, Indian history needed to be a part

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of the national history of the United States because "it helps to explain much of our national development."²² Also, it needed to show how Indian contributions "have affected our national culture our literature, our language, or our agricultural products."²³ By making these last points, Weeks was far ahead of his time, for ethnohistorians would not start emphasizing these approaches until the 1970s and 1980s.

Bacone College's acceptance of cultural pluralism helped to attract more Indian students in the 1930s, especially those students who wanted to pursue Indian art. In 1936 the college's student body came from forty tribes and fourteen different states. By 1939 the junior college division enrolled 97 students out of the 242 total students enrolled on campus.²⁴ Unlike other colleges that struggled to survive during the Great Depression of the 1930s, Bacone flourished in the same decade because of the various factors already discussed.

The college encouraged its graduates to pursue their education at four-year degree granting colleges and universities after leaving Bacone. Some matriculated to nearby colleges. Dorothy Lorentino (Comanche), who graduated from Bacone in 1933, pursued her four-year degree at Northeastern State Teacher's College in Tahlequah.²⁵ Several Bacone graduates pursued their four-year education at the University of Redlands in southern California. From 1936 to 1939 alone, Redlands enrolled eight former Baconians, including the following six who earned bachelor's degrees: Cleo Caudell (Choctaw) in 1937, Earl Riley (Creek) in 1937, Kelley Moore in 1938, John Rainer (Taos Pueblo) in 1938, Raymond Berdsley (Laguna Pueblo) in 1939, and Thomas St. Germaine Whitecloud (Chippewa) in 1939.²⁶ These students went to Redlands because it was Baptist-affiliated like Bacone, and Weeks encouraged them to go there. There was talk on the Redlands campus that "Bacone was a little Indian factory for Redlands."²⁷ Other Baconians continued to earn bachelor's degrees from Baptist-affiliated Ottawa University: Lewis Durant (Choctaw) in 1933, and Frank Belvin (Choctaw) in 1938.²⁸

Some of the above students who earned their bachelor's degrees from Redlands and Ottawa later became prominent Indian leaders. John Rainer became an active leader in the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) after it was founded in 1944. NCAI continues to serve as a lobbying group in Washington, DC, on behalf of Indian interests. He later earned a master's degree in education from the University of Southern California. In 1969 he founded the American Indian Scholarships, Inc., a funding organization to assist Indian students admitted into graduate and professional schools.²⁹ As for Earl Riley, after graduating from both Bacone and Redlands, he earned two more degrees, a

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bachelor's degree from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary and a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1943 he returned to Bacone to become the first Indian president of the college, a position he held until 1947.³⁰ Like other alumni, he too returned to serve his alma mater, a factor which helped Bacone to survive.

Bacone enjoyed good times in the years up to World War II, but the scene changed after the war ended in 1945. In the postwar period, the United States experienced a new political climate characterized by conservatism and conformity, and of course the federal government's termination policy for Indian people. The policy intended to end the historic "wardship" and guardianship relation with tribal people that had existed since the early nineteenth century. Policymakers and administrators no longer talked about cultural pluralism. The new postwar climate had a big impact on Bacone College in the late 1940s and into the 1950s. One visible sign of the changing times was the end of most of Bacone's Indian courses established in the 1930s. When Marc Smith left Bacone in 1945 for a new job at Redlands University, the chair in Indian history disappeared as well as the Indian history course. The only courses that continued to emphasize Indianness were those in art. The art classes remained because Bacone hired Richard West (Cheyenne), who headed the art department from 1947 to 1970. West had graduated from Bacone in 1938 and had earned a master's of fine arts degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1941.³¹ Here was another former student returning as a college instructor.

