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THE BROAD DAYLIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE:

SEMINOLE EDUCATION 1843-1930

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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I wrote this dissertation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Future historians will write of the inequity and the ways in which our response to this pandemic resulted in the loss of bright, brilliant lives. My tribal Nation, the Seminole Nation, has lost many wonderful people to this pandemic as well. A collective grief has been shared by many and it was so difficult to write during this time. Elders that have shared knowledge and language with me have passed away this year. Our elders are our libraries, our archives of knowledge and the loss of them is felt very deeply. I want to acknowledge those who have taken time to share their knowledge with me, and I will continue to do my best to share it with those that come after me.

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing archival methods, the goal of this project is to describe how the Seminole Nation asserted sovereignty through their educational institutions. A critical component to this study involves the translation of a selection of historical Maskoke texts and curriculum. Local histories, politics and geographies challenge settler colonization narratives about the formation of early schools in Indian Territory. Within this area, Tribally controlled schools shape our understanding of the history of American Indian Education as the struggle for school control was representative of a larger movement to assert Tribal sovereignty. This project advances our understanding of the Seminole Nation's educational institutions in the following ways. First, it reveals the autonomy that the Seminole Nation exercised over their schools during a tenuous time period. Second, my research strengthens our understandings of the ways in which the early formation of territorial schools was wrapped within a larger project of settler colonization meant to divest Tribal Nations of their sovereignty, land and property. Finally, this project contextualizes educational access for Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen students during Reconstruction through State Formation and ensuing Jim Crow legislation.

Introduction

I graduated from Konawa High School, a rural community located three miles east of my grandma's home on our allotment lands. The community's name is a Seminole word, which translates to a string of beads, and it reminds me of the beads that my grandma wore often. She used to keep her brooches and necklaces in an old blue suitcase and she would show me the beads that had belonged to her mom while we were tidying up her closet. Seminole women are known for our intricate beads that are often strung in bright colors around our necks. Historically, they served as important trade items. The community's name is tied to my identity as a Seminole woman.

My high school is located within the Seminole Nation, and a large percentage of students are Seminole children. In high school, I had a Native teacher, Coach Fleming, who taught an Indian History class each year to a room full of Native students. His class was the first class in which we learned about the Tribal Nations in Oklahoma. Coach Fleming challenged us, he made us dig deep in our class discussions. It was the first time in my schooling experience that I had encountered a historical course in which our people were finally represented. Konawa High School was doing something right. However, my experience was vastly different than the generations before me.

My uncle, Puwv, remembers attending Konawa when he was really young before he was removed to Jones Academy with many other Native students. Puwv is our storyteller, our family historian. He remembers names, faces, places and events as if they occurred yesterday. Now 84 years old, his memory and mind are

still sharp. He shared that his grandma, Lucy, had attended Emahaka School, one of the Seminole Nation's tribal schools for girls. He didn't know how old she was or how long she went, but she went for a short time. Puwv said that the bell to Emahaka School was given to the Middle Creek #2 Church, located right down the road and is still in use today. Emahaka's bell still rings for our people.

It wasn't until almost twenty years later, when my much younger uncle and mom came along that they were able to stay home and attend Konawa High School all the way through until their graduation. When I first began to think about what I wanted to research for my dissertation, I thought about my family's experiences with education. I knew that my great-grandma had attended Emahaka School and my grandma had attended Mekusukey Mission shortly before it closed permanently. Our experiences with schooling in my community was so vastly different and I knew that I needed to write about the Seminole Nation's educational history.

Utilizing archival methods, the goal of this project is to describe how the Seminole Nation asserted sovereignty through their educational institutions. In addition to archival documents, I draw upon family and tribal history that challenge the settler colonization narratives about the shape and formation of local geographies, histories and schools within Indian Territory. I assert that the Seminole Nation's early school development and the struggle for school control was representative of a larger movement to assert sovereignty and to ensure the well-being of the Seminole people. Throughout our history, Seminole people have steadfastly engaged in the refusal process of handing over control of their most

precious resource—their children.[1] This project advances our understanding of the Seminole Nation's educational institutions in the following ways. First, it reveals the autonomy that the Seminole Nation exercised over their schools during a tenuous time period. Second, my research strengthens our understandings of the ways in which the early formation of territorial schools was wrapped within a larger project of settler colonization meant to divest Tribal Nations of their sovereignty, land and property. Finally, this project contextualizes the history of and the educational access for Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen students during Reconstruction through State Formation and ensuing Jim Crow legislation.

After completing my graduate studies in education and serving for a couple of years as an elementary teacher on Tribal reservations in Arizona and Florida, it was time to return home. I refer to home as my grandma's house, located at the southernmost portion of our Tribal reservation, near the South Canadian river and three miles east of Konawa. The river and the woods on our family's allotted land are an essential part of my family's history. The land provided ample rabbits and squirrels for our uncles' hunts, and the water provided them with fish for many shared family meals. My great-grandparents raised hogs and chickens there. All of my aunts and uncles, except for the two youngest, were born in the family smokehouse.

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1. Audra Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016): 326-33.

My mama likes to tell stories of bumpy wagon rides to town when she was a child. By the time I came along, things had changed in some ways, but some things stayed remarkably the same. While my mom worked, we spent our days with Grandma. Some of my earliest memories are helping her plant seeds in the ground for her field of watermelon, cantaloupe and snap green beans. She'd patiently cup her hands around mine as she demonstrated how to pat the small raised mounds of dirt around the seeds we had buried. As I got better at it, she'd let me do it on my own and I'd look to her for approval before I proceeded down the line. Although my grandma didn't speak English, and I wasn't fluent in our tribal language, we had our own ways of communicating, and Grandma's bond with her grandchildren was great.

The woods near her home hold some of my greatest childhood memories. I know those woods like the back of my hand. The large, flat gray rocks made the perfect floor for our imaginary house. When the bright green moss would cover the rock, it made the perfect shag carpet. We'd lay on the "carpet" with our hands behind our heads and stare at the golden streams of sunlight that would glimmer through the shady tree cover. My cousins and I had our own rooms, and we'd often repurpose old TVs that were tossed, and lug radios up the hill to plug into the trees to fix up our "rooms." We'd go on hikes down towards the river, or to the creek near our uncle Alec's house. On the rocks near the creek, someone long ago had hung up ladles for use and we'd take turns swigging ice cold water straight from the creek that Pretty Boy Floyd drank from. Across the road from the creek was one of his hide outs and my uncle tells us that he would buy food

from my great grandparents, always treating them respectfully. As children, we were explorers, spending long summery days rotating between many play areas, learning the contours of the land, always within earshot of Grandma calling for us. Our family allotment is 120 acres, and we had access to all of it, as our land is communally shared by my Grandma's brothers and sisters.

After spending a decade away, I returned home to my Grandma's house. I had lost her a few years before and every time I walked through her front door, my eyes would automatically seek her out at her kitchen table where she'd listen to the news in our language on our Tribal radio show. I moved into her house, with its familiar sounds. Some mornings, in the moments right before I'd awaken, I'd dream of hearing her arranging her pots and pans on the stove as she'd prepare breakfast. At times, I'd catch the faint scent of her perfume.

During that time, I was pleased to be working in service to my Tribal Nation. One warm, late summer day in 2008, I left my grandma's house with a fresh cup of coffee. Outside on the gravel road, sat my trusty 'Ole Blue, my Honda that had seen me through Arizona, Florida and now Oklahoma. As I navigated through the meandering, sharp curvy roads towards Sasakwa, I searched for the pond with water vapors rising from it. It was one of the sights that I treasured each morning. There it was, near the sign pointing the way towards Bird Creek Baptist church. As I drove through Sasakwa, I passed the Tribal community building and Sasakwa school. The high school's Palmer Morris Football Field, is named after Mrs. Joanna Palmer Morris, a tribal elder who graciously donated the land for the field. As I drove out of town, I saw the turn off

for Rock Lake, a favorite swimming hole for locals before it closed down to public.

I passed dilapidated old buildings near New Model, where Grandma grew up. Before I rounded Chili Fish Corner, I looked for the road that led that an old tribal graveyard located there. The graveyard is unmarked, but Grandma and Mama told us about these sites because it is important that we remember. As I neared the Five Mile Corner store my eyes automatically scanned the pasture on the right. There it was. The old crumbling familiar chimney stack, oddly situated in a cattle pasture. I knew what it was. My uncle had told me that it was where the old Emahaka School was located and that the chimney was all that remained. I traveled that highway five days a week, twice a day, and found myself seeking out that chimney each time I drove near Five Mile Corner. I was drawn to it.

As I reacquainted myself in the Wewoka community, I visited the Seminole Nation Museum. I was excited to find a permanent exhibit on Emahaka School. Silver tea sets with the name Emahaka blazoned across the front sat behind polished glass panes. As I wandered down the row of glass enclosed artifacts, I marveled at the pictures and carefully inked stationary with Emahaka School lining the top. Maybe it was due to my background as an educator, or my family history with the school, but I knew I wanted to know more about this Tribal school for girls. That same afternoon, when I returned to my office, I started researching Emahaka School. I found the court case in which Alice Brown Davis, the first appointed woman that served as Chief, testified that she refused to sign off on the sale of the Emahaka School Tract. She mentioned the oil reserves

that were nearby and noted that what the government was offering was not comparable, and therefore was not beneficial to our people. As I delved further into the court cases, I found testimony about Mekusukey Mission, the counterpart to Emahaka (but for boys), and how land was sold at a fraction of the cost during Seminole County's oil boom in the 1920s. Newspaper articles heralded Mrs. Davis' role in standing against the U.S. government takeover of Seminole tribal schools. I read through each of the articles and filed them away for further research someday. (Someday wouldn't transpire for almost a decade).

As I chatted with Puwv about my findings later that week, he shared with me that my grandmother had attended Mekusukey Mission School. "I thought Mekusukey was a boys school?" I asked Puwv. "I don't know, but Mama and Eliza went there, for a short period of time until Grandpa pulled them out," Puwv replied. He disappeared in his room, while I visited with my Aunt Liza at their kitchen table. After a short time, he returned triumphantly holding a small, tattered black and white photo of two young smiling teenage girls standing in front of a tree. He pointed out the one on the right. "That's your grandma and that's Eliza right beside her at Mekusukey Mission. This was taken when they went to school there."[2]

CHAPTER ONE

As a citizen of the Seminole Nation, I grew up within our Tribal Nation. I attended public schools in which the histories of my people were relegated to

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2. Frank Harjo, personal communication to author, February 18, 2019.

small squares on the sides of the page within history textbooks, if we were even mentioned. Although histories from our people are not commonly shared in written formats, they are certainly shared intergenerationally in our tribal communities and families. Our community's oral histories continue to be shared intergenerationally. Our histories and stories have played an integral role in shaping my understanding of who we are.

As a Seminole scholar, I see my work as a disruption to a long legacy of settler colonization, in which the histories of my people are contained within the annals of ship logs, manifests, and government records that remitted notices of the genocide committed against my people. I return to the words of Tiffany Lethabo King who reminds us "Genocide is the defining feature of this form of colonization, not settlement, and when settlement is invoked, it is always tethered to the violence of genocide."[3] The terminology of violence, contained within official documents, commissions and reports has served to advance a colonial agenda of the development of what is now called the United States.[4] I reflect on how my present and future is shaped by history. In conversation with King's statement, I believe that when we approach history, we need to name our experiences. Mishuana Goeman writes that "Native women authors do not just

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3. Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 59.

4. This connection is derived from some of the concepts put forth in the following text on colonial archives. See Ann Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1 (2002): 87-109.

represent space as a return to an "original" land or an "original" past/nation/being that erases the layers of time geography and history; rather they mediate multiple relationships and by doing so navigate ways of being in the world that reflect contemporary Native experience."[5] Our contemporary experiences are inextricably linked to our past and our future.

Archival Memories

With the exception of Susan Miller's book on *Coacochee's Bones*, textual history about my people have been written largely by non-Native researchers, who have learned from what they have recovered from the archives or observed through anthropological lenses. They have surveyed and surveilled our people in order to record what they believed would become extinct. As such, when viewing and thinking through the role of archives, I view them as subtle reminders of how settler colonization relies upon the elimination of the Native.[6] As Wolfe reminds us, settler colonization is really about access and ownership of land. In order to cement one's position within one's land, as this government has done, it was imperative that the development, expansion and writing of history accommodate those that invaded these place.

One example that I often read is what has been written about our name Seminole. Some scholars who have researched my people have written that the

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5. Mishuana Goeman, "(Re)Mapping Indigenous Presence on the Land in Native Women's Literature," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 300.

6. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research*, no. 8:4, (2006): 388.

word Seminole means wild or undomesticated.[7] However, our elders tell us that the word Semvnolē actually means something that is of a place, something that is from a particular area of land.[8] What we call ourselves refers back to our link to relationship with the ekvnv (earth). So intertwined is our relationship rooted to place, that we cannot identify ourselves without referring to this link. Yet, this meaning has been corrupted over time because of what someone wrote long ago.

I've often wondered how the name was corrupted. Perhaps those they surveilled refused to tell them what our name really means? Was it an act of refusal in the face of those who would know every last thing? The written record was just one part of a systemic colonial wave that has contributed to an onslaught of dehumanizing actions whose intent was to erase and replace. Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us "Unfortunately, we mostly hear that version from a dominant perspective that has assumed the right to tell the stories of the colonized and oppressed that they have re-interpreted, re-presented, and re-told through their own lenses."[9] This has been a key feature in the canons of historical texts and within the field. Furthermore, this example demonstrates the issues that are

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7. Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

8. The late Seminole elder, Leon Bell, spent valuable time sharing his knowledge to our youth and ensuring that they know why we call ourselves Este-Semvnolē.

9. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Forward to *Decolonizing Research:Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, ed. Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, Jason De Santolo (London: ZED, 2019), 1.

prevalent in Indigenous histories. What was written about us contributed to a narrative of primitiveness that was necessary to sustain projects of U.S. imperialism.

As a Seminole scholar, visiting the archives has always been a deeply emotional journey for me. Chickasaw scholar Amanda Cobb reminds us that within her archival searches "I search for Grandma."[10] I too, search for Grandma. Within the archives, I've heard the voice of my great-grandma in an interview, and listened with tears streaming silently down my face to my great-grandpa make tribal announcements on the Indians for Indians radio show hour.[11] I have reconnected to family that I never met in person because of my relationship with the archives. The archives have also made me wish for a return to a way of being. Reviewing treaties and correspondence that were written entirely in Tribal languages make me yearn for the way things were. When Indigenous languages were scrawled in pencil so naturally across documents, I knew that our languages were so vibrantly in use. Holding such documents helps me imagine the possibilities. It's a reminder of how our futures can be shaped by our histories. As I reflect on my role in historical research, I dream of a "radical hope" for

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10. Amanda J. Cobb, Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), xvii.

11. Indians for Indians Radio Show. August 2, 1949 Recording. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.

historical writing in which the focus is placed upon us, Indigenous people, our relations and Nations rather than the centering of American expansionism.[12]

Connelly and Fuentes remind us "all archives are incomplete—such historical accounts written primarily by the most powerful have overwhelmingly informed our understanding of the past."[13] As I've visited archive after archive, I've been surprised at the level of governmental surveillance of our people.[14] But maybe I shouldn't be surprised. For example, last year I returned to a National Archive that holds a significant amount of records from my Tribal Nation.
It was not lost on me that the governmental records seemed to be haphazardly kept with no rhyme or reason to the organization of the files or finding aids. A lot of the records on students contained just numbers. I wondered to myself if that was the intention of the record keeper? Was the numbering system a way of tracking? Was it a way to establish ownership over the lives of students? This system of categorizing and tracking students has even been revealed in student accounts of school systems. Students were known by their numbers and that number stayed with them throughout their time in school.[15] We see the same sort

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12. Kim Tallbear, "Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming," *Kalfou* 6, no. 1 (2019): 34.

13. Brian Connolly, and Marisa Fuentes. "Introduction: From Archives of Slavery to Liberated Futures?" *History of the Present* 6, no. 2 (2016): 105.

14. Sue McKemmish, Shannon Faulkhead, and Lynette Russell, "Distrust in the Archive: Reconciling Records," *Archival Science* 11, no. 3 (2011): 213.

of numbering that occurred during the TransAtlantic Enslavement Trade and the numbers tattooed on the prisoners of Hitler's concentration camps. I also view the numbering method of tracking as one way in which students lives were easily subsumed within the system. Numbering student lives makes them malleable, disposable and easily forgotten.

As I diligently pulled each file, I'd scan each piece of crinkled, thin yellowed paper for my grandma's name. That day, I lucked out. I saw her sister's name first and typed neatly underneath was my grandma's name. I blinked away tears because seeing her name reminded me of how much I missed her. I carefully finished photographing the remaining documents and pulled the next file. As I opened the next file, I noticed that it contained health records. I felt my pulse quicken and I inhaled a sharp intake of air. Were my grandma's health records in these files? I found myself holding my breath because I didn't want to see her name and her records displayed out in the open for anyone to see. I'd have to find a way to protect her health records. But what pull could I have in a National Archive? All these thoughts were racing through my mind as I held out hope that I wouldn't find her name.

As I scanned the first paper, I saw what the print entailed and I immediately felt terrible about looking at such a personal private document. The record that I saw was cold, clinical and sterile. It felt invasive and wrong. I needed

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15. Clyde Ellis, To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996) 103.

to know if her records were in there. I told myself that I would only look for her name, and no more. I looked through the names and saw many that were familiar to me (there are many grandchildren that carry their grandparents names). I was relieved to not see her listed among these particular files. I felt my shoulders relax, but I was unsure of what to do with this information.

As I drove out of the gates surrounding the archive and followed my mapped route towards home, I reflected on my encounter in the archive. Should I have documented the records? Would I be doing my due diligence as a researcher? Why was I feeling so unsettled by those particular records? Would this constitute a sale?[16] I connect this encounter in the archives with Morrill and Tuck's question of reproducing the violence of vanishment.[17] The colonial records represent the objectification of people and as Mohawk scholar Laura Terrance reminds us, these young children had no say in what was recorded about them.[18] The health records were representative of colonial violence in which the United States government surveilled the bodies of young students. I refuse to

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16. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Unbecoming Claims: Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 20, n. 6, (2014): 811.Tuck and Yang ask this critical question and I return to it often. "As researchers, when we overhear, uncover, are entrusted with narratives that we know will sell, do we stop the sale?"

17. Angie Morrill and Eve Tuck, "Before Dispossession, or Surviving it," *Liminalities* 12, no. 1 (2016): 7.

18. Laura Terrance, "Resisting colonial education: Zitkala-Sa and Native Feminist Archival Refusal," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 24, no. 5 (2011):625.

continue that extension in my scholarship. How then do we move from objectification to methods that allow us to conduct our research in ways that are beneficial to our communities?

One crucial element in historical research is that we often look towards the archives as the official record. We need to challenge our ideas of what constitutes official knowledge. The limits of colonial archives are the stories and histories that are contained within these institutions are limited to one point in time and often without context. Indigenous families and children advocated for their education and formed relationships that transformed their schooling experiences. Indigenous scholars who write about tribal schools often highlight student agency as a key theme and the collection of oral histories help us understand student experience.[19] These oral histories and stories are also forms of official knowledge.

Our memories are also a part of continuous link to the past, and when they are transmitted intergenerationally, they also constitute an oral archive. As Richard White reminds us, "there are regions of the past that only memory knows."[20] In many Indigenous Nations, community memory is an important component that is redistributed and rejuvenated across generations. More recently, Indigenous scholars have reminded us of that land and languages are

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19. Brenda J. Child, Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940 (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2000).; Amanda J. Cobb, Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

20. Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagran* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2004), 7.

archives.[21] Indigenous lands, and the languages that named them stem from community-based knowledge traditions that are sites of memory.

These place names have withstood colonial encroachment and ownership. A few years ago, I traveled to Alabama for a work-related trip. It was my first trip to Alabama and as I drove two hours to my destination, I saw many familiar names. I was staying in Opelika, which in our language means "where the owls live," so I knew that there must have been a lot of owls in the area. As I toured a military fort in Wetumpka, I stood near the Coosa River, I thought about the name of the town. In our language, it was describing water that flies, and as I mused out loud, the local guides to the area shared that there was a waterfall nearby. On that particular visit, I spent a lot of time driving through very rural areas. As I walked the land that my ancestors had walked, I felt very emotional. I knew that my eyes were seeing what my ancestors saw and the feeling was almost overwhelming. I felt the ground humming beneath my feet and the recognition of those ancestors who welcomed me home. Even though it had been over a century of a forced exile from the land, I still knew its history through our language. Land and languages are living archives.

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21. Lisa Brooks, "Strengthening Indigenous Scholarship, Archives and Education," Panelist at the Relationships, Reciprocity and Responsibilities: Indigenous Studies in Archives and Beyond" American Philosophical Society. Sept. 21, 2020.

Representation

This research requires me to be introspective about my approach. I think about what representation looks like. I worry about the boundaries between what I need to write about to keep my research original and what I'm comfortable with sharing. I think about the demands of a settler academy that consumes pain.[22] How much is too much? Studying history and all of its messy, uncomfortable truths sounds easier than it really is. I think about how these histories and settlement that is tied to genocide is uncomfortable for some to hear, and at times, it's uncomfortable for me to talk about. I question why I am uncomfortable. I also think about why I believe these histories need to be widely known, and I wonder why it is so important to me. By sharing our stories, am I in some way trying to prove our humanity?

I think of the earlier, foundational work that has been done in the history of boarding schools, residential schools and missionary schools. Some accounts have been painful to hear and the photographic images are revealing. Saidiya Hartman asks of us, "How do we train students who engage in archival work to tell the stories of those whose lives were without record and whose biography was comprised of terrible things that others said or did to them?"[23] What hard decisions did these scholars make in deciding what could be shared publicly? Are

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22. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Unbecoming Claims: Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 20, no. 6, (2014): 812.

23. Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 7.

they like me? Do they search the eyes of the children in the pictures looking for reassurance that they were ok? In what ways have they protected the communities from revisiting pain and trauma?

Tuck and Yang remind us "Human subject protocols establish that individuals must be protected, but not communities. Individuals are empowered to give away the community's stories."[24] I think about this question often. I rely heavily on my intuition and ask myself if I was presenting this information to my community, would I still feel as comfortable? I also think that if I wouldn't want my grandma or a loved one being presented in certain ways, then I just don't engage in that type of research. This is another form of refusal.

So how do I discern what is appropriate to share? I've looked toward other studies by Indigenous and other scholars who write from their communities within the field as they have demonstrated methodological ways in which they have approached these questions.[25] Often, they have collected oral histories and

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24. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Unbecoming Claims: Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 20, no. 6 (2014): 812.

25. For more information, please see the following: Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2000). ; Amanda J. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). ; Tsianina K. Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light :The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).; Devon A. Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1993).; Lisa Kay Neuman, *Indian Play: Indigenous Identities at Bacone College (*Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press*,* 2013).

stories to complement their archival research. The limits of archives are usually limited to certain perspectives. In his study on the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, Clyde Ellis shared an important observation of historical inquiry in the field. He stated, "Although some works examine the boarding school experience from the perspective of students, for the most part these accounts are not from Indians as much as they are about Indians. The difference is crucial, for it entails the critical component of perspective."[26]

All of the issues with writing Indigenous histories cause me to reflect upon why we engage in these efforts. First, I view my work as part of a larger project of reconnection and reclamation. I see my research grounded in community-based research that is responsive and responsible in its approach. I have a responsibility to my Nation and community that people outside of my community do not possess. I won't be writing about the health record that I saw, nor will I write about the things that were said about that particular student. I am bothered that these records are there. My research for this project, like many undertaken by Indigenous scholars within the field is deeply personal. I don't believe it is by accident that these accounts of students and schools are slowly fading from memory. I know that the slow vanishing (literal and metaphorical) of these sites and accounts are by design. As Indigenous Scholar Audra Simpson shares,

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26. Clyde Ellis, To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), xi.

"Settler colonization is enduring, its process is deliberate and its structure ensures that it happens in covert ways."[27] I see my work as a refusal to this process.

As Leanne Simpson stated beautifully, "My body and my life are part of my research and I use this knowledge to critique and analyze."[28] My body and life are extensions of my Nation, land, community and family and as I write a part of our story, it becomes enveloped within a larger story of us.[29] I don't write for "I," I write from and for our future us.

Historiography of Indigenous Education

Writing the history of education for Indigenous populations is richly nuanced. In the United States, a colonial understanding of education has consisted of a school environment centrally organized around American nationalism. These spaces have historically been sites of violence for many Tribal youth. However, scholarship within the field has also demonstrated that these sites have also been sites of resistance and liberation despite intentional measures that sought to oppress students, families and Tribal Nations. Some school sites have also demonstrated how Tribal Nations shaped these institutions into the images of

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27. Audra Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016): 330.

28. Leanne Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 31.

29. Ibid, 31.

what they deemed appropriate and exemplary education for their children and young adults.

One of the challenges in writing about these histories involves how these narratives are framed. In order to understand the complicated histories of education for Indigenous populations, scholars must often navigate across several disciplines including political, education, legal and anthropological fields.[30] Additionally, when writing these histories, an understanding of the unique, political status of Tribal citizens is warranted along with the role of U.S. government intervention in Tribal affairs.[31] The United States' political, economic and colonizing aims has imposed and embedded itself within our histories to the point that it is difficult to write Indigenous histories without including these policies.

As a Seminole scholar of these histories, the task to orient and frame the narrative of our histories is a central concern. Many histories of education follow commonly understood time periods and eras in education. Those eras serve to

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30. Donald Warren, "American Indian Histories as Education History," *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2014): 256.

31. Citizenship and Nationhood are critical issues within Indigenous communities. For further study, the following articles contribute to these important discussions. Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, "Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education," *The Urban Review* 37, no. 5 (2005). ; Eva Marie Garroutte, "The Racial Formation of American Indians: Negotiating Legitimate Identities within Tribal and Federal Law," *The American Indian Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2001): 224–39.; Richard Scott Lyons, *X-marks : Native Signatures of Assent. Indigenous Americas (*Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).; Circe Sturm, "Race, Sovereignty, and Civil Rights: Understanding the Cherokee Freedmen Controversy," *Cultural Anthropology* 29, no. 3 (2014): 575-98.

anchor the research around eras that denote U.S. exceptionalism. The continuation of utilizing these common timelines is problematic because colonial history and its canon has sanitized what was occurring during those moments of time for people that were subject to violence and terror.[32] As such, Indigenous scholars within the field have advocated for new methodologies and analysis in the writing of American Indian educational histories. Warren writes "the basic historiographical tool of periodization shifts from imposing a stencil of Euroamerican turning points to probing for those that emerge from Indian experience, which typically varied by region, climate and social group."[33] Warren's scholarship acknowledges the challenges for Indigenous scholars to orient ourselves within those frames as our histories contest the framing of history within American expansionism terminology.

Language yields power and this power is heavily laced with intent. Expansionism and Reform. Reconstruction. Industrialism. Progressive. The continued use of these phrases belies the reality that communities and Nations of color faced within the United States. I am intentional in choosing the process of refusal by challenging these turning points and terminology in my research. Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson reminds us "the very deliberate, willful,

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32. In writing about the TransAtlantic Slave Trade, Saidiya Hartman noted how people shifted the blame to the West because it let them "believe they were without scars." Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 72.

33. Donald Warren, "American Indian Histories as Education History," *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2014): 261.

intentional actions that people were making in the face of the expectation that they consent to their own elimination as a people, that they consent to having their land taken, their lives controlled, and their stories told for them."[34] Refusal affords the opportunity to contest parameters that are entrenched in upholding structures that are built in the oppression of our Tribal Nations. Refusal ensures we tell our own stories in our own ways.

Reconstructing histories of education for Indigenous populations challenge us to rethink our conceptualizations of what education is and more importantly, what could be. Cervera notes that some scholars from the field of American Indian education have "intuitively critiqued historians of education for failing to recognize Indigenous education outside of Euroamerican institutions and ideologies."[35] Limiting ideas of education to what has been shaped and framed by colonial institutions inhibits and ignores the types of learning that occurred and continue to be perpetuated across Tribal Nations. Furthermore, my scholarship acknowledges and affirms the existence of education that are premised on the unique knowledges perpetuated by distinct Tribal Nations.

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34. Audra Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016): 330. Simpson's concept of refusal is based upon the idea that "Refusal holds on to a truth, structures this truth as stance through time, as its own structure and comingling with the force of presumed and inevitable disappearance and operates as the revenge of consent—the consent to these conditions, to the interpretation that this was fair, and the ongoing sense that this is all over with."

35. Yesenia Lucia Cervera, "Negotiating the History of Education: How the Histories of Indigenous Education Expand the Field," *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2014): 370.

Although there were some commonalities across Tribal Nations experiences with education (such as missionary schools, boarding schools, etc.), and common experiences shared at schools with Inter-Tribal students, Indigenous education is diverse and multi-faceted. Seminole education, Mvskoke education, Diné education, etc. were celebrated pre-colonially and continue to be perpetuated in distinct and intentional ways.

Historical Aim & Purpose of Education

The aim and purpose of education is born out of a project of imperialism and oppression. Anderson's seminal work on the Education of Blacks in the South highlights the relationship between the development of the American education and the "politics of oppression."[36] He noted that in 1787, Thomas Jefferson was one of the very first proponents of an educational system that would identify the very top of the class of white males and advocated their schooling be funded via public expense, while making no provisions for those that were not white males.[37] Congress legislated the Northwest Ordinance that same year, linking "good government, schools and morality" establishing an early role in the interest of education.[38] Although the colonial narrative of education tale is one of progress

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36. James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 1.

37. Anderson, 1.

38. James W. Fraser, The School in the United States: A Documentary History (New York: Routledge, 2014), 19.

and democracy, the very foundation of the American educational structure is rooted in the oppression of people that were not white males.

Adams noted by the 1790s, there was no question about the motives of the new government, "the divestiture of Indian land was essential to the extension of American ideals."[39] Neuman's research found some of the earliest work among Tribal Nations occurred in 1807 between the American Baptists and the Tuscarora Nation in New York.[40] One of the goals of their mission was to teach the fundamentals of reading so that the Bible could be read. On the colonial political landscape, the United States had to confront profound questions of how to further establish itself as a Nation-state while divesting Tribal Nations of their ancestral homelands. One tactic was to continue an aggressive military campaign against Tribal Nations by waging war and committing acts of genocide. Waging war among Tribal Nations was a costly endeavor, and military leaders quickly realized that they needed to vary their approach.

By 1819, Congress legislated the Civilization Act to fund missionary endeavors to bring education and Christianity to the Tribal Nations. These critical missions were supported with $10,000 in federal appropriations to help set up

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39. David Wallace Adams, Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 5.

40. Lisa Kay Neuman, *Indian Play: Indigenous Identities at Bacone College* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013) 35.

schools and to prepare students for agricultural interests.[41] The elimination, disappearance, and erasure of Indigenous people was a key feature of the educational aspirations that the United States held for Indigenous people. Piatote reminds us that the "existence of tribal-national polities, with powers and territories beyond those of the states (as states did not enter into treaties with the US) represented a threat to the sole sovereignty of the nation."[42] Ellis noted U.S. policy toward Indigenous populations from this era remained unchanged well into the twentieth century.[43] The Civilization Act ultimately advanced an agenda that "linked conversion to Christianity with European American concepts of property ownership, colonization and territorial expansion."[44] Each of these factors contributed greatly to the United States' policy toward the Trial nations. They also solidified the settler regime that had Indigenous children in their sights.

The missionary educational funds, doled out by the Department of War in the early 1820s, was a systematic method of approaching the "Indian Problem" through the guise of benevolence. By doing so, the United States government

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41. Tsianina K. Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light:The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) 2.

42. Beth H. Piatote, Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 5.

43. Clyde Ellis, To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 5.

44. Lisa Kay Neuman, *Indian Play: Indigenous Identities at Bacone College* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 37.

sought to formally organize schools as a means of indoctrinating tribal children toward a new form of nationalism of the United States. The U.S. government hoped to alienate tribal children from their tribal way of lifeways as a form of educational genocide by funding "benevolent" education with War funds. McKenney's 1825 report to the US Secretary of War notes that the number of Cherokee who are "receiving, in their turn, the enlightening influences of the system of education, and a little time only will be required, so far at least as it regards the Cherokees, to destroy this fear, when the whole tribe will, no doubt, seek to place themselves under the laws of the States, and by that act, prepare the process for their extinction as a *race*."[45] The source of these funds came from the U.S. Department of War budget and were reported annually to the Secretary of War thus illustrates how the education of Native people was a preemptive military strategy.

Similarly, imperial projects played a role in how education was shaped in the West. Beadie et. al.'s scholarship highlight a complex but critical issue that is often not articulated within the field "Imperial projects structured the political economy of education..."[46] Furthermore, they assert that these imperial projects compelled the forced migration of labor to serve projects that furthered the

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45. Thomas Lorraine McKenney, Sequoyah, and United States. Office of Indian Affairs. [Report upon ... the Present System for Civilizing the Indians: Letter from Thomas L. McKenney, in Charge of the Office of Indian Affairs]. (Washington, D.C.:S.n., 1826) 20.

46. Nancy Beadie, et al. "Gateways to the West, Part I, Education in the Shaping of the West," *History of Education Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2016): 424.

Nation-state and capitalistic interests. Although these early school systems were often couched in terms of benevolence, they really masked the motives of financial interests. Even though Beadie et. al. were referring to education within the West, this structure was enacted from the genesis of American education and was replicated across the United States in contributing to the structural oppression of multiple communities of color.

Anderson's project on the American South, and Beadie et. al. on the American West along with the missions on Indigenous populations share similar features. Anderson's research noted that during Reconstruction, as Black Southerners were developing their own school systems, an effort by Northern "benevolent" donors help fund Rosenwald schools throughout the South.[47] Curriculum and populations within these schools mirrored the labor that was required to maintain the work of white Southern agricultural interests in which the donors were financially invested.[48] Similarly, Beadie et. al., found that financiers in the West aggressively recruited labor populations from Mexico and Asia which contributed to a change in the landscape of school systems in the West. Indigenous populations were often targeted for their land which settlers often sought for the mineral and natural resources. Education for each of these

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47 James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 153.

48. Anderson, 207.

populations was framed in terms of benevolence, yet were actually rooted in oppressive policies that were well documented into the twentieth century.[49]

Beadie et.al. note that public schools were not developed without significant federal intervention.[50] In Indian Territory, Federal intervention meant that the United States government took a significant interest in the development of public school systems in order to ensure that white students were afforded access. Angie Debo found that the United States Superintendent of Indian Schools took surplus court funds that were allocated to tribes and diverted them to the building of public school systems.[51] Although these overwhelmingly white population public schools admitted a very small number of Tribal students, access was not extended to Black and Freedmen students.

