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Indians

D-11

AMERICAN INDIAN INSTITUTE

Second Annual Conference

University of Oklahoma Student Union Building

March 17, 1956

The American Indian Institute met for its second annual conference at the University of Oklahoma on March 17, 1956. The University committee directing the activities of the Institute consists of the following members: B. D. Timmons, Chairman, Iva O. Schmitt, Savoie Lottinville, L. H. Snyder, M. L. Wardell, Stephen Borhegyi, John Dunn, Glenn Couch, O. B. Jacobson, and Leonard Logan.

The conference was opened with a general statement by Dr. M. L. Wardell, Professor of History at the University of Oklahoma, explaining the history of the Institute, its present objectives, and the plan for the current conference. Seventy-eight persons registered for the conference, representing a large cross section of the Indian leaders from the major tribes of the State of Oklahoma, as well as groups from Moose, Wyoming, Horton, Kansas, and New Mexico. Also there were representatives from the Indian Service personnel, public school teachers, Oklahoma State Departments of Health, Child Welfare, Charities and Corrections, the Supreme Court, and the University of Oklahoma. The conference was fortunate in having some of the outstanding Indian leaders attend the meeting, including several of the tribal executives and many councilmen and chairmen of tribal councils.

The following list is a roster of those who registered and attended the meeting:

ANADARKO

AHTONE, Jake  
Box 303

DEAN, Robin R.  
Riverside Indian School

HUNT, Rose  
Box 382

CHILOCCO

KELLEY, Keith

OTIPOBY, Leonard

PIPESTEM, Francis

PENOI, Charles

CYRIL

CONNER, Mildred Jane  
Dep't of Public Welfare

DURANT

BELVIN, Hon. Harry J. W.

HINTON

TOUNWIN, Lloyd  
TOUNWIN, Mrs. Bessie

HOMINY

PITTS, Paul  
Box 657

KEOTA

DAVIDSON, Jack

LAWTON

ADAMS, Dr. Sylba  
Kiowa Indian Hospital

MUSKOGEE

FELSHAW, Morris  
2500 Manila

HAYES, Mrs. Marie  
Room 310, Federal Building

MAYTUBBY, E. B.  
404 Wall Street

NORMAN

BARNES, Frances Oneta  
814 W. Comanche

CAMPBELL, Walter S.  
Univ. of Oklahoma

CHUCULATE, Richard W.  
720 W. Boyd

DUNN, John  
Univ. of Oklahoma

DYMOND, Ruby  
401 N. Flood

HAYES, Harley D.  
Residential Hall

NORMAN (continued)

HOMZIAK, Hedwig M.  
Child Welfare Dep't  
1310 Classen Blvd.

LOGAN, Dr. Leonard  
Univ. of Oklahoma

MAC DONALD, Peter  
Box 343, WWC

NEWKUMET, Mrs. Phil J.  
Chairman, Ohoyohoma Club  
729 Elmwood Drive

SCHMITT, Mrs. Iva  
Univ. of Oklahoma

TARVER, Helen C.  
Jordan House, Quad.

TIMMONS, Mr. & Mrs. B. D.  
Univ. of Oklahoma

TONEMAH, Doris

TONEMAH, Scott  
1403 S. Jenkins

WARDELL, Dr. & Mrs. M. L.  
Univ. of Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA CITY

LOONEY, Eula  
2213 Downing

CONLON, Lottie  
805 N. E. 20

CHUCULATE, Owen P.  
1025 N. E. 21

DOWNING, E.  
3404 N. W. 26

DESTER, Laura E.  
811½ East Drive

OKLAHOMA CITY (continued)

DANIEL, Josephine L.  
Dep't of Health

FEDER, Mrs. Sadie  
718 W. California

FULLERTON, Eula  
618 N. W. 15

GRIGGS, Lucille L.  
3833 Maney

HARRIS, Mrs. Mabel  
817 S. W. Grand Blvd.