Because of financial difficulty in the immediate postwar years, the administrators of Bacone chose to downsize the campus. The elementary school division ended in the late 1940s followed by the high school in the late 1950s. Only college-level instruction remained at Bacone. To help the college survive and grow, the board of trustees made some big changes in the early 1950s. It decided to make the college interdenominational instead of being solely affiliated with the Baptist Church. It also decided to focus more on the geographic region of the southern Great Plains. Most significantly, it decided to encourage white students to attend Bacone. Beginning in 1950, the college allowed 10 percent of the student population to be non-Indian. As time progressed in the 1950s, it allowed even more whites to attend. By the academic year 1954-55, Bacone had the following racial breakdown: eight of the sixty-nine freshmen were white and nine of the fifty-seven sophomores were white. Altogether, Bacone's white student population stood at 13.5 percent in the mid-1950s.³² Interestingly, Bacone had integrated itself even before the well-known Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* in 1954. The board's decision to integrate was

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Bacone College Chapel, January 17 1944 (23359.27 Friends of the Archives Collection, OHS Research Division).

partly the result of the postwar political climate to integrate society and also to encourage American Indians individually to be part of the larger dominant society. It was also influenced by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) termination policy of the 1950s that sought to assimilate and integrate Indians into society by inducing and encouraging them to relocate to urban areas. Indirectly, Bacone was influenced by these larger societal trends even though the campus has never been part of the OIA.

The decision to integrate changed the complexion of Bacone College, for up to the early 1950s it remained almost 100 percent Indian, except for a few white students who were the children of college employees. John Rainer, who recalled his days as a student at Bacone in the mid-1930s, specified that Bacone was “almost an all Indian college” except for five or six white students.³³ Indianism became less evident. The campus had only one native faculty member by the late 1940s and early 1950s: Richard West, who taught art and served as an advisor to the Indian club on campus. As mentioned earlier, Bacone had several Indian faculty before the war, but those courses faded away except for Indian art.³⁴ Like other academic institutions of the postwar period, Bacone also emphasized patriotism for its students in the nature of mainstream subject matter

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Oklahoma Presbyterian College for Girls, Durant, Oklahoma. Taken between 1912 and 1953 (MRL 10: G.E.E. Lindquist Papers, 55, 1160, Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries at Union Theological Seminary, New York).

The integration of Bacone had a lasting impact on the college. From 1970 to 1978, its enrollment was 47 percent American Indian, 33 percent white, 11 percent African American, and 9 percent foreign and other. Regardless of the changes, both Indians and non-Indians continued to regard Bacone as an Indian college, and native students continued to come to the college from different parts of the nation. From 1955 to 1978, 523 tribal students came to Bacone from Arizona, 292 from New Mexico, and 1,968 from Oklahoma itself. With a diverse population the college grew, averaging 540 students per academic year from 1971 to 1978.³⁵

There was talk over the years to make Bacone into a four-year institution. As far back as the late 1930s, some individuals favored a four-year college, but the Bacone administrators opposed it because they believed “that contact, acquaintance, and competition with white students is an essential part of the Indians’ training. Further segregation would hinder his best developments.”³⁶ Years later Dr. Gerold Holstine, who served as president from 1967 to 1973, also suggested

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that Bacone might become a four-year college.³⁷ Again, no change resulted.

More recently, in September 1979 Dr. Dean Chavers, college president and a member of the Lumbee tribe, wrote a lengthy report entitled *The Feasibility of an Indian University at Bacone College*. Chavers suggested the establishment of a four-year degree granting university that would prepare Indian students for leadership positions and would offer both mainstream and Indian-oriented courses. Besides the traditional university curriculum, the university would also offer short-term programs to benefit the Indian population of Oklahoma. Interestingly, Chavers argued both for and against transforming Bacone into a four-year university. Points in favor of the change included Bacone's long track record of being a postsecondary institution, the "great need for college-educated Indians," and the fact that the campus was already located in "Indian country," or in northeastern Oklahoma with one of the largest American Indian populations in the nation. Arguments against the change included competition that might arise from the already existing tribal colleges established in different far western states, the fact that Bacone had only a few native faculty, and that Oklahoma already had "too many [mainstream] colleges." Chaver's proposal, however, went nowhere because of internal opposition.³⁸ Comfortable with Bacone remaining a small liberal arts college, many faculty could not accept marked changes that would come about with the creation of a new university.