Indigenous Education & Schooling

Indigenous education across the United States and the experiences of Tribal youth were diverse. In the writing of the history of Indigenous education, we must respect and assert that Tribal Nations are distinct and intentional in the types of education they perpetuate. Prior to the invasion of what is now known as the United States, no historiography of Indigenous education would be complete

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49. Rubén Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

50. Nancy Beadie, et al., "Gateways to the West, Part I, Education in the Shaping of the West," *History of Education Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2016): 430.

51. Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 70.

without the recognition of these forms of education across Tribal Nations.[52] Each Tribal Nation transmitted knowledges in ways that honored their own unique epistemologies and these differed from Nation to Nation.

Warren noted the sheer diversity of these modes of education by detailing the breadth of education among various Tribal Nations. For example, he found the Comanche honored unique forms of horsemanship. Comanche children were socialized into these societies while being taught specific types of knowledge that were applied to the care and demonstration of skills that were unique to their Nation.[53] Vine Deloria recognized Indigenous forms of education that emphasized relationality. He noted the respect that was given to plants before harvest because "of the recognition that the universe was built upon constructive and cooperative relationships that had to be maintained."[54] These Indigenous forms of knowledge systems differed from Nation to Nation, yet the historical canon has asserted that these knowledge systems were primitive in nature. Indigenous writers contest these assertions and I return to the words of Leanne Simpson who refers to these

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52. For purposes of this paper, I am using past tense, but I want to be clear that Tribal Nations continue to provide education in deep, meaningful ways that are specific to their respective communities.

53. Donald Warren, "American Indian Histories as Education History," *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2014): 280.

54. Vine Deloria and Daniel R. Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (Golden: Fulcrum Pub., 2001), 24.

types of knowledges within her Nation as Nishaanabeg brilliance.[55] Summarily, pre-colonial education within these spaces was occurring in intentional ways in order to transmit knowledges of brilliance that was deemed critical to Tribal Nations.

After the Civilization Act, missionaries dispersed among Tribal Nations to enact U.S policy in "civilizing" Tribal populations. Although Carlisle Indian School is often highlighted as one of the earliest examples of American Indian education, it was actually preceded by schools developed by missionaries and Tribal Nations both in the East and in Indian Territory approximately five decades before its inception. In many schools that served Native students throughout the United States, history abounds with the deleterious effects that state sanctioned schools have had upon Native languages. Within the Five Civilized Tribes Schools, there was some difference. Throughout this document, there are multiple references to the Five Civilized Tribes or the Five Tribes. I understand the naming of Nations as "civilized" operates within a binary framework of civilized and uncivilized. Although it is not my personal choice, as a citizen of the Seminole Nation, to continue to utilize this terminology in my personal life, I recognize that the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee and Seminole Nations continue to operate from this historically developed and currently established political

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55. Leanne Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017) 17.

organization. At times I'll alternate between the Five Tribes and the Five Civilized tribes-however they are the same.

Many of the early missionaries to the Territory noted the critical nature of proselytizing to and converting Native people to Christianity was hampered by a lack of knowledge of their respective languages. They quickly realized that they would need to cross the language barrier that stood between them and the populations they hoped to convert. Although early Christian efforts were couched in benevolence, such efforts were propelled by governmental interest in controlling tribal Nations. These missionaries inadvertently contributed to the perpetuation of Native languages by working with Indigenous language speakers in translating and transcribing biblical materials to further their mission, thus laying the foundation for some of the earliest forms of bilingual education within the area.

Within the Cherokee Nation, an early response to United States federal policy and missionaries resulted in early school endeavors as early as 1799.[56] In a report to the Secretary of War, Thomas L. McKenney, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, noted that the first school built by the Cherokees was built in

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56. Devon A. Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 15. Mihesuah reports Daniel Ross, the father of John Ross hired a teacher to teach his children and the Cherokee National Council in the year of 1800, gave approval for the Moravian faith to develop secular schools.

1817.[57] McKenney lamented, “Instead of instructing the Indians in a knowledge of the language of the country, and by means of that mighty instrument, making avenues for their direct approach to and intercourse with, the whites, and for their immediate acquaintance with the arts and conveniences with cultivated life, the missionaries adopted the plan of first learning the Indian language and by means of it, conveyed their instruction to them.”[58] In the eastern Cherokee Nation, Cherokee literacy and the adoption of George Guess’ syllabary was noted in official reports as early as 1825.

The 1825 McKenney report included the testimony of David Brown, a Cherokee citizen who wrote about conditions within the Cherokee Nation, in their original eastern homelands. Brown wrote “Schools are increasing every year; learning is encouraged and rewarded. The young class acquire English, and those of a mature age, the Cherokee system of learning. The female character is elevated and duly respected. Indolence is discountenanced. Our native language, in its philosophy, genius, and symphony, is inferior to few, if any, in the world.”[59] The McKenney report also contains some of the earliest references to the work of George Guess in the development of the Cherokee syllabary noting “Like

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57. Thomas Lorraine, McKenney, Sequoyah, and United States. Office of Indian Affairs[Report upon ... the Present System for Civilizing the Indians : Letter from Thomas L. McKenney, in Charge of the Office of Indian Affairs]. (Washington, D.C.: S.n., 1826) 16.

58. McKenney Report, 15-16.

59. McKenney Report, 19.

Cadmus, he has given to his people, the alphabet of their language."[60] Some early accounts highlight Cherokee boys and girls who attended Brainerd Mission in 1821.[61] At Brainerd Mission, Mihsueah reported that their students acquired English literacy, however, once Sequoyah demonstrated his innovative syllabary, the drive to attain English literacy was not as critical.[62] Although early accounts of missionary schools during this era are scarce, Brainerd Mission remains one of the earliest accounts of mission schools developed within Tribal Nations. In the Chickasaw Nation, Cobb reports early schools established as early as 1820-22.[63]

During this time frame, the United States government was moving forward in efforts to enact legislation that mandated genocidal acts towards Tribal Nations. The Cherokee Nation had a decentralized form of government, with local towns and communities headed up by local leaders.[64] By 1827, the Cherokee Nation formally organized with a written constitution that declared sovereignty

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60. McKenney Report, 33.

61. Devon A. Mihesuah, Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909 (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 7.

62. Mihesuah, 7.

63. Amanda J. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females 1852-1949* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 27. Cobb reports the Presbyterian founded Charity Hall and the South Carolina-Georgia Synod opened the Monroe School for Chickasaw students.

64. Rebecca Nagle, The Treaty, This Land, podcast audio, June 24, 2019, Crooked Media, https://crooked.com/podcast/this-land-episode-4-the-treaty/

over land.[65] The state of Georgia, threatened by the Cherokee Nation's organizing, began extending its laws into the Cherokee Nation and violently harming the Cherokee Nation and its citizens. Rebecca Nagle shared that the impetus for settler migration from the north was a land grab.[66]

By 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, thus setting a chain of events that would change the lives of tribal citizens east of the Mississippi. Within the Cherokee Nation, there were legal battles between the state of Georgia and the Cherokee Nation about the unscrupulous laws that threatened Cherokee lives, homes and land. Although the Cherokee Nation prevailed at the U.S. Supreme Court in Worcester vs. Georgia in 1832, the United States military was already enforcing Jackson's nefarious policies.[67] Under military order, generations of Indigenous people were forced to walk over one thousand miles to unfamiliar lands. As the United States continued their national policy of Indian Removal, these policies had devastating effects upon Tribal populations as whole families were separated, while many did not survive the journey. Often in U.S. History, Indian Removal is framed through the U.S. expansionism perspective, when the reality was that white settler men were making decisions to supplant Indigenous people to satiate their desires for land

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65. Nagle, 2019.

66. Nagle, 2019.

67. Susan Work, *The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma: A Legal History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 8.

and control over territory. The loss of life was not a deterrent in order to satiate the greed for Indigenous lands.[68] The fact that whole lives would be forcibly uprooted to consolidate economic interests for the most powerful illustrates the power they had. The basis for settler claims rested upon the elimination of Indigenous people and their lands, and white settler logic asserted their justification of knowledge to harness territory and resources as their claim.[69]

Territorial Education

As some of the Eastern tribes arrived in what was to become their new homelands, they were faced with a new environment. Tribal Nations were required to learn from and how to live in unfamiliar terrain under difficult conditions. However, one thing was clear. In order to defend their people, Tribal leaders knew that it would be important to acquire the English language and literacy. For many, that process had started in their original homelands, but for some, the process was just beginning.[70]

One aspect that continually frustrated federal officials in Indian Territory, was that the push to acquire the English language was typically not at the expense of their respective tribal languages. To illustrate, Mrs. Ann E. Worcestor

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68. Wolfe reminds us that "Thus contests for land can be-indeed, often are-contests for life. See Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4(2006): 387.

69. Wolfe, p. 394.

70. All of the Tribes except the Seminole had begun the development of schools prior to the Indian Removal Act.

Robertson was a teacher within the Muscogee Nation. Although she spent some years at her father's mission in the Cherokee Nation at Park Hill, her marriage to the principal of the Tullahassee Mission landed her among the Muscogee people.[71] She noted "the importance of a knowledge of the vernacular for reaching the hearts of the people" was critical to communicating with the Creek population and spent a great part of her life translating and transcribing the New Testament. N.B. Sullivan, a Creek informant who helped her in her translation work described the work as tedious saying "If we finish a page a day, we think we are doing well. Today, we worked one verse three hours."[72] Furthermore, her husband encouraged her work believing the Creek people were "those who could only be reached through their own language."[73] The work at Tullahassee Mission School proved very fruitful, as the mission published the "Our Monthly" newsletter utilizing a hand printing press.[74] These newsletters contained stories, recounted daily activities, and gave information on events at the school and in the surrounding community. The newsletter was often printed in the Maskoke language, yet at times included some notes in the English language.

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71. S.W. Robertson Collection, Box R-40, Folder 8. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

72. Ibid., 10.

73. Ibid., 10.

74. E.E. Dale Collection, Box 239, Folder 2. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

In the Choctaw Nation, the *Chahta Holisso* provided grammatical material for teachers of Choctaw students.[75] Pages abound with nouns, verbs, the atmosphere, along with geography lessons. Liberally sprinkled through the text are insertions of Christian influence. The Lord's Prayer in Choctaw, The Ten Commandments and the Day of Judgement are provided alongside grammatical, mathematical and scientific materials, all written in the Choctaw language.

Native language literacy was very prevalent across all of the Five Civilized Tribes. This fact was not lost on the U.S. Superintendent of Indian Schools, John D. Benedict. In her seminal research on the Five Civilized Tribes, Debo writes that Benedict accused the tribal school superintendents of conversing in the Native languages with students, and "deplored" that boys were trained for college and the professions instead of industry, while girls studied Latin and mathematics instead of domestic service.[76] While missionaries hoped to enlighten their students and families to the gospel, leaders of the Tribal Nations viewed the function of school as essential to their nationhood. Rowan Steineker noted that esteemed Muscogee leader Opethleyahola encouraged the development of schools as a defense mechanism to protect their sovereignty.[77] Opethleyahola was one of

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75. Agnes Fuller Collection, Minor Box F-5. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

76. Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 74.

77. Rowan Faye Steineker, "Fully Equal to That of Any Children": Experimental Creek Education in the Antebellum Era," *History of Education Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2016): 274.

many leaders who saw the development of school systems as a necessary step in rebuilding Tribal Nations in new lands.[78] As Devon Mihesuah reports on their work on the Cherokee Female Seminary, mere decade after the Cherokee Nation was forcibly relocated to Indian Territory, one of their first orders of business was to set about developing seminaries for their youth.[79] Mihesuah's powerful study explored how Cherokee women experienced education at the Cherokee Female Seminary that opened in 1851.[80] Most of the students came from an agricultural background, and this particular seminary focused their efforts on a liberal arts education.[81] Socioeconomic backgrounds, phenotype, and Cherokee language use were each markers of class distinctions among the students and opportunities for girls from affluent families were more abundant.[82]

Located south of the Cherokee Nation, the Chickasaw Nation also quickly sought to establish school systems. Writing on the Bloomfield Academy developed in 1852 as a school for Chickasaw girls, Amanda Cobb writes that the

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78. Ibid, 274.

79. Devon A. Mihesuah, Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909 (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 2.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid, p.2.

82. Ibid, p. 3.

school would become an iconic symbol of pride within the Nation.[83] Furthermore, Cobb noted the founding of the school was premised on the belief that tribal leaders knew that "literacy training was crucial to their survival as a Nation."[84] Cobb's scholarship illustrates how literacy bound projects were tied to markers of nationhood. By 1894, the Davis Progressive reported that the Chickasaws operated a number of schools for Chickasaw students.[85] Operation of five academies and nine neighborhood schools demonstrated the Chickasaws desire for education as the schools served approximately eight hundred students in total. Additionally, annual funding appropriations on behalf of the Chickasaws was reportedly close to $100,000 for their educational endeavors.[86] Chickasaw leaders recognized that Chickasaw futures were predicated on these important aspects of education, while asserting uniquely Chickasaw ideologies.

Within the Muscogee Nation, missionary influence was also an important component to the development of educational institutions. Early reports of Creek

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83. Amanda J. Cobb, Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females 1852-1949 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 1.

84. Cobb, 6.

85. The Davis Progressive. (Davis, Indian Terr.), Vol. 1, No. 52, Ed. 1 Friday, June 14, 1895, newspaper, June 14, 1895; Davis, Indian Territory. (https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc143468/: accessed April 21, 2021), The Gateway to Oklahoma History, https://gateway.okhistory.org; crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

86. Ibid., 4.

schools date their development by the 1850s.[87] By the early 1880s, these missionaries had petitioned the Creek Nation for land to develop an Indian University where Creek women could attend.[88] This college, later known as Bacone College was firmly established as a post-secondary institution that still exists today. Neuman's research highlighted some of the asymmetrical relations between the Muscogee and missionaries who stood to benefit from the relationships they had built among key tribal people.[89] Archival documents provide us with insight into how this was carried out. One official Creek document includes a paragraph that describes the 160 acres of land that would be set aside for one particular missionary.[90] Some missionaries benefited from Tribal Education endeavors in very tangible ways.

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87. Rowan Faye Steineker, "Fully Equal to That of Any Children": Experimental Creek Education in the Antebellum Era," *History of Education Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2016): 275.

88. Lisa Kay Neuman, *Indian Play: Indigenous Identities at Bacone College* (Lincoln.: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 42.

89. Neuman, p. 60. Bacone President Weeks' wielded considerable influence within the region and his zeal to fundraise for Bacone was at times at the expense of Creek estates. His political influence was so powerful that his support for key administrative positions was sought after by those seeking to head up the Indian Office.

90. S.W. Robertson Collection, Box R-40, Folder 18. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

In 1884, Chilocco Indian School opened its doors to students from various tribes in the area.[91] A U.S. boarding school for students that sought to disrupt the communal life of the tribal groups, Chilocco became an important cornerstone of "tribal and pan-Indianism" as students were bound together through shared experiences.[92] Lomawaima highlights student accounts of solidarity that brought them together as a surrogate for their close familial bonds waiting for them back home.[93] These close relationships sustained them as they faced an institution that sought to surveil their movements and favored military standards in education and dorm life. Lomawaima's scholarship enhances our ideas of student agency and autonomy in governmental boarding schools.

In the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache homelands, the Rainy Mountain boarding school opened its doors in 1893.[94] Enshrined in the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1870, this school was a project of the United States government and advanced a system of surveillance and assimilation efforts. Students of the school reported that they received a permanent number and they were known by that

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91. Tsianina K. Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 8.

92. Lomawaima, 129.

93. Ibid., 131.

94. Clyde Ellis, To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), xi.

number until the day they departed school.[95] Students resisted surveillance in creative ways. Students caught speaking their tribal languages were punished, but students got around this rule by writing notes in their languages utilizing the phonetics that they had been taught.[96] These were truly some of the earliest forms of written text in their respective languages.

Purpose of Indian Schools in Indian Territory

Beth Piatote's scholarship on the intricacies of gender, citizenship and law for domestic subjects are important considerations in examining the role of education for Indigenous populations. She reminds us that these issues were important because these struggles were symbolic of what was really at stake: "control over Indian futures-children, culture, land and imagination."[97] These matters were critical to advance the imperial project, yet Tribal leaders in Indian Territory demonstrated resolve to maintain Tribal control over education. They knew exactly what was at stake.

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95. Ibid.,103. Numbering students is a method of surveillance that is rooted in violence. I connect this with Saidiya Hartman who noted that the "officials of the Dutch West India Company branded slaves with numbers which identified them as property or as an itemized unit." For more information see Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother : A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 74.

96. Clyde Ellis, To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 104.

97. Beth H. Piatote, Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 4.

Borrowing from the legal discipline, Sarah Deer shared important words from her mentor Bonnie Clairmont who writes "Women's sovereignty is central to Indian sovereignty because nations cannot be free if their Indian women are not free."[98] We can extend this statement to the development of early schools within Tribal Nations in Indian Territory. As early schools such as the Cherokee Nation's Female Seminary, Chickasaw Nation's Bloomfield Academy, Chilocco Indian School and Rainy Mountain School demonstrated, schools were the nexus and blend of ideologies and epistemologies. Identities were reinforced and contested. Despite the fact that early colonial schools were focused heavily on education for males, this trend was not replicated within Tribal Nations. An explanation for this can be found in how each of these tribes organized their societies.

Given that the Five Tribes are matrilineal societies, it is not coincidence that most of them focused their initial efforts on the development of schools for girls. This is a powerful movement and statement that reflected gender equity in education during an era in which this was not common. Tribal leaders understood that the development of schools were essential to defending tribal sovereignty. Each of these tribes had pre-existing ideologies that women were essential for Nation-building and these precolonial forms of education were then extended into

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98. Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xvi.

the schools that they subsequently developed. A nation cannot be built without the women. These were clear demonstrations that Tribal Nations viewed schools and by extension, education for girls, as a tool of liberation and a tool for defending sovereignty.

Education was also viewed by some tribal leaders as a critical component to the retention of tribal land bases. In 1866, Choctaw leader Peter P. Pitchlynn, in an address given in Washington D.C., advocated for homesteads to be inalienable for 21 years so that children could be educated and mature in regard to home sales.[99] Tribal leaders knew that literacy and bilingualism were skills that were needed by tribal citizens. Literacy was tied to transactions of land and these skills were essential in the protection of tribal land interests. The colonial United States policy was clear in the advancement of territory and tribes saw education as an equalizing force to stave off impending state formation.

Education within the Five Civilized Tribes challenges our understanding of how tribal languages were utilized in educational spaces, and demonstrate the methods in which tribal communities resisted oversight, retained languages, and remained uniquely Seminole, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Cherokee. Their languages found refuge within religious texts and this drew the ire of U.S. governmental officials.[100] Within the schools that were tribally ran, tribal

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99. Peter Pitchlynn Collection, Box 6, Folder 8. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

language use was an important aspect of the socialization of students in the schools. Both the Cherokee Nation accounts of the Female Seminary and early Muscogee school accounts note that Tribal languages were spoken so frequently, that students who entered as English only speakers, often learned to converse in their respective languages.

Tribal language use under surveillance was a common theme throughout schools that were ran by the United States government. Accounts from Rainy Mountain Boarding School mentions that one of the biggest offenses was speaking Kiowa. Typical punishment for these "sins" included young children being attached to a ball and chain, whippings and being forced into stress positions.[101] Yet, students persisted to speak their languages in a myriad of ways. Despite measures to erase their languages they continued to speak to one another at the risk of punishment. Their languages were deeply valued and these small acts of speaking their languages were giant acts of resistance. From passing notes to each other, to furtive whispers on the playground, Indigenous students resisted the push to rid them of their Tribal languages. They created some of the earliest texts in their languages. They enacted Indigenous agency in places that sought to strip them of who they were.

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100. Beth H. Piatote, "Our (Someone Else's) Father: Articulation, Dysarticulation, and Indigenous Literary Traditions," *The Kenyon Review* 32, no. 1 (2010): 199.

101. Clyde Ellis, To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 105.

The history of Indigenous schooling has demonstrated that these sites were contested spaces. The spectrum of types of schools help us understand that some school sites were seen as models of educational sovereignty, while others were extensions of the imperial project. One commonality that exists across all of these examples is that Indigenous people resisted in bold and courageous ways to ensure that what they valued would persist. Languages, literacy, and nationhood were critical to these endeavors. These narratives help shape the historiography of education for Indigenous communities and Nations and illustrate Tribal resistance to the Imperial Project.

Early Education in the Seminole Nation

On a wintry January day in 1908, Stella Elizabeth Blake, a teacher at Emahaka School, earnestly penned a letter to John D. Benedict, the U.S. Superintendent of Indian Schools. Emahaka School had surprised her. She wrote neatly across the lined paper, "it was pleasant in every other way, and I am sorry to disappoint you."[102] Her hand firmly pressed her pencil on the paper to convey her distress as she wrote "I knew there were negros in school, but I did not realize how it would be."[103] She informed Mr. Benedict that she would be leaving the school, but requested that he keep in her mind if he needed a teacher for a

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102. Mr. Benedict from Stella Elizabeth Blake. January 2, 1908. RG 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Five Civilized Tribes Agency Records of the Supervisor of Indian Schools, Letters received by the Supervisor of schools, 1906-1908, Box 2, National Archives, Ft. Worth. 1.

103. Ibid., 2.

neighborhood school. After all, she asserted in her scrawling penmanship, "One cannot live down one's 'raising' in a day."[104] Ms. Blake's ideologies surrounding race and the unique political status of Indigenous people were challenged in the Seminole Nation, where Seminole Freedmen attended school alongside the rest of the Nation's children.

Just three decades after the last Seminole War with the United States government had concluded in 1858, and subsequently the Civil War in 1865, the Seminole people were undergoing tremendous sociopolitical change. While Seminole leaders were initially promised lands in which they would be undisturbed, they continued to face challenges as invaders continued to pour into the region demanding land and access to tribal resources. Seminole leaders recognized the need for the development of a school system. They had overwhelmingly elected to direct a significant amount of tribal funds toward the construction of two Academies.[105]

Emahaka School, where Ms. Blake taught, was located in the heart of the Seminole Nation, a school for Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen female students. It was initially co-educational until its counterpart, Mekusukey Mission, was constructed for Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen boys. Although the white

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104. Ibid., 2.

105. Robert E. Trevathan, "School Days at Emahaka Academy," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 38, no. 3 (1960): 266. Byron S. Blake was the son of William Packer Blake, who served at the Superintendent at Emahaka. He was one of very few white students who was allowed to attend the all-girls school from 1894-1897.

children of school employees and missionaries could attend the Academies, the Seminoles did not extend educational access to the general white population. Teachers and staff, influenced by the work of missionaries, enacted policies of the Tribal National government. While the space was initially under the purview of White missionaries, the Seminole tribal government assumed control of the school early during its inception in the early 1890s.[106]

Oversight from the federal government came in 1899, with the arrival of John D. Benedict, who was sent to Indian Territory to serve as the U.S. Superintendent of Indian Schools. His presence was not viewed positively by the tribes. Mr. Benedict was surprised to find,

> I soon learned that each of the Five Tribes had its own school laws, its own school system, its own school buildings, its own teachers and its own schools and school laws had been in operation for half a century or longer, during all of which time, the Federal Government had had nothing whatever to do with them, they having been constructed, managed and maintained exclusively by the Indian Tribes.[107]

Benedict that did understand that each of the Five Tribes had made the education of their children a top priority. Tribal control of schools was not common during that era. By 1903, the Norman Democrat newspaper reported on the status of schools among the Five Civilized Tribes. The headline called Indian Territory "The Land of Schools" and noted that the "Indians have a good system of

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106. Ibid., 272.

107. My Education Experience. John D. Benedict. Indian Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK. 1.

schools."[108] The article also noted "they are better educated as a class than the white people of this country."[109]

Federal Indian policies provided much needed support to the invasion and theft of Indian lands in Indian Territory. The 1887 Dawes Allotment Act was a law enacted by the United States government to break up communally held land into small allotments to be distributed back to individuals.[110] Although the Five Tribes were exempt from this Act in 1893, the pressure from white squatters who felt they had a claim to Tribal lands, was supported. The Organic Act of 1890, supported the concerns of the squatters who demanded the dismantlement of Tribal governance systems.[111] The Curtis Act of 1898 sought to abolish the Tribal governance systems of the Five Tribes in order to pave the way for Oklahoma statehood.[112]

The confluence of these federal policies reverberated across classrooms within the Five Tribes. The representation of the United States government via

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108. Norman Democrat. (Norman, Okla.), Vol. 13, No. 43, Ed. 1 Friday, May 22, 1903, newspaper, May 22, 1903;Norman, Oklahoma. (https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc119119/: accessed April 21, 2021), The Gateway to Oklahoma History, https://gateway.okhistory.org; crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

109. Ibid.

110. Susan Work, *The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma: A Legal History*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 17.

111. Ibid, p. 23.

112. Ibid, p. 36.

John Benedict was a threat to the educational autonomy of the Tribal Nations. In the Seminole Nation, long situated education policies of integrated schools became contested as John D. Benedict began a campaign to dismantle tribal schools. Preliminary research on the Five Tribes' educational systems demonstrates the manner in which they were targeted to disproportionately pay for the development of neighborhood schools for White students. Benedict's goal was to establish schools for the burgeoning White population. He enacted federal policies within Tribal Nations to divert funds directed to Tribal Nations to coffers designed to develop schools for White students.[113]

Much of the existing scholarship that surrounds the education of Tribal children has primarily focused on the federal government boarding schools and its enactment of genocidal policies. In contrast to what was taking place on the national level, education among the Five Tribes was purposeful in their approach to support Tribal children. Recent scholarship has contributed to our understanding of some of the Five Tribes' educational systems. Mihesuah's seminal scholarship on the Cherokee Female Seminary, Cobb's research on the Chickasaw Nation's Bloomfield Academy, and Steineker's study on Creek schools has helped us understand some of the intricacies of the development of Tribal schools among the Five Tribes. [114]

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113. Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 70.

114. Amanda J. Cobb, Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories : The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949, (Lincoln: University of

Research into the Seminole Nation's educational institutions is very limited. The principal goal of this project is to better understand how the Seminole Nation asserted sovereignty through their educational institutions. How was the battle for school autonomy representative of a larger struggle to assert Seminole sovereignty? In what ways does school integration take on a different meaning in the Seminole Nation? How did Seminole schools and its people contribute to Tribal Nation-building?

Another significant topic that is germane to the project are Maskoke primers, newsletters and documents that are written in the Maskoke language. Fluent tribal speakers and Christian missionaries contributed to the perpetuation of Native languages by translating and transcribing biblical materials to further their mission. The translation and transcription of these early biblical texts laid the foundation for some of the earliest forms of bilingual education. Some of the curriculum that was very prominent within the Seminole Nation include the *Mvskoke Nakcokv Eskerretv Enhvteceskv* and the *Mvskoke Nakcokv Eskerretv Esvhokkolat.* These books refer to the first and second Maskoke books of learning. Both of these primers are written in the Maskoke language.

An examination of Maskoke language curricular materials is critical to the historiography of schools controlled by the Seminole Nation. One key component of this project is the translation of a selection of Maskoke text to shed light on

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Nebraska Press, 2000).; Devon A. Mihesuah, Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).; Rowan Faye Steineker."“Fully Equal to That of Any Children”: Experimental Creek Education in the Antebellum Era." History of Education Quarterly 56, no. 2 (2016): 273-300.

curriculum ideologies.[115] Examples may include the following: Maskoke Primers (both 1 & 2) in addition to school correspondence, legal documents and letters. Outside of the field of functional linguistics, there has been little (if any) research that provides a textual analysis of the Maskoke curriculum content of materials from when Tribal Nations developed and controlled their own schools within Indian Territory. Furthermore, due to the critical endangered status of the Maskoke language, there are only a handful of people in this world that can directly engage in this effort. My background as a Seminole tribal citizen, daughter of a first language speaker, second language learner, and language revitalization advocate aid in the translation of these materials for future research.

Methodology & Sources

This project utilizes what has been contained within governmental documents, archives, photographs and most importantly, tribal and family history. The methodological framing of my research blends archival collections, tribal and family history, linguistics, and the inclusion of what Saidiya Hartmann calls critical fabulation, "to imagine what might have been."[116] Hartman's critical

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115. During the writing of this phase of my dissertation, we were experiencing a global pandemic that impacted my ability to work closely with elders in translating some of the materials. I have included a short translation of one of the texts, however, future work will be needed in this area.

116. Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 7-11. Hartman describes this as the rearranging of a story, "re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view, I have attempted to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done."(p. 11).

fabulation is a key feature of my project. Archival documentary research is a key role in this study. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of Federal Indian policy as well as official publications of Reports of the Secretary of the Interior offer us further insight into the aims of the federal government and the subsequent role they played in tribal education.

Materials that were examined included:

- Curriculum materials (primers, textbooks, official government documents)
- Personal (letters, diaries, etc.)
- Official (government documents, reports, ledgers, etc.)
- Photographs (classroom space, materials on the walls, etc.)

Each of these materials leads us to an understanding of how the curriculum was taught, the arrangement of spaces, and how the education for Seminole Nation students was conducted via oversight by the Tribal Nation and/or the federal government. Secondary sources supplementing the primary source materials have been collected. The Western History Collections at the University of Oklahoma was uniquely suited to assist in my research because it housed many collections that serve as primary source materials. In order to look at what was taking place within the Seminole Nation, it is critical to examine what was occurring within other Nations in Indian Territory. For example, in the *Agnes Fuller Collection,* the teacher certification was good for anywhere in Indian Territory and around 1904

was stamped with "Allow White Children to Attend for Free."[117] These documents help provide context to federal policies during that time period. Other primary source materials relevant to this study include the following manuscript collections: WPA Indian Pioneer Papers, Doris Duke Collection, Roscoe Cate, Guy Cutlip, and John D. Benedict. The diary of Mrs. John B. Lilley, one of the first missionaries and teachers in the Seminole Nation, and John Ross Ramsay, one of the first missionaries to the area also aided in this study. Another important archive is the Sequoyah National Research Center at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. The granddaughter of Alice Brown Davis, who served as Superintendent to Emahaka School, has donated her collection to the research center. Included in this archive are memoirs of Emahaka and the Maskoke Second Primer along with personal letters from Alice Brown Davis. The Oklahoma Historical Center is the repository for Mekusukey Mission materials. Included in this collection are governmental records, student records, inventory sheets and faculty correspondence. In addition, there are photos of early Seminole school sites, Alice Brown Davis' certificates, and curriculum materials included at these sites. The National Archives at Ft. Worth include records of the United States government in Indian Territory. Personal letters to John D. Benedict, Secretary of Indian Education reports, student files and records are all housed at this

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[117] Agnes Fuller Collection, Box F5, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma.

archive. The collections of archival materials have greatly added to the scope and depth of this project.

Organization

"The Broad Daylight of Knowledge: Seminole Education 1843-1930" is organized into five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction and the historiography of Indigenous Education as well as Education in Indian Territory. It also includes some of the background on the sociopolitical environment the Seminoles encountered during the forced removal, an act of genocide perpetuated by the U.S. government, to what is presently known as Oklahoma. The Chapter also identifies key Seminole leadership.

Chapter Two examines early Seminole Schools that led to the development of Emahaka and Mekusukey Mission schools. The first, Oak Ridge Mission was developed by John Bemo and the Lilley family who were early missionaries to the area. The next few schools included Ramsay Mission, Sasakwa Female Academy, and later Emahaka and Mekusukey Mission Academies. These schools were initially developed by missionaries and supported by Seminole Tribal leaders. Central to this chapter will be the influence that missionaries had on the development of these schools. Some of the earliest reports of missionaries to the Seminole Nation occurred in 1848, between the Second and Third Seminole wars with the United States government. The Seminole were undergoing colossal changes that were purposefully enacted to take care of the "Indian Problem." Thus this study examines federal policies that impacted the development of early Seminole schools. Also included in this chapter are

pertinent notes, stories and experiences that have shaped my understanding of these histories.

Chapter Three examines the relations between Seminole and Seminole Freedmen people and student experiences. The Five Tribes were undergoing tremendous change politically, as they entered into final treaty negotiations during 1866. This chapter examines how these relations influenced Seminole-Freedmen participation in schools. In addition, the Doris Duke Collection and Indian Pioneer papers both include accounts from formerly enslaved people as well as Seminole-Freedmen students who attended Mekusukey Mission School. These accounts discuss how Oklahoma's Jim Crow laws impacted participation in Seminole schools.

Chapter Four focuses on the curriculum of the school. A selection of Maskoke language curricular materials was selected for translation in addition to English language materials. The study of curriculum materials will help shed light on the ideologies that were conveyed to Tribal students and help us understand what the Seminole Nation valued in their schools. In addition, it will also help us understand how these curriculum ideologies might have changed with the change from Tribal to federal oversight.

Chapter Five looks at how educational policy transitioned from the Seminole Nation to federal policy. Leadership of the school was initially determined by the Seminole Nation, however that changed with Oklahoma statehood. However, preliminary research indicates that the Seminole Nation resisted these overtures by the federal government culminating in the refusal of

Alice Brown Davis to turn over Emahaka School.[118] The discovery of oil within Seminole County affected tribal land holdings which affected school properties. Preliminary research has yielded nefarious land sales which resulted in litigation brought forth by the Seminole Nation protesting the illegal sale of the Emahaka tract. Finally, this project links the dismantlement of Tribal schools as a critical component of the United States' settler colonization project.

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118. Alice Brown Davis Collection, Box 1, Folder 3. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma. The manuscript also mentions Alice Brown Davis was a member of the influential Brown Family of the Seminole Nation. She was contracted to serve as Superintendent of the school, while her brother John F. Brown served as Governor of the Seminole Nation. Mrs. Davis wielded considerable influence in the Seminole Nation as she was a bilingual speaker of both English and the Maskoke language and highly respected among her peers.; See also, Michael E. Welsh, "The Road to Assimilation: The Seminoles in Oklahoma, 1839-1936," (PhD dissertation, The University of New Mexico, 1983).