JOHNSON, Hon. N. B.  
Chief Justice, Supreme  
Court

LOONEY, Eva  
2213 Downing

TAYLOR, Mrs. Louise  
2308 N. Ollie

WERMY, Ruth H.  
4016 S. W. 28

WYLIE, Callie  
2816 N. Walker

PAULS VALLEY

MC CURTAIN, Mrs. Randolph  
P. O. Box 5609

PAWHUSKA

FISTER, Russell  
621 Grandview

PAWNEE

HORSE CHIEF, John  
Box 53

MORGAN, William Mullen  
314 Forest Street

PAWNEE (continued)

ROBERTS, George H.  
Route #1

PERKINS

SOLOMON, Kent

SHAWNEE

THOMAS, Robert K.  
318 East Tenth

TAHLEQUAH

BALLENGER, Mr. & Mrs. T. L.  
102 Minor

TULSA

ISLAND, Leagues  
2005 St. Louis

ISLAND, Elizabeth  
2005 St. Louis

MAYES, Mayme

QUETONE, Allen  
1307 S. Lewis

RENSON, Katherine

TIGER, Kenneth

VICTORY, C. C.  
2545 E. Eighth Street

WAGONER

WAGGONER, John  
Box 62

WEWOKA

SHUNATONA, Bat

KANSAS

HORTON

CADUE, Mrs. Vestano  
Route #2

SPOONE, Minerva  
Route #2

JESSEPE, Mrs. Minnie  
Route #2

SACQUST, William  
Route #2

WYOMING

LAUBIN, Mr. & Mrs. Reginald K.  
Moose, Wyoming

After the general meeting the group was divided into four divisions of interest. One division concerned health; the second, economical and social welfare; the third, education; and the fourth, the preservation of customs, traditions, and heritages. After considerable discussion by the several groups, the conference reconvened in a general meeting to hear reports from each section.

REPORT OF THE GROUP ON HEALTH

This group, under the direction of Miss Eula E. Fullerton, of the State Department of Health, Oklahoma City, elected Earnest E. Downing as chairman and Mrs. Hugh Conner as secretary. The group discussed and arrived at an agreement as to the current problems concerning health and also discussed briefly the effect of the transfer of the health service from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Public Health. The following recommendations were made by the group:

1. That there is a definite need for health education in the homes, in the schools, and in the community. There must be a better coordination of work between the Indians and the non-Indians with regard to the health education of both groups for the betterment of their community. Both the Indians and the non-Indians must realize that they are now members of the same community and their health problems are the same, and a well-rounded health education program would do a great deal to point out this mutual responsibility.

2. There is a need for a coordinated referral system of federal, state, county, and local governments of the varied health programs which have to do with aid to Indians in order that they can get the greatest benefit from any of the existing resources.

3. There is a need for an understanding of Indian culture, customs, habits, etc., on the part of those who work with the Indians in order to give the Indian confidence and secure his cooperation so that he will obtain full benefits of the health facilities available to him.

4. This group recommends that a source of information be available in the form of health education so that the Indians will know the health services that are available to them and how to secure these services, on what basis, and the responsibility that they have regarding the services they receive.

5. There should be some method of encouraging Indians to study in the various professional fields related to health education, such as doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, x-ray specialists, etc., in order that they can better serve the Indian population.

6. The group recommends that the American Indian Institute request the State of Oklahoma and the federal government to institute a series of pilot studies in three or four areas which are predominantly of Indian population for a health demonstration to improve the health of that area. The pilot study would be under the direction of the State Department of Health, with a carefully selected staff who would have an understanding of the Indian and his needs.

After additional discussion, the conference approved the report of the health group.

REPORT OF THE GROUP ON ECONOMICAL AND SOCIAL WELFARE

The leaders of this group were Dr. Leonard Logan, of the University of Oklahoma, and Jake Ahtone, of the Indian Service, Anadarko. Mrs. T. L. Ballenger, of Tahlequah, was elected reporter. The following discussions

and recommendations were presented by this group.

Due to the misunderstanding of the background and philosophy of Indians in general, an Indian quite often becomes discouraged in his education and drops out of school at an early date, and, as a result, lacks the technical training to provide anything but unskilled labor.

There must be some method devised whereby the public school teacher is able to understand that the Indian presents an entirely different problem from the average school individual and needs to be encouraged to complete his education. It was reported by this group that about 25 per cent of the Indians who have been relocated in an employment area which is outside of their particular home or state are returning to their former homes, and the reasons given were that they were homesick, they were not among people who could understand their problems, they were subject to drink and not able to keep their jobs and adjust to communities where there were no other Indians with whom they could associate. The Indian should have more detailed information as to the problems that he will face on relocating into a new employment area so that he will understand the difficulties that he will encounter in this new program. If employment opportunities are offered on or near the reservation, the type of employment should be such that it would bring the Indian in more contact with the non-Indian population and in contact with businesses and industrial occupations that are not principally related to Indian handicrafts and arts. By restricting the Indian's occupation to a reservation type of employment he is missing the opportunity of making contact with groups and organizations in business off the reservation that would be of great assistance in his transition from his reservation life to one of modern times.