Although this discussion of Bacone ends with the year 1980, the year Bacone celebrated its one hundredth anniversary, some big changes have surfaced in more recent times. The college once again reintroduced American Indian courses. This development was the result of Native Studies courses and programs becoming popular in many colleges and universities in the last three decades of the twentieth century. More importantly, in 2005 Bacone officially became an accredited four-year university. The campus had given up this status some ninety-five years earlier.³⁹

Unlike Bacone College, the Oklahoma Presbyterian College for Girls did not survive the twentieth century. OPC came into existence in 1910 as the higher education outgrowth of the Calvin Institute, which was a small lower-level Presbyterian school established in the Choctaw Nation of Indian Territory in 1894. Calvin was an elementary and secondary school that sought to Christianize primarily the Choctaw people since it was located in the town of Durant in Choctaw country. Both Calvin and the OPC received continuous financial support from the Home Missions department of the Presbyterian Church of

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the United States. The Indian students also received financial support from the OIA since it regarded OPC as an authorized contract school, and because OPC favored the transformation of Indians.⁴⁰ Here was an unofficial case of church and state working together

For much of its twentieth-century existence, OPC was a college for Indian women. One scholar reported that "more than half" of the students "were of Indian blood."

Both Indians and non-Indians also regarded it as an Indian college even though the college also enrolled white students of the region. The Indian women at the college were primarily Choctaw, followed by the Chickasaw, and to a smaller degree Seminole and Cherokee. Very few if any Creek students enrolled because they attended schools and colleges further north, including Bacone and Northeastern State University⁴¹

In its earliest years of existence, OPC appeared to have a strong foothold as a postsecondary institution. From 1910 to 1916 it awarded bachelor's degrees to its four-year graduates. But the administrators reduced the curriculum to a three-year program from 1916 to 1920. Finally, from 1920 to 1935 the college stabilized itself as a two-year junior college. Undoubtedly the college reduced its levels of education because of the college's small size and the fact that very few students earned degrees in the early twentieth century⁴²

There were several major factors that led to OPC's slow decline. The college could not compete against Southeastern State Teacher's College (SETC), also located in Durant, Oklahoma. Unlike OPC, which was a private, church-run college with limited resources, SETC was a state-run teacher's college operated by the state of Oklahoma with greater assets. To ensure its survival, OPC made a big decision to cooperate with SETC. Beginning in 1922 OPC allowed its students to enroll concurrently in both OPC and SETC. Many Indian women took advantage of this cooperative arrangement because it allowed them not only to board at OPC and take courses in religion and other academic areas, but also to commute to nearby SETC to work toward bachelor's degrees in teaching. While staying at OPC, they received financial support from the OIA in the form of tuition payments because, as previously noted, the OIA viewed OPC as a contract school. Had the women gone strictly to SETC and had no connection to OPC, they would not have received government support in the 1920s.

In 1923 OPC allowed SETC students to take art and music courses on its campus, and SETC in turn provided studio rooms for OPC students. Although this cooperative relationship appeared to be a good thing, it benefited SETC much more than OPC, for one institution

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continued to grow whereas the other gradually became weaker⁴³ In contrast, Bacone did not face local competition because there were no other long-lasting postsecondary institutions in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

The relationship between OPC and SETC, however, allowed at least twenty-one Indian women to earn four-year degrees from SETC between the years 1918 and 1932. Among the women were Rila Folsom, Cepha Intolubbe, Agnes Maytubby, Bertha Bohannon, Eloise McCurtain, Sally LeFlore, and Lucy Folsom, all from the Choctaw tribe. Several of the college graduates went on to teach in various OIA schools, including Chilocco and Sequoyah in Oklahoma, and even the Cut Bank school on the Blackfeet reservation in northern Montana. Although many of the OPC graduates went to nearby SETC, some chose other postsecondary institutions in Oklahoma. One individual was Bessie Johns who graduated from OPC in 1919, earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1921, served as a teacher at Chilocco for one year, taught English at OPC from 1922 to 1925, worked at the Goodland Indian Orphanage in Hugo, Oklahoma, from 1943 to 1945, and then served as OPC college president for one year (1945) under her married name of Mrs. Jewell L. Hardy⁴⁴

Waiting for church services, Goodland Indian Orphanage, c. 1920s (19248, Goodland Indian Orphanage Collection, OHS Research Division).