CHAPTER TWO

Seminole Education Prior to Arrival of Missionaries

The socialization and education of Seminole children in families was shaped by a collective community.[1] Children were cared for and taught by a host of family, clan relatives and community members. The contributions of the family members who were related matrilineally to children were especially significant. Core organizing processes for child development and education were structured around fundamental principles. These values were comprised of the following: Eyasketv, Vnokeckv, Kvncvpeckv and Heromkv.[2] Eyasketv can be described as carrying oneself in a humble manner. Children were not supposed to boast about themselves or their accomplishments. Vnokeckv's literal translation means "I would take your sickness or pain for you" and was a way of expressing love for someone. This concept was central to a child's teaching because there was no greater description for how children who would grow into adults that would care for a collective community. Love for others was central to guiding every interaction, act and decision making process. Kvncvpkv is to have humility, to put

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1. I am using past tense for purposes of this project, however, I assert that these features of education continue to be perpetuated in Seminole families and communities.

2. Some of these values are as described by the former Assistant Chief of the Seminole Nation, Mrs. Ella Colman. The concepts of these values can be described in the following ways, although the meaning is more comprehensive in our language, while English lacks the nuances and detail that can provide the exact meaning. Context is also key as they can convey different meanings when utilized in other ways.

the wellbeing of others before oneself. This concept was especially critical, as it served as a reminder that the focus of decisions would always place the needs of others (or by extension, the community) above the individual. Heromkv is to remind us to always show kindness to others. These tenets would have been central to a Seminole child's teachings.[3] Children were encouraged to display these characteristics in all facets of life and each served as a way of being. Interactions with others, including our non-human relations such as the animals, the plants and the land were to be core to the educational philosophy that encompassed these values.

Mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, clan relatives and community members all played an integral role in the education of the children. Grandparents and especially the maternal grandmother, played an integral role in the transmission of knowledge traditions. Our people were matrilocal and follow the matrilineal line. The child's mother, and the maternal grandmother would have been central to the child's caretaking. Maternal aunts were referred to in our language as the "little mothers" because they often helped fill in the role of child rearing. Children knew that if their mother was not able to take care of their need, their little mothers would, and enjoyed an especially close relationship to her. The maternal uncle, referred to as Puwv, would have also played an integral role in the child's upbringing, and have often served as the

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3. These values might have differed by family, clan or community and should not be construed as the only tenets.

disciplinarian for the child, if called upon by the mother. The maternal grandmother was an important matriarch and the whole family would look to her for guidance. Her grandchildren were doted upon, and she played a focal role in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge traditions. Each of these individuals formed a collective of mvhayvlke, or those who teach.

Children were considered to be sacred and they were brought up with the knowledge traditions that stemmed from our interconnected relationships of life. These relationships include our relations that include the non-human, the Birds, the Wind, the Sweet Potato, the water and all of those that live in relationship to each other.[4] Long before institutional buildings called schools assigned genres such as legends or myths, our stories told us of how we came from the earth and remind us that at one time, our people and the animals spoke the same language. We refer to these stories as nak-onvkuce. We do not consider these stories to be myths or legends. These concepts imply that they are not real. Rather our stories guide our philosophies, our cosmologies and are repositories of memory. They are our archives and they continue to endure.

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4. This is not a comprehensive list, rather, these are just some of the relationships that our people are connected to and through. The Bird, Wind and Sweet Potato are just a few of the Seminole clans. Our clanship system is how we understand our relationships and roles. Although, I could write so much more about these forms of education, I recognize and respect the role of the clans and the propriety of what is appropriate to share and what belongs to our people to teach.

Missionary Teachers

The arrival of missionaries to the Seminole Nation with their ways, their values and their religion indelibly affected the ways in which Seminole children learned. The missionaries' purpose was to civilize and develop Christianity among the Seminole people. These ideologies created ruptures in the leadership of the Seminole Nation. Missionaries began to be looked at as authority figures. Richard Sattler found that Christian Seminoles resented required attendance at ceremonial events and complained to governmental officials. [5] These divisions led to some families abiding by the Church, while others opted to follow the ceremonial ways. Some Seminoles participated in both.[6] Although Christian Seminoles often would decline participation in the ceremonial life, Sattler found that they did not try to interfere or dissuade others from attending.[7] Missionaries to Indian Territory and the Seminole Nation played a unique role in shaping the school process for Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen students.

These teachers were supported by funds from their religious organizations and they brought their inherent beliefs about the role of Christianity to our people. For example, the American Indian Missionary Association's mission was to promote measures that would allow Native people to reside in their areas instead

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5. Richard A. Sattler, "Siminoli Italwa: Socio-political Change among the Oklahoma Seminoles between Removal and Allotment, 1836-1905," (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 1987), 295, Proquest (8713834).

6. Sattler, p. 333.

7. Ibid.

of driving them out.[8] Furthermore, they noted "instead of battling them into subjection with bullet and bayonet, [they] will make them peaceable citizens and pious Christians by our civil institutions and the Bible."[9] Christian missionaries advanced paternalistic ideologies believing that they were trying to "save the Indians." They likely looked upon the development of schools as one way to accomplish this endeavor.

Education within this era has to be contextualized with what was taking place on the war front. During the mid-nineteenth century, the Seminoles in 'Kvn-fvske (Florida) were still defending our people from the United States government, while others who had already been forcefully removed to Indian Territory were faced with tremendous changes. With the introduction of missionaries came the introduction of schools and teachers.

Teachers within Indian Territory were viewed with suspicion as the early missionaries to the Seminole Nation soon found out. By 1890, the United States Special Census Report on the Five Civilized Tribes noted that the majority of teachers within Tribal Schools were educated Indians, with very few whites.[10] A

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8. American Indian Mission Association, *Proceedings of the First Annual meeting of the American Indian Mission Association*, (Louisville: Sabin Americana 1500-1926,1843), 4.

9. Ibid, p. 4.

10. "Eleventh Census of the United States: Extra Census Bulletin of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indian Territory," (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1898), 21. https://www.srbeucheetribe.org/app/download/398890304/FiveCivilizedTribesOfIndianTerritory71844112.pdf (pdf of the original report that was filed by

few years later, it became clear that teachers within Seminole schools grappled with issues of integration between Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen students and their personal views of race. Who were teachers of Seminole students? How did their ideologies shape practice within Seminole spaces of education? These are the questions that I had when I began this project. It was a subject that I was keenly interested in because of my experience as a classroom teacher. My background shaped and strengthened my understanding of the impact that Indigenous teachers demonstrate in Tribal communities and I wondered about those who had taught in our early schools. Did my ancestors have access to Seminole teachers? Who were the individuals that taught with their own sets of ideologies, rules and expectations? How did our people respond to a new cadre of mvhayvlke?

Missionary support was bolstered with the support of Congressional funds that were appropriated as early as the 1819 Civilization Fund.[11] While the fund contributed to the missions with $10,000 appropriations, monies were funneled through the religious organizations. Missionaries requested allocations from their respective organizations. Early reports of annual funding and missionary progress were tied directly to the United States Department of War.[12] Ironically, while

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Donaldson, subsequently he sued the Census Secretary for omitting portions of this report in later publications).

11. "The Missionary Impulse," *Digital History* online, accessed October 13, 2017, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=683.

12. The United States Department of War oversaw Indian Affairs until 1849. For further information, "Records of the Office of the Secretary of war:

colonial soldiers were waging violent war against our people, missionaries were unleashed to wage a different form of warfare in classrooms and communities. In this chapter, I argue that while missionary teachers to the Seminole Nation served as important tools to the settler colonization project, Seminole people often demonstrated refusal of the many settler demands for assimilation in the educational process. The first teacher within the Seminole Nation was in fact Seminole, and his advocacy for our people stemmed from his experiences with the violence of white settlement and land dispossession. I anchor school development and mission work to the United States policy of genocide because the development of schools cannot stand alone from the ontology of Seminole life. As missionaries began to set their sights upon the Seminoles in Indian Territory, their entryway into the Seminole Nation was through an enterprising source: John Bemo, the nephew of noted Seminole war leader, Vsse-yahola (Osceola).

Rev. John Bemo

One of the first proponents of establishing a school system in the Seminole Nation was John Douglas Bemo. Michael Welsh recorded the missionary era within the Seminole Nation from 1842-1885.[13] Mr. Bemo contributed greatly to the foundation of educational institutions within the new lands. Early biographical

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Administrative History," *National Archives,* July 29, 2020, https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/107.html.

13. Michael Welsh, "The Missionary Spirit: Protestantism Among the Oklahoma Seminoles, 1842-1885," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 61, no. 1, (1983): 30.

sketches of John Bemo indicate that he was born around the year 1825.[14] While on a visit to St. Augustine with his father, his father passed away during the trip. Welsh reports that the was detained by federal troops during the beginning of the second Seminole War until a French ship captain, Jean Bemeau adopted him.[15] Other accounts state that he was taken in after his father's death by the sailors in St. Augustine.[16] As a young man, he gained valuable skills as a sailor, and saw much of the world via the maritime life. It was during this time upon the ocean that young John Bemo converted to Christianity.[17] When he returned to Florida to look for his mother, his efforts were stymied by the ongoing Seminole Wars.[18] Sadly, he was unable to locate his family or his mother as they were no longer found in the area they had called home.[19]

Early documents indicate that at some point in his younger years Bemo "proceeded to join his people, who had been removed to their new home in the west, when he found them in great want and distress."[20] When he inquired about

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14. Edward Thomson and Davis Wasgatt Clark, *Sketches, Biographical and Incidental* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1868), 133.

15. Welsh, 30. Welsh found that his name was anglicized from Bemeau to Bemo. Descendants of the Bemos still carry the name to this day.

16. Thomson and Clark, p. 134.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

his relatives he learned they were most likely killed in the war.[21] These experiences shaped his perspectives and certainly influenced his later life choices to advocate for the Seminole people. Archival documents indicate he was a persuasive orator who regaled audiences of his life as a Seminole and as a Christian. He centered some of his speeches around the welfare of the Seminole people, often raising money for food and clothing.[22]

Influenced by the Reverend Orson Douglas, young John Bemo realized that his mission was to serve his own people and made plans to set up a mission in the new Seminole Nation.[23] Welsh reported that in 1842, Bemo was contracted by the United States Indian Office and the Seminole council to establish a government school for the Tribe. He reported to the Seminole agent in 1843 to begin his work.[24] By the spring of 1844, John Bemo and his Creek wife, Harriet Lewis, had a class of forty students at their day school, located in the far southwestern portion of the Muscogee Nation.[25] They named their school Prospect Hill.[26]

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21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 136.

23. Welsh, p. 31.

24. Ibid.,

25. Ibid.,

26. Ibid., Welsh notes this school was located in the western portion of the Muscogee Creek Nation. The western portion of this area is heavily Seminole, yet the jurisdictional areas of the two reservations are so heavily settled, that where

Complicating matters within the Seminole Nation was the ongoing war with the United States government. The conclusion of the Second Seminole War in 1842 saw the forced genocide of Seminole people, Seminole-Freedmen and free Blacks. Thousands of mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents and children were moved like cattle under gunpoint to the lands in Indian Territory. The late Seminole elder, Joanna Palmer Morris shared this history during an interview conducted in the Masoke language. The English language is italicized.

> …acunēckvkof Semvnolvlke Kvn-fvske vtothoyat vtohket ǫhoyvtēs. Yv pum
> *…when we moved, when the Seminoles were driven out of Florida. It was not*
> eyackv tokon mont owen stemerkv sofkē ’teropotten enhomahtet yihocvtēt ont
> *what we wanted, but they were led through deep sorrows and got here. And a*
> os fulhoyat. Mont on este tat yvmahkaket ’petak hvte heckakusat enokhokusē
> *lot of people were destroyed. The newborn babies, they might have been sick*
> tis owēpē witvtēs ont on hvkihēc’n owat, mont owen hvmke tat mowen mak-
> *when they cried, and there was one person, a Seminole person that was*
> vhvn mv ’ste-Semvnole avtohhokē estvpakvtē somkētt owvnks. Lucinda
> *included, she passed away. Lucinda Coker was her name. And as she told.*
> Coker hocefkvt owvtēs. Mont owen onayat, mv hopuewuce cųtkusēt owen
> *The little baby wouldn’t quit crying and one of the soldiers took it and hit*
> hvkihkat wik[e]ku tayen owet on mvn suletawv hvmket estucen ehset tohopke
> *its head against the post and killed it. The land they were driven from, as they*
> hueratet mvn ekv snafket elēhocvtēt owēs. Mv ēkvnv vtohhokē avhohoyat,
> *were coming, and as they came through terrible hardships…*
> mont on nak stemerke tat ropottēn avtohhoken fullvtēt owē[s]…[27]

I share Mrs. Palmer-Morris’ story because the language that is historically written about this time period often sanitizes the events that led to our arrival in Indian Territory. While colonial politicians were debating the merits of democracy and

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the Creek lines begin, the Seminoles still have remained. The current Seminole Nation administrative building that houses the Executive Office is technically on Creek lands.

27. Muskogee (Seminole/Creek) Documentation Project, *Interview with Joanna Palmer-Morris,* video, 26:19, http://muskogee.blogs.wm.edu/interviews/mus16024/

highlighting agendas of "civilization" to serve their claims over land and territory, they were also enacting violent policies of genocide. Our people were arriving in this new land, with a very different ecological environment under the harshest of conditions. This new land required a transition in Seminole approaches to ecological education. Specifically, while our people were well versed in land-based approaches to education, a change in environment required a restructuring of knowledge traditions that were developed around those lands. Knowledge of the land and its gifts of food, shelter and necessities was vital to our survival and these relationships between us and the land had been strengthened over thousands of years. Families would have to have been intimately familiar with when and where to plant crops, hunting locations, migratory patterns. The United States policies brutally upended these processes foundational to not only our survival, but also educational systems that had informed our epistemic philosophies.

John Bemo would have witnessed the harsh conditions during the early years. He was very likely faced with the tough choice to either remain and continue to teach, or to explore alternative methods to contribute to the well-being of his people. He returned once again to the East to embark upon a lecture tour to raise money for the Seminole people to combat starvation.[28] Early reports noted that he supported himself by lecturing and charging for his appearances.[29] The topics of his lectures were centered around the plight of his people. He clearly

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28. Welsh, p. 62.

29. Ibid.

saw himself as an advocate to advance the conditions of Seminoles in their new lands.

Early accounts of his speaking engagements illustrate three major points that Mr. Bemo carried in his messages. The first point highlighted the morality of the war waged upon the Seminole which cost millions of dollars and the loss of many lives.[30] The second point was the love (vnokeckv) that the Seminole people carried for their family members and for the ancestors who were buried in our original homelands.[31] The third point highlighted the cruel nature that white people inflicted upon the Seminole people. [32] Thomson and Clark's 1868 biographical sketch of John Bemo noted[33]

> The day may come when the American will blush at that page of history which will record the origin, the progress and the termination of the Florida war, in which human beings were hunted by bloodhounds, and driven from a sunny home...

It appears that John Bemo's advocacy to contribute to the well-being of the tribe took immediate precedence over the functions of Prospect Hill school, as the school doesn't appear readily in the archival literature very often. Although it must have been a difficult choice to choose between his school or to help raise

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30. Thomson and Clark, p. 136

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Thomson and Clark, p. 137

funds for the well-being of the people at that time, he never lost sight of the importance of developing schools within the Seminole Nation.



Figure 1. *John Bemo, 1875.* Source: #1140, J. Coody Johnson Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society.

In August of 1846, the Rev. William Loughridge, who settled within the Creek Nation, accompanied fellow missionaries to the Seminole Nation to inquire about setting up a mission and school.[34] Traveling with an interpreter, his trip was to gauge Seminole support for a new mission. One of his first stops on his route was in Halack's town where he reported the people living in good log cabins, with

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34. The Foreign Missionary Chronicle, Mission House, New York, v. 15, no. 3. 1847, p. 74, https://archive.org/details/missionarychroni153unse/page/74/mode/2up?q=John+Bemo

a population of around three hundred.[35] He found them open to the development of a school, gauged their interest as indifferent to the Christian religion, but did not oppose the preaching.[36] Noting that the Seminoles were organized into four distinct towns, he then visited Mekōnvpē's town, also home to the noted warrior Kowakkoce.[37]

Kowakkoce's role as speaker afforded him the opportunity to serve as a spokesperson to any foreign delegation such as the Christian missions. When Loughridge queried Kowakkoce about the potential for setting up a mission and school, Kowakkoce replied "he was an Indian himself, and he wished his children to be raised Indians, but did not know what the rest of the people might think about it, they could speak for themselves."[38] Kowakkoce also noted that their town had received word from Creek chiefs that urged them to oppose the white men's ways, noting the danger that was inherent in what ideologies they were propelling. Kowakkoce stressed to Loughridge, "they were much pleased with John Bemo, he had taught them for some time, and they wanted him to come and live with them and teach their children."[39] Seminole leaders were adamant that Seminole people should be serving in educational roles as they were respected to

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35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 74.

39. Ibid., 75.

convey the peoples' values to tribal children. Kowakkoce's statement also demonstrates a form of refusal to consent to the elimination of Seminole educational processes that had sustained our people for generations.[40]

Loughridge's mission report notes that the four Seminole towns would prove to be a challenge to their "improvement."[41] He further indicated that a boarding school would propel them towards "civilization" and would be the principal means of converting them.[42] Establishing a school within the Seminole Nation would place Seminole children to serve as a "powerful influence" to Christianize and civilize Seminole parents and families.[43] Loughridge was familiar with John Bemo and there was communication between the two men. John Bemo continued to travel to the East to continue his advocacy for the Seminole people.

It was during one of these trips between 1846-1847, that a white missionary, John B. Lilley, became acquainted with the young Seminole after

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40. Audra Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016): 321.

41. The Foreign Missionary Chronicle, Mission House, New York, v. 15, no. 3. 1847, p. 74, https://archive.org/details/missionarychroni153unse/page/74/mode/2up?q=John+Bemo

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., 75.

attending one of his speaking engagements.[44] As John recounted his efforts to advance the Seminole people and fundraised, John B. Lilley was intrigued. He was interested in serving the Seminoles in another way. He chose to travel West toward Indian Territory with his growing family. In 1847, John Bemo set about building a log cabin for the Lilley family.[45] This log cabin would serve as the site of the second school established within the Seminole Nation.

John Bemo continued to have considerable influence over the well-being of his Seminole people. As they approached the Civil War, he was noted for stopping the efforts of a Baptist missionary that was trying to persuade the Seminoles to join the Confederacy.[46] Although he was maligned by this particular missionary, many accounts indicate that many people supported him by testifying to his character and faith. John Bemo continued to serve as a teacher in the next school that he built with the assistance of the Lilleys, the Oak Ridge Mission

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44. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

45. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

46. "John Douglas Bemo Vindicated," Record of the Times, (Wilkes-Barre, PA)1876. https://www.newspapers.com/clip/3557969/john-douglas-bemo-vindicatedrecord-of/.

School and reportedly baptized John Jumper one of the Seminole leaders.[47] His long life of service to his beloved people continued on until his death in 1890.[48]

Mary Ann Lilley

The Lilley family made the journey to Indian Territory via wagon and steamboat.[49] A witness to the genocidal policy of Indian Removal, her Mary Ann Lilley's diary reveals that she personally viewed the removal of a large number of Muscogee who were being removed from Alabama to Indian Territory during her journey. She recalled that she was not much of the missionary spirit, but was rather appeasing her husband in his wish to move to Indian Territory and to serve as a missionary. Upon arriving to Indian Territory, they made their way to the Muscogee Nation to learn from one of the early missionaries to that Nation. After spending a few years with the Rev. Loughridge in the Muscogee Nation, in October of 1848, they arrived at their destination in the southeast corner of their tribal area. There were many Seminoles and Muscogees that lived in the area. Mr. Bemo had traveled ahead and quickly built a small cabin for them. She noted "When at last we arrived at the sight of the Mission, it was a desolate looking

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47. Dianna Everett, "Bemo, John Douglas," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=BE014.

48. Ibid.

49. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

place, right in the midst of a sandy plain, a little log cabin, without a window, just a door and a shutter on wooden hinges."[50]

The roots of the new school, Oak Ridge Mission, a Presbyterian school, was established among the Seminole people of Indian Territory around 1848. Mary Ann Lilley documented the challenge they had in finding acceptance among the Seminole people. She shares "at first they thought we wanted to get their children and then send them away and perhaps make slaves of them, but when they saw that we treated the children kindly they began to think better of us".[51] Although the Lilley family were white missionaries within this territory, their very presence and interest in the children incited fear among the Seminole and Seminole Freedmen. Indian Removal policies were still being enacted during this period and the fear of enslavement and genocide were certainly salient for many of our people. During the year 1850, the Seminole and Seminole Freedmen who were aligned, fended off attacks from white settlers, Cherokees and Muscogees who were invading Seminole settlements to kidnap the Seminole Freedmen.[52] This was an issue that continued to affect many of the families, and culminated

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50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., p. 29.

52. Mulroy, p. 81.

with a few hundred Seminole and Seminole Freedmen who relocated to Mexico to build a community in which they were free.[53]

Only one year prior to the Lilleys arrival, Kevin Mulroy noted that the Seminole Agent, Duval, reported in 1846,

> The subject of education is thought about as little of, as if it was only intended for White people. They feel themselves and desire to be considered, as decidedly beyond the pale of civilizations, perfectly satisfied to walk in the 'footsteps of their predecessors," showing, as far as mental improvement is concerned, a philosophy in being satisfied with their present state.[54]

Federal reports demonstrate foreign ideologies that were being externally imposed the Seminole people. The Seminole experience with the white settlers and United States military had clearly demonstrated that their ideas for education would have been laden with their values, and as Kowakkoce expressed, he did not want that for his children. There were most likely many others that would have supported Kowakkoce's sentiment. Although Duval was referencing specifically the Seminole, these type of federal ideologies were widespread throughout the United States as the federal agents reported on conditions within Tribal Nations.[55] Ironically, as this agent was reporting on those there were beyond the "pale of civilization" the military were engaged in the theft of land and genocide.

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53. Kenneth Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2013), p. 131. See also, Susan Miller's Coacoochee's Bones for an excellent historical narrative of this journey.

54. Mulroy, p. 91.

55. See Brenda Child, Boarding School Seasons, Education for Extinction by David Wallace, etc.

By the Spring of 1849, Mr. Lilley went to visit the leader of the Seminoles, Mekōnvpē, in order to get permission to begin a school. The Chief agreed to the opening Oak Ridge Mission school, but Mrs. Lilley noted, that Kowakkoce, who was a prominent Seminole leader, did not take think favorably on that idea. It is very likely that Mekōnvpē gave his approval because John Bemo vouched for the Lilley family. Although he gave his permission, Kowakkoce's reaction indicates that not everyone agreed to the proposal. However, because Mekōnvpē was Kowakkoce's maternal uncle, his deference to his uncle on the matter was in line with the respect accorded to him due to this relationship. However, he remained critical of the Mission and school project. Mrs. Lilley recalled being brought to tears when Kowakkoce chastised them for being in the area long enough to clear the woods, but had not yet opened the school.[56] He had every reason to be suspicious of the white missionaries.

Just a few short years before, Kowakkoce, a noted Seminole warrior, had fought valiantly in the Seminole Wars against the United States. He might have viewed the development of schools within the Seminole Nation as an affront to the tribe, because his experience with governmental officials, and their representatives, would have given him great reasons to distrust them. The development of schools within the Seminole Nation must always be placed within the ontology of the conditions for the forced march to Indian Territory. It is well

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56. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

documented that United States military leaders utilized nefarious means to entice tribal leaders into peace talks, inducing some to sign treaties written in the English language.[57] The missions had support from the United States government. By 1850, the Secretary of the Interior's report included details that illustrate the drive to acquire Indigenous land was very much a critical point to further the Nation-State. The report asked,

> "…the question forces itself upon the mind of the statesman and the philanthropist, what is to become of the aboriginal race? This question must be fairly met. A temporizing system can no longer be pursued. The policy of removal, except under peculiar circumstances, must be abandoned, and the only alternatives left are to civilize or exterminate them. We must adopt one or the other." [58]

The United States government did not know what to do about the Native people. They viewed the tribes in the original homelands as a problem. Grant Foreman found that in 1854, the Florida legislature had outlawed any trade with the Seminoles still in Florida.[59] They hoped to force the removal of the remaining Seminoles by severing any means of securing ammunition or supplies.[60]Once they forced the tribes to move west of the Mississippi River, they were still

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57. Porter, p. 32. Porter reminds us that treaties were written in languages that were not spoken by Seminole leaders. They were required to trust the interpreters who translated for them.

58. Report of the Secretary of the Interior, p. 502, 1850. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015031655296&view=2up&seq=20

59. Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes: Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 253.

60. Ibid.

contemplating "extermination." It posed quite a conundrum to their ideals of American expansionism. As Wolfe reminds us, the goal was to eliminate complex societies of Indigenous people to strengthen white settler claims to territory.[61] During 1853, the Secretary of the Interior reported that "Ample provision should be made for educational purposes. The missionary establishments among them, which have been very successful in converting many to Christianity and reforming and civilizing them, should be fostered and encouraged."[62]

The Oak Ridge School building was made of hewn logs, and was described as being two stories high and approximately twenty feet in length and sixteen feet high.[63] There was also a 12x14 log building that served as the meat house.[64] The land surrounding the mission was fenced for fields and gardens while the farm produced up to 450 bushels of corn that sustained the school.[65] Enrollment consisted of seventeen Seminole students and four Muscogee children during the first year.[66]

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61. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research*, no. 8:4, (2006): 393.

62. Report of the Secretary of the Interior, p. 7, 1852-1853, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015031655288&view=2up&seq=7

63. Mrs. E.P. Smith Collection, Box S10, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

64. Ibid.,

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

Oak Ridge Mission school students were taught by John and Mary Ann Lilley and John and Harriet Bemo. After the Lilley's daughters graduated from their schools in Ohio they returned to Oak Ridge and became faculty at the school. The Bemos resigned when new faculty were added, including the Reverend J.R. Ramsay in 1855.[67] They may have felt pushed to resign with the missionaries taking over the school duties. The missionaries might have also diminished Bemo's role at the mission. Enrollment at Oak Ridge Mission school grew to twenty-six students and it was reported that at least 12-14 students could read the Bible. Newspaper articles reported that "English was considered a foreign language by these students."[68] The mission school reports also provided information on the social events of the area as the Rev. J.R. Ramsay married Eliza Lilley in 1857.[69] The final report of Oak Ridge indicated the faculty consisted of "one American minister, one American male teachers, three American female teachers and forty-three communicants to the church."[70]

The purpose of the missions was to prosthelytize to the Seminoles in hopes of coverting the tribal people to Christianity. This aim was very evident

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67. Ibid,

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

throughout the documents of the missionaries.[71] The influence of the missionaries brought about tremendous social change among the Seminoles and the conflict between Seminole epistemological beliefs and the missionaries was often waged over the lives of the children within the care of the schools. For example, Mary Ann Lilley wrote about the death of one of her infants and how the missionaries had the children carry the small casket for the burial, violating Seminole customs and restrictions surrounding death. Upon hearing about the role of the children in the burial of the Lilley baby, Seminole parents gathered up their children so that they could maintain tribal restrictions regarding funeral rites as was customary for our people.[72] Mrs. Lilley described her astonishment that Seminole parents were upset about this incident. However, Seminole cultural beliefs were strictly adhered to even under the gaze of the missionaries. This incident highlights refusal of the Seminole people to cast aside the belief systems and practices in the face of enormous pressure from missionaries that viewed cultural practices as pagan. They continued to participate in the mission and schools, but their participation was contingent upon their own terms and conditions.

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71. The Foreign Missionary Chronicle, Mission House, New York, v. 15, no. 3. 1847, p. 74, https://archive.org/details/missionarychroni153unse/page/74/mode/2up?q=John+Bemo

72. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

James Ross Ramsay

James Ross Ramsay graduated from the Princeton Theological School in 1849.[73] He remarked being attracted to the idea of the foreign missions and initially wanted to serve in Africa, but his fiancé, Martha, was horrified at that idea. After reading more about the African missions he became convinced that the missionary work should be done by Africans, he then set his sight on missions in Indian Territory. He had his board change his detail from Africa to Koweta, Muscogee Nation.[74] Reverend Ramsay spent some time with the Loughridges at Tallahassee Mission before meeting with John Bemo and heading for the Seminole Mission for the very first time that year.

When he arrived at the Oak Ridge Mission, he took on the role of a preacher as Mr. Lilley was only a lay person and he ministered to area homes. The Lilleys relied upon Willis, a Seminole Freedmen who interpreted for them during their work at the Mission. Ramsay noted a visit to the Rockey Mountain area where "an old African named Uncle Warren and his wife Aunt Sue lived" and would stay overnight there that week.[75] Rev. Ramsay remarked "We had a very pleasant meeting, Africans and Indians made the house full."[76] John Bemo

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73. James Ross Ramsay Autobiography, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, p. 7.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

also traveled with him via horseback to serve the Rockey Mountain area. Mr. Lilley toured him throughout the area and it was during this trip that he noted the extreme poverty that the Seminole people were living in. Annuities and rations that had been promised during earlier treaties had not materialized.[77]

After losing his wife Martha to consumption back in the East, Reverend Ramsay wouldn't return to the Seminole Nation until the Spring of 1856.[78] When he arrived to his new detail at the mission, the Lilleys had built him a simple log cabin, and it was there that he would live with his new bride, Eliza Lilley, the daughter of John and Mary Ann Lilley.[79] Oak Ridge at that time had several converts to the Presbyterian faith, with school during the week and sermons on the Sabbath.[80] He noted that Willis, the interpreter, had passed away years before. They were in need of an interpreter and were having difficulty finding a reliable person who had fluency in both languages. Ramsay wrote,

> We determined, Mr. Lilley and myself, to use our own brains to acquire the language so that we might speak to the people without an interpreter. Mr. Lilley's children had learned to talk the Muscogee language: and sometimes we tried to persuade his daughters to interpret for us. And on one occasion in performing the marriage ceremony, Maggie, now Mrs. Washburn, interpreted for me in marrying two natives.[81]

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77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid., p. 33.

81. Ibid., p. 33.

Reverend Ramsay's remarks on the Muscogee language being so prominent in the Mission indicates that the language was the primary language of the area. Oak Ridge students must have spoken the language frequently. The Lilley children, whose playmates were probably Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen children, would have been immersed in the tribal language and would have developed bilingual skills that enabled them to undertake the translations.

Rev. Ramsay noted that he and Mr. Lilley would travel to different areas to preach, and those towns often were "African" towns. In reality, they were most likely townships that were home to free blacks and Seminole-Freedmen. One of the towns that he mentioned was Uncle Charles town, where the people demonstrated their trust of Mr. Lilley.[82] It was during this time, that Ramsay indicated the frustration that he felt when Mr. John Bemo, who had been a faithful Presbyterian, was baptized into the Baptist faith by his rival, the Baptist preacher, Rev. Buckner.[83] Ramsay was so upset that Mr. Bemo had switched his denomination, he denigrated him by charging that Mr. Bemo was illiterate and lazy. The real issue appeared to be that Mr. Bemo was persuasive in his ministry, and he had a way of preaching that spoke to the people. In his autobiography, Reverend Ramsay remembers traveling with Mr. Lilley back to Uncle Charles

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82. Ibid., p. 33.

83. Ibid., p. 33.

Town to discuss setting up a church, only to find the town's people had already been baptized into the Baptist faith by none other than John Bemo.[84]

Reverend Ramsay, and Mr. Lilley (who become ordained as a preacher in 1857), were still attempting to learn the tribal language, but were lacking in the acquisition. While serving at Koweta, he had utilized the services of a Robin Foster, who was enslaved in the Muscogee Nation.[85] Reverend Ramsay called upon the enslaver of Robin Foster and requested that he hire him to provide interpretations for him again at the Oak Ridge Mission. Robin Foster and his wife Elizabeth Hawkins moved to the Oak Ridge Mission where he interpreted for the preachers. [86] It is not known as to whether or not the Fosters were paid for their services. If their experience was anything like at Koweta, then they were most likely only paid one day out of the week, while the rest of the wages for the other days went to his Muscogee enslaver.[87]

Reverend Ramsay traveled across Indian Territory, and was particularly impressed with the ways in which the ministers in the Choctaw Nation spoke the Choctaw language so fluently in their Missions. He was even more determined to pick up the Muscogee language.[88] The missionaries to Indian Territory were

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84. Ibid..

85. Ibid., p. 34.

86. Ibid.,

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

required to learn the languages of the people who they hoped to convert. Interpreters to the languages were few and far between, and to be really effective, it was in the best interest of the missionary to acquire the local language. The Seminoles' use of their languages was an act of refusal to eliminate it in favor of the foreign English language and the missionaries recognized and responded to this in a myriad of ways.

Back at the Oak Ridge Mission, Reverend Ramsay shared his travels with the members of his church. He noted that the majority of members were from the Ochese Town.[89] In particular, he highlighted two men of the town, Chofulwa (Ecofulwv or Deer Shoulder) and Yaha (Wolf) who wanted to convert to the new religion. Reverend Ramsay was surprised that the men were more open to receive the gospel than the women. The wives of these two men were opposed to the conversion, but became amenable to the prospect later.[90]

Reverend Ramsay became obsessed with learning the Maskoke language. He began to develop a dictionary between the winter of 1856-1857, and labored to understand the syntax of the language.[91] He again called upon Robin Foster to help him understand the translations in his homemade dictionary and said that it must have been very boring for him because he often caught him nodding off. He

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89. Ochese is one of the current bands of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma today.

90. James Ross Ramsay Collections, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

91. Ibid.

even tried to enlist the help of his wife Eliza, who was bilingual, but stated "it was so common to her, she was rather jealous of my devoting so much time to the Indian language."[92] His younger sister-in-law was deemed the most correct speaker of the Muscogee language because she had been born in Indian Territory and had been reared speaking both since birth. At that time, the language taught in the schools must have been the foreign English language because Reverend Ramsay then began to translate pages of the First Reader, or the McGuffey Reader, page by page.[93] Robin Foster provided corrections to his translations.

Oak Ridge Mission served as a medical facility as Mr. Lilley had some skill in the area. Locals came to him for teeth extractions and simple surgeries.[94] Reverend Ramsay noted that the Seminole Chief John Jumper became an "inquirer" of the church during the Winter of 1856-1857[95]. He began to attend some sermons and he, along with his friend Yahafekseko endeavored to learn how to read and write. They became very familiar with the Bible and Ramsay kept a correspondence with them in the Muscogee language when they returned to Florida to try to encourage other Seminoles to move to Indian Territory. After his time spent with John Jumper, Reverend Ramsay was crushed when Jumper

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92. Ibid.,

93. Ibid., p. 38.

94. Ibid., p. 39.

95. Ibid.

became a member of the Baptist faith.[96] The battle between the denominations were taken very personally by Reverend Ramsay and Reverend Buckner.