The following recommendation is presented to the conference: That the Indians be informed of the services available to them from state and federal agencies in matters pertaining to their education, health, and general welfare. Too many times the Indian is in ignorance as to his rights and privileges and quite often state organizations that have dealings with Indians assume the attitude that since he is an Indian he can receive aid from the federal government, and, therefore, the organizations have little interest in assuming any responsibility. In order that all agencies of the state and the Indians in particular can be informed of what is available in the way of assistance, it is recommended that the Commission of Indian Affairs and/or the State of Oklahoma set up a socio-economic study to determine what is available to the Indians so that a more intelligent approach can be made toward a proper solution and that this study report to the various agencies their findings so that they can coordinate their activities in providing satisfactory services to the Indians.

A separate recommendation was made by this committee, sponsored by Allen Quetone, of Tulsa, and Jack Davidson, of Keota, to the effect that under the present laws of the State of Oklahoma and the federal government, an Indian, to be eligible for old-age assistance, must sell his trust property and reserve only forty acres for homestead exemption. The committee recognizes that this is an unfair hardship on the Indians who have this land in trust and they recommend immediate action to relieve this unfair situation that has been imposed on our senior Indian citizens.

Mr. George Roberts, of Pawnee, who is chairman of the Pawnee Tribal Council, presented the following resolution concerning the Indian Claims Commission:

The original life of the Indian Claims Commission was ten years, beginning

on the date of enactment by Congress, August 13, 1946.

It will be necessary to extend the life of that Commission in order to complete claims which are filed before it. Bills to extend the life of the Indian Claims Commission have been passed by the Congress (S. 1746 in the Senate, providing for an extension to 1959; H. R. 5566 in the House, providing for an extension to 1962). It will be necessary for one of the Congressional bodies to act upon the other's bill before either bill can go to conference and become a law, but the Department of Justice is now trying to eliminate, by an amendment to that bill, any right of recovery based on aboriginal title. The proposed amendment of the Justice Department is now being considered by the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Subcommittee and by the House Subcommittee of Interior and Insular Affairs.

Should the Justice Department be successful in getting this amendment adopted, it would destroy Indian claims which are based on aboriginal title.

The Department of Justice asserted before the Indian Claims Commission, the Court of Claims, and the United States Supreme Court that original Indian title, occupation, and possession was not sufficient to constitute grounds for recovery. These courts have now unanimously held against the Department of Justice's contention. The Department of Justice has had its day in court running from the trial of these cases before the Indian Claims Commission to a finality in the Supreme Court of the United States. Indian claimants have been put to the expense, time, and trouble to establish their right to recovery on aboriginal title and now that the Supreme Court has finally settled the issue in their favor, it is not fair and equitable for the lawyers on the losing side to ask Congress to penalize these tribes by removing the theory of recovery from the act.

Any legislation to strike down the claims of these Indians, some of which have been reduced to judgment, under the original Indian Claims Commission bill would in effect be destroying vested rights already established by and granted to such tribes. We believe that it is not the intention of any of the national legislators to undertake to legislate so as to destroy vested rights now existing in any claimant against the government.

This group also recommended that the conference go on record asking that a separate state board of Indian Affairs be created by the state legislature for the purpose of coordinating all Indian activities within the State of Oklahoma. After some discussion on the above report, it was moved that it be approved and the conference passed the resolutions as presented by the economical and social welfare group.