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*Jewell L. Hardy (22159.4,
Jewell L. Hardy Collection,
OHS Research Division).*



In its years as a degree-granting college, OPC always had a small enrollment. Excluding the high school division, it had forty-two Indian college students in 1912, fifty-eight in 1915, fifty-two in 1920, forty-seven in 1926, and fifty-one in 1932. As previously mentioned, the majority of students were Choctaw followed by the Chickasaw in the years up to the early 1930s. In the 1930s the college recruited more Seminole students. Besides the Indian women, the college had always enrolled white women. During some years, the whites even outnumbered the Indians. For example, in 1931 there were seventy-five Indian women to eighty-five whites. Regardless of the college being integrated, the general public continued to view OPC as an Indian college.⁴⁵

Although the Presbyterian Church ran OPC, the Choctaw Nation became more active in the affairs of the college as the years passed. In 1932 Ben Dwight, principal chief of the Choctaw tribal government, determined that those Choctaw students who came from “broken homes” and those with a “greater degree of Indian blood” would be given first preference to attend OPC.⁴⁶ In short, he wanted less fortunate Choctaws to receive the opportunity to pursue a higher education. There were at least two reasons why Dwight took a deep interest in the affairs of OPC. He was a college graduate, having earned more than one degree, including a master’s degree from Columbia University in 1912 and a law degree from Stanford University in 1915.⁴⁷ Moreover,

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Ben Dwight, chief of Choctaws, 1929-1937 photo by Mitchell Byfield (7228, Mrs. Mary Jane King Collection, OHS Research Division).

his interest in higher education supported the Choctaw Nation's nineteenth-century policy of encouraging a college or university education for Choctaws. Going back to the 1840s, the Choctaw government had subsidized the higher education of its students in accordance with the Dancing Rabbit Creek Treaty of 1830. Although the Choctaw leaders initially supported young men, they eventually subsidized the higher education of Choctaw women throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Half of the tribal scholarships granted in the 1880s and 1890s were awarded to women.⁴⁸ Some Choctaw leaders in 1891 argued that Choctaws did this because "it is more important to educate girls than boys, because mothers have the larger influence in training and educating children."⁴⁹ It is difficult to determine if all Choctaws agreed with this statement. Certainly, Ben Dwight supported Choctaw women's higher education at OPC in the 1930s and 1940s during his leadership.

By the early 1930s OPC had four distinct programs: the Choctaw (for high school students), the Seminole (high school), the two-year junior college, and the boarding school program. The junior college program offered a varied curriculum, including business or office training, fine arts, home economics, and music, to name only a few of its programs. The program enabled students to transfer to four-year colleges and

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universities after two years of study. The boarding school program, of course, allowed students to stay at OPC while taking classes at SETC. This program became the most popular among the students and largely explains why OPC ended its junior college program in 1935.⁶⁰ It no longer offered degrees but continued to be called the Oklahoma Presbyterian College.

In the years after the mid-1930s many Indian women took advantage of the boarding program, and at least fourteen Choctaw students earned degrees from SETC while staying at OPC in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The college graduates included Ernestine Townsend (1937), Rena Dosh (1939), Geraldine Pebworth (1940), Mildred Wade (1941), Lois Taylor (1942), Pearl O'Bannon (1944), and Pauline Bohanan (1946), all Choctaw women. Some of them financed their education with OIA educational loans.⁵¹ The educational loan fund came into existence in 1931 after Congress appropriated \$15,000 annually to the OIA for this purpose.

In 1942 OPC received a serious blow when the OIA eliminated the annual funding it had issued to the college since its earliest days of existence. The OIA's action was the result of Congress cutting back substantially on domestic programs after the United States became involved in World War II. The federal government channeled much of its resources to the war effort and reduced expenditures for domestic agencies, including the OIA. The OIA in turn had to reduce or eliminate its funding for programs that had been funded for years.⁵² OPC therefore lost a large part of its funding. Both Indians and non-Indians of southeastern Oklahoma pressured the OIA to restore the funding. Ben Dwight stressed that the college was "a necessary and worthwhile up-to-date phase of education among the Choctaws," and he asked the OIA, "Will you approve an appropriation bill for that purpose?"⁵³ Floyd Maytubby, chief of the Chickasaw Nation, also asked that the funding be restored since Chickasaw students also attended OPC.⁵⁴ Edith Hodgson, the non-Indian principal administrator at OPC, voiced her concern in early 1943: "Without Oklahoma Presbyterian College and the Indian Contract few of these girls could have received a college education. We know that you are well aware of the need for this school and of the fact that O.P.C. does need the appropriation in order to continue to render its important service to Indian girls."⁵⁵ Even W. B. Morrison, president of SETC, asked for restoration when he spoke on the issue: "It has for some years chosen outstanding Indian girls, who have shown educational promise sufficient to carry them through High School, and has made it possible for them to secure a college education. This is made possible because of the close cooperation of O. P. Col-

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lege with Southeastern State College.”⁵⁶ But the OIA did not restore the contract with OPC, using the argument that the OIA would no longer provide special support for a specific college. Instead, if Indian students wanted financial support for a college education, they could apply for OIA educational loans and go to the college of their choice.⁵⁷ The loss of OIA funding became the second big factor that led to the slow decline of OPC.