Reverend Ramsay began the journey from the Muscogee Nation to the new Seminole Nation.[97] They began to build the new Oak Ridge Mission school in the new lands and endeavored to increase the number of Seminoles to the Presbyterian faith. He worked very hard to accomplish this task. Reverend Ramsay requested a leave of absence for three months so that he could visit his family back East.[98] Once the trip was granted, he and Eliza, along with their children, began the journey to his family home. They ended up remaining there for some years because the Civil War began.

Despite this turmoil, during the next few decades, the Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians began to situate their religious organizations among the Seminoles. They worked to further their missions by establishing institutions of learning throughout the Nation. This work was halted during the Civil War, as many missions abandoned their posts in order to seek safety. The Oak Ridge Mission suffered the same fate, as no reports came from the Mission during that

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96. Ibid.

97. When the Seminoles first arrived into Indian Territory, they were forced to live in Creek lands, under Creek rule according the treaty stipulations.

98. James Ross Ramsay, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

time.[99] The Seminole Nation was not immune to the effects of the war. The Nation was split, with some people siding with the Confederacy while others sided with the Union. As Seminoles scattered throughout the area during the war, the schools that were set up by the missions were abandoned.

After the Civil War ended, Reverend Ramsay returned to find Oak Ridge Mission burned down.[100] At the advice of Agent Major Reynolds, he immediately began plans to develop two new schools, one located at Wewoka and the other at Nobletown.[101] Ramsay elected to teach at the Nobletown school where he earned a $100 a month salary, while Mary Lilley taught at Wewoka for a similar salary in 1867-1868.[102] During the following Fall, he taught at Wewoka School as it was more convenient for his new location for the new proposed Wewoka Mission. In this location he planted an orchard with apple and peach trees. The school hours stretched especially long as he was chastised by Major Reynolds to cut the hours from six to four each school day. Seminole scholars were encouraged by tribal leaders such as Chupco who reminded them to be "obedient and studious."[103] In Autumn of 1869, the Presbyterian board authorized an allocation of $1200 to

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99. Mrs. E.P. Smith Collection, Box S10, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

100. James Ross Ramsay Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

101. Ibid., p. 72.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid., p. 73.

build a proper Mission on the site. By 1870, Mr. Lilley was brought back out to the Seminole lands to serve as a teacher to the school, and was glad to do so as "he had said to lay his bones with theirs."[104] Within three months of his return, he passed away peacefully of pneumonia, and almost the entire Nation was present at his funeral.[105] John Lilley began to teach at the school and Reverend Ramsay and Eliza's daughters also attended.

Reverend Ramsay was delighted that the new Agent to the Seminoles, Dr. Breinar was a fellow Presbyterian, and they made plans to build a new church mission building and school.[106] They opened the new school in the Fall of 1871 and took in a dozen Seminole children, six boys and six girls along with their own daughters and Hattie Lilley. Thomas McGeesey and Alice Brown were among the students that winter.[107] Ramsay continued to run the school until the Spring of 1873 when he ran into financial issues at the Mission and resigned. [108] He returned the following year, after losing his wife Eliza, and began working as an evangelist in Indian territory. Stationed at Wewoka Mission once again, his children

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104. Ibid., p. 76.

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid., p. 75.

107. Ibid., p. 76.

108. Ibid., p. 77.

attended school in the basement. The classes were taught by Antoinette Snow Constant, the wife of D.C. Constant.[109]



Figure 2. *Photograph of an Early Seminole School in 1890:* Source: Ralph Lamb Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society

In the Fall of 1877, the Ladies Missionary Society from New York offered to sponsor a Seminole Mission school.[110] The Seminole council appropriated $450 to support six boys in the school, while the Society matched their funds to support six more students. Although Mrs. Constant was not Ramsay's first choice to teach in the school, she was favored by Chupco. Chief Chupco issued an ultimatum to

109. Ibid., p. 80.

110. Ibid., p. 85.

Reverend Ramsay and he and his new wife, but they refused to have anything to do with the school if Mrs. Constant was involved. The Ramsays had their way, and Mrs. Constant was no longer employed as a teacher with their mission school.[111] This was more than likely the Ramsay Mission School.

Ramsay reported that in the summer of 1878, there was an examination at the school in which many of the Seminole leaders were in attendance.[112] The leaders were so pleased with the progress, they proposed to increase the attendance at the school to eighteen students.[113] Ramsay also details school drill competitions between his students and those of Mrs. Constant's school and claims that his students won each time.[114] By the next school year, the Seminole council endeavored to expand the school building to accommodate more students.

In the Fall of 1879, Rev. Ramsay's daughter, Maggie, started her career as the head teacher at the Mission school. She had thirty students and began to learn the Muscogee language, until she was called to a mission in Bogota mid school year. Her sister Addie and her father took over her teaching duties during the following Fall and Ramsay stated, "we felt much encouraged by what appeared to be a revival of religion in the school."[115] He continued to run the school with the

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111. Ibid., p. 86.

112. Ibid., p. 87.

113. Ibid..

114. Ibid..

115. Ibid., p. 90.

help of his wife, Miss Minnie Diament, and in the Spring of 1883, Susan Davis was appointed to assist them.[116] During 1883, school attendance was up to sixty-three; forty-five of those students were supported by the Seminole Nation, while the rest were funded by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. [117] In the Spring of 1886, Ramsay noted that a Dr. & Mrs. Junkin took charge of the Freedman's school, on the other side of Wewoka and remained in their positions for two years. This school was more than likely the Nobletown school. In the winter of 1888, the Presbyterian board appointed Warren Marshall to assist the Ramsays as a teacher. He was authoritative and as Ramsay quickly found out, "did not spare the rod."[118] Seminole families were angry at the mistreatment of their children, and Mr. Marshall resigned within the year.

Ramsay's autobiography contained the following note in 1890:

> A large new school building is being erected at Mekesukee Town; a very large and imposing edifice., but on a high hill, where very little water is to be had. The Presbyterian Home Board will probably assume charge of it; but who will be the Superintendent, I do not know; as I feel to far advanced in life to commence such an undertaking. This Mission is still in the hands of the Board and apparently will continue in their possessions; as it is theirs by treaty; but if the Board assumes the Mekesuckee school, they will transfer this Mission to the Freedmans' Board; and it is expected that this Mission will be used as a Freedmen's school. And who will be the Superintendent of that is yet undecided. It is expected however, that the Presbyterians will take charge of it; and that the same appropriation from the Nation towards carrying it on, will be received for the Freedmen, that is now being received for the Indians. In the mean time school will commence here again on the 15th of September, providence permitting.

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116. Ibid., p. 92.

117. Ibid., p. 93.

118. Ibid., p. 97.

> And when the new school building is finished and furnished: it probably will be removed to that place; and a Freedmen's school commenced here…[119]

Stella Elizabeth Blake

A few short years after Reverend Ramsay's note was written, the educational system within the Seminole Nation had undergone tremendous change. The Office of Indian School Superintendent was established through legislative action in the United States Congress in 1882, and the federal government had begun to intercede in school matters within the Seminole Nation.[120] Since the time of his note, Indian Territory had fallen under the territorial government of the state of Oklahoma, and this had an effect upon the teachers within the Seminole Nation. The Nation had indeed opened the Mekusukey Mission School that Rev. Ramsay had mentioned, it was modeled after the formidable Emahaka School building.

The structure of education among the Seminoles included a School Superintendent that was appointed by and reported to the Tribal Council.[121] In an 1884 report, the United States Superintendent of Indian Schools report indicated that although the schools of the Five Civilized Tribes were not included (due to

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119. Ibid., p. 99.

120. United States Office of Indian Affairs Superintendent of Indian Schools. *Report of the Superintendent of Indian schools.* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1896). https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924109838718&view=1up&se q=91

121. Joe C. Jackson, "Survey of Education in Eastern Oklahoma from 1907 to 1915," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 29, Summer 1951: 237.

the schools being financed and managed by the Tribes) and teachers from the area were tribal teachers.[122] By then, some of the missionaries retained a certain respect among tribal people and as such, teachers were approved by the church boards prior to placement.[123] By 1895, it was reported that there were two boarding schools and six day schools within the Seminole Nation.[124]

Emahaka and Mekusukey Mission were the two academies of the Seminole Nation. It is important to note that Seminoles were in control of education for the two academies after the missionaries withdrew their financial support. Most importantly, unlike other tribes, Seminole agreements with the government did not vest the power in the federal government to assume control of their schools.[125] The Academies were influenced by Christianity, yet in some ways, the school retained Seminole culture and language.[126]

At Emahaka Academy, anecdotal accounts of the school faculty were generally positive in nature. In one account, Mrs. Hixson, the daughter of William Packer Blake, the School Superintendent, shared a story in which she and a tribal student, Irene Davis (daughter of Alice Brown Davis) decided to peek in on their

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122. Report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools, House Report, Executive Doc. No. 1, 38th Congress, Second Session (1884).

123. Ibid.,

124. Ibid., 54.

125. Ibid.

126. Liturgical texts and Maskoke language materials were integral to school curriculum.

two teachers in the parlor as they entertained their suitors.[127] They were quickly found out when one of them leaned in for a better looked and fell. The two students were punished with a spanking, but both girls vowed to not tell their parents because they didn't want to receive another punishment.[128] Emahaka girls also resisted disciplinary tactics. One student, Byron S. Blake, recalled that a male teacher was pushed into a laundry bin and tumbled down the stairs right when he was getting ready to discipline a student.[129] Student accounts from the school indicate they had generally had respect for the teachers at the tribal schools. Yet, they were not afraid to show their displeasure when rules were being enforced.

In her description of Emahaka's faculty, Mrs. Hixson described the school principal, Miss Lillian Paxton, as a "a great disciplinarian and when she spoke, there was attention and response."[130] Laura Hough, who taught music was described as having sparkling brown eyes, a rosy complexion, and she was filled

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127. Mrs. Hixson was at Emahaka school from 1894-1907 as her father, William Packer Blake served as Superintendent of the school. Her information is found in the Garrard Ardeneum Collection, Box 14, Sequoyah National Research Center, University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR.

128. Ibid.

129. Robert E. Trevathan, "School Days at Emahaka Academy." *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 38, no. 3 (1960): 270. Byron S. Blake was the son of William Packer Blake, who served at the Superintendent at Emahaka. He was one of a very few white students who was allowed to attend the all girls school from 1894-1897.

130. Garrard Ardeneum Collection, Box 14, Sequoyah National Research Center, University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR.

with enthusiasm and was a very good music teacher."[131] Although Mrs. Hixson did not remember individual qualifications, she did note that teachers had to meet certain standards and requirements before they could teach at the schools. It seems that at Emahaka, Seminole students were flourishing under tribal guidance. Mrs. Hixson recalls, "the faculty changed from year to year from marriages, deaths and other causes, but there was always harmony. Problems, yes, met head-on, discussed and solved together. The spirit of cooperation was wholesome due to the Christian spirit that prevailed."[132]

These ideologies were not shared among all of the faculty. On a wintry day in January of 1908, at the Seminole Nation's Emahaka School, Miss Blake wrote in her scrawling penmanship a letter to the Superintendent of Indian Schools, Mr. Benedict. She wrote, "I do not blame you and Mr. Falwell for losing patience-and I deserve no more favors from you. I knew there were negros in school, but I did not realize how it would be."[133] She then details her discomfort when one Freedman student showed her affection and states "I decided to leave-and asked Mr. Ferguson to telephone you. The school is very pleasant in every other way and I am sorry to disappoint you-but one can not live down ones

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131. Ibid.

132. Ibid., p. 56.

133. Mr. Benedict from Stella Elizabeth Blake. January 2, 1908. RG 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Five Civilized Tribes Agency Records of the Supervisor of Indian Schools, Letters received by the Supervisor of schools, 1906-1908, box 2, National Archives, Ft. Worth.

"raising" in a day…"[134] Miss Blake's resignation from the school highlighted the school population at Emahaka. The girls at the school were Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen students. Her resignation letter serves as a reminder of the realities that Seminole Freedmen people faced to obtain an education.

These early analyses of the history of teachers within Seminole educational spaces complicate our understanding how missionary teachers interacted with the children. Teachers, heavily influenced by Christian ideologies, encountered conflict with Seminole cultural practices. It seems as though some teachers were able to navigate those spaces in ways that were respectful of the Seminole Nation. Others were blatantly hostile to the Seminole and Seminole Freedmen. Although the Seminole went on to develop Academies that contained Christian influences, they were able to retain some autonomy and control over who operated within those spaces until the federal government interfered with tribal affairs. From the earliest missionaries to the tribal teachers that exhibited characteristics that were attributed to Christian influences, each played a pivotal role within education.

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134. Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

Schooling Access for Seminole Freedmen

Stella Elizabeth Blake's letter, written just a few months after Oklahoma had become a state, is illustrative of the tension that some white teachers had in educating Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen children together. This tension was propelled by state and federal policy in which Seminole and Seminole Freedmen students were being forced into segregated schools. The United States governmental policy had not occurred in one act, rather, it began with a series of actions that were aimed at indoctrinating tribal children into a new form of nationalism. Teachers and their racialized ideologies affected the educational experiences of Seminole and Seminole Freedmen children. By the time Miss Blake had mailed her letter, fully integrated schools had been institutionalized within the Seminole Nation decades prior.

The Five Tribes were undergoing tremendous change politically, as they entered into final treaty negotiations in 1866. Although there were some commonalities in the experiences of the Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes, these experiences cannot be represented monolithically.[1] One chapter cannot possibly encompass the comprehensive history of the Seminole Freedmen, however a brief history is requisite to understanding how the educational

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1. I note again the irony of "civilized" and its problematic roots, especially in this context.

experiences of the Seminole Freedmen was unique in Indian Territory.[2] The Seminole Freedmen were critical to the development of the Seminole Nation in Indian Territory. They served as interpreters to Seminole leadership, fulfilled roles as teachers in schools, and ascended to some of the highest leadership positions with the Seminole Nation. This chapter examines how these relations influenced the education of Seminole and Seminole Freedmen children in schools. I assert that early access to educational opportunities primed the development of schools within Seminole Freedmen communities. Although Seminole Freedmen students were well represented in the Academies of the Seminole Nation, the strong commitment of their communities to education resulted in the establishment of educational spaces that are unique to Indian Territory. It is important to note that the initial development of schools in Seminole Freedmen communities were not likely due to external pressures of segregation, rather these schools developed out of community desire and mobilization.

History written about the Seminole Nation would not be comprehensive without discussing the enslavement of generations of Seminole Freedmen. How could Indigenous Nations, who lived through genocide, enslave women, children and men? Enslavement contradicts the values of vnokeckv, eyasketv, kvncvpv, and hermokv. As a Seminole scholar, this is a topic that I've returned to often in

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2. Kevin Mulroy has written a comprehensive text, *The Seminole Freedmen*, which I relied upon extensively in the development of this chapter. Additional texts include Daniel Littlefield's *Africans and Seminoles* and Kenneth Porter's *The Black Seminoles.*

the research on Seminole educational institutions. Although these values shaped the educational processes of our communities, there were also very powerful "settler structures that influenced the ways in which our communities reproduced the ideologies and violence of white settlers."[3] Those ideologies included the bondage of Black men, women and children as property that could be sold.

Oral history within the community is shaped around the roles of Seminole-Freedmen people who fought alongside Seminole warriors during the wars with the United States government. Enslavement of the Seminole Freedmen is not something that is openly talked about within our communities. Asymmetrical power relations, bolstered through the Dawes allotment process, has stratified tribal citizenship policies. The manifestations of these issues continue within my Tribal Nation today, where Seminole-Freedmen continue to be marginalized and denied from receiving the same resources that our ancestors agreed to when they signed the 1866 Treaty.

When I chose to write about education within the Seminole Nation, I found photographs of our schools that reflected Seminole and Seminole Freedmen education and it really made me proud. My pride was tempered by the knowledge of the context and conditions the Seminole Freedmen were forced to endure under Seminole enslavement. I think of the temporality of the history that I am writing and how our history still affects peoples' lives today. I have witnessed the effects

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3. This connection was made by reading Laura Harjo's work on Mvskoke futurities. Laura Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019) 52.

of the erasure of Seminole-Freedmen histories within my Tribal Nation and my hope in writing this history is to ensure that my Nation's history is reflective of all of us. The Seminole Nation has directly benefited from the enslavement of and from the contributions of the Seminole Freedmen and this research is written with that in mind.

Settler colonization studies contribute to our understandings of how the Five Tribes assumed settler ideologies in their enslavement practices. However, the framework also contributes to the erasure of the history of Indigenous people who descend from Africa.[4] Although I utilize Seminole Freedmen and free Black terminology to refer to the people, I am cognizant that they also belong(ed) to thriving Indigenous cultures.[5] As Robin D.G. Kelly reminds us "African indigeneity is erased in this formulation because, through linguistic sleight of hand, Africans are turned into Black Americans. The Atlantic Slave Trade rips Africans from their homeland and deposits them in territories undergoing settlement and dispossession, but renaming severs any relationship to their land and indigenous communities."[6] Although recent scholarship in settler colonization

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4. Robin D.G. Kelly, "The Rest of Us: Rethinking Settler and Native," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 2, (2017) 268.

5. Although it is beyond the scope of this project, future research might examine the African Indigenous communities that Seminole Freedmen descended from.

6. Robin D.G. Kelly, "The Rest of Us: Rethinking Settler and Native," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 2, (2017) 268.

studies has begun to interrogate and challenge our understandings of these complex relationships, it is a very recent practice in the field.

Anthropologists have studied the sociopolitical relationship that existed pre-Removal, while historians have analyzed military alliances and the relationships between notable Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen leaders.[7] Daniel Littlefield highlighted the role of Kowakkoce and his alliance with Seminole Freedmen who demonstrated the refusal inherent in accepting the conditions of bondage.[8] Scholars have criticized the lack of attention of Indigenous peoples' roles in the enslavement of black populations, comparing it to white southern revisionist history.[9] Historians and Seminole Freedmen historical interviews have noted the complex relationships that existed between the Seminoles and enslaved populations.[10] The goal of this chapter is to highlight this history and its effect on

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7. See the following for further reading. Miller, S. A. (2003). *Coacoochee's bones: a Seminole saga*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.; Mulroy, K. (2007). *The Seminole Freedmen: A history*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.; Porter, K. W. (1996). *The black Seminoles: History of a freedom-seeking people*. Gainsville, FL: University Press of Florida.; Sattler, R. (1987). *Seminole italwa: Socio-political change among the Oklahoma Seminoles between removal and allotment, 1836-1905* (Doctoral dissertation).

8. Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *Africans and Seminoles* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977) 153.

9. Claudio Saunt, "The Paradox of Freedom: Tribal Sovereignty and Emancipation during the Reconstruction of Indian Territory," *Journal of Southern History* 70, no. 1, (2004):

10. Primus Dean Interview. Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman Oklahoma.; Dave McIntosh Interview, Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, University of

the educational experiences of students in in our schools. Although it is beyond the scope of this project to write a thorough Seminole-Freedmen history, the focus of this topic is germane to the history of education within the Seminole Nation and is explored very briefly during this chapter.

Enslavement among the Seminole Pre-Removal

One of the more comprehensive texts that traces the history of the Seminole-Freedmen is Kevin Mulroy's scholarship.[11] He traces Seminole enslavement to the occupation of what is now known as Florida by Spain and Britian.[12] The Spanish colonization of Florida was key to the development of the first free Black town (located near St. Augustine), Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, in 1738.[13] The townspeople of Mose were made up of free Blacks, freedom seekers from enslavement, and what the Spanish termed Indian people.[14] Mose was situated between competing colonial powers and freedom seekers who found

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Oklahoma, Norman, OK.; Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A history* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).; Carrie Marshall Pittman Interview. Indian Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.; Kenneth Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a freedom-seeking people* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996).

11. Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A history* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

12. Mulroy, p. 3

13. Jane Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (1990)10.

14. Ibid., 12

refuge under the Spanish Crown.[15] Prior to the Revolutionary War, Mose served as a critical freedom point from enslavement in the Carolinas and Southern planters. The town also become a target for southern planter blocs who saw Mose as a threat.[16] The formation of this free Back town was a first line of defense for Spain and led to alliances between Mose and tribes local to the area.[17] These alliances would serve as a catalyst for future relationships.[18]

Kenneth Porter's scholarship also asserted that Seminole enslavement began during the first two decades of English rule when Seminoles first noticed the value that the English and Spaniards placed upon enslaved people.[19] The Seminole enslaved primarily via captivity during warfare, through purchase or as gifts from the English Crown.[20] Historians that have studied the Seminole Freedmen tend to agree that those enslaved by the Seminole lived in villages near their enslavers pre-Removal.[21] The enslaved grew crops, raised livestock and

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15. Landers (p. 10) notes that the Spanish saw the freedom seekers, the free blacks and Indian people as important allies against British encroachment, and Mose served as an early alarm for St. Augustine.

16. Ibid.,14.

17. Ibid., 18.

18. Mulroy, 8

19. Kenneth Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2013.) 5.

20. Ibid., 5.

21. Littlefield, 2001; Mulroy, 2007; Porter, 1996.

were expected to pay tribute to Seminole leaders in annual amounts.[22] The Seminole people did not enter into the planter economies of cotton or crops which made them distinct from the other Tribal Nations in the Southeast.[23] Although Seminole economy was not centered around the southern planter blocs, Seminole leadership constituted the majority of the enslavers.[24] Their descendants then took over as enslavers of men, women and children when those leaders passed away.[25]

As Florida came under British rule, and later the United States, the nearby Black and Seminole communities were targeted by Southern planters and military occupation.[26] As federal policy and U.S. military aggression amped up, the Seminoles and Black communities faced immediate threats. Black freedom seekers witnessed the treatment of the enslaved by white Florida planters and their overseers.[27] Many of them had escaped from the southern plantations and headed toward Florida in search of freedom.[28] However, their well-being was not guaranteed among the Seminole. They were still enslaved and had the potential to

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22. Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016) 13.

23. Mulroy, 23.

24. Mulroy, 99.

25. Mulroy, 39.

26. Landers, 14.

27. Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation*, (Jackson: Banner Books, University Press of Mississippi), p. 11.

28. Ibid., 11.

be sold.[29] Military aggressions against these communities, driven by Congressional policy of Indian Removal, escalated into what would become three Seminole Wars. The Black communities were important allies and their leadership proved to be critical to the resistance of the Seminole during the Wars.[30]

The United States policy of extermination and the threat of the southern planter bloc and potential for re-enslavement bolstered the resistance alliance because these policies posed deep threats to these communities. Similar to the relationships that were seen in Mose, the Seminole and Black alliance was so strong, the United States military realized it would need to attack the bond of this coalition.[31] Vsse-yahola and John Horse were two war leaders of the Seminole and Black alliance that were particularly close. General Jesup recognized that the enslaved and free Blacks would only negotiate if guarantees of freedom were on the table.[32] Seminole leaders were weary of having to live life under the threat of danger, always on the run. Some of the free and enslaved Black leaders who served as interpreters between the Seminole and the United States military utilized their knowledge of the English language and negotiated their terms of

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29. Mulroy, 51.

30. Mulroy, 58.

31. Littlefield, p. 15.

32. Ibid., 15.

freedom.[33] All were forced to make extremely difficult decisions under extenuating circumstances because southern enslavers from plantations were traveling to these sites to make claims to what they deemed property.[34] They came to enslave.

The forced Removal to Indian Territory was a time of great sorrow for our Nation. Southern planters came forth to issue claims against some of the freedom seekers, asserting that many were fugitives from Southern plantations and Muscogee enslavers.[35] The enslaved and free Blacks both worried that if the military would acquiesce to these demands their lives would be at stake as they would face re-enslavement under the white planter enslavers.[36] Furthermore, the United States military leaders who were placed in charge of negotiating the terms of Removal knew that if these claims were upheld, it would slow the process of Removal.[37] Southern planter claimants were frustrated when governmental agents

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33. Ibid, p. 22. One of the resistance leaders was John Horse. He was a Seminole Freedmen who was bilingual in both English and the Maskoke language. During the war, he fought for his freedom, and was an important leader within the Seminole Wars. Before supporting the treaties that the United States government drew up, John Horse ensured that his freedom was guaranteed by General Jesup. For more information about him, please see Phillip Thomas Tucker, "John Horse, Forgotten African American Leader of the Second Seminole War," Journal of Negro History, Spring, 1992, V. 77, No. 2

34. Mulroy, 48.

35. Mulroy, 34.

36. Mulroy, 46.

37. Littlefield, 36.

hastened the orders so that the process would be expedited.[38] Forced migration for Seminoles, enslaved people and free blacks commenced to Indian Territory.[39]

Mary, a Seminole Freedman who served as a cook for Mary Ann Lilley in Indian Territory, recounted the terror they faced during the War.[40] Mary stated that they were always on the run and that one time they came close to being discovered by the soldiers. She stated, "the soldiers went past never looking to the right or left, just as regular soldiers do and she showed me how they looked. When they were going past a little child belonging to a woman named Rose, began to cry."[41] They quickly urged the mother to choke the child, in fear that they be found in hiding, and the mother was forced to silence her baby, understanding that if she did not, they would all be rounded up.[42] Luckily, the child survived and this narrative illustrates how those that were escaping the military regiments were often forced to make difficult sacrifices during the wars. Mary's memory of that time also demonstrates that the effects of the Seminole Wars and subsequent forced move to Indian Territory were shared by the

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38 .Littlefield, 36.

39. Mulroy, 50.

40. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

41. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

42. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

Seminole Freedmen. Although some had negotiated terms of freedom, there was no guarantee that these terms would be upheld in their new homelands.

Enslavement in Indian Territory

Between 1838-1843, over five hundred enslaved and free Blacks accompanied the Seminoles to Indian Territory.[43] Once they arrived within Indian Territory, they were placed within close proximity to Eastern tribes that would constitute the Five Civilized Tribes (Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Seminole and Muscogee).[44] Each of these tribes enslaved Black men, women and children. Mulroy asserts, "Slavery never assumed the same connotations among Seminole owners that it did among the Indian-white elites of the other Civilized Tribes."[45] Although historians highlight the differences between the southern planter economies that were adopted by the other Nations and the Seminole, enslavement was still enslavement. Black men, women and children still faced the threat of their family members being sold and having their lives dictated for them. Some Seminole Freedmen were freed by their enslavers for their alliance in the Seminole Wars, but the vast majority of them remained in bondage. The free Black people who had moved to Indian Territory also faced similar threats.

Their arrival in Indian Territory did not alleviate the threat from being captured and sold. Southern planters and Cherokee, Muscogee and white enslavers followed them to the Seminole Nation in Indian Territory, made claims on them as property, and raided Indian Territory to capture both free and enslaved

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43. Mulroy, p. 12.

44. Grant Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes: Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971),

45. Ibid, p. 88

people in the early years.[46] Abraham, a free Black man who had served as an interpreter for the United States military, lost his family when his wife and their children were kidnapped by enslavers and sold.[47] Freedom for those that were actually free was not guaranteed. Threats to family compromised their safety, so many of the Seminole Freedmen and free Black people attempted to limit their mobility to the Seminole Nation because it offered a very small measure of security.[48] The surrounding Tribal Nations of the Muscogee, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Cherokee Nations had enacted strict enslavement codes, so many of the Seminole Freedmen refused to leave the area because they faced the threat of being kidnapped.[49] In the Seminole Nation, there were thirty-four recorded Seminole enslavers and over fifty-two percent of those enslaved were considered the property of three individuals.[50] The Seminole Agents and the Baptist missionaries to the area were also supporters of enslavement. Between 1840 and 1850, Heniha Miko, a Seminole enslaver, was known to profit from the sale of those he enslaved.[51]

In Indian Territory, the practice of organizing a community separate from enslavers was carried forth by the Seminole Freedmen.[52] Mulroy notes that

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46. Mulroy, 81.

47. Ibid., 132.

48. Mulroy, p. 134.

49. Ibid., 88.

50. Ibid., 102

51. Ibid., 105

52. Mulroy, 135.

although intermarriage occurred, it was not the norm. [53] Ben Bruner, the nephew of Caeser Bruner, was a Seminole Freedmen.[54] He was born in 1852, the son of John and Grace Bruner. His father, John was enslaved within the Muscogee Nation in Alabama and Ben's mother Grace, was a full-blood Seminole who came from the original homelands of Florida.[55] Ben's father was sold to Jim Factor for $3000 Confederate dollars.[56] Ben stated, "Mother and we children were not slaves but Father's master allowed him to take his family when he was sold."[57] Ben notes that during the Civil War, Jim Factor served in the Confederate Army and he moved them to the Chickasaw Nation. His father rented land from his enslaver and was allowed to keep some of what he earned. Ben's family history illustrates the confluence of the relationships that existed within the Seminole Nation. While some historians have asserted that the Seminole and Freedmen were totally separate communities, Ben's family history shows that this was not always the case. As the son of a Seminole woman, Ben would have belonged to a Seminole clan and would have been recognized within Seminole kinship processes. Grace and Ben's clan would have been comprised of many other clan relatives. Ben's uncle, Caesar Bruner, became one of the leaders of the Seminole Freedmen.[58] He

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53. Mulroy, 32.

54. Ben Bruner, Indian Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

55. Ibid.

56. Ben Bruner, Indian Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

57. Ibid.

58. Mulroy, 271.

was bilingual in the Maskoke language and in English, and his bilingual skills helped facilitate his role when he served as an interpreter.[59]

Other relationships that were forged during the Seminole Wars were also sustained in Indian Territory. Kowakkoce continued his close relationship with John Horse, a Seminole Freedmen.[60] Their alliance was very prominent in Indian Territory. Kowakkoce and John Horse chose to leave Indian Territory with approximately three hundred Seminole and Seminole Freedmen for promise of a better life in Mexico. The Mexican government had abolished enslavement and had offered land in Nacimiento in exchange for border protection. Military reports in 1858 indicate that Kowakkoce remained on the military's radar.[61] Although Kowakkoce returned periodically, he and their followers remained in Mexico, where Seminole and Seminole Freedmen descendants still reside today.

Post-Civil War

When the Civil War broke out the Seminole Nation was split between the Union and the Confederate South. Melinda Micco found "although the majority of Seminoles sided with the Union and left their Nation to seek protection in Kansas, a portion remained in Indian territory and sided with the Confederate States at the end of 1861."[62] The greatest majority of the Seminoles were heavily pro-Union

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59. Ibid.

60. Littlefield, 153.

61. https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2059&context=indianserialset, p. 11

62. Micco, p. 93.

and they refused to meet with officials from the Confederate states and voiced their wishes to remain loyal to the treaties that they had signed with the United States government.[63] In March of 1861, the Seminole Nation formally opposed a treaty with the Confederacy during a Council meeting.[64] However, some Seminole Confederate loyalists pledged their allegiance to the southern group and signed a treaty of friendship with the Confederate army.[65] These groups were influenced by missionary ideologies. The Seminoles that sided with the Confederacy were heavily influenced by Reverend Joseph Samuel Morrow, a Baptist missionary leader who immediately segregated church audiences and served in the Confederate Army.[66] The Seminole Chief at the time, John Jumper, was a Baptist minister, an enslaver and also headed up a Confederate regiment.[67] Numerous Seminole and Seminole Freedmen, known as the Loyal Seminoles, headed north to Kansas and followed leaders such as John Chupco.[68] Some of these men later served with Union troops.[69] During one particular heated battle in

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63. Mulroy, 161.

64. Kenny Arthur Frank, "Confederate Relations with the Five Civilized Tribes," (master's thesis, Central State College, 1969).

65. Ibid.,

66. Mulroy,162.

67. Ibid.,

68. Mulroy, 163.

69. Mulroy, 172.

Indian Territory, pamphlets written in different tribal languages were distributed among the Freedmen of all of the tribes notifying them that they were free.[70] But they weren't actually free yet. Although the United States had abolished slavery in 1865, many of the Confederate enslavers wielded power over their enslaved and asserted they were not under the laws of the United States.[71] Freedom for some of the enslaved wouldn't actually occur until 1866.[72]

After the Civil War ended, the Seminoles, along with other representatives of the Five Civilized Tribes were summoned to a meeting with U.S. officials. These officials took the viewpoint that each tribal nation had displayed a lack of loyalty to the United States and they would be required to negotiate new treaty terms.[73] During this time frame, the Loyal Seminoles assumed leadership over the Tribal Nation.[74] As the government agents laid out their list of requirements for the new treaties, one of the most notable proposals was the abolishment of slavery and the incorporation of formerly enslaved people into the Seminole Nation.[75] They requested some changes to the wording to make it explicit that only

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70. Mulroy, 182.

71. Jimmie Lewis Franklin, *Journey Toward Hope*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), p. 9.

72. Ibid.,

73. Mulroy, 195.

74. Ibid.,

75. Mulroy, 195

"colored persons lately held in bondage by the Seminole people, and free persons of color residing in the nation previous to the rebellion," would be considered a part of the Seminole Nation.[76] Mulroy outlines their concerns, " We are willing to provide for the colored people of our own nation, but do not desire our lands to become colonization grounds for the negroes of other States and Territories."[77] However, the southern sympathizers were not so open to these measures. Although they agreed with the abolition of slavery, they did not look so favorably on the incorporation of the freedmen into the tribe, as "it shocks the lesson we have learned for long years from the white man as to the negro's inferiority."[78] These Seminole leaders assumed white settler ideologies which governed their interactions with the Seminole Freedmen. During later months, the United States government appointed an official to evaluate the progress made with the Seminole Freedmen. In 1866, General Sanborn met with a Loyal Seminole representative who stated "We receive them as brethren on the same footing and rights. We are not willing to receive the colored folks of other tribes. We can take care of the negroes of our Nation, without any aid from the Federal government."[79] Although dissension simmered from the Confederate Seminoles, the new leaders of the

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76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid..

79. Ibid., p. 198.

Seminoles signed the Reconstruction Treaty in March of 1866. Article two of the treaty included:

> And inasmuch as there are among the Seminoles many persons of African descent and blood, who have no interest or property in the soil, and no recognized civil rights, it is stipulated that hereafter these persons and their descendants, and such other of the same race as shall be permitted by said nation to settle there, shall have and enjoy all the rights of native citizens, and the laws of said nation shall be equally binding upon all persons of whatever race or color, who may be adopted as citizens or members of said tribe.[80]

The signing of the treaty marked a new era of relationships among the people of the Seminole Nation who were the first Tribal nation within Indian Territory to sign the 1866 treaty. The period between the 1866 treaty and state formation was a period of growth within the Nation as people chose home sites, grew crops and established communities. For many, there was some recognition that the nature of education for the Tribal Nation was rapidly changing.

