Native Spiritual Paths: Native American Bible College Graduates, 1911-2000

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Abstract
During the twentieth century hundreds of Pima, Tohono O'odham, Dine, Sioux, Cocopah, Mojave, and Mescalero Apache men and women chose to attend one of three specialized Bible colleges in the Southwest. These little-known schools served as an alternate route to further education for hundreds of Native Americans who either wanted to pursue some type of Christian ministry or who lacked the academic preparation to attend a regular college or university. Having found their Bible college experience, and then their ministry, meaningful, many graduates in turn encouraged their friends and relatives to attend a Bible college. Most students enrolled, not because a college recruiter contacted them, but because a family member or close friend persuaded them that they could gain something valuable by going to a Bible school.

Because of their educational experiences many Bible college graduates have become cultural brokers. During the early decades, most graduates became pastors or lay workers in their local churches, serving as spiritual intermediaries. More recently, increasing numbers have chosen to pursue degrees in human services, education, or business. Although by the end of the twentieth century fewer Bible college graduates were entering the ministry, many of these individuals continued playing an active role in their local churches.

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