OPC did not close down, however. Instead its administrators looked for ways to keep the campus alive. One big change took place in 1951 when the institution opened its doors to male students, especially Indian men. This change enabled Indian men to stay at OPC, take Bible study and other classes, and also work toward bachelor’s degrees at SETC. In the 1950s and early 1960s at least two Choctaw men earned degrees from SETC while living at OPC, Jacob Bohannan in 1957 and Howard Bohanon in 1960. OPC also opened its doors to a more diverse student body. This change became evident by 1949–50 when the campus had a total of seventy-nine students, of which thirty-two were Indian, twenty-six white, twenty Mexicans, and one Chinese. Several years later, in 1961–62, the campus had fifty-five students, of which twenty-two were Indian, seventeen white, four Mexican, five Texas Mexicans, four Chinese, and a few other students from outside the United States. The OPC had become an international community in the 1950s and early 1960s because of the effort to recruit a more diverse student population.⁵⁸

The final blow to OPC happened in early 1966 when the Presbyterian Church withdrew its financial support from the college. As already mentioned, this support had been continuous from 1894 when Presbyterian missionaries established Calvin Institute. OPC, when it was named in 1910, continued to receive church support. Over the years the Presbyterian Church’s contribution to the college amounted to \$20,000 per year and represented roughly 30 percent of the college’s revenue by the early 1960s. Unable to secure new sources of funding, the board of trustees of OPC made the decision to shut down the college forever in June 1966.⁵⁹

Even before OPC closed its doors in 1966, the college administrators had accepted the fact that OPC was no longer a college but only a boarding place for Indian students attending nearby SETC. In 1964, two years before its closure, they changed the name from Oklahoma Presbyterian College to the Oklahoma Presbyterian Center.⁶⁰ It was the center that was shut down in 1966. Before its closure, several Indian students depended upon OPC as an Indian dormitory. The following Southeastern State Indian students lived there: Charlene Amos, Lola

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Elliott, Joe Christie, Arline Wilson, and Grayson Noley Noley, who was Choctaw, lived at OPC in 1965–66, its last year of existence. He noted this experience: “I did live in a dormitory one year down there [in Durant] It was kind of an Indian dorm it was almost all Indian out there [at OPC]”⁶¹ Upon closing in 1966, the land of OPC reverted back to the Choctaw Nation since the Choctaws had donated the land to Calvin Institute in 1894. Today the main building of OPC still exists in Durant, Oklahoma, but it now serves as the official headquarters of the Choctaw Nation.⁶²

Ironically, if OPC experienced a slow decline over a period of years up to 1966, the nearby Southeastern State, which became a regional university in the 1960s, experienced massive growth. By the late 1960s and early 1970s it had one of the largest Indian student enrollments in the nation.⁶³ By this time hardly anyone remembered the former OPC, except for those persons who stayed on the OPC campus and knew the history of southeastern Oklahoma.

In conclusion, two unique Indian colleges existed in Oklahoma in the first half of the twentieth century. However, neither were controlled by American Indians. Bacone remained alive because of effective leadership, successful recruiting, the acceptance of new ideas, and the hiring of alumni. But OPC closed due to the loss of its major funding sources and because it was overshadowed by a nearby, growing, state-run college. Of the two colleges, Bacone had the biggest impact on the larger American Indian world, as some of its graduates became noted artists and administrators.

Endnotes

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¹ Ann Ruth Semple, “The Origins and Development of Oklahoma Presbyterian College” (EdD diss., Oklahoma State University, 1955); John Williams and Howard L. Meredith, *Bacone Indian University: A History* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Heritage Association/Western Heritage Books, 1980).