Missionary Educational Experiences

At the missions, the religious organizations differed in their approaches and treatment of the Seminole Freedmen. The Presbyterian missionaries did not appear to enact segregationist policies in churches prior to the Civil War.[81] It is very likely that Seminole Freedmen were also educated by the Lilleys, Talamase-mekko and Reverend Ramsay at the Oak Ridge Mission. Mrs. Lilley noted that when she was stationed at Tullahassee Mission in the Muscogee Nation around

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80. Ibid., p. 200.

81. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

1842, their congregation were comprised of mostly Freedmen.[82] She wrote in her journal, "I used to get them together Sabbath morning and teach them spelling, and Robert was very anxious to learn and he would go with the boys, but after he learned a little he stopped. On Sabbath morning, I had a class and he would come with others and teach out of some simple books."[83] Robert, also referred to as Robin, was a Freedman who served as the interpreter for the Reverend Ramsay.[84] Although Mary Ann Lilley had taught Robert, they also supported the enslavement policies within the Muscogee Nation in other ways. Mrs. Lilley noted that they paid Robert's enslaver for his service and Robert was only allowed to keep one day's wages, even though he had worked more days than that.[85] Mrs. Lilley also recorded an early interaction with Eliza Bowlegs who boasted about her young son who was rich and was an enslaver of many people who could work for him.[86] It is very likely that they attempted to teach everyone

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82. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

83. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

84. James Ross Ramsay Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

85. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

86. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

how to read and write because the more people that could read the Bible would ensure conversion to Christianity.

When Robert moved to the Oak Ridge Mission, Mrs. Lilley also recorded some of the enslavement raids into the Seminole Nation.[87] She noted that the enslaved were supposed to have their freedom in Indian Territory and when it didn't happen, many of them lived under military protection at Ft. Gibson.[88] The brother of the Seminole Agent Duval and a lawyer worked out an agreement with some Seminole enslavers to turn over a number of the enslaved to them.[89] It doesn't appear that the Lilleys and Talamase-mekko supported these activities. In one of her recollections, she noted that enslavers came to the Mission and Talamase-mekko tried to warn the Free black man who worked for them, but he was held up by gunpoint and couldn't warn him in time for him to hide.[90] Mrs. Lilley also indicated that this was one of the reasons why Kowakkoce and John Horse left the Seminole Nation.[91] There are also accounts that highlight their

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87. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

88. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

89. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

90. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

91. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

visits to Freedmen communities.[92] When the Civil War broke out, Talamase-mekko and the Lilleys went North.[93] These actions demonstrate a very strong possibility that they did not support the Confederacy.

Within years of the Treaty of 1866, there were two Indian schools and two Freedmen schools and the Seminole Agent Breiner lauded the Bruner Town school for Freedmen children as the "most complete and comfortable schoolhouse in the nation."[94] The Seminole Freedmen students could attend any school within the Seminole Nation, but many of them chose to attend their own neighborhood schools.[95] This was probably due to the community investment in their education and due to the proximity to their homes. The Seminole Nation also contributed educational funds to the development of all of the schools.[96] C. Guy Cutlip, a prominent attorney in the Seminole Nation, noted two Black schools that were developed after Ramsay Mission.[97] One of the schools was known as the Red

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92. James Ross Ramsay Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

93. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

94. Mulroy, p. 282.

95. Ibid., 281.

96. Ibid.

97. C. Guy Cutlip Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

School House on Little River.[98] The teacher, was Alexander Crain, a white man who came to the area from Philadelphia.[99] The next school was the school at Nobletown located north of Wewoka Lake.[100] Nobletown was a Seminole Freedmen town.

Antoinette Snow served as a teacher of Seminole and Seminole Freedmen children. She is pictured in archival photographs and documents with Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen students in the Wewoka Mission school around 1874. Mulroy's earlier research on Antoinette Snow highlights her liberal views in educating all students. Her journal reveals,

> I make no differentiation in my work on account of race or color. They are all bright children. All must be educated and Christianized…There was ostracism on the part of many because of the education of the two races together, 'But God, that made the world, made of one blood, all nations of men.[101]

Mrs. Antoinette Snow Constant believed that the students learning together enriched both Seminole and Seminole Freedmen students. Mrs. Constant's account also highlights her missionary drive to convert people to her Presbyterian faith. These early educational experiences among Seminole and Seminole Freedmen children likely made strong impressions on the minds of young children. The Seminole Freedmen students had a strong command of both the

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98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Mulroy, 268.

English and Maskoke languages.[102] She noted that Freedmen students often contributed to the education of Seminole children, who often spoke only the Maskoke language, by helping her interpret what she was teaching. Mrs. Constant was supported in her efforts by John Chupco who served as the Seminole Nation Mekko.[103]

Seminole-Freedman student, Carrie Marshall Pitman, who was born in 1871, reported that she attended school with Indian and Freedmen children and was also another student of Mrs. Constant.[104] Early integrated schools were the norm with the Seminole Nation. The students at these schools often returned to the community as teachers. Dave McIntosh, a Seminole-Freedman that was born in 1879, attended an Indian day school north of the Seminole Nation's capital of Wewoka, in the Seminole Freedmen community of Nobletown.[105] McIntosh stated that his teacher was Louisa Bruner, who was the daughter of Caeser Bruner, an influential Seminole-Freedmen leader.[106] Mr. McIntosh learned to read at the school and said that his playmates had already taught him how to read.

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102. James Ross Ramsay Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

103. James Ross Ramsay Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

104. Carrie Marshall Pittman interview, Indian Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

105. Dave McIntosh Interview, Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

106. Ibid.

Louisa Bruner played an integral role in the education of students. She was a student of Mrs. Antoinette Snow Constant and was reportedly one of the teacher's favorites.[107] She was a devout student and attended school at Hampton Institute.[108] She seemed to understand early on her calling in life. Graduating from Hampton Institute in 1885, Louisa returned home to teach at Thomas Town in Indian Territory and later in Noble, Tenn.[109] She is the first Seminole-Freedman to serve as a school-teacher.[110] In her first school in Thomas Town, she reported that she had sixty-three students and in the second school, she had almost the same number of pupils. Less than two decades after the abolishment of enslavement within the Seminole Nation, the Seminole Freedmen had established schools in their home communities. From the large number of students in Miss Bruner's classrooms, education was important to the Seminole Freedmen. Growing up within the Presbyterian faith had also made a strong impression on young Louisa. She stated,

> I have a full Sunday school, all the children of the day school come and others; the parents come also and take an active part. I am not married: I think I can do more if I am single and have no home cares. I own a couple

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107. Mulroy, p. 268.

108. Hampton Institute, *Twenty-two Years Work of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute*, (Hampton, VA: Hampton Normal School Press, 1893), 221. Although the Hampton Institute report states that she taught in Noble, Tenn., I believe that this is erroneous. Dave McIntosh, a Seminole Freedman student reported that he was taught by Louisa Bruner in Nobletown, which was a Seminole Freedman town.

109. Ibid.

110. Mulroy, 287.

> of ponies and fourteen head of cattle and the rest in cash. I want to be a missionary with God's help. The general condition of the colored people in the way of living is very promising. Education has been neglected so long, it makes them very slow in getting on.[111]

Her statement was recorded in a reporting of Hampton alumni and indicated she had strong sentiments about the importance of Christianity and education. Her work as an educator also impacted her role in the community, as Louisa's father was well respected. The community must have trusted her a great deal as the respect for her as an educator also affected Sunday school attendance. Miss Bruner was confident that that she would do well as a single woman which also demonstrates her affirmation of her gender role that were patterned after the matrilineal lines that were common in the Seminole Nation. She also reflected on the promise of education and other opportunities there were for the Seminole Freedmen people. Her hope likely stemmed from her own educational experiences. Louisa's education provided her with opportunities that took her far from her family and Indian Territory. A testament to her character, she likely had opportunities that could have taken her to new places after she graduated, yet she chose to return home to serve her people.

Another student at Seminole mission schools was J. Coody Johnson, a Muscogee Freedman whose family had connections to the Wewoka area. He also

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111. Hampton Institute report, 222.

attended school with Louisa Bruner.[112] A precocious student, his talent was supported by the Seminole Nation who sponsored his college education at Lincoln University, a Historically Black University located in Pennsylvania where he graduated in 1884.[113] His Maskoke name was Kaccv-lvste, Black Panther, and his knowledge of the Maskoke language contributed to his ascension to some of the highest leadership roles within the Muscogee and Seminole Nations. At the Muscogee Nation, he served in the House of Warriors.[114] It was said that when J. Coody Johnson was going to speak on matters that were pertaining to the Muscogee people, all of the fullblood Indians would attend to hear what he had to say.[115]

At the Seminole Nation, he served as a private secretary to Hvlpvtv-mekko. Hvlpvtv-mekko did not speak English, so one of his first acts was to assign signature authority over the Seminole Nation to Kaccv-lvste. Mr. Johnson was then a prominent lawyer in the area, and through his lifetime, he amassed

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112. Mulroy, p. 268; C. Guy Cutlip stated that J. Coody Johnson attended Ramsay's school, so which school he actually attended is not clear and it could be possible that he attended both.

113. A Lincoln University newsletter published in 1921 noted "the Hon. J. Coody Johnson, '84, is a prominent attorney and expert in Indian affairs at Wewoka, Oklahoma. His practice frequently takes him before the Supreme Court at Washington. He is the owner of a fine 3,000 acre cattle ranch near Wewoka, and has large oil interests in the neighborhood." http://www.lincoln.edu/library/specialcollections/herald/1921.pdf

114. C. Guy Cutlip Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

115. Ibid.,

great wealth. One white lawyer in the area recollected "there was nothing that Coody ever possessed that was not at the behest of his community if they needed it."[116] He was also very well regarded at the national level. Booker T. Washington was a friend who visited Mr. Johnson at his ranch and it is very likely that they exchanged their ideas about education.[117] When J. Coody Johnson passed away, he left a significant portion of his estate for the establishment of a school for Black children.[118]

Statehood and Segregation

From the onset of the white settlers in both the Indian and Oklahoma territories, they began aggressively pursuing statehood. Jimmie Lewis Franklin noted "From 1890 to 1897 the statutes provided for local option with the decision to segregate determined by popular ballot at the county level."[119] The 1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson case, in which the Supreme Court upheld segregation also affected the education of Black students in schools.[120] These actions bolstered segregationist policies down to the local level and emboldened school officials to deny schooling for Black students. These policies stood in stark contrast to the

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116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. Jimmie Lewis Franklin, *Journey Toward Hope*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 28.

120. Plessy vs. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

Seminole Nation's educational institutions. Many of the Black towns were concentrated in Indian Territory, and with the Dawes Allotment, Seminole Freedpeople were allotted lands. This contributed to the development of business enterprises like the ones built by J. Coody Johnson and education within the Seminole Nation remained strongly rooted in community. The Federal government however continued to meddle in Tribal affairs by appointing a Superintendent of Indian Education. They also began to enact policies that supported the development of the state of Oklahoma.

At a meeting in Guthrie on November 20, 1906, the Constitutional Convention formally convened. The chair of the Convention was William "Alfalfa Bill" Murray.[121] He settled in the Chickasaw Nation and served as an advisor to Chickasaw Governor Douglas H. Johnston.[122] Murray was a white supremacist and he made his views very clear.[123] At the convention he segregated the audience and stated,

> We must provide the means for the advancement of the negro race and accept him [sic] as God gave him to us and use him for the good of society…He must be taught in the line of his own sphere, as porters, boot-blacks and barbers, and many lines of agriculture…in which he is adept, but it is an entirely false notion that the negro can rise to the equal of the

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121. Danny M. Adkison, "Constitutional Convention," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CO047.

122. "William H. Murray," *Digital Prairie,* https://digitalprairieok.net/timeline/william-h-murray/

123. Jimmie Lewis Franklin, p. 40.

> white man in the professions or become an equal citizen to grapple with public questions.[124]

Murray's views surrounding the roles of education for the Black population likely swayed many of the audience that day. For certain, he steered many of the policies surrounding segregation during his political career. When Oklahoma formally became a state, the first law that was passed was Senate Bill No. 1.[125] This segregation law promoted separate transportation facilities but it set the agenda of the Oklahoma legislature who were enacting policies that targeted Black populations. [126] Under the Oklahoma Constitution, people without African descent were classified as white (including Native people) and were to be segregated in schools.[127] I assert that the underlying premise behind this classification was to provide access to Tribal lands and resources. If Native people were considered white, they were marriageable. White men and women were allowed to marry Native people in some Tribal Nations, which provided them access to their allotment lands. In the Cherokee, Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, it provided them with tribal citizenship. Alfalfa Bill married the niece of

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124. Jimmie Lewis Franklin, p. 40.

125. Larry O'Dell, "Senate Bill One," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=SE017.

126. Ibid.

127. Jimmie Lewis Franklin, p. 42.

Chickasaw Governor Johnston, and would have benefited from this union in many ways. Jimmie Lewis Franklin states

> As part of the Jim Crow code, the Oklahoma legislature adopted a policy of separate schools permitted by the constitution and it prohibited interracial marriages. The school law, of course, merely continued an established practice in the territories and it carried out by statue the constitutional mandate that the state provide separate schools. [128]

I write about this because it is important to highlight the ways in which people within the Territories were being racialized in different ways and this profoundly affected the educational experiences of children. Many Seminole Freedmen, who were also of African descent, would have been greatly impacted by these decisions. Additionally, these methods of racialization would have also ignored their political status as citizens of the Seminole Nation.

As a result of state and federal legislation, the Seminole Freedmen were targeted for their lands. In 1908, the Restrictions Bill was passed to remove restrictions off of Freedmen lands, along with Tribal people whose blood quantum was below ½ degree of Indian blood and intermarried whites.[129] Federal restrictions was a conundrum. On one hand, federal restrictions made it difficult to sell land without the pesky oversight from the Federal government. On the other hand, it did serve as a form of protection because opportunists and con men usually didn't want to go through the red tape of lifting restrictions. However, the

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128. Jimmie Lewis Franklin, p. 45-46.

129. "Removal of Restriction for the Five Tribes," *Oklahoma Historical Society,* https://www.okhistory.org/research/restriction, Date Accessed, September 20, 2020.

removal of restrictions undoubtedly contributed to the loss of lands at an accelerated rate for the Seminole Freedmen.

The loss of land was documented during interviews with Seminole Freedmen Primus Dean, who recalled the construction of Emahaka Academy in the Seminole Nation.[130] His father would haul limestone rock with his team of oxen. At the school site, they would build bricks with the limestone. He began attending school when he was six or seven years old at the counterpart to Emahaka, the Mekusukey Mission school. Mekusukey Mission School was described as one of the more beautiful or healthful spots within the Seminole Nation.[131] The school was said to have been laid on solid Rock and the architect of the building was W.A. Madden of Muscogee who also built Emahaka and the Eufaula Boarding School.[132] The school opened around 1891, under the supervision of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions and Rev. Duncan was in charge of the schoolroom and industrial room teachers.[133] The school was initially coeducational and the Seminoles paid seventy-five dollars for each student annually. Each of the fourteen bands of the Seminole Nation were allotted eight

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130. Primus Dean Interview. Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK.

131. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, File 7, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

132. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, File 7, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

133. Primus Dean Interview. Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK.

slots to fill with students from their band. There were approximately 112 students attending and it was noted "Two of the bands being Freedman, and no other provision being made by the Seminole Council for their school, eight children from each Negro band, making sixteen in all, were admitted the same as the Indians."[134] Mary Diament noted the citizenship status of the Seminole Freedmen and that they had the privilege of attending the school until the Tribal Nations were dissolved and the Government took charge of the schools.[135]

Seminole Freedmen children attended the schools and many shared fond memories of their classmates. Primus Dean, recalled the boys making bows and arrows and teaching him how to shoot.[136] They would hunt rabbit and squirrels and he claimed to shoot really well. The boys would deliver their rabbits to the school cook, Mrs. Danielson, who would cook them for the boys.[137] Mr. Dean also recalled playing football and baseball at Mekusukey and that they would play white boys out of Seminole who wouldn't stand a chance of winning against their talented team.[138] Mr. Dean recalls having to leave the school being in 1910. He

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134. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, File 7, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

135. Ibid.

136. Primus Dean Interview. Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK.

137. Ibid.

138. Ibid.

stated “Yeah, that’s when they Jim Crowed us anyway, and the colored never did go back up there to school anymore.”[139]

Charlie Johnson attended Mekusukey Mission for seven years and started school in 1910.[140] Children at the school were monolingual Maskoke language speakers. According to Johnson,

> Well, a lot of our Indian children those days couldn’t speak a word of English. And we went to school, in just one big building. Off-hand I don’t know how many classrooms we had. We must had about four classrooms I suppose. And we went to school with the colored children. I imagine those colored children were Freedman’s children. And lot of them spoke Indian. And then when we couldn’t talk English, well we tried to talk in Indian. We’d get caught. Why we’d get demerits for it.[141]

He recalled the Seminole Freedmen students leaving school, but he didn’t know why at the time.[142] He thought it was because a lot of students went to school in their areas because there were schools for them.[143] Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen students spoke the same language and undoubtedly, this contributed to positive interactions between the students.

However the school was not immune to fights between the boys. In his interview, Charlie Johnsons recalled there sometimes there would be conflict

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139. Ibid.

140. Charlie Johnson Interview. Doris Duke Collection. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK.

141. Ibid.

142. Ibid.

143. Ibid.

between Seminole Freedmen boys and the Seminole boys and they'd pelt each other with hickory nuts, acorns, rocks or bean flips.[144]



Figure 3. *Students at Mekusukey Mission school.* Source: Mekusukey Mission Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma.

After the arrival of the U.S. Superintendent of Indian Education, the populations of the school began to change. By 1904, teacher's certificates that were issued within Indian Territory (which were good throughout Indian Territory) were being stamped with "Allow White Children to Attend School For

144. Ibid.

Free".[145] Years before official Oklahoma statehood, the federal government began the shift towards the inclusion of white students within spaces constructed and paid for by tribal Nations.

Joe Jackson reported that there were no denominational schools or private schools by 1898, so whites were allowed to attend the tribal schools if they paid $1.00-$1.50 per month in tuition, but most whites refused to attend school with Freedmen children.[146] The first school for white children in the Seminole Nation, Wewoka, was created in 1901.[147] When Miss Stella Elizabeth Blake wrote her letter to Mr. Benedict, the conditions for support of her ideologies were being manifested through policies that were overwhelmingly displacing Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen students out of local school systems.

At Emahaka School, the school for girls, there were also reports from students about their experiences at the school. Emahaka School was also a school that was fully integrated.[148] The physical layout of the school consisted of three

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145. Agnes Fuller Collection, Minor Box F5, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma.

146. Joe C. Jackson, "The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma from 1898 to 1915" (EdD dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1950), 230.

147. Joe C. Jackson, "The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma from 1898 to 1915" (EdD dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1950), 232.

148. Garrard Ardeneum Collection, Box 14, File 154, Sequoyah National Research Center, University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR.

floors.[149] The kitchen, dining hall, pantry and laundry room was located in the basement.[150] At dinner time, students would sit in assigned seating around dining tables that seated twelve people.[151] The faculty, superintendent and family, guests, and hired hands would join in the meals.[152] The Superintendent and his family had living quarters on the first floor along with a chapel where students met. The second floor contained the four large dormitory rooms, along with two apartments for matrons and faculty and two rest rooms with stools and bathtubs.[153] She noted that Muscogee students, who were likely Freedmen resided on the third floor along with a matron, but she stressed that Muscogee and Seminoles weren't segregated. In her recollection of Emahaka School, student Mary Blake Hixson, daughter of the white superintendent William Packer Blake, noted that the Seminole school was integrated. She stated "We were all one big family, and I shall always be grateful that from infancy up, we were taught Black or yellow, red or white, it makes no difference in his sight..."[154] In another recollection, she describes her love and admiration for two of the Black laundry matrons and

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149. Garrard Ardeneum Collection, Box 14, File 154, Sequoyah National Research Center, University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR.

150. Ibid.

151. Ibid.

152. Ibid.

153. Ibid.

154. Ibid.

described how their children were well-disciplined but not allowed to come through the mission fence without permission.[155] Her recollections of the school seem to contradict what the schooling experiences might have been like for Seminole Freedmen students. Community people held the school faculty and staff in high regard. Caesar Bruner even complimented Mr. Blake proclaiming him as the father of all the Seminole children.[156] The girls loved the school so much, they would often send their own children.[157] The relationships at the school also indicated that it was a social hub for community members. They would often bring in food to barter and many of the community would attend school events.

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155. Ibid.

156. Robert E. Trevathan, "School Days at Emahaka Academy," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 38, no. 3 (1960) 271.

157. Robert E. Trevathan, "School Days at Emahaka Academy," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 38, no. 3 (1960) 271.



Figure 4. *Emahaka School Students* Source: Sequoyah National Research Center, University of Arkansas Libraries, Little Rock, Arkansas.

By 1905, it was reported that there were sixteen schools operating within the Seminole Nation.[158] There were fourteen day schools for Indians and whites and two schools for Negro and Seminole Freedmen.[159] Seminole Freedmen students were able to attend tribal schools such as Emahaka and Mekusukey Mission, but access to local day schools that were near them was more difficult to

158. Joe C. Jackson, "The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma from 1898 to 1915" (EdD dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1950), 221.

159. Ibid.

obtain. Black students that were not a part of the Seminole Nation were more than likely prohibited from attending the Tribal schools. This pattern of inequity was replicated in the local schools. Wewoka School reported that in 1906, there were 155 white students, 3 Indian students and no Black students.[160] Territorial education was not supportive of Freedmen students and the low number of Indian students suggests that it was not a friendly environment for them either. Only three short years after Oklahoma became a state, Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen students became enveloped within policies of school segregation.

Seminole Freedmen and Land Allotments

Prior to Oklahoma statehood, the Dawes Commission began the parceling of communally held land among the Five Tribes. The final Dawes allotment rolls listed 1,890 Seminoles by blood, 248 Newborn Seminoles, 857 freedmen and 129 Newborn Freedmen which numbered the total tribal enrollment at 3,124.[161] Allotments were distributed to both Seminole and Seminole Freedman with each receiving approximately one hundred and twenty acres each.[162] Almost as soon as the allotments were distributed, the land grifters began to target their lands. One student, educated at the Ramsay school, was one of the lawyers who represented

160. Joe C. Jackson,"The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma from 1898 to 1915" (EdD dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1950), 232.

161. Mulroy, 299.

162. Ibid.

their interests in court.[163] He proved to be very instrumental to the protection of rights for the Seminole and Seminole Freedmen people.

In 1908, a newspaper that ran in Blair, Oklahoma reported that James Coody Johnson, a Muscogee Freedmen lawyer, represented the interests of the Muscogee and Seminole freedmen in their objections to the removal of restrictions on the homesteads of Indians and Freedmen. He reported that the freedmen had lost their surplus land without governmental protections and that in less than six months' time, the grafters would take over all of the homesteads that they could get their hands on. He further cited cases in which the grafters utilized forgery and perjury to obtain Freedman land.[164]

Some of the grafters were representatives of the very same Seminole schooling systems for the Seminoles. The U.S. appointed Superintendent of Emahaka School, Walter Ferguson was one of those individuals. Primus Dean recalled that his mother had lost her allotment to Mr. Ferguson. As he recalled, "Mr. Ferguson was gobbling up the land."[165] He and his family ended up moving

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163. C. Guy Cutlip Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

164. The Blair Progress (Blair, Okla.), Vol. 4, No. 40, Ed. 1 Thursday, March 5, 1908, newspaper, March 5, 1908; Blair, Oklahoma. (https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc826264/: accessed April 23, 2021), The Gateway to Oklahoma History, https://gateway.okhistory.org; crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

165. Primus Dean Interview, Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

to the residence of Chilly Fish, a Seminole leader, where his mom cooked for the Fish family and Primus was hired by Mr. Fish. [166]

After four years of legal wrangling over the issue of Freedmen land allotments, the Supreme Court issued a decision in 1912. The Wewoka Democrat reported on Freedmen homelands: 'the restriction upon the alienation of homestead lands applied as well to the freedmen as to the other allottees, but it was removed, with respect to the freedmen by the act of May 27, 1908."[167] Furthermore, the newspaper noted that the land titles to the former Seminole Nation were on par with and open similar to those of the Five Tribes. The Wewoka Democrat reported,

> Now watch us grow. Already loan companies are making arrangements to enter this field. The uncertainty of titles and the doubts raised by the Interior department, in the face of plain acts of Congress, has heretofore been the greatest obstacles placed in the development of our county. The Supreme Court has rolled these obstacles away. But it has been a long, weary fight-eight long, lean, lank, hungry years since the act of 1904. It took courage, perseverance and patience to stand the ordeal. The pioneers of Seminole county braved the ordeal of federal lawsuits and many discouragements before the goal was reached. All credit to them for standing steadfast. They will now reap the reward they so richly deserve.[168]

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166. Ibid.

167. T. S. Cobb, The Wewoka Democrat (Wewoka, Okla.), Vol. 5, No. 30, Ed. 1 Thursday, May 9, 1912, newspaper, May 9, 1912; Wewoka, Oklahoma. (https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1139259/: accessed October 3, 2020),The Gateway to Oklahoma History, https://gateway.okhistory.org; crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

168. Ibid.

A few short years later, an oil boom within Seminole county would accelerate the loss of Seminole and Seminole-Freedmen land through sham transactions. Although the Seminole and Seminole Freedman fought diligently against this structure, they were stymied by the regulations and territorial Oklahoma laws that were developed to aid white settlers in the theft of land and resources.

The shared spaces between Seminole and Seminole-Freedman students were unique in Indian Territory. In the Seminole Nation, school integration had a far different meaning than those in other parts of the United States and Indian Territory. Seminole and Seminole Freedmen students shared schooling experiences until state laws and federal regulation disrupted the foundation of integrated schools. Seminole schools deepen our understanding of the different responses of Tribes beginning to address education for formerly enslaved people of their Nation. Stella Elizabeth Blake's letter clearly outlines the discomfort that she felt upon these spaces in which school integration was the standard of the area. As early settlers began to pour into the Territory, they did not leave their "raising" behind, yet some seemed to be aware of their precarious position in exercising power in tribal spaces. Miss Stella Elizabeth Blake did not seek to change the structure of the school, she chose to exit, perhaps realizing that she had little power to do so at Emahaka.

Until interference by Territorial and United States governments, the Seminole Nation enacted and supported the growth of educational institutions for all of their children. Although the history of the Seminole Freedmen has often centered around whether or not they were in fact Seminole people, the kinship

relationality aspect of Seminole people is often not documented. These kinship practices transcend time and place. It is clear from families such as Ben Bruner, and that between Kowakkoce and John Horse, that the Freedmen were considered relatives of the Seminole people. The liminality of their positions, driven by settler colonial ideations of who is Seminole, is not how our people have historically practiced kinship relations. A lot of documented evidence is derived from the Dawe's Allotment rolls which was not based upon Seminole kinship relationality practices. These practices are not contained on the neatly written lines of allotment enrollment cards. At no point in our history prior to the Dawes commission, did our people institute a blood quantum requirement for citizenship.

The leadership roles that various Freedmen and women took on within the tribe point to the recognition of Seminole community patterns of relationality. Kin relations would extend to people who were looked upon as leaders or who served the community. Kaccv-lvste is one example of this, even though he had accumulated material wealth, he recognized and practiced a form of relationality to his people so that they could also benefit. Louisa Bruner also practiced relationality by returning to her community to develop education as a teacher and as a missionary. They did not let others determine what roles they would take. Both of them were propelled by education that spanned the Seminole Nation in Indian Territory, to postsecondary institutions in the Eastern part of the United States. Despite the history of enslavement, and the shared resistance to the invasion of the United States military, the Seminole Freedmen persisted in refusal practices that saw them advance their education, develop community schools and

serve in leadership positions. Some of their forms of refusal meant leaving to Mexico, while others were enacted by utilizing education as a tool for the development of their communities.

It is possible that some of the Seminole Freedmen might actually be descendants of Mose, so the efforts to strengthen Black towns and communities has deep historical roots. The free Black towns in Oklahoma likely have direct ties to the first Black town located in Florida. Seminole Freedmen history complicates our understanding of Indigenous identity. The development of Black towns and the economic opportunities that were led by the Seminole Freedmen communities highlight the role of education in these efforts. These communities contributed immeasurably to the development of the Seminole Nation as we know it today.

CHAPTER FOUR

Being Seminole

Seminole leader Neamathla asserted in 1823 that if white people taught them their ways, they would no longer be Indian.[1] From Neamathla's perspective, he had witnessed the white settlers that were invading Seminole land and territory as well as the military occupation in his homelands. He was resolute in affirming Seminole epistemologies.[2] Kowakkoce would express the same sentiment decades later in Indian Territory. They believed that the white men's ways would contribute to the decline of who they were and who they wanted their children to be. As parents, they would think about what was important for their children to know and to learn. Education for the Seminoles was inculcated with a value system, a way of understanding the world and their role in it. Neamathla, and Kowakkoce refused the education overtures of the people who had enacted genocidal policies upon their families.

Seminole children were socialized within a network of family, clan relatives, and community. They would have a deep understanding of their role in the world according to what clan they belonged to. This understanding of their roles is aligned with Seminole Creation stories in which our people were paired with certain animals, plants, and elements of the natural world. Children would

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1. Mulroy, p.xxvvii.

2. Geoffrey Crayon, "The Crayon Papers," *The Gutenberg Project,* October 8, 2012, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7994/7994-h/7994-h.htm

follow their mother's clan. Each Seminole clan has a function within the natural world, in the community and those teachings are shared intergenerationally. Although education might look similar across the Nation, each clan had their own prescribed process for ensuring that teachings central to that clan would be perpetuated.[3] Neamathla and Kowakkoce recognized that the white people's form of education would lack these central teachings, and they refused to consent to this type of education for their children.[4]

As a former classroom teacher who had taught Tribal students in elementary school, I understood the role of curriculum in the school setting. In some schools, we only had texts for math and reading, so if we wanted our students to learn science and social studies, we had to develop the curriculum ourselves. As an Indigenous teacher, it was important for me to ensure that the values of the communities that I worked within were visible and tangible in my curriculum and pedagogy. I had been prepared for this process as a graduate of a Native American Teacher Preparation program. As I thought about how my tribe had historically approached the schooling process once it became institutionalized, I wondered if the teachers long ago thought the same? What did

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3. Although I wrote this in the past tense, I assert that these processes continue to be carried out in Seminole families and communities. I also recognize the propriety of what to share and out of respect for the clans and tribes' intellectual and cultural property, I leave this section intentionally vague. Our Nations have been exploited in the name of research, I refuse to engage in that process.

4. Audra Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3. (2016): 328.

they teach? What was important to them? How were they trained? What values were implicit in the core classes? As I searched through the archives, I found curriculum written in the Maskoke language, with ink-stained handprints on the yellowed, aging pages. I knew the primer book was utilized heavily due to the wear and tear and the names written in the very front part of the book. This chapter examines the curriculum of the school, daily schedules and the ways in which teachers were instructed to carry out their duties. I assert that the curriculum of the schools was to provide students with a Christian based education throughout the three types of leadership: Tribal, Mission and Federal government and that Seminole communities took what they needed and made it their own. Although indoctrination was the aim, Seminole people shaped their Christian beliefs to meld with our own values.[5]

Beth Piatote notes, “Liturgical texts remain one of the sites where the local indigenous languages have found a degree of refuge through many years of colonial incursion.”[6] Although the function of the schools was to facilitate conversion to Christianity and the acquisition of the English language, liturgical texts were one area in which our people found sanctuary. Our history of education demonstrates the ways in which Seminole communities refused to replace their

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5. Jack Shultz’s work on Seminole Indian Baptist Churches highlight the ways in which Seminole people took a non-Native institution and made it Seminole.

6. Beth H. Piatote, "Our (Someone Else's) Father: Articulation, Dysarticulation, and Indigenous Literary Traditions," *The Kenyon Review* 32, no. 1 (2010): p. 199.

language with the foreign English language. Even the early white missionaries to the area recognized that they had to adapt their language to the Maskoke language in order to find success in their missions. In stark contrast to federal boarding schools in which Indigenous students were forced to attend far from their homes, within Indian Territory, it was the white missionaries that were having to acculturate to the characteristics of the Tribal Nations. Language was the key. Missionaries to Indian Territory were very much aware that the laws governing behavior was under the jurisdiction of the Tribal Nations. The organization of the Nations within Indian Territory, with their own court systems and their own governance structures were highly effective entities. Although some parts were mirrored after the colonial system, there were other functions that were distinctive to those Nations. The conditions of the strong governance systems within Indian Territory undoubtedly contributed to the uniqueness of the relationship between missionaries and the Nations they were serving. Missionaries also fell under Seminole jurisdiction and had to follow Seminole laws.[7] Non-native people had to acquire permits from the Tribe to reside in the area.[8] Tribal Nations employed law enforcement officers, such as the Seminole Lighthorsemen, who upheld Tribal legal decisions. Each Tribal Nation responded to these missions in very different

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7. Susan Work, *The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma: A Legal History*, (2010), University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK. 23.

8. Ibid.

way, and the confluence of Tribal and missionary ideologies were enacted within the schools.

Leadership at Seminole schools responded to these ideologies in a variety of ways. The first teacher, Talamase-mekko experienced the effects of settler colonization, the war upon the people and the ensuing challenges that our people faced in this new environment. He likely recognized early on that that our people would need to acquire the English language. He had traveled widely in the East and knew that the gravity and permanency of the white settlers' aspirations. Perhaps in response, he recognized that in order to protect our people, land and to prevent the atrocities that had occurred, the Seminole people would need the tools to combat these pressures. He likely viewed Christianity and schooling as a tool to challenge the genocide that had been committed. He might have believed that biblical scriptures could be utilized to dissuade similar events by appealing to morality. The mission aim was clear: to win more souls to their particular denominations, however they were also heavily invested in land appropriations in Indian Territory.[9] The federal government also utilized a heavily Christian influence in the educational process by sponsoring missions in Tribal lands.[10] The Christian education component to education upheld white supremacy in many

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9. Lisa K. Neuman, *Indian Play: Indigenous Identities at Bacone College*, (Lincoln, Nebraska, 2013), p. 60

10. K. Tsianina. Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994),2.

ways. Indeed, some of the earliest legal justifications for the theft of Indigenous land is directly affected by the Doctrine of Discovery, which linked spirituality and property rights that were extended to only Christian people.[11] The enactment of these processes all was reflected in the curriculum and formal organizational structure of the classroom.