² Semple, “The Origins and Development of Oklahoma Presbyterian College”. Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*.

³ John Williams and Howard L. Meredith, *Bacone Indian University: A History* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Heritage Association/Western Heritage Books, 1980), 45, 48; Coeryne Bode, “The Origins and Development of Bacone College” (MA thesis, University of Tulsa, 1955), 80-81.

⁴ Loretta Mary Granzer, “Indian Education at Haskell Institute, 1884-1917” (MA thesis, University of Nebraska, 1937), 165; Charles A. O’Brien, “The Evolution of Haskell Indian Junior College, 1884-1974” (MLS thesis, University of Oklahoma), 38-39. The Office of Indian Affairs was renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) following World War II.

⁵ Bode, “The Origins and Development of Bacone College,” 57–62; Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 56–57

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⁶ Ottawa University, *The Ottawan*, 1917 30, Ottawa University Library, Ottawa, KS; Ottawa University, *The Ottawan*, 1926, 28, Ottawa University Library, Ottawa, KS; Ottawa University, *The Ottawan*, 1928, 29, Ottawa University Library, Ottawa, KS.

⁷ Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 57–59.

⁸ Bode, “The Origins and Development of Bacone College,” 82–83; Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 64.

⁹ Bode, “The Origins and Development of Bacone College,” 83.

¹⁰ Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 61, 65.

¹¹ Kenneth R. Philp, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977), 26–91, Lawrence C. Kelly, *The Assault on Assimilation. John Collier and the Origins of Indian Policy Reform* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

¹² Sally Hyer, *One House, One Voice, One Heart: Native American Education at the Santa Fe Indian School* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1990), 31, *The Problem of Indian Administration* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1928), 372.

¹³ Winona Garmhausen, *History of Indian Arts Education in Santa Fe: The Institute of American Indian Arts with Historical Background* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1988), 47

¹⁴ Philp, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform*, 135-45.

¹⁵ *Bacone College Bulletin, Annual Catalogue, 1932–1933*, 33, 35-36, Bacone College Records, American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester, NY (hereafter cited as Bacone College Records); Lisa Kay Newman, “Selling Indian Education: Fundraising and American Indian Identities at Bacone College, 1880–1941,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 31 (2007): 51-78; Lisa Kay Newman, “Painting: Art and Ethnography at a School for Native Americans,” *Ethnography* 45 (2006): 172-92.

¹⁶ Lisa Kay Newman, “Recapturing Culture: American Indian Identities at Bacone College, 1927-1955” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2002), 6–7 218, 225.

¹⁷ Howard L. Meredith, “The Bacone School of Art,” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 58, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 92; Bode, “The Origins and Development of Bacone College,” 99; Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 75, 78.

¹⁸ M. J. Smith to E. E. Dale, November 1, 1938, E. E. Dale Papers, box 63, folder 10, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK (hereafter cited as WHC, OU); *Bacone College Bulletin, 1938–40*, 40, Bacone College Records; “History 391. The American Indian,” E. E. Dale Papers, folder 22, box 175, WHC, OU

¹⁹ M. J. Smith to J. D. Hicks, May 17 1939, File 2596, University Archives, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, B. D. Weeks to Charles Detweiler, April 17 1940, American Baptist Historical Society Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, PA, W. W. Brierley to Charles Detweiler, May 26, 1938, folder 4160, box 396, Rockefeller Archives Center, New York, NY

²⁰ “Dean will attend Wisconsin University,” *Bacone Indian* (Muskogee, OK), May 26, 1937 2.

²¹ B. D. Weeks to Leo M. Favrot, April 20, 1938, folder 4160, box 396, Rockefeller Archives, New York, NY

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Bode, “The Origins and Development of Bacone College,” 98.

²⁵ “National Teachers Hall of Fame,” *Indian Country Today* (Canastota, NY), June 30–July 7 1997 A1.

²⁶ Alumni records, University of Redlands, Redlands, California.

²⁷ John Rainer (Taos Pueblo), interview by the author, November 3, 1998, Taos, New Mexico.

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²⁸ Ottawa University, *The Ottawan*, 1933, 32, Ottawa University Library, Ottawa, KS; Ottawa University, *The Ottawan*, 1938, 24, Ottawa University Library, Ottawa, KS.