History of Maskoke Language Curriculum

Across the United States, the history of schools for Indigenous children were replete with the effects of English Only language policies in federally controlled schools. Although these early schools usually cast these policies as benevolent, what really occurred was often violent means to ensure Tribal children were speaking English. Socializing Indigenous children in the English language was a rupture of the inherent worldview that is contained in languages. Wolfe reminds us "Settler colonialism destroys to replace."[12] The acquisition of the English language was emphasized throughout the history of education for Indigenous communities. Depending upon who controlled the schools, the methods of enforcing school-based language policies looked very different. To the west of Indian Territory, Clyde Ellis' work on the federally-run Rainy Mountain Boarding School demonstrated the ways in which students were

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11. "The Doctrine of Discovery, 1493," *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History,* Date Accessed October 28, 2021. https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/doctrine-discovery-1493

12. Wolfe, p. 388.

forbidden to speak their languages, while Kiowa, Comanche and Apache students demonstrated resistance to these draconian measures.[13] Students developed their own methods of spelling their language. Ellis found, "Parker McKenzie wooed his future wife Nettie by passing her messages in phonetically written Kiowa, a practice that prevented teachers from confiscating the notes and reading them out loud."[14] Children were finding ways to retain and perpetuate their identities as Kiowa, Comanche or Apache students.

In Indian Territory, Tribal Nations were making concerted efforts to ensure perpetuation of their own ways, through their own languages.[15] Many of the white missionaries to Indian Territory noted the critical nature of proselytizing to and converting Native people to Christianity was hampered by a lack of knowledge of their respective languages. They quickly realized that they would need to transgress the language barrier that stood between them and the populations they hoped to convert. Archival collections often include school curricula in Indian Territory pre-statehood which yield rich materials that are often written entirely in Indigenous languages.[16] Tribal citizens within the

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13. Ellis, p.

14. Ellis, p. 104.

15. I draw a connection to the Hawaiian language, where Native Hawaiians have a rich history of reading and writing and publishing in the Hawaiian language.

16. Agnes Fuller Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

Muscogee and Seminole Nations enjoyed a variety of materials that were written entirely in the Maskoke language, while the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Cherokee Nations also enjoyed extensive literature in their respective languages.[17]

Maskoke language literacy was prevalent among school aged children and some adults. This fact was not lost on John D. Benedict, the U.S. Superintendent of Indian Schools. In her seminal research on the Five Tribes, Angie Debo writes that Benedict accused the tribal school superintendents of conversing in the Native languages with students, and "deplored" that boys were trained for college and the professions instead of industry, while girls studied Latin and mathematics instead of domestic service.[18] However, because the materials are written in the Maskoke language, there remain some unanswered questions: What did the Maskoke curriculum convey? In what ways was Maskoke language use reinforced in tribal educational spaces?

Linguist Jack Martin found some of the earliest texts written in Maskoke were recorded in 1736.[19] German settlers to the area recorded words and phrases in a notebook along with brightly colored illustrations. Within Indian Territory, the drive to develop Maskoke language materials was boosted by missionary

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17. The following collections at the Western History Collections at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK contain rich language materials. Colonial Dames Collection; Dovie Jones Collection; Green McCurtain Collection; Melvin Cornish Collection, Phillips Pamphlet Collection; Samuel Robertson collection

18. Debo, p. 67

19. The text documented daily life in Savannah, GA and recorded animal and plant Maskoke words. http://muskogee.blogs.wm.edu/bookshelf/

interests in the area. These texts, developed by Maskoke speakers and white missionaries inadvertently contributed to the continuance of Native languages. Although missionaries aimed to further the mission of conversion to Christianity, Maskoke speaking people utilized the materials to sing hymns, speak and teach the language. They gave life to Maskoke literacy practices. The translation and transcription of these early biblical texts laid the foundation for some of the earliest forms of bilingual education within Indian Territory. Other notable materials within Maskoke speaking populations included school newsletters, legal documents and personal letters which indicate Maskoke literacy was prevalent in homes and communities in Indian Territory.

One of the earliest Maskoke language texts that was published was the *Mvskoki Imunaitskv* (Maskoke Em Vnicetskv) or the Maskoke Helper in Boston during 1834.[20] This text included one of the earliest orthographies in the Maskoke language, along with illustrations to aid language learners. Bilingual texts written in Maskoke and English likely served dual purposes. First, they reinforced written literacy for Maskoke speaking populations. Second, they aided white missionaries in their acquisition of the Maskoke languages. This text is heavily dependent upon teaching the Maskoke language via syllable sounds.[21] Perhaps the authors thought that by teaching the language through syllables, they could teach sounds that did

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20. Jack Martin. (Seminole/Creek Documentation Project.) College of William & Mary, February 6, 2021, http://muskogee.blogs.wm.edu/bookshelf/

21. Ibid.

not exist in the English language. The text also provides dictionary definitions of commonly used words and provides small snippets of conversational phrases that one might speak. These exercises might have been aimed towards the foreign English-speaking teachers to provide help when teaching. The *Muskoki Imunaitsv* also demonstrates some of the political order. For instance, some of the conversation centers around the political leadership. They ask when the council will meet and the other speaker replies that they will be meeting in the big house, which is a structure that is representative of Maskoke political and social meetings.[22]

There are several passages that explicate some of the social life during 1834. In one particular text, the speaker refers to going to the Fort to buy flour.[23] We know that trade among the fort and the Maskoke speakers was ongoing. If we think about the context of social life in 1834, we have to situate the Maskoke speaking population within the larger framework of settler colonialism and the events that occurred prior to and during the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The text reinforced this concept with illustrations of the Nation's capital at Washington D.C., religious buildings in London, etc.[24] These places were far removed from the life of Maskoke speaking populations, yet the credence of symbolic images that

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22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

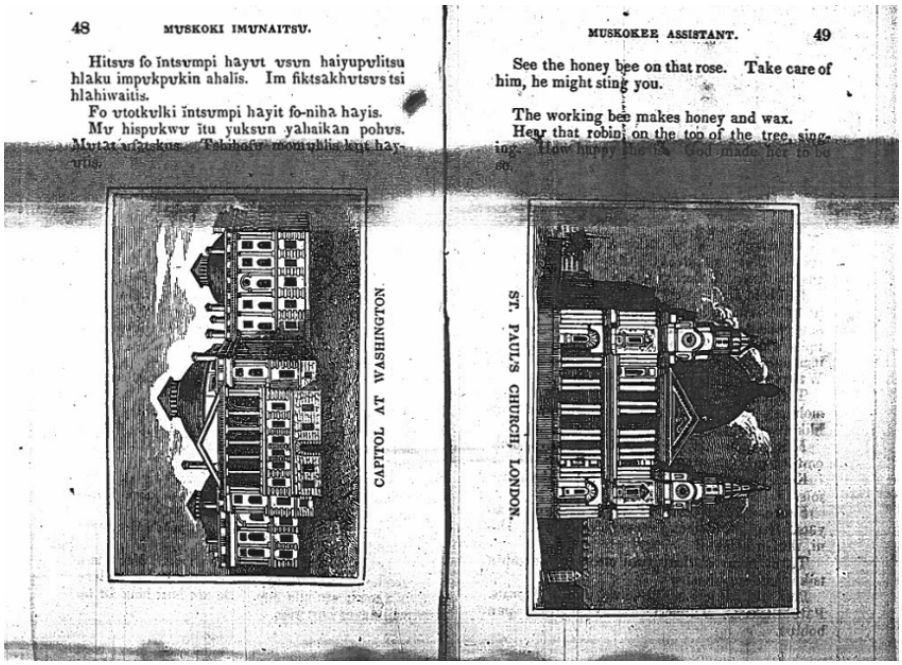


Figure 5.*Muskoki Imunaitsu:* Source: Muskogee (Seminole/Creek) Documentation Project.

reinforced settler colonialism narratives are embedded throughout these texts. The images are prominently placed along stories that are not aligned with the photos that are displayed on the same page. The pages convey the imagery of the Capitol at Washington, a site of power in which influential decisions were being made to drive Indian policy. These images reinforced the permanency of the settlers, and as Patrick Wolfe explains the logic of elimination encompasses "religious conversion and resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools…"[25] Resocialization included texts, imagery and implicit and explicit messages that were reinforced through multiple means. Although the goals of the

25. Wolfe, p. 388.

text produced by missionaries were for conversion, these same texts also sought to reproduce ideologies of settler colonization by asserting nationalism.

Translations from Maskoke to English also reflected English worldviews. For example, the word *mekko*, was translated to a king, but the Maskoke concept of a leader is not representative of a leader that that sought to expand empire or resembled a monarchy. Rather, Maskoke speaking populations centered leadership around someone who took great care in thinking of the people first, and made all decisions from that perspective. A mekko is someone who makes decisions for the collective, and not the individual. In some ways, these texts conveyed distortions of the actual meanings of the Maskoke language.

Indigenous languages are not static, rather they grow with the world around them. The evidence of this change is marked by new vocabulary that was introduced during the arrival of the missionaries. For example, there were Maskoke words to describe the Baptists, Presbyterians and Methodist denominations. Maskoke speaking people differentiated between the types of missionaries according to how they carried out their baptisms. Baptists were referred to as Aksomkvlke, which refers to their method of fully immersing the person in water. The Presbyterians were called Uewv Ohfēskvlke, which related to their method of sprinkling the person being baptized. The Methodists were referred to as the Uewv Ohkalvlke because they baptized by pouring water on top of the head. Our people developed new words, new language and based it upon the way that they typically named things through description. As Piatote reminds us, “It is assumed that cultural forms will always be made, unmade and remade.

Communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts."[26] Language was one way in which the people continued to evolve, and the multiple forms of literacy were one part of the reconfiguration.

Although some of the texts reinforced settler ideologies, community acceptance of the books was negotiated. Maskoke speaking populations might have rejected the ideologies of these books, while reinforcing their own Maskoke language. In Indian Territory, there was a plethora of materials that were increasingly available. *Istutsi Naktsok* or the The Child's Book was published by Rev. John Fleming at the Union Mission.[27] A missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Rev. Fleming published his Maskoke language material in 1835 and it is the first book printed in Indian Territory.

Many Maskoke language texts were produced in the Muscogee Nation. Mrs. Ann E. Worcestor Robertson was a teacher within the Muscogee Nation.[28] Although she spent some years at her father's mission in the Cherokee Nation at Park Hill, her marriage to the principal of the Tullahassee Mission situated her

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26. Beth H. Piatote, "Our (Someone Else's) Father: Articulation, Dysarticulation, and Indigenous Literary Traditions," *The Kenyon Review* 32, no. 1 (2010): p. 206.

27. Linda D. Wilson, "Printing and Publishing Industry," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=PR015., see also http://muskogee.blogs.wm.edu/bookshelf/, Jack Martin has conducted extensive research in the histography of the printed language.

28. S.W. Robertson Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

among the Muscogee people. She noted that "the importance of a knowledge of the vernacular for reaching the hearts of the people" was critical to communicating with the Maskoke speaking population and spent a great part of her life translating and transcribing the New Testament.[29] N.B. Sullivan, a Maskoke speaker with expertise in the language, greatly contributed to her translation work described the work as tedious saying "If we finish a page a day, we think we are doing well. Today, we worked one verse three hours." Furthermore, Mrs. Robertson's husband encouraged her work believing the Muscogee people "those who could only be reached through their own language." The work at Tullahassee Mission School proved very fruitful, as the mission published the "Our Monthly" newsletter utilizing a hand printing press. These newsletters contained stories, recounted daily activities, and gave information on events at the school and in the surrounding community. It was a way of communication with parents and community members. It was also utilized as a way to continue the spread of the gospel, as the majority of print was in the Maskoke language.

In 1874, Mrs. Robertson wrote in the Our Monthly newsletter "For a quarter of a century, we have been striving to educate our youth in English schools, and the experiment here as everywhere has utterly failed. English

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29. S. W. Robertson Collection, Box R-40, Folder 8, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK.

instruction in English books never has directly reached and influenced any Indian speaking people and never can."[30] The Maskoke speaking population held fast to their language and although there were assimilation efforts, missionaries within the area recognized the strength and resolve of the people to retain their languages. Mrs. Robertson would have been well acquainted with the Seminole Nation missionaries as they would often visit other missions for fellowship meetings. There was certainly overlap and sharing of materials in the area. Mission newsletters would have carried important missives and local news throughout Indian Territory, so it is very likely that Mrs. Robertson's ideas about language in education would have had a wide audience beyond Tullahassee Mission.

Curriculum materials that were written in the Maskoke language is an example of how teachers utilized the language of Seminole students as a starting point for education. In this way, the Seminole Nation's teachers demonstrated to students and families that the language of the Nation was respected and had value within the schools. Schooling was to acquire English, but the use of Maskoke materials indicate that the language was the lingua franca of the school and spoken by Seminole and Seminole Freedman students alike. Furthermore, although the vast collection of materials included heavily Christian topics, the

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30. Our Monthly. ca. 1874. 1 sheet (2 pages). Three columns on each page. From original at University of Oklahoma's Western History Collections, Norman, Oklahoma, see also: http://lingspace.blogs.wm.edu/files/2010/08/newspaper-ourmonthlyc.1874.pdf

translation of these materials were not limited to biblical texts. Mrs. Robertson transcribed a story about the Origin of Corn and her influence on the development of Maskoke language materials was very strong.[31]

Some of the texts at Mekusukey Academy indicate teachers recognized and utilized different methodologies for teaching students who were learning the foreign English language. One of the primers in the school was a book that was specific to non-English speaking people. The Aldine readers were also prominent at the school. The first primer in this collection included illustrations along with rhyming texts to accompany the pictures that were about the natural world. These books would have been key to facilitating the acquisition of the English language. The books were also very relevant to what Seminole children were familiar with and they would have been able make schematic connections to text and the English vocabulary. The primers emphasized a phonics-based education and the first one hundred English sight words.[32]

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31. "Bookshelf," *Muskogee (Seminole/Creek) Documentation Project,* Accessed September 8, 2020, http://muskogee.blogs.wm.edu/bookshelf/

32. Frank E. Spaulding, and Catherine T. Bryce, *Aldine Readers,* (New York, Newson & Co., 1906) https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044097080311&view=1up&seq=10

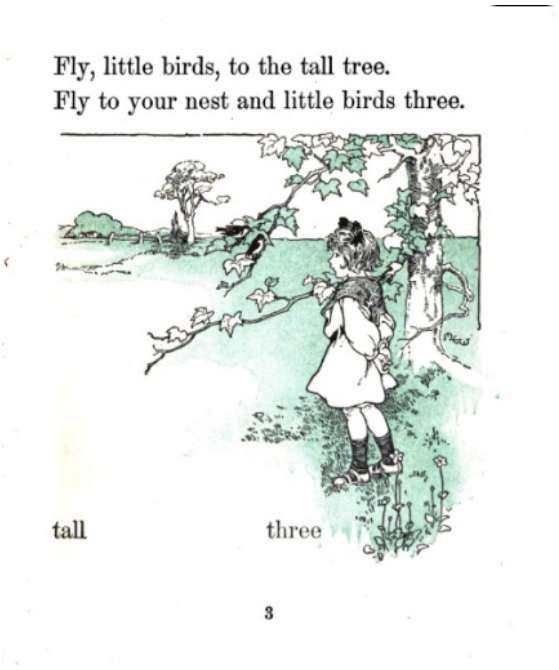


Figure 6, *Aldine First Reader* Source: Babel Hathitrust

The *Mvskoke Nakcokv Eskerretv Enhvteceskv* and the *Mvskoke Nakcokv Eskerretv Esvhokkolat* were important texts developed in Indian Territory and written in the Maskoke language.[33] These books contained biblical references, introduced students to foreign animals such as the rhinoceros and the camel, and also offered essays on the protocols of decorum for young men and women. Some of the passages also framed the animals in ways that conflicted with Seminole epistemologies. In one passage within the Second Reader, the text was centered around a bear.[34] In it the bear is described as a big, mean animal that steals food

33. William S. Robertson, a missionary who began his work in 1849 and David Winslett wrote these two primers. Source: http://muskogee.blogs.wm.edu/bookshelf/

34. Ibid.

from other animals. It goes into detail describing how the bear kills other animals, even noting the quality of bear meat for consumption, and the utility of bear skin for clothing during cold months. The Bear Clan is a Maskoke leadership clan and Seminole people show great respect for the Bear because of this kinship relationship. The killing of a bear by a clan relative would likely not occur, nor would the eating of bear meat by those same clan relatives. Curriculum materials were at times in direct contrast to Seminole knowledge traditions. The relationship between Seminole people and the animals were overlooked and children were likely negotiating the messages from school in contrast to the knowledge traditions being carried out at home.

Nonetheless, Maskoke language materials were very popular within the Muscogee and Seminole Nations. What was occurring within these particular nations was unique. Students were learning to read and write in the English language in tandem with the Maskoke language. This type of learning very likely occurred during the period after the 1866 treaties were signed until federal oversight began in the late 19th century. It was a period of intense growth for the Tribe, and demonstrated the resolve of the people to develop, to dream, and to build what they hoped would equip our people with the tools to face new challenges going forward. Tribal Nations were ensuring that the acquisition of the English language was not at the expense of their own language.[35]

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35. In archival institutions, there are a plethora of curriculum materials, school newsletters, communications and treaties written entirely in Indigenous

Tribal languages were important to the transmission of knowledge to Tribal students.[36] Seminole people were reimagining the use of schools, were ensuring their ways, their values were embedded within these institutions. Their language was the source of transmission. Although the acquisition of English was emphasized in the curriculum, students were able to converse in their language within Seminole Academies, until the Seminole people were forced to give up control of their own schools.[37] Tribal language use in the schools was a common feature that spanned Tribal-Mission and Federal control. Under Tribal control, the Seminoles' language policy in school was to support bilingualism. White missionaries to the area were also desperate to learn the language and many of them supported the Tribal Nation's language policies that had been enacted in the schools.[38] These language policies began to shift once the United States

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languages, many of those from the Five Tribes located in Indian Territory. Currently, we have a small window of time to work with Indigenous first language speakers to translate these materials. If we do not engage in this effort now, the knowledge contained within these documents may never be recovered.

36. Again, although I write in the past tense, I assert this issue is still key to language reclamation in Indigenous communities.

37. Charles Johnson, Doris Duke Project, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.; Federal oversight of the school began with the federal appointment of John Benedict. By 1901, governmental documents like Estelle Reel's Course of Study mandated that the aim of education was to advance English language acquisition along with domestic and manual labor.

38. Evidence by James Ross Ramsay diary, the development of materials by Maskoke speakers in conjunction with missionaries. I also want to note that although the missionaries often took credit for this work, their work relied upon the expertise of Maskoke speaking people who often were not credited with their invaluable contributions.

government began to impose itself into the educational affairs of the Seminole Nation. Beth Piatote, relying upon seminal scholarship by Noenoe K. Silva reminds us that "contest over language was and is part of the anticolonial struggle."[39]

Christianity & Gender Ideologies

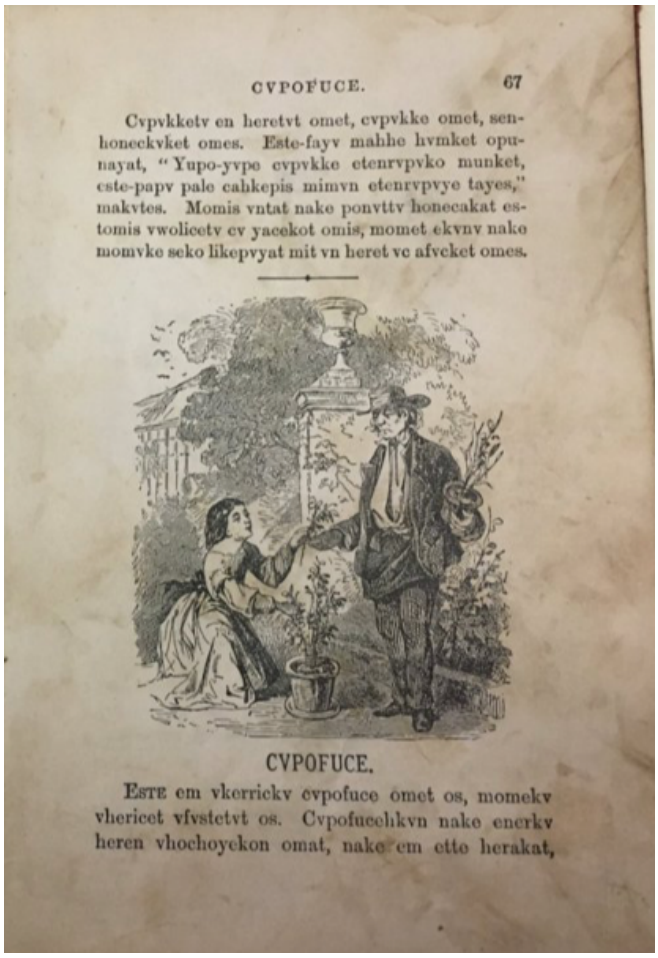
Although the Five Tribes were enacting forms of refusal by teaching through their languages, there were also ideas of gender that conflicted with Seminole epistemologies and were manifested within the school curriculum materials. The missionaries to Indian Territory had heavy control over the types of curriculum that were published. Their ideologies are interwoven throughout the curriculum of the school. One area that they were advancing was their ideas about the role of women within society. This operation was a common approach that missionaries often took when they settled in Indigenous lands. In Hawai‘i, Noelani Arista asserts Christian mission stories about their arrival often "places the mission at the islands' origin, introducing with it a surreptitious claim of indigeneity, which predates the arrival of the Hawaiians' Polynesian ancestors, trumping claims of first settlement and replacing them with the mana of a new Christian Genesis."[40] Christian ideologies consisted of much of the curriculum

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39. Piatote, p. 201

40. Arista, Noelani. "Captive Women in Paradise 1796-1826: The Kapu on Prostitution in Hawaiian Historical Legal Context." American Indian Culture and Research Journal 35, no. 4 (2011): p. 41.

materials. They also conveyed ideologies that were in contrast to Seminole constructions of gender.



CVPOFUCE. 67

Cvpvkketv en heretvt omet, cvpvkke omet, senhoneckvket omes. Este-fayv mahhe hvmket opunayat, "Yupo-yvpe cvpvkke etenrvpvko munket, este-papv pale cahkepis mimvn etenrvpvye tayes," makvtes. Momis vntat nake ponvttv honecakat estomis vwolicetv cv yacekot omis, momet ekvnv nake momvke seko likepvyat mit vn heret vc afvcket omes.

CVPOFUCE.

Este em vkerrickv cvpofuce omet os, momekv vhericet vfvstetvt os. Cvpofucehkvn nake enerkv heren vhochoyekon omat, nake em etto herakat,

Figure 7. *A Garden. Mvskoke Nakcokv En Kerretv Eshokkolat,* Source: Garrard Ardeneum Collection, Sequoyah National Research Center

The image in Figure 3 is a selection from the Mvskoke Second Reader and offers some insight into the ideologies that were being perpetuated through this text. This particular section is entitled "Garden" and it gives some guidance for behavior. The late Helen Bunny translated this passage into English,

> "A person's mind is like a garden, so be very careful what you plant and take real good care of it for if a seed is not good, it will not grow and make pretty flowers. When the boys and girls go to school, the teachers will try

> to plant good seeds in their minds, but as always, there are dirty minds, dirty talkers even people that are bad like the weeds that grow in the garden…"[41]

The passage of text, along with the image in the book highlight gender roles and expectations of behavior. In the image, the woman is seen kneeling in a deferential position to the man while handing him a sprig from her plant. For Seminole people, this imagery is in direct contradiction to the gender roles of Seminole women. Seminole people were a matrilineal, matrilocal society, and the role of the women was well-regarded.[42] In contrast to the role of white women, Seminole women were the matriarchs of families and communities. When a woman decided upon her partner, the man was the one to move to the woman's home, and his work contributed to the well-being of his wife's clan and community. Children that read these texts were presented with information that could have fundamentally shifted their thinking about Seminole constructs of gender.

I connect these texts within the larger settler colonization project. In Indian Territory, women that held allotments were also targeted for their properties. Seminole women were being singled out for their land, and the diminution of their roles were being framed within curricular texts supported by

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41. This particular translated passage by Helen Bunny was shared with me from Jack Martin. I also verified translations with my mom who is also a first language speaker of the Maskoke language.

42. Again, I assert that the matrilineal society is still very prevalent in many families and communities today.

the missionaries. These disruptions to the gender roles in Seminole society contributed to the shaping of the political and social landscape which narrowed the roles for Seminole women across the domains. I'm reminded of Piatote's scholarship on domestic subjects. She claims "…in the hands of Indian girls, fixtures of Indian domesticity are not merely symbolic representations of a larger political struggle are themselves constitutes of the struggle. At stake in this contest is control over Indian futures-children, land and the imagination…"[43] This resocialization of the Seminole constructs of gender is a feature of the settler colonization project.

While the Seminole political leadership wielded tribal control within their Nations, their missionaries inserted their ideologies within the curriculum in many ways. They might have inflicted these views in the curriculum because it was one of the few areas that they had some semblance of control over. Although missionaries might have had some influence with political leaders of the Seminole Nation, they did not have the ability to enact laws within the Seminole Nation.[44] The people who were most affected by this struggle were the students, and the strict ideologies surrounding gender contributed to a change that negatively impacted Seminole women. Mrs. John B. Lilley recalled one of her church

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43. Beth Piatote, *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 4.

44. This connection was made with Arista's scholarship where she noted that in Hawai'i "…they had no authority or power to proclaim kapu or to introduce law in the islands." P. 49

members, Eliza Chupco who came to her seeking permission to marry a Seminole man that was not Christian. Mrs. Lilley said

> We talked to her about what was her idea and though that we did not want him and I was going to ask her why she would not dismiss him like a white woman would if she did not want him but when she still persisted that he wanted her and was going on to say that he was not opposed to her religion, it just struck me that she might want him and did not know whether or not she would be allowed to have him. I said Eliza perhaps you want him yourself do you, then they were married and they were very consistent. Every Sabbath they would come to church and before meeting, she would come in the room and bring him with her and we would teach him how to read the Muscogee Hymn book.[45]

Eliza sought the permission of the missionaries. Their ideologies had impacted her choice, her decisions to freely choose her partner like generations of Seminole women before her.

School Calendar

The Mekusukey school calendar for the 1916-1917 year highlights monthly activities that were structured around predominantly religious activities.[46] The school year began on September fourth with the students being classified into grade levels the following day.[47] By their second day of school, students were already beginning their academic and industrial work.[48] The school

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45. Mrs. John B. Lilley Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

46 Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, F6, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

day was organized around class work while students were assigned duties such as agricultural work for the boys.[49] Employees held monthly business meetings, and Sunday school took place each Sunday with a morning and evening service. [50]

The Baptist missionary, Rev. Robert Hamilton, and a Presbyterian Missionary visited the school each month.[51] Although there was a Methodist missionary, it was noted on the school calendar that he was not a regular visitor. If there was no minister to exhort, then one of the employees would conduct the services. [52]All the students were encouraged to participate. There were social activities organized on a monthly basis for the students, along with religious services by the Presbyterian ministers. [53]The calendar also noted days in which services were conducted by Indian ministers, but it didn't state which denomination these particular ministers were. At the close of the first month of school, there were election of officers to the Literary Societies.[54]

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49. Ibid.

50. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, F6, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

In October, many of the activities were similar.[55] During this month, it was noted that a Baptist minister conducted two services and the sociable event for the students was held on the lawn.[56] There was also a literary program and a Halloween party to close out the month.[57] It appears that Mekusukey Mission school wasn't aligned with only one faith, as the appearance of ministers changed from month to month. During the month of November, Dr. McCarthy gave an illustrated lecture on the Care of the Teeth, and the Sunday school topic was a temperance lesson.[58] There was an evening song service and a Thanksgiving dinner held. The students at Mekusukey Academy were also treated to a moving picture show after their holiday dinner, a real treat during the 1916-1917 school year.[59]

In the month of December, the Superintendent gave an illustrated lecture on dairying and the Baptist ministers were the only ones on the agenda this month.[60] Pupils shared in a Christmas dinner and exercises on Christmas day.[61] Students did not appear to go home that often, but they were allowed short breaks,

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55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

such as during Christmas and the holidays. During January, students celebrated by having a New Year's Dinner and the following month they also had a Valentines party.[62] The school also offered a Lincoln-Washington program during February.[63] All of these events were in addition to their regularly visits from the Baptist & Presbyterian minister.

During the Spring month of March, the school offered the usual literary program, employees social meetings along with the lectures by the multi-denominational ministers.[64] There was an Arbor and Bird day and Baseball game scheduled on the home grounds.[65] On the last day of the month, there was a local history program in which the students met with the local Seminole high school.[66] The school would follow a very similar program during the final months of the school. During June, at the close of the academic year, the school would host commencement exercises as well as a Field Day.[67]

The Mekusukey Academy calendar would have contrasted sharply with the Seminole organization of time that was structured around the natural world.

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62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, File 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

67. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, F6, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

The Seminole New Year is typically celebrated during the summer harvests and this would have been a time of dancing and feasting and enjoying fellowship with other families in the community.[68] The passage of time was marked by what was taking place around us. For example, while the month of December was known to us as the Big Winter, the month of January was known as the Winter's younger brother. Likewise, February was known as the Wind month. Other months were known for the Big harvest time while some reflected smaller periods of the harvesting of fruit. The celebration of these Seminole holidays sometimes met the ire of the missionaries. One Mekusukey Mission school leader wrote after 1910, "The stompdance is yet indulged in by many of the adult Indians among the Seminoles and held as if it is all seasons of the year, and in all kinds of weather, is a serious menace to the general health of the Indian."[69] Furthermore they elaborated

> It is the general belief, especially among those who have seen service as missionaries among them, that the stompdance is designed and indulged in to excite the passions. Whether this be so or not, it seems to have that effect even among the school children. For this reason, it is not permitted on or about the school premises, nor are the children allowed to chant the stompdance songs.[70]

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68. Alexander Spoehr, "Seminole Kinship," PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1940. ProQuest. (T-09767), 27.

69. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, File 2, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

70. Ibid.

The leadership of the school was then under the control of the federal school administrators. The stompdance to Seminole people were aligned with the epistemological beliefs and were very much a central to the identity of some of the Mekusukey Mission school students. Stringent rules surrounding permissible behavior continued from the Tribal-Mission control to Federal oversight.

Mekusukey Mission Curriculum Materials

Mekusukey Academy employed a Superintendent, a Principal, an intermediate teacher, primary teacher, domestic science teacher, in addition to school matrons.[71] Materials at Mekusukey Mission were well documented. Federal oversight of the school ensured that rigorous inventory lists were documented throughout the years, from automobiles, axes, down to the furniture.[72] Faculty were also required to submit materials of their rooms. During the 1919 school year, the December inventory highlighted some of the curriculum and books of the school.[73] Some of the books pertained to the academic content areas while others represented the agricultural/manual labor training that students were studying. Bookcases and cabinetry were made onsite in the shop at the school.[74] Some of the faculty texts centered around the teaching of agricultural

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71. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, File 6, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

72. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, File 2, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

practices. These texts included Barn Plans and Out buildings, Bush Fruits, Dairy Cattle and Milk Products, Farmstead, Fertility of the Land, Common Disease of Animals, Husbandry for Schools, along with many others that supplemented the teaching material.[75] There were also texts for the Boston School Cookbook, Dressmaking in School, Discipline as a School Problem, and the Manual of Shoe Making.[76] These texts supported faculty development in their domains of expertise.

Literature choices included popular authors such as Louisa May Alcott and Edgar Allan Poe.[77] There were copies of *Jo's Boys*, *Little Women*, and *Little Men*. The *Fry's Grammar School of Geography*, *Hero Tales from American History*, *Bloomfields Youth and Vocation* and *Nature Studies and Life* were some of the curriculum texts.[78] Mekusukey Academy also included student texts such as: English Composition, Advanced Arithmetic, Physiology, Algebra, Agriculture for Beginners, Bookkeeping, Introduction to Language, Elementary and Grammar School of Geography, Poe's Poems and Tales, Montgomery's History, Beginning History and a book of the poem about the Ancient Mariner.[79] Mekusukey students were exposed to a great variety of subjects and literature.

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75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.



Figure 8. *Mekusukey Academy Classroom,* Source: Mekusukey Mission collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

Although the teachers at Emahaka and Mekusukey Mission were usually white, especially in the years following federal intervention, orders placed for texts indicate an attempt to infuse curriculum that reflected the students' heritage.[80] For example, the Mekusukey Mission inventory supply lists indicate that Dr. Charles Eastman's *An Indian Boyhood* was on the bookshelves at the

80. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, File 2, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

boys school.[81] Although Charles Eastman was not Seminole, the influence of his success as a Native doctor did not escape the faculty at Mekusukey Mission who might have hoped to influence the Seminole boys. The early support for materials that included Indigenous perspectives demonstrate early attempts to include curriculum that was responsive to the students' background. Seminole students at Mekusukey Academy saw students who looked like them in some of their materials, and this would have been critical to their identity development.

Mekusukey Academy also had musical instruments. There were two pianos on site, along with a Victrola and a drum set. Each Academy contained a music room, where students would rehearse for their recitations and performances.[82] The library contained books that highlighted the "pioneers" of regions across the United States, and offered how-to books describing how people are clothed, fed and sheltered.[83] There also books with Indian titles such as *The Old Indian Legends* and *Stories of Red Children.*[84] The library lent books on agricultural and/or labor topics such as farms, and how-to books on planting.

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81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84 .Ibid.

During the 1916-1917 school year, the school appeared to be co-educational.[85] The school organized religious services twice each Sunday.[86] The boys were allowed to go to the nearby town of Seminole on Monday afternoon. They had to ask for permission to go, and it was usually granted as long as it was not abused.[87] The girls were also permitted to go on Monday afternoons, but they had to travel with a chaperone, which was usually an employee of the school.[88]

Emahaka Academy Curriculum

The academy for Seminole girls, Emahaka Academy, was structured around the development of academic training as well as moral character. Students were between the ages of six and eighteen when admitted to the school. Their terms of admission also required they should be of "sound mind and free from contagious diseases."[89] Students were selected by their band chief, who supported their good moral character. Students were required to be neat and clean. Boys were provided with two of the following: suits, shirts undershirts, underwear and socks. They were also provided with one pair of shoes with a "common sense"

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85. Mekusukey Academy Collection, Box 32, File 6, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

89. Seminole Nation Museum, "Emahaka Mission Course of Study," *Documentary Narrative*, http://docnarr.oucreate.com/items/show/40.

heel and a hat.[90] The girls were required to have two to three dresses of good material along with a "sufficient amount of underclothing for warmth and cleanliness."[91] Although the school was for Seminole girls, a few boys that were children of the missionaries were allowed to attend. The boys' clothing items were provided, while the girls were required to furnish their own clothing.

The rules for the school were centered around decorum. Students were to be punctual to school and all other duties.[92] They were also required to be obedient to their teachers in a cheerful and respectful manner. During religious services, Emahaka students were expected to demonstrate orderly and respectful behavior.[93] Conduct between the students, employees and visitors was to be polite and obliging to all others. There were ten grade levels at Emahaka starting with the first year.[94]

The course of study was similar throughout each school year.[95] During the First year, students studied chart lessons, spelling, the first reader, elementary arithmetic and writing.[96] The second year students studied spelling, the second

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90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

reader, arithmetic, writing, drawing and declamation.[97] Third year students continued with the spelling lessons, the third reader, Barnes' language lessons, arithmetic, elementary geography, writing and drawing.[98] During their Fourth year, students concentrated on spelling, the fourth reader, Barnes' language lessons, arithmetic, manual of geography and writing. [99]Fifth year students also continued a similar course of study with spelling and defining, fifth reader, grammar, arithmetic, manual of geography and writing.[100]

The Sixth year students studied spelling and defining, the fifth reader, grammar, arithmetic, intermediate geography and writing.[101] By their Seventh year, students start to delve into career-oriented studies. They continued with the spelling and defining, the sixth grader reader, grammar, arithmetic, United States history and book-keeping.[102] During their eighth year, students studied the sixth reader, grammar, arithmetic, algebra, United States history and physiology.[103] Ninth year students learned Composition, English literature, algebra, general

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97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

history, botany and physical geography.[104] Finally, the Tenth year students learned English literature, algebra, natural philosophy, language.[105] During their final year, students also learned music and elocution throughout the course.[106]

Emahaka students were being trained in the liberal arts with classes that supported public speaking. As early as the second grade, the students' lessons in declamation were preparing them to orate and recite among others. In contrast to federal boarding schools that often focused upon training students for domestic arts or manual labor, Emahaka's school curriculum was preparing their students for the public sphere. The school was preparing future leadership of the Seminole Nation, and Emahaka girls were refining their leadership abilities in academic training as well as the fine arts.[107] The Wewoka Daily times reported "A cultured and refined atmosphere pervaded and the entire institution which seemed strangely out of place in the unsettled territory."[108] The school was a social hub for the area. For example, the closing exercises at Emahaka Academy was a well

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104. Ibid.

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid.

107. Local newspapers reported "Many successful and prominent women of Wewoka and the surrounding territory look upon it as the foundation of their education."

108. Mrs. E.P. Smith Collection, S-10, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK.

attended event. The local newspaper editor was invited and locals traveled to attend as it was a time to socialize and to witness the gem of the Seminole Nation.

During the 1899 closing exercises, the program was filled with student exhibitions of talent.[109] The students likely rehearsed their lines, songs and performances for weeks prior to the event. It was showtime and Emahaka was the place to be. The vocal class sang "America" and gave devotionals with a short Bible class.[110] The intermediate students sang "Summer Time" while the primary pupils sang "What the Birds Say."[111] Joanna Browning played the Snow Flake March as a piano solo while Rosanna Stewart gave a recitation.[112] Lizzie Jumper and Miss Holmes entertained with a piano duet.[113] The class gave a recitation of arithmetic.[114] Mae Davis played the Indian Band Two Step as a piano soloist while Selda Little offered a recitation.[115] Jeanette Fixico gave a recitation of "A Poor Rule" and Angeline Payne told the True Story of the Little Boy Blue.[116] There was a graphophone selection of the Bugler's Dream and Mae Davis,

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109. Alice Robertson Collection, Box 3, Folder 42, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid.

112. Ibid.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid.

115. Ibid.

116. Ibid.

Lucinda Fife and Joanna Browning gave a recitation of the Voices of the Woods.[117] Ella Tanyan recited the Cow and the Bishop.[118] The Intermediate class performed a scarf drill and Mary Blake and Irene Davis sang the "Baby's Lullaby."[119] Alice Bruner gave a recitation of Something Great and Emahaka faculty sang "A Beautiful River."[120] The closing performance was a graphophone selection of the night alarm "Fire!".[121]

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117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. There is a well-known, common baby's Maskoke language lullaby, although the program doesn't say whether or not it was in the language, there is a strong possibility that it was. If it was, this supports Seminole language and socialization practices.

120. Ibid.

121. Emahaka Students listed in this programme include: Joanna Browning, Rosanna Stewart, Elsie Blake, Lizzie Jumper, Selda Little, Mae Davis, James Blake, Luch Sancho, Jeanette Fixico, Angeline Payne, Maude Davis, James Blake, Lucinda Fife, Ella Tanyan, Irene Davis, Mary Blake, Fannie Palmer, Julia Davis, Julia Nevins, Hattie Grayson, Lillie Green, Bess Davis, Emma Davis, Alice Bruner, Fannie Morris, Susie Larney. Emahaka Faculty listed: Miss Holmes, Misses Davis, Crain, Blake, and Fife

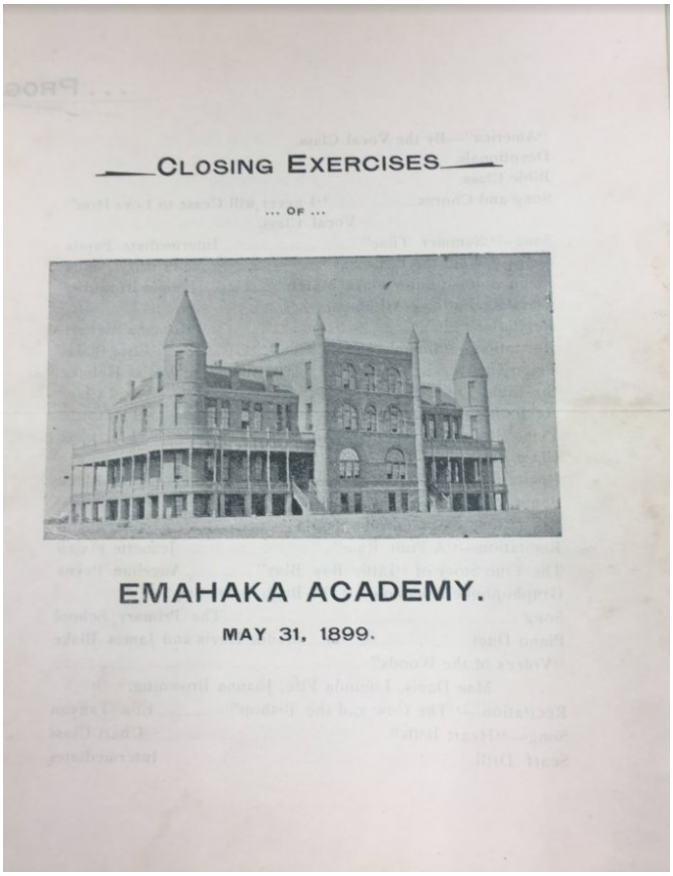


Figure 9. *Emahaka School Closing Exercises Programme,* Source: Alice Robertson Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society

The curriculum history of the school, along with the way of organizing school calendars, rules and public perception were important considerations in the education of Seminole children in the schools. Although the students at Emahaka were demonstrating their talents in the fine arts, I still wonder how much of the culture remained a part of the school. Were they being affirmed as to who they were as Seminole children? Some of the evidence, such as the language materials indicate that yes, they were being affirmed. In other ways, their epistemologies were being questioned and attacked and we see this carried out from the missionaries like Mary Ann Lilley all the way through the federal control of the

schools. The influence on Seminole-based constructs of gender and the Seminole epistemologies structured around the relationship with the non-human and the natural world were also being restricted through the curriculum and the rules governing behavior in the school. From the very first settlers, to the missionaries, to the governmental officials, each entity pressed their ideologies. They sought elimination of the People. Why were the ideals contained within the messaging of Seminole schools so important to the settler colonization project? The imagery, the texts, contested ideas of gender roles, were all critical to gaining further access to territory, and these aims were made explicit during the federal takeover of Seminole schools. Despite this, the Seminoles continued to advance their language, they still danced and feasted and shaped Christianity to fit their epistemologies.[122] They shaped the schools to fit their needs. The necessity to ameliorate the tools of combating invasion and genocide were beginning to shift. Neamathla and Kowakkoce had fought against the invasion of white settlers, while Talamase-mekko recognized the early need to develop an educational system. I assert that the Seminole people viewed schools as a very useful weapon to respond to the settler colonization project.

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122. Again, this statement is true today.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter examines leadership and educational policies as they enacted the forceful takeover of Seminole schools, transferring oversight of Seminole schools to the United States government. The move towards state formation in the early years of the 20th century was a very powerful force that greatly impacted the Tribal Nations and their schools. The newly formed state of Oklahoma's ideologies was supported by the United States federal government and its agents, especially around the new state's treatment of Indigenous and Black populations. The Seminoles' long battle with the United States coalesced in the early 20th century over the leadership of Seminole schools. Although the resistance to retain leadership began years prior to her oversight, Alice Brown Davis, from the influential Brown family, found herself leading the battle to retain Seminole control over Emahaka School.[1] The discovery of oil within Seminole County also affected tribal lands, including school properties, and accelerated the demand for control over Seminole land and resources. Nefarious land sales resulted in litigation over one of the Seminole Nation's academies and implicated the federal Superintendent of Seminole schools. Finally, the dismantlement of Seminole Nation schools was a critical component of the United States' settler colonization project.

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1. Alice Brown Davis Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma.

Sovereignty, Education and Leadership in Indian Territory

Talamase-mekko initiated and served as the first leader of Seminole Schools. It was evident that the people looked for his support when missionaries came to the area. Federal oversight did not end with the culmination of the Seminole Wars in 1858. In Indian Territory, the government ramped up efforts to surveil the Tribal Nations and required the Seminole Nation to agree to the military occupation of their new homelands.[2] The 1866 treaty also required the cession of 2,169,080 acres of land in which the United States government paid fifteen cents an acre. They then required the Seminole Nation to pay fifty cents an acre to purchase two hundred thousand acres for a land base. The treaty outlined the provisions for how some of the Seminole funds would be spent. An allocation of fifty thousand dollars of the Tribe's funds would establish a permanent school fund and the interest was to be paid annually to support the schools. Decisively, the federal government also required six hundred and forty acres granted to every religious society or denomination which had constructed buildings within the Seminole Nation for missionary or educational purposes.[3] Although the United States utilized the southern faction of the Seminoles' treaty with the Confederacy as the impetus for the 1866 Treaty, they also outlined another ominous purpose. "Whereas the United States…in view of its urgent necessities for more lands in

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2. Treaty of 1866 with the Seminole Nation https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/kapplers/id/26751/

3. Ibid.

the Indian territory, and is willing to pay therefor a reasonable price, while at the same time providing new and adequate lands for them."[4]

The 1866 Treaty directly set the parameters and tied a substantial portion of Seminole lands with the missionary education project. It also provided an incentive for Christian missions to establish posts in Indian Territory. These incentives continued toward state formation in 1906 with J.G. Buchanan, the Superintendent of Wapanucka Public Schools in the neighboring Chickasaw Nation, insisting

> If the people in the East only knew the crying need of the Gospel in this new country, they would hurriedly respond to the advancement of the work. Now, as statehood is dawning, and as Presbyterians we want to be in the front ranks, would it not be a wise idea to plant a Presbyterian school for girls somewhere within the borders of the beautiful Indian Territory where the daughters of Presbyterian families might be educated instead of having to send them so far from home? I mean a school that will be a monument to Presbyterianism through the ages to come. By the erection of such a school we gain a substantial footing that otherwise we will not have.[5]

The period of time after the Treaty of 1866 up until the early years of the twentieth century are often referred to as the Progressive Era. As white settlers were advancing suffrage, industrialization and "progressive" policies, they were simultaneously overtly carrying out the theft of Indigenous lands through practices to Christianize and "civilize." Across the country, scores of Indigenous children were sent to boarding schools that were modeled after Henry Pratt's

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4. Ibid.

5. J.G. Buchanan, "Needs of Education in Indian Territory," *Christian Observer* (1840-1910); Jan 24, 1906: 94,4 American Periodicals, p. l0.

Carlisle Indian School. These assimilationist schools were often led by shadowy governmental officials whose purpose was to provide students with educational opportunities to prepare them for what they hoped would be lives as white women or men.

In Indian Territory, it was different. Tribal officials led the schools, and they were often selected by their peers within their own Nations. They were also very proud of their institutions of learning. Within the Seminole Nation, schooling was being institutionalized by Talamase-mekko while Seminoles were still being forcibly moved into Indian Territory. Early leaders within Indian Territory recognized that the battle to retain who they were was going to be negotiated within a classroom context. The Seminole reaction to these epochal changes was to revamp the method of response to U.S. occupation. They recognized that in order to respond to these methods, they would need to understand the foreign language, to be literate in that language and undertake a study of the laws of the foreign, militarized white settlers who had invaded their homelands.[6] The Cherokee Nation in Georgia had undertaken such a mission, and although the laws of the foreign Nation were on their side, Tribal Nations understood quickly that it was not always supported.[7] There was no legal reckoning with the United States, because they didn't abide by their own laws. Still, it would be critical to ready the tools that would afford the opportunity for the Seminole Nation to respond purposefully.

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7. Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia, 30 U.S. (5 Pet.) 1 (1831).

The United States government was alarmed at the quick response of the Five Tribes to develop institutions of learning and its lack of control over these institutions. Although the United States Indian Office had financially supported Talamase-mekko's school development, they also wanted to continue oversight of the schooling institutions within Indian Territory even after they were no longer contributing financially to this effort. This oversight and disruption to Tribal control of education was a continuance of a long line of genocide that had affected the Five Tribes in their original homelands. Wolfe claims "the factor that most antagonized the Georgia state government (with the at-least-tacit support of Andrew Jackson' federal administration) was not actually recalcitrant savagery of which Indians were routinely accused, but the Cherokee's unmistakable aptitude for civilization."[8] Although Wolfe advances the civilization narrative, I frame the Cherokee responses to white settlement as resourceful and representative of warfare tactics. One must know their opponents very intimately, must study their habits, and their ways in order to combat their campaigns and military approaches.

I also understand these responses to include the education of Indigenous students within the Five Tribes. Their schools were so extensive, successful and a model for the area, that the federal government's early interest and oversight was

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8. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research*, no. 8:4, (2006): 396

in response to the mechanism that was producing biliterate scholars who could respond to the explicit policies that were targeting their lands. By attacking the Five Tribes, and the Seminole Nation's institutions of learning, they were advancing the settler colonization project. Its aim was direct, it was invasive and it mobilized the Oklahoma territorial and the federal government's push to provide educational opportunities for white settler students at the cost of Tribal and Freedmen students' education within the Seminole Nation. Access to schools meant that access to lands would be accomplished more effortlessly as schools for white students would establish permanency and advance settler claims to territory.

The development of a political organization that united several Tribal Nations within Indian Territory was a concerted effort to establish an Indian Territory Government. In 1870, Tribal Nations met to establish a Council of Indian Territory and created committees to report on various topics within each Nation.[9] These tribes not only included the Five Tribes, but the Ottawa, Osage, Sac & Fox, Seneca, Peoria and the Quapaws. There were also overtures made to the Tribal Nations in the West, such as the Comanche, Kiowa, Apache, Cheyenne, Caddo, and Wichita to establish peace with an invitation to join the Council. Council delegates wished to develop a governance system to advance a union of Nations, "for the better protection of their rights, the improvement of themselves,

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9. Journal of the General Council of the Indian Territory Composed of Delegates Duly Elected from the Indian Tribes Legally Resident Thereof Lawrence [Kan: Excelsior Book and Job Print. office, 1871.

and the preservation of their race…"[10] While the official constitution proposed during that year was modeled after the settler government, the aims of the Nations were to retain who they were, and to ensure the well-being of their people under an umbrella that would advance Tribal sovereignty. Just a few short years after the Civil War, Tribal Nations were organizing collectively to develop their own Union and their own systems of governance.

Delegates to the Council also reported on the condition of the schools within their Nations. The chairman of the Education Committee reported the effects of the Civil War on the educational endeavors of the Tribal Nations gathered for the meeting.[11] Education within Indian Territory was sharply impacted as all the schools within the area were closed and numerous properties were destroyed. However, one of the Tribal Nations' first initiatives was focused on rebuilding and increasing supplies and food for their people. After the Nations had augmented their capacity to care for their people, they also doubled their efforts on ensuring their children's access to education. The committee acknowledged a deep concern for tribal youth whose educational access had been denied during the years-long war.[12]

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10. Ibid, 44.

11. Ibid, 58.

12. Ibid.

During 1870, the Seminole Nation reported a population of twenty-five hundred.[13] The Tribal Council had established four neighborhood schools with teachers who each received an annual salary of six hundred dollars. The total number of students who attended these schools was about ten percent of the Nation's citizenship numbers at two hundred and twenty-five students. Each school's daily attendance averaged around forty students. The report also mentioned the development of the Presbyterian mission building that the Reverend Ramsay was heading up. This building was being constructed to accommodate fifty students. The schools were supported by an annual appropriation of twenty-five hundred dollars, drawn from the fifty-thousand-dollar fund that was being held in trust by the United States government. The Education Committee reported to the Council there were no other efforts on behalf of the tribes to challenge the permanency of their institutions if it were not for U.S. Congressional endeavors to enact a territorial form of governance over them.[14] The closing remarks of the Education Committee stated

> The government proposed by the General Council-to be established over the Indian Territory-to be administered by the Indians for themselves-is one founded on and growing out of treaty relations with the United States, and depends for its perpetuity not upon armies and navies, but upon the honor and good faith of that Government. It must be defended by the patriotism and intelligence of its sons.[15]

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13. Ibid., p. 61-62

14. Ibid., p. 64

15. Ibid.

The Tribal delegates who had lent their support to this endeavor were mobilized to gain support from their respective Nations. Tribal Nations viewed the development of a collective governance that was representative of Tribal leadership as a critical response to the proposed white settler territorial government machinery that was set in motion. Certainly, this meeting in 1870 laid the foundation for the ensuing Sequoyah Convention decades later.[16]

16. The Sequoyah Convention was a meeting spearheaded in 1905 by the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations. The Seminole Nation and the Muscogee Nation also participated and supported the endeavor to enter an Indian state into the Union. The project was opposed by the Chickasaw Nation, with Governor Douglas H. Johnston advised of the proceedings by William "Alfalfa" Murray. Although the attendants passed the proposal, the bid to develop the State of Sequoyah was never realized. See Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run p. 163.

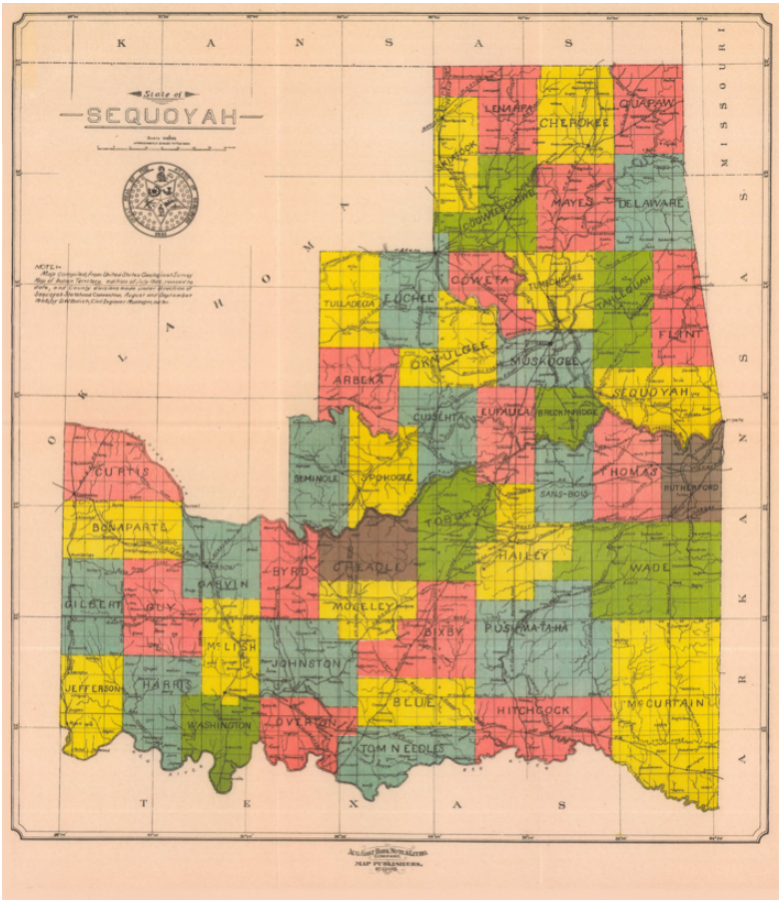


Figure 10. *Proposed State of Sequoyah,* Source: ITMAP.0034, Oklahoma Historical Society Map Collection, OHS

Appointment of U.S. Superintendent of Education of the Five Tribes

By 1874, the Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano, serving under the Grant Administration, began to advance a bill to appoint a Superintendent of Education for Indian Territory.[17] Secretary Delano attached a letter to the request

17. House of Representatives Executive Document No. 227, 43d Congress, 1st Session. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, Recommending an Amendment to the Bill (H. R. 2343) Providing for the Appointment of a Superintendent of Education for the Indian Territory (2016). Web.

from Edward P. Smith, who served as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs who reported to him"…sums of money, aggregating over $120,000, are annually disbursed for educational purposes in the Indian Territory, among the Chickasaws, Choctaws, Seminoles, Cherokees and Muscogees. In the expenditure of these sums, the Department has no control or direction, nor does it receive any report from parties who administer the trust."[18] The letter then states,

> There is reason to believe that the schools might be made much more efficient for the education of Indian youth, if brought under the care of some competent person, who should devote his time to their supervision, and to such information and assistance as he might be able to give to the teachers and other educational officers of the nation.[19]

Secretary Delano recommended to the legislation that the Superintendent be appointed and his salary and expenses paid by him from the funds of the Five Tribes. The legislation allowed for a twenty-five hundred dollar appropriation for the Superintendent, with two thousand devoted for the salary and five hundred for travel, office and other expenses. There was no consultation or consideration for what the Tribes' wishes and opinions might be, nor does it appear that their permission was sought to utilize their funds to pay for the appointment. Although "efficiency" was the reason stated, this legislation was really about establishing control over tribes who were self-governing, self-sustaining and who had been very successful in their efforts to educate their own children. Once again, control was implied in terms to "benefit."

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18. Ibid, p. 1-2.

19. Ibid, p. 2

The leaders of the Nations responded swiftly. They cited the conflict with the treaties that the United States had agreed to uphold.[20] In particular they cited the line from the treaties that stated "that the legislation of Congress shall not in any wise interfere with or annul their present organization, or their respective legislatures or judiciaries; or the rights, laws, privileges or customs of said tribes, respectively."[21] The protest also noted the governance of each tribe and outlined how they had developed their own ways of education and had contributed quite amply to the support of their institutions of learning. School administrator roles had been codified in law within the Nations. The protest asserted

> Some of these systems have been in operation for more than thirty years, and the communities supporting them have no cause to be ashamed of either their character or the results they have accomplished, or of their present condition, or their prospective usefulness in the dissemination of knowledge among their people. During their long years of experiment, growth and progress, there has been no effort made by the Government to interfere with, or control, or superintend them in any manner whatever, and we are aware of no sufficient reason why it should seek or desire to do so at present.[22]

The protest lodged a formal complaint on the grounds that it was unjust for the United States government to create the office, select the Superintendent, and pay

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20. United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Appropriations. Memorial of Indian Delegates from the Indian Territory Protesting against the Adoption of the Amendment Proposed by the Senate to the Bill (H. R. 2343) Providing for the Appointment of a Superintendent of Schools in That Territory. S.misdoc.117. Washington: [s.n.], 1874. Pg. 1.

21. Ibid, p. 2.

22. Ibid.,

for it with all with Tribal funding.[23] Perhaps the most infuriating fact was the United States' appointed Superintendent would not fall under the Tribal laws within the Territory and he would not have to be accountable to Tribal leadership.[24] The authors of the protest succinctly defined what was taking place. They stated, "The inevitable effect of his appointment will be interference with the laws and the rights of the Indians, conflict with their authorities, and consequent discord, confusion and injury to the schools of the civilized tribes." They were right.

Evidently, the Tribal Nations' protest to the appointment of a Superintendent of Indian Schools worked for some time. The United States government however was relentless in its approach for control and territory. In 1894, the federal government created the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, more commonly known as the Dawes Commission which focused on the allotment of individual land sites for Tribal citizens.[25] The Curtis Act, passed in June of 1898 was the driving force behind the move to abolish the governments of the Five Tribes and to force the Tribes to accept the terms of allotment.[26] This Act had very detrimental effects within Indian Territory. It codified the "development

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23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25 "Curtis Act (1898)." Encyclopedia of Native American History 1, (2011): 206.

26. Ibid.

of municipal governments, management of mineral rights, trust payments went to individuals instead of the Tribe, and it granted voting rights to individuals."[27]

In addition, tribal authority over legal matters began to be wrested from Tribal control. Central to these policies was to break up the communal aspect of land. The federal government knew that in order to strengthen its push for land, it had to stress individualism because the Tribes owned land collectively and they would not have agreed to it on their own. These policies cut to the heart of Indigenous value systems in which the care and well-being of the people were viewed collectively. Of course, there were plenty of people that might have exploited this aspect, as in any society, but on the whole, Tribal people were content with the way they had approached ownership of land. It was a relatively new concept to many of the people, because ownership of land was very different from the roles in which societies had functioned as caretakers of the land. In particular, the Seminoles relationship with the land was mediated through their understanding of their collective responsibilities to the earth. Within many Indigenous Nations, these relationships were symbiotic, there was no hierarchy of people>animals>elements>land. Among the Seminoles, this system was fortified through our clan-based society in which our roles were anchored through these relationships.

An amendment to the policies prescribed by the Curtis Act was filed by the Secretary of the Interior Thomas Ryan, to specifically impact Education in

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27. Ibid.

Indian Territory and to finalize the aim of the United States government to control Tribal Education. In particular, the position of the Superintendent of Schools in Indian Territory was finally legislated. The duties of the position entailed "to visit, inspect, and organize or reorganize the schools and orphan asylums located among the Five Civilized Tribes."[28] Furthermore, the rule change dictated that the position would be the administrator of the work of the Tribal schools, prepare the courses of study, report defects, recommend changes and assign school supervisors to each Nation.[29] These supervisors were assigned by the Secretary of the Interior. These positions were intended to surveil the school sites with the individual Supervisors reporting on the "character, efficiency, and effective industry of each."[30] The Secretary of the Interior required all employees to take an oath of office.

Moreover, Section 9 of the rule stated "That hereafter no warrants or orders shall be issued by the respective nations for salaries or other expenses of the schools and asylums supported out of the royalties on coal, etc., or over whose schools and orphan asylums the Secretary of the Interior has, by law or treaty,

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28. House of Representatives Executive Document No. 227, 43rd Congress, 1st Session. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, Recommending an Amendment to the Bill (H. R. 2343) Providing for the Appointment of a Superintendent of Education for the Indian Territory, 2016.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid, p. 3.

supervision and direction."[31] The rule change also demanded that the Superintendent open as many day schools as possible as long as funds permitted, with only Tribal children being admitted to their boarding schools. Additionally, the Secretary of the Interior required that employees instruct the children in English and "instruct pupils as to the duties and privileges of American citizenship."[32] The salary was increased from the initial amount to three thousand and five hundred dollars. Individual school supervisors were paid fifteen hundred dollars annually. The funds were drawn from Tribal Nations against their will. The move towards state formation gained traction with the advancement of the Secretary's rules. The incoming Superintendent of Indian Education for the Five Tribes, John D. Benedict, cited the Curtis Act as his authority to wield power over the Tribes' educational institutions.

The leadership of Seminole schools began to shift after the arrival of the United States Superintendent of Indian Education. Although the Seminole Nation formally took over the schools from the missionaries around 1892, the procedure for selecting school leadership was outlined through Seminole Laws written in the Spring of 1903.[33] The National Council of the Seminole Nation elected one Superintendent of Schools in the Seminole Nation who served in this capacity for

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31. Ibid, p. 4.

32. Ibid., p. 5.

33. Roscoe Cate Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

four years. If he neglected his duty, the National Council retained the ability to depose him from office and fill the position with another appointed official. The duties in this office required the official to visit each school at least once a quarter. The Superintendent was also in charge of ensuring the schools had all necessary supplies, and signed off on the permissions to purchase necessary materials.

The arrival of John D. Benedict, who was sent by the federal government as the U.S. Superintendent of Schools in February of 1899, was not viewed positively by the tribes.[34] Mr. Benedict was surprised by what he found when he arrived:

> I soon learned that each of the Five Tribes had its own school laws, its own school system, its own school buildings, its own teachers and its own schools and school laws had been in operation for half a century or longer, during all of which time, the Federal Government had had nothing whatever to do with them, they having been constructed managed and maintained exclusively by the Indian Tribes.[35]

His paternalistic attitude toward Tribal control of education was evident when he justified his position by stating " The Tribal officials thought they would be allowed to remain in control of their schools and other institutions just as they had been for fifty or more years, and that the Secretary would simply provide a method of paying their bills."[36] Mr. Benedict did not acknowledge that the

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34. John D. Benedict. Indian Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

schools were being financed from the monies held in trust for the Tribal Nations by the United States government. In the Seminole Nation's case, the proceeds of the interest earned on their allocation was what was utilized to pay for the schools. In his view, the federal government was footing the bill, when in actuality, it was tribal funds that were financially supporting the Tribal schools.

During his first year in Indian Territory, Mr. Benedict attended the summer normal held to train teachers that taught in the tribal schools within the Muscogee Nation.[37] His autobiography demonstrates his disdain for the normal schools that were developed by the tribes. He noted the lack of competency of school administrators and the teachers and quickly sought control of the schools. He noted that the schools at that time were controlled by Superintendents who were tribally elected, were citizens of their respective nations and who lacked the educational qualifications that were required.[38] He derisively stated "Several of these boarding school superintendents were unable to converse with me in the English language, yet they were supposed to be giving the children under their charge an English education."[39] He also used derogatory language to describe a tribal superintendent as an "uneducated halfbreed."[40] His rendering of his role

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37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

within Indian Territory schools was littered with paternalistic language such as "I let him go ahead and 'organize…'" and "I intended to assert my right.."[41]

When Benedict was rebuffed in implementing a summer normal of his own accord during his first year, he was aided by the Secretary of Interior's rules which stated that any expenditures in funds would have to be approved by him and he exploited this text during his tenure.[42] As the Muscogee Freedmen teachers met during the same time as the Indian normal (teacher training institute), Benedict spoke to both parties in the development of a new federally sanctioned normal that he was swift to implement. Benedict claims that the teachers were begging him for a chance to learn new teaching methods and for him to not make his examination too difficult for them. He also shared his frustration when Tribal officials continued to remove and appoint school administrators without his input. Within the Muscogee Nation, Benedict detailed how he called upon the services of the United States Indian policemen and "I instructed him to go to that boarding school, put out the man who was in possession, and install a new superintendent who I had assigned to that position."[43] He didn't hesitate to utilize force to achieve his endeavors and the Muscogee Nation's control over their education was wrested from them by an agent of the United States.

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41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. John Benedict Collection, Western Histories Collection, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma.

In early 1900, legislation was underway to support taxes established for education in Indian Territory.[44] The Committee on Indian Affairs recorded the population of Indian Territory at approximately five hundred thousand. Of that number, an estimated 72,000 were Indian, with 18,750 Black inhabitants and 400,000 white, non-citizen populations.[45] The report also highlighted that the white and Black children (non-citizens) had no school facilities except for in the larger towns where it was very limited.[46] The report relied upon fear of "an army of ignorant, idle, homeless tramps…" as the need to establish funds for schools for the non-citizen children.[47] Non-citizens within Indian Territory were being taxed by the Tribal Nations, refused to pay, and were essentially squatters within Indian Territory. Under the threat of federal law enforcement, they would begrudgingly pay and the report highlights the unevenness between the Tribal Nation's taxes. They did not recognize the sovereignty of each Nation to decide their tax amount separate from the other Nations. The bill's author believed that up to two hundred thousand dollars could be raised annually and utilized to support the education of the non-citizens.[48] The purpose of the allocation would allow the "Secretary of the Interior to make regulations by which the taxes

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44. U.S. Congress. House Committee on Indian Affairs. 1900.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

collected would be allowed to be spent on the education of the children of all residents in the Indian Territory, including the children of Indians and freedmen, as well as those of non-citizens."[49] The report also feigned concern for the benefit of all children, but the reality was, they were aiming to utilize tribal dollars to support the development of schools for white children. Although these reports mentioned the inclusion of Black children, they had no intention to actually realize this support when it came time to initiate schools for non-citizens.

Support for the education of white children in Indian Territory had been escalating. In a letter within the neighboring Chickasaw Nation, there was a push to lobby the United States Congress to establish such schools.[50] The authors of the letter relied upon the words of President McKinley who had recommended that the education of thirty thousand white children was a pressing matter for the Dawes Commission and the Secretary of the Interior to tackle. The request noted that the request for state desires should be developed in schools first. Ironically, "We also observe that the white people resident in the Indian Territory are the only people…over which the United States has ever exercised sovereignty and denied them a system of public education."[51] The letter was signed by William H.

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49. Ibid.

50. United States. Congress. House. Committee on Indian Affairs. Memorial of the Indianola Public Free School Society. Letter from the Acting Secretary of the Interior, Transmitting, a Memorial Relating to the Education of White Children in the Indian Territory. H.doc.242. Washington: [s.n.], 1899.

51. Ibid.

Murray, the Committee chairman, around the time he married the niece of Chickasaw Governor Douglas H. Johnston. It is not known as to whether or not Governor Johnston knew of Murray's advocacy for the establishment of schools for white children within the Chickasaw Nation. Nevertheless, Murray's actions can be viewed as an affront to the sovereignty of the Tribal Nations within Indian Territory because it chipped away at their ability to make decisions within their own Nations. Furthermore, although Murray's letter was certainly utilized to bolster support for school development for non-citizens, there is no mention of the urgency for educational institutions for non-citizen Black children. His message was clear. Support for schooling within the Territories was being framed and expanded for white children.