²⁹ John Rainer interview

³⁰ "Pres. Riley to speak at Baccalaureate," *Indian Leader* (Haskell, OK), May 10, 1946, 1, Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 101, Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 87

³¹ Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 105; Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 92.

³² Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 109, 111.

³³ John Rainer interview

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Dean Chavers, *The Feasibility of an Indian University at Bacone College* (Muskogee, OK. Bacone College, 1979), 17-22.

³⁶ W W Dolan, "Junior College for Indians," *Junior College Journal* 9 (November 1938): 64.

³⁷ Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 115.

³⁸ Chavers, *The Feasibility of an Indian University at Bacone College*, 1-5, 120-24.

³⁹ "Bacone Makes Some Moves," *Native American Times* (Tahlequah, OK), May 19, 2006, 10.

⁴⁰ Ann Ruth Semple, "The Origins and Development of Oklahoma Presbyterian College" (EdD diss., Oklahoma State University, 1955), iv, 27-38.

⁴¹ Semple, "The Origins and Development of Oklahoma Presbyterian College," 53.

⁴² Ibid., 66; E. B. Meritt to R. M. McCool, January 19, 1924, Central Classified Files (CCF), 87134-19-Five Tribes-803, RG 75, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as NARA).

⁴³ Semple, "The Origins and Development of Oklahoma Presbyterian College," 48-51, Herbert C. Calhoun to Commissioner of Indian Affairs (CIA), June 26, 1929, CCF 87134-19-Five Tribes-803, RG 75, NARA.

⁴⁴ Semple, "The Origins and Development of Oklahoma Presbyterian College," 106, 143.

⁴⁵ Letter to Charles Rhoads, July 16, 1931, CCF 29201-27-Five Tribes-803, Pt. 1, RG 75, NARA.

⁴⁶ George C. Wells to CIA, April 30, 1932; Ben Dwight to CIA, May 25, 1932, CCF 29201-27-Five Tribes-803, Pt. 1, RG 75, NARA.

⁴⁷ "Ben Dwight," *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City, OK), July 21, 1953, 7. "Dwight again heads Indians," *Daily Oklahoman*, June 9, 1934, 4; Marion E. Gridley, ed., *Indians of Today* (Chicago: Indian Council Fire, 1936), 46.

⁴⁸ J. B. Jackson (chair of Committee on Schools) to General Council, November 11, 1881, Choctaw Nation Papers, box XIII, folder 40, WHC, OU; Appropriation for Scholars at Schools in the States, November 6, 1888, Choctaw Nation Papers, folder 54, box XX, WHC, OU.

⁴⁹ Quoted in *Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners, 1891* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1892), 109.

⁵⁰ George Wells to CIA, December 23, 1932, CCF 29201-27-Five Tribes-803, Pt. 1, RG 75, NA I, Semple, "The Origins and Development of Oklahoma Presbyterian College," 66., NARA.

⁵¹ Registrar records of graduates, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Durant, Oklahoma; "A complete record of all reimbursable educational loans granted the Five Civilized Tribes during the years 1931-1946," CCF 18480-55-Muskogee-850, RG 75, NA I, Student records, Oklahoma Presbyterian College, box 1, Department of History, Presbyterian Church, Montreat, NC.

⁵² "Making Appropriation" *United States Statutes at Large* 57 part 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944), 459; "Making Appropriation" *United*

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⁵³ Ben Dwight to John Collier, August 10, 1942, CCF 29201-27-Five Tribes-803, Pt. II, RG 75, NARA.

⁵⁴ C. R. Sands to Floyd E. Maytubby, March 30, 1943, CCF 29201-27-Five Tribes-803, Pt. II, RG 75, NARA.

⁵⁵ Edith F. Hodgson to Dr. William B. Morrison, February 17 1943, SEN 83A-F9, RG 46, NARA.

⁵⁶ W. B. Morrison to Elmer Thomas, February 17 1943, SEN 83A-F9, RG 46, NA I. NARA.

⁵⁷ House Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Interior Department Appropriation Bill for 1944*, 78th Cong., 1st sess., Pt. II, 230; House Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Interior Department Appropriation Bill for 1945*, 78th Cong., 2nd sess., pt. II, 148.

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⁶¹ Grayson Noley, interview by the author, September 15, 1998, Norman, OK.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ House Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1972*, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., pt. 1, 1152.