On another note, John Benedict was successful in his brutish methods to assert his oversight over schools within Indian Territory. However, there was a marked difference based upon who attended the normal sessions. Newspapers of that era noted the difference between the Indian teachers and the white teachers of tribal children during Benedict's time as Superintendent. The Norman Democrat noted in 1903 the Indian teachers who attended Benedict's normal developed wonderfully and took more of an interest in the normal work than the white teachers.[52] Indian and Freedmen teachers seemed to be highly invested in the welfare of tribal education. They had every reason to be invested. They were of

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52. Norman Democrat, (Norman, Okla.), Vol. 13, No. 43, Ed. 1, May 22, 1903; Norman, Oklahoma. The Gateway to Oklahoma History, Oklahoma Historical Society.

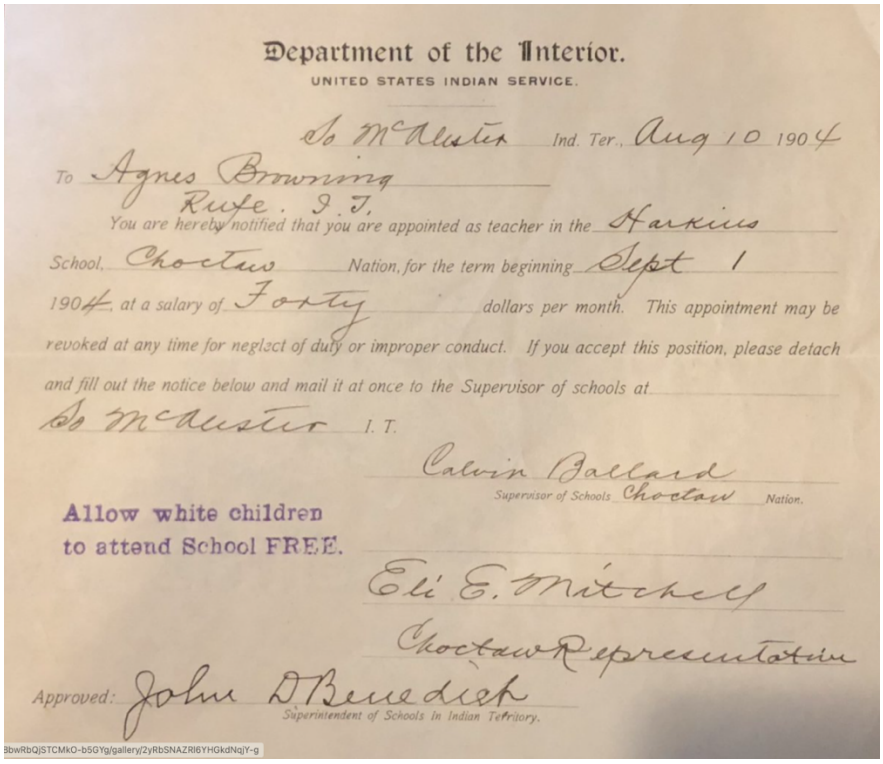
those communities, and they recognized the importance of preparing the children of their Tribal Nations for the impending state formation. It was essential for their youth to be well-equipped to meet the new challenges that were sure to come. These teachers were also likely teaching their young relatives, and this would have played a huge factor in their personal stakes in Tribal education.

By 1906, there were formal outlines of study for the Teachers summer Normals within Indian Territory. The University of Oklahoma prominently advertised their school within the printed book as being open to Indian Territory and Oklahoma students.[53] The Agricultural and Mechanical College at Stillwater (later named Oklahoma State University), a land-grant institution, also advertised their school noting their teaching equipment that was valued at $130,000.[54] The summer normal also instituted teacher examinations and certificates that were good throughout all of Indian Territory. As early as 1904, teaching certificates issued by the Department of Interior were already being stamped with "Allow white children to attend for free."

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53. Office of Indian Affairs, *Outlines of Study: For the Teachers' Summer Normals of Indian Territory*, (Washington, D.C.: 1906), https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=002146-011-0232&accountid=12964

54. Ibid.



Department of the Interior.
UNITED STATES INDIAN SERVICE.

So McAlester Ind. Ter., Aug 10 1904

To Agnes Browning
Rufe. I. T.

You are hereby notified that you are appointed as teacher in the Harkins School, Choctaw Nation, for the term beginning Sept 1 1904, at a salary of Forty dollars per month. This appointment may be revoked at any time for neglect of duty or improper conduct. If you accept this position, please detach and fill out the notice below and mail it at once to the Supervisor of schools at So McAlester I. T.

Calvin Ballard
Supervisor of Schools Choctaw Nation.

Allow white children
to attend School FREE.

Eli E. Mitchell
Choctaw Representative

Approved: John D Benedict
Superintendent of Schools in Indian Territory.

Figure 11. *Indian Territory Teacher's Certificate,* Source: Agnes Fuller Collection, WHC.

The course of study was augmented by the merge of the Indian Territory Teacher's Association and the Territorial Teachers Association in late December of 1906 and no doubt supported by John D. Benedict. Indeed, the opening address by Rev. L.C. Wolfe, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Shawnee stated, "We are here to witness the marriage ceremony uniting in the holy bounds of amalgamation in the pedagogue "Oklahoma" to the fairest of school ma'ams "Indian Territory."[55] Under the guise of a more "efficient" manner of education,

55. Indian Territory Educational Association, and Territorial Teacher's Association of Oklahoma. Report of the Proceedings of the Joint Meeting of the Indian Territory Educational Association and the Territorial Teacher's Association of Oklahoma. Shawnee, Okla.: Herald Printing, 1906.

the move to develop schools for white children was being carried out openly by the agents of the United States. The foundation for public education within Indian Territory were Tribal schools, often taught by Tribal teachers and the educational system that had been enjoyed within the area by Seminole and Seminole Freedmen children began to be challenged even more so.

John F. Brown Jr.

Governor John Brown served as leader of the Seminole Nation from 1885-1901 and again from 1905-1919.[56] The son of a Seminole woman, Lucy Redbeard, and one of the first white settlers in the area, Dr. John Frippo Brown, he grew up in a privileged household. His father was a physician in the Seminole Nation who had moved with the Seminoles from Florida where he was in service to the federal government.[57] The Brown family are known as sharp advocates for the Seminole people. As children, young John F. Brown and his siblings were very likely some of the first exposed to the English language in the household, as intermarriage between Seminole and white settlers was not very common. Their bilingual and biliteracy skills undoubtedly contributed to their worldview, ideologies and shaped Seminole polities for generations. John F. Brown was also a supporter of the Southern Confederacy movement. He was also the only Confederate representative present during the 1866 Treaty negotiations, and was

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56. Jon D. May, "Brown, John Frippo," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=BR025.

57. Ibid.

very likely instrumental in the insertion of the clause to bar Free Blacks or Freedmen of other Nations into the Seminole Nation. Upon his election as the leader of the Seminole Nation, people outside of the Seminole Nation admired his "progressive" approach to governance in contrast to Hvlpvtv-mekko.[58] Of the latter, it was stated "They found it difficult to transact the business of a nation with a chief who had to use an interpreter all the time."[59] John F. Brown served during the impending statehood challenge and utilized his knowledge of the English language to advocate for his people. His leadership guided Seminole people as they negotiated for control over their own schools.

Brown's tenure as the leader of the Seminole Nation witnessed the Congressional passage of the Organic Act, which codified a territorial form of governance over the western part of Indian Territory.[60] Later, Chief Brown utilized his knowledge and skillful expertise in the response to the Dawes Commission that was appointed and quickly began negotiations with the Seminole Nation in 1894. The response of Chief Brown was directed to United

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58. Jacob Harrison Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK.

59. Ibid.

60. Susan Work has written extensively on the legal history of the Seminole Nation. For further information, please see her text The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma: A legal history. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma.

States government's dissatisfaction of the state of affairs in Indian Territory.[61] The Commission was basically notifying the Tribes that it would be better to negotiate the terms of the agreement rather than having the decisions made entirely by Congress. The United States government also dangled a schedule for the issuance of funds that were already being held in trust as part of their negotiation. These funds were used to pay for Tribal governance, and also for the maintenance of educational costs of the Seminole Nations educational institutions. Chief Brown responded that he had held public meetings and the situation had been explained and understood by the citizens of the Seminole Nation. "The reply in each case, without exception, has been a firm declination to agree to any of the propositions presented by the Commission."[62]

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61. John F. Brown Collection, Box W38, F9, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma

62. Ibid.



Figure 12. *Seminole Chief John F. Brown,* Source: 1658, Alice Fleet Collections, Oklahoma Historical Society.

Seminole people were powerfully refusing to enter into further negotiations with the United States government. Their stance was that they had upheld their end of the Treaty of 1866, but as was the case in Georgia, the United States continued to abrogate their end of the legal agreement. Indeed, the actions of the United States were even in violation of their own Constitution. Article VI of the United States Constitution declares,

> This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land;

> and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding.[63]

The Treaties of 1866, like the Marshall Trilogy, were not upheld as the Supreme law of the land, even though the very basis for the American government was premised on the Constitution. The mention of the schedule of the issuance of funds was also a veiled threat that if the Seminoles did not come to the negotiation table, the schedule for the issuance of these funds was to be determined at the whim of the United States government. They could delay the issuance of monies which would have a domino effect within the Seminole Nation. Chief Brown avowed,

> We are not unconscious of the great dangers that surround us; nor do we underrate your friendship, or question the honesty and sincerity of your motives, but we are deeply in sympathy with the feelings of our people, and must show fully in the responsibility of their refusal to treat.[64]

Similar to their resistance in their original homelands of Florida, Seminole people were refusing to consent to the control over their lives.[65] Chief Brown keenly observed that the Seminoles had upheld and sustained their terms of the agreement despite the Congressional legislation that continued to attack our people. He described these bills as

> …tending to disrupt us a Nation and to finally destroy us as a people. If these solemn pledges are to be broken at last, with or without the Indians'

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63. U.S. Const. art. VI § 2

64. John F. Brown Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma.

65. Audra Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016): 328.

> consent, for no apparent reason given except that the supreme court of the United States has decided that this can be done with an Indian Tribe, and because it is inconvenient to observe them any longer—it is idle for us to refer to them, though they are the bulwarks of our faith.[66]

He also cited the Seminole's method of communal land ownership by referring to the lack of monopolies in the area.[67] The result of these Seminole policies were that citizens could establish their homes wherever they chose and this policy had sustained our people for generations. Chief Brown understood the purpose of the Dawes Commission's method of allotting to individuals would result in the white settlers becoming the owners of the land thereby affecting Indian homesites. The real beneficiaries to this proposal were not the Seminole and Seminole Freedmen, but the non-citizens to the area. As a testament to the Tribe's progress, Chief Brown affirmed the special role that the Seminole Nation's educational institutions held,

> We feel not ashamed to invite an inspection of some of our institutions of learning, of which we justly feel proud, where our young are being educated and christianized amidst the atmosphere of the most wholesome and pleasant surroundings, to which fact you gentlemen, we feel sure will testify. From this source, more than to any other have we relied to emerge from the surrounding darkness and entanglements into the broad daylight of knowledge that would place our posterity a upon a lasting foundation—to equal with his white brother. Nothing is more certain that unless we are prepared and equipped, we cannot maintain an equal contest with him in life's race.[68]

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66. John F. Brown Collection, Box 38, F9, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

Chief Brown was clearly illuminating the institutions of learning to ingratiate the Seminole Nation's progress with the Commission. He references the "surrounding darkness and entanglements" which were likely metaphors for the wars, and highlighted the new approach to confront the battle for our people's destinies. In some ways, I believe that Chief Brown was trying to highlight these factors to prove the humanity of our people, similar to how his predecessor, Talamase-mekko had done when he went on his speaking tour before missionary audiences in the East. These two leaders understood that the challenge to retain our sovereignty and to protect our people would have to be fought in new ways.

Between the two periods of time where he served as Chief of the Seminole Nation, the United States Congress passed the Five Civilized Tribes Act which was a resounding attack on Tribal sovereignty.[69] The Act was to "provide for the final disposition of the affairs of the Five Civilized Tribes in the Indian Territory, and for other purposes."[70] The Act outlined enrollment rules, established the completion of the Dawes rolls, the removal of principal chiefs, abolished Tribal taxes, disestablished the Tribal land offices, moved records to the United States courts, and authorized payments to Loyal Seminoles among other actions. A significant component to the Act was directed toward control of the schools of the Five Tribes. The Act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to fully take control

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69. The Five Civilized Tribes Act of 1906. https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/59th-congress/session-1/c59s1ch1876.pdf

70. Ibid.

of the Tribal schools along with the lands and all school property contained within the school sites. The federal government outlined its plans to control the school systems "until such a time as a public school system shall have been established under Territorial or State government."[71] Furthermore, the Act authorized the seizure of funds that belonged to the Five Tribes to pay for the Tribal school sites in addition to any new schools. Furthermore, the new legislation legalized the possession of all Tribal buildings such as the governmental sites, schools and all of the furniture contained in each and placed the belongings for appraisal and to put up for sale. What remained of Tribal lands was to be held in trust. Once again the Five Tribes responded swiftly.

Brown's advocacy continued well into the twentieth century as state formation was being approached. By November of 1906, the Muskogee Times-Democrat reported the United States Superintendent John D. Benedict had ordered Governor Brown to turn over the Emahaka School and described the Seminole Nations' actions as "which they had been holding by force."[72] In fact, the United States government was actually seizing a building that the Seminole Nation had constructed and furnished with their own funds. It is evident that the federal government was in violation of the Treaty of 1866 in which Tribal Nations were to be in control of their own organizations. This climatic event set in motion

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71. Ibid.

72. The Muskogee Times-Democrat, Muskogee Indian Territory, November, 12, 1906 Vol. 12, No. 357, H.B. Teehee, Manager. Editorial on Seminoles. John F. Brown Collection, WHC

a refusal to consent to turning over the educational oversight to the federal government. Perhaps the Seminole Nation had heard of the history of boarding schools within the United States and hoped to protect their children from being removed from their care. The Indian Citizen newspaper published an editorial on Governor Brown's efforts to resist this policy by summarizing his meeting with President Roosevelt's Cabinet Secretary of the Interior, James R. Garfield a few months before the state of Oklahoma formally entered the Union.[73] The editorial reported that the Department of the Interior had required that they assume control of the schools, but Governor Brown refused to do so.[74] He was aided in the matter by his sister, the indomitable Alice Brown Davis.

Alice Brown Davis' Emahaka School

Reverend William Packer Blake, a missionary to the Seminole Nation, served as Superintendent of Emahaka School from 1894 until 1906 when the school term ended.[75] Born in Pennsylvania, he trained as a printer until he attended Baptist seminary to become a Pastor. He moved to Indian Territory around 1883, when he began his missionary work in Eufaula, Muscogee Nation. Rev. Blake moved to the Seminole Nation at the behest of Rev. John Jumper

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73. The Indian Citizen, Atoka, Indian Territory, August, 22, 1907, V. 22, no. 15, Paul B. Smith, editor, John F. Brown Collections, box 38, FF 52, WHC

74. Ibid.

75. Robert E.Trevathan, "School Days at Emahaka Academy," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 38, no. 3 (1960) 265.

where he took over the reins of the Emahaka Academy. Reverend Blake looked fondly upon his time with the Seminoles stating "My relation with the Seminoles were of such a nature as to bring us into intimate fellowship with the whole Nation, both of the full-bloods, mixed bloods and the negroes among them."[76]

He recalled some of his friends within the Seminole Nation and the role that Alice Brown Davis assumed as she also served as an interpreter to Hvlpvtv-mekko. As Blake remembered, "The Brown family, John F., Andrew Jackson and



Figure 13. *Seminole Leader, Alice Brown Davis,* Source: Seminole Nation Museum

76. Ibid, p. 271.

Mrs. Alice Brown Davis were undoubtedly the real leaders and did much to advance their people."[77] Blake recalled early financial support was given on behalf of the American Baptist Home Missions until around 1894, when the Seminole Nation took over the school. The leadership of the school was managed by the Superintendent of Education of the Seminole Nation and Reverend Blake had support to carry on as he had under the Baptist Mission. Thomas McGeisey was the Superintendent of the Seminole Nation when Blake first began, then Dorsey Fife, followed by Stanton Brown.[78]

This support was also carried forth under John D. Benedict's time as Superintendent.[79] Reverend Blake recommended that Alice Brown Davis succeed him as the Superintendent of Emahaka School, where she served her people. [80] In 1905, an editorial written in The Okemah Independent highlighted the woman who was assisting the government in enrolling Seminole babies.[81] The article mentioned her knowledge of the Nation's business, while emphasizing her importance among the people. When Hvlpvtv-mekko was considering joining Kowakkoce's band in Mexico, Alice made the journey with him. She referred to

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77. Ibid, p. 271

78. Ibid 273

79 Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Alice Brown Davis Collections, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma.

the Seminole people in Mexico as "blanket" Indians, was reminded of the Seminoles' early life and remarked upon Mexico being a beautiful country.[82] Alice Brown Davis obviously held views that were aligned with settler ideologies in viewing certain Native people as primitive.

The following year, editorials were being published across Indian Territory about Mrs. Davis' efforts to resist the government takeover of Emahaka School. The Weleetka American reported,

> There is a big row on here because the Department of the Interior has ordered J.D. Benedict and Walter Falwell, representing the department in Indian Territory school matters, to dispossess Mrs. Davis who has a contract with the Seminole Nation to teach the Emahaka Academy, near Holdenville, where 110 Seminole pupils are in school.[83]

Alice Brown Davis believed that the best education for Seminole students would be under Seminole control. She was brilliant, and knew that her contract was signed before the Act required the Tribal Nations to give up control of their schools.[84] She wielded this knowledge to her advantage, asserting that the contract would remain in place until the official date of dissolution of the Tribal governments.[85] The Attorney General for the United States government denied

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82. Ibid, p. 2

83. Alice Brown Davis Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

her claim and their policy was to oust her from the school leadership.[86] Although the federal government ended up forcing the takeover of our schools, when Emahaka closed down in 1914, the school tract continued to be an important site for our people. There were memories there, and it served a reminder of the diligent efforts that our people had made in order to provide an education for our students. Although Alice Brown Davis had made a valiant effort to retain Seminole control over Emahaka, she was succeeded by Walter Ferguson, who was an agent of the United States government when he served as Emahaka's superintendent.

Seminole leadership historically had determined who would actually attend the schools. Walter Ferguson, served as the Superintendent of Emahaka School in early 1907.[87] At the time that he assumed control of the school, there were nineteen rural schools in the Seminole Nation and it was reported that they were satisfactory.[88] Walter Falwell, who served as the U.S. Supervisor of Creek and Seminole Schools reported that he had conducted summer normals for the Muscogee and Seminole teachers and every effort would be made to teach "usable English" in every school that year.[89] The government had assumed control of

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86. Ibid.

87. United States Department of the Interior, *Annual Report*. (GPO: Washington D.C., 1907). 357

88. Ibid, p. 357.

89. Ibid.

Emahaka on November 17, 1906, and Falwell hoped to increase the number of rural schools to twenty-five that year.[90]

School Superintendent Walter Ferguson's stint at Emahaka was contested by the Seminole people. Unclear in who should be attending, he wrote a letter to the United States Superintendent of Creek and Seminole Schools asking for permission to admit students who were enrolled Muscogee because they also followed the matrilineal line of descent, but whose fathers were Seminole. He stated "We now have present ninety girls and turn some away most every day."[91] Students were selected to attend the school via their band representation. Each band was allowed to send eight students to Emahaka and these bands had to vouch for the girls' character and their ability to do well in school. These decisions indicate that there was joint responsibilities being shared between the bands and the school leadership.

Seminole parents disputed some of Mr. Ferguson's decisions on who could attend Emahaka. In a letter to the United States Superintendent of Indian Education, John Benedict, Ferguson detailed a response to Jacob Harrison who lodged a complaint about Ferguson's management of the school.[92] Walter Ferguson had complained that Harrison's daughter, Katie, was sickly and unable

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90. RG 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Five Civilized Tribes Agency Records of Supervisor of Indian Schools, Letters Received by the Supervisor of Schools, 1906-1908, Box 1.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

to do her school or domestic work, so he sent her home. Ferguson said that he called Harrison's attention to the following:

> Article 1 of my contract required children before being accepted as pupils to be in good health and sound physical condition. This offended him and after several attempts to pin various ways to keep her in, he finally withdrew her on the 23rd of February. It is evidently because of this that he, with the aid of some others who are anxious to cause me any embarrassment possible made up his mind to report the complaints you mention.[93]

Seminole parents organized and resisted efforts to deny their children educational opportunities. Jacob Harrison was a prominent leader within the Seminole Nation. He had served as the Second Chief a couple of years prior to this incident and as a part of the decision making body of the Seminole Nation, he would have been very familiar with the organizational structure of the Seminole schools.[94] He had assumed the role of Chief of the Seminole Nation after the death of Hvlpvtv-mekko and was impeached shortly after he had assumed the duties of the office so that the Tribal Council could put in John F. Brown.[95] Harrison proved to be a formidable opponent as he continued his campaign against Walter Ferguson's management of Emahaka, as Ferguson detailed in a letter to Benedict dated in April of that year.[96] Jacob Harrison's refusal in denying Ferguson's claims about

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93. Ibid.

94. Jacob Harrison Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, OK.

95. Ibid.

his daughter indicate that there were other Seminole parents who supported his claims. Walter Ferguson seized upon the advantages of being in control of Emahaka School. He exploited the people of the Seminole Nation, amassed quite a large number of land titles and wrote letters asking for permission to graze his cattle on the school tract.[97]

During late summer of 1907, Stanton Brown served as the Superintendent of Seminole Tribal Schools. As the funds for the faculty and administrator's salaries were derived from their funds deposited with the Department of the Interior, Stanton Brown pursed his payroll from John Benedict. He sent multiple letters to Benedict requesting his payroll.[98] Stanton Brown was the brother of John F. Brown and Alice Brown Davis. Due to the standoff between Alice Brown Davis and the United States government over the leadership of the school, Benedict might have delayed the processing of Stanton Brown's payroll to dissuade him from staying on in a leadership position at the school. The Brown family were well respected within the Seminole Nation, they were educated, bilingual, wealthy and their leadership very likely was looked upon as a threat by the federal authorities. The Browns involvement with Emahaka continued on after the closure of the school.

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96. RG 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Five Civilized Tribes Agency Records of Supervisor of Indian Schools, Letters Received by the Supervisor of Schools, 1906-1908, Box 1.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

By 1919, the 320-acre Emahaka School tract was appraised by the United States Department of the Interior for $16,700.[99] This amount included $6.00 per acre for oil and gas and two thousand dollars for the school building. The Superintendent of the Five Civilized Tribes notified the United States Oil Inspector of the potential for oil on the School tract in January of 1920, stating the potential for the tract to sell for $25 an acre.[100] The United States government was actively encouraging the development of oil on the Seminole Nation. Exploration for oil began multiplying on the allotment lands of the Seminole and Seminole Freedmen people.

On May 26, 1920, the Interior Department authorized the sale of Alice Brown Davis' beloved Emahaka School tract to be sold at public auction.[101] The Seminole Nation vehemently protested the sale of the school site. The appraisal amount had been increased to the $25 an acre for a total of $22,780. Emahaka Superintendent Walter Ferguson was the winning bidder with a bid of $27,280.[102] The terms of sale were extremely generous with Ferguson, only requiring him to pay twenty-five percent of the amount with the full balance due two years from

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99. The Indians Claims Commission. Seminole Nation vs. United States of America. December 5, 1955.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.

the date of sale.[103] Ferguson made the initial payment but never fulfilled his end of the payment arrangement. The Interior department was supposed to cancel the sale, but they refused to do so, offering Ferguson another opportunity to carry out the purchase terms. Meanwhile, there was a flurry of activity as speculators were increasing exploration of oil sites and the value of the property also increased.[104] During litigation brought against the United States for the illegal sale of the property, one witness claimed he had lived in the area during that time and the going rate for acreage was $100.00 per acre.[105]

In 1923, the Betsy Foster #1 oil well site was discovered a few miles from the Emahaka School site.[106] The site rapidly began producing up to thirty-five hundred barrels of oil a day. The discovery of oil within the Seminole Nation affected Tribal citizens from that point on. To this day, Seminole allotment lands with fractionated interests are still mired in a convoluted maze of oil leases. Although some Seminole families became extremely wealthy, our oral history tells of how some Seminole people lost their lives as white settlers would stop at nothing to gain access to the valuable oil leases. Many prominent families within the Seminole Nation gained their wealth through reprehensible means. They

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103. Ibid.

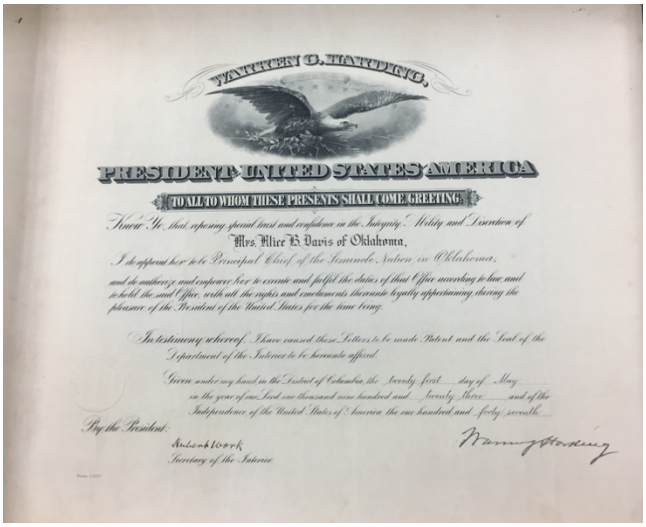
104. Ibid.

105. Ibid, p. 468

106. Seminole Nation Museum Blog. Wewoka's First Oil Well. March 17, 2016.

assumed guardianship of Seminole people and children, capitalizing on the fact that monolingual speakers of the Maskoke language were still considered not fully capable of handling their own affairs.

Around the time that the Betsy Foster site was discovered, the going rate for the land was $150-$200 per acre for the lease and Emahaka was estimated to


WARREN G. HARDING,

PRESIDENT UNITED STATES AMERICA

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, GREETING:

Know Ye, that, reposing special trust and confidence in the Integrity, Ability and Discretion of

Mrs. Alice B. Davis of Oklahoma,

I do appoint her to be Principal Chief of the Seminole Nation in Oklahoma,

and do authorize and empower her to execute and fulfil the duties of that Office according to law and to hold the said Office, with all the rights and emoluments to the same legally appertaining, during the pleasure of the President of the United States for the time being.

In testimony whereof, I have caused these Letters to be made Patent and the Seal of the Department of the Interior to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand in the District of Columbia, the twenty first day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and twenty three and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and forty seventh.

By the President:

Hubert Work
Secretary of the Interior

Figure 14. *Presidential Appointment Certificate of Alice Brown Davis* as Chief of the Seminole Nation, Alice B. Davis Collections, OHS

be worth that amount.[107] Walter Ferguson on the other hand, notified the Interior Department that he could not make the payments and was transferring his interest to V.V. Harris, a banker out of Oklahoma City.[108] Mr. Harris made the final payment on February 5, 1923.[109] A few short months later, Alice Brown Davis, who had been appointed as the Chief of the Seminole Nation by President

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107. Indian Claims Commission, p. 469.

108. Ibid.

109. Ibid.

Harding on May 23, 1923 took swift action to once again protect her people.[110] She protested the sale of the tract and refused to sign off on the title that would transfer ownership of the property.[111] On June 26, 1923, she asserted that Emahaka's tract was illegally sold without the Nation's consent. In court documents, she wrote a letter to highlight her reasoning behind the protest. The amount that was paid was not comparable to what the nearby land was going for, it was sold without consent and it should have been retained for its value.[112] Nevertheless, on December 22, 1924, the Interior Secretary approved the transfer of the Emahaka property citing the lack of signature by the leader of the Seminole Nation. Chief Alice Brown Davis testified that when she had returned the unsigned deed to the Acting Superintendent of the Five Tribes, she reiterated that the Nation had never agreed to the sale of the property, the land was of great value and within the next year could be worth millions of dollars.[113] She further elaborated that for her to sign the deed would be a grave injustice to the tribe and not in keeping of the trust imposed in her as a Chief.[114]

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110. Alice B. Davis Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Ok.

111. Indian Claims Commission, 473.

112. Ibid.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid.

Alice Brown Davis' legacy is rooted in her service to our people. Her story provides us with a look at Seminole women were leading our Nation through education with the knowledge that the needs of the collective should always outweigh the needs of the individual. These stories that emanate from the history of our schools highlight the connection between settler colonization, their powerful officials and their subsequent greed for land and resources. They also demonstrate the very powerful refusal of the Seminole Nation to hand over control of their educational systems willingly. The Seminole Nation was actually the last of the Five Tribes to lose control of their institutions of learning. Seminole people had been successfully educating their children from time immemorial and although it might have looked different, they were still transmitting the values that had sustained our people. To hand over the control of their children was an issue that they would resist in powerful ways. The struggle over school control was a struggle over educational sovereignty. The Seminole Nation very much desired to retain their forms of educating their children, with the inherent right to determine what that education looked like. They had fought through wars, had survived in a new homeland and they faced challenges together. The Seminole Nation schools represented the very best of the Nation's endeavors as the education of their children was a Nationwide effort of vnokeckv.

Reflection

Researching the history of education within my Tribal Nation has been an important endeavor to me. Our contemporary experiences are intricately tied to our past. As I was reminded of the critical role of education within the Seminole Nation, it was clear to me that my ancestors viewed it as an important tool to protect our people, our lands and our resources. In his lifetime, Talamase-mekko witnessed epochal events that transformed Seminole education in a multitude of ways. Seminole people were up against an entity that was horizontally and laterally stacked against our people. Our people resisted. As I undertook this research, I was reminded of how similar our resistance is to these forces that seek to erase us. Even today, in light of the McGirt decision that has reaffirmed the reservation status of the Five Tribes, I know that education will remain key to our resistance. For the Seminole people, education has continued to play an important role in our lives. In some ways, we are still carrying out Talamase-mekko's work to better the lives of our people. In Indian Territory, the act is of resistance and shapes our refusal. Refusal to consent to our elimination as a people, refusal to consent to the dispossession of our land, our lives told and our people controlled.[115]

Our relationship with the land is always evolving, yet we still retain our relationships with our original homelands. Tribal allotment in these new

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115. Audra Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016) 328.

homelands challenge colonially defined ideas of property “ownership.” As I reflect on this relationship, I know that our retention of these properties continues to be predicated on the protection of the earth in which our ancestors are buried. Many Seminole families, including mine, have family cemeteries in which our grandparents have been interred on our allotments. Within what is now Seminole County, there are many allotment properties that were stolen, codified through Congressional laws such as the Restriction Act and later the Stigler Act of 1947. The settler regime continues to demand land and its resources. I’m reminded of how the homes of powerful men within the county whose winding driveways lead to large homes with oil rigs pumping in their front acreage, are often lined with Seminole family cemeteries. Even today, many of our people don’t have access to their family cemeteries because their allotments were seized and sold without consent.

My great-grandmother attended Emahaka School for a short period of time, and my grandmother attended Mekusukey Mission for a brief time. Both served as matriarchs of our family and were our teachers. Education for our family played an important role in ensuring that we would retain our family’s land allotment. My great-grandparents, monolingual speakers of our Maskoke language sent their sons to school to learn how to read and write. When the Indian agents would visit my great-grandparents' home with papers for them to sign, they would steadfastly refuse to sign them until one of their sons could read what was written on the papers. Sometimes those documents outlined terms to sell our allotment land. My great-grandparents refused each time. The acquisition of

English literacy was essential to retaining our lands. Other times, it was physical. My uncle recalls watching a neighbor moving a fence over so that a pond would be on his side of the property. He had to tell my grandma and under the threat of criminal charges, the man was forced to move the fence back to its proper place. For the vast majority of our people, the structure of settler colonization and the ferocity of laws and policies were corrosive and violent. From what is now called Florida to Indian Territory and well into the twentieth century, many people lost their lives because settlers wanted their land. Allotment lands were also stolen by grifters and con men and as this history demonstrates, those people were sometimes the employees of the United States.

Although my grandma and her sisters were taken out of school by their dad, her brothers continued on in school. They became bilingual and were fluent in our beautiful Maskoke language and in English. Within our family, we began to see our language shift from Maskoke to English with each generation that experienced school. For my grandmother and her sisters, the shift towards English was much later, and wouldn't occur until their children went to school. I recognize that my grandma and her sisters were some of the last monolingual speakers of our Maskoke language within the Seminole Nation. I often wonder why my great-grandparents chose to take the girls out of school. Had they seen the shift in language? In some way, I think they recognized that the sisters were responsible for upholding our language and recognized their role in the transmission of knowledge and the removal from school ensured the perpetuation of our language. Perhaps they realized that in order for this to be achieved, it was

necessary to raise them in the home and to continue their education in the ways that had sustained our people for millennia.

I share this experience because these histories of education within communities are important. They are critical to understanding the intricacies of trust within school systems, and highlight the roles in which schools have played enacting shifts within families and communities. Indigenous histories of education often highlight the ways in which education has been approached by viewing students through a deficit lens, when the histories of education within Tribal Nations indicate that this was certainly not the case. Rather, our histories complicate the histories of education told about us and demonstrate a clear regard to protect our people and ensure that that protection extended to our new homelands. The Seminole Nation's history of education demonstrates the potential when education is a decision that is made by and for the people. From the original homelands, our ancestors were looking towards our children's futures.

We called it Ekvn-fvske, Florida, the sharp land named by the sharp strands of the sawgrass. What we called the land was reflective of our relationship to that space. When we were forcibly removed to what would become our new homelands, we brought those old names with us. Wetumka, Ocese, Tallahassee, Ceyahv, these were the names from our ancestral homes and the names reflected the deep kinship ties. Each town had a fire, and that fire represented a relationship that continues to tell us of how intimately related we are to the land, the animals, the elements and to each other. From the animals, the plants and the earth, we

understand who we are. Our people will continue on, we will continue educating, we will continue to perpetuate our ways and our languages.

Finally, stories of tribally controlled schools demonstrate how our people viewed these spaces as sites of survival that were critical to ensuring we would thrive. I return to Emahaka's bell, now located at the Middle Creek Indian Baptist Church right down the road from the old school site. The bell, a symbol of communication, continues to carry messages of meetings, signals the start of church, or notifies the community of the loss of a member. When the bell rings in our community, our people stop what they are doing, and we listen intently, often with our head respectfully bowed. Long, repeated ringing of the bell is often followed with somber reflection and time is suspended as we listen to the message that the bell conveys. The same bell that called Emahaka girls to school still calls to our people today.

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