#### REPORT OF THE GROUP ON EDUCATION

The discussion was opened by Dr. M. L. Wardell, of the University of Oklahoma. The discussion leaders were W. Keith Kelley, of Chilocco, presiding as chairman, with the assistance of Acee Blue Eagle, of Okmulgee. Mrs. Frances Oneta Barnes, of Norman, was selected as recorder and Mrs. Marie Hayes, of Muskogee, as reporter. The group discussed the original seven aims presented by Dr. Wardell at the opening of the meeting and made the following resolutions:

1. That a general scholarship for Indian students be established for the State of Oklahoma from federal funds or from individual tribal funds, such as some of the tribes in Oklahoma and other states have already done. This scholarship is to be available to any qualified Indian to attend any school or college of his choice. It was pointed out that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is de-emphasizing loans and are stressing scholarships and

grants. The group felt that the federal government should be encouraged to enlarge and maintain its scholarship program. The group recognized the fact that there is need for higher education on the college and university level, but wish to point out the need also for training in industrial employment through vocational education and special skills needed for teaching, secretarial science, etc. They also discussed the possibility of the state legislature setting up a scholarship program for Indian students here in the state. The group agreed that more information should be sent to the various communities regarding the scholarships and grants that are available for education purposes. It was noted that there is a special need for the continuance of a good guidance program in Indian schools to assist students in making adjustments to new locations and situations regarding changes in education and employment.

In view of the above discussions, the following recommendations were made to the general conference:

1. A scholarship fund for Indian students be established and that an executive committee be chosen by this conference to formulate plans for consideration and adoption of the scholarship proposal.

2. Recommendation was made by Owen Chuculate, of Oklahoma City, that the meeting of representatives of Indian boarding schools and public schools where they have large Indian enrollment, and social workers of the state be sponsored by the American Indian Institute to discuss educational problems from the elementary and secondary levels. The motion was seconded by Mr. Robin Dean, of Anadarko, and approved by the discussion group.

3. This group recommends to the conference that there should be an expansion of the Indian art program, music, writing, and all other cultural

aspects of Indian ability and talent.

The education report was approved by the conference.

REPORT OF THE GROUP ON THE PRESERVATION OF INDIAN CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

This report was made by Mrs. Eula Looney, of Oklahoma City, acting chairman and reporter of the group. There was considerable discussion by this group on what was meant by the customs and traditions of the American Indian that needed to be preserved. It was finally agreed that the culture of the Indian in his relation to the arts, language, literature, and music should be preserved and those parts of his culture which can and still do contribute a great deal to the culture of this country in general should be encouraged and expanded. This group is not interested in preserving the Indian way of life as it is related to his poor economic condition, his inadequate health facilities, and his poor housing. They want to bring the Indian out of the dugout and the tent and yet retain his wonderful contribution to art and literature, language, and handcraft. They also feel that the Indian should be as free as any other racial group in his use and interpretation of his own culture. A suggestion was made that as many as possible of the older Indians in the country be contacted concerning historical events that they knew during their lifetime in order that complete and correct information can be secured while these older citizens are still living.

The conference then approved the report of this group.

Mr. C. C. Victory, of Tulsa, and Judge N. B. Johnson, of Oklahoma City, gave reports on current legislation affecting the Indians in the United States. They pointed special attention to Resolution 108 concerning the withdrawal of the federal government in its supervision and participation in the welfare of the Indians in general and also to the danger involved in the closing of

the Indian Claims Commission before the tribes complete their records and present their legitimate claims.

The conference approved the recommendation of the American Indian Institute Committee that appointed or elected representatives from each tribe in the state serve with the Institute as its regular members. The conference also suggested that the University continue its fine program of assistance to the Indians in the various phases of its activity, and if possible increase and enlarge upon those activities. The conference approved the recommendation that a steering committee be elected by this group to be an interim committee to act during the year to carry out the policies of the Institute. The following members were nominated and elected to this committee:

Boyce Timmons, Chairman	Paul Pitts
Scott Tonemah	Francis Pipestem
Mrs. T. L. Ballenger	Mrs. Phil Newkumet
Amos Toahty	Leagues Island
Harry J. W. Belvin	Bat Shunatona
Charles Grounds	Leonard Otipoby
N. B. Johnson	Ruth Wermey
Floyd Maytubby	Sadie Feder
George Roberts	Mrs. Marie Hayes

The above-named committee represents most of the major tribes in the state. Mr. Harry J. W. Belvin, Chief of the Choctaw tribe, summarized the conference and briefly pointed out the following topics which were discussed:

1. Health program had evidently made a successful transfer from the Indian Department to the Public Health Service.
2. Hospitals were still run principally for the Indians, but under the Public Health Service the white people will be admitted. He urged that all Indians should take advantage of the facilities of these institutions to which they are entitled.

3. Oklahoma should attune itself to the needs of the back-in-the-hills underprivileged Indians, in order that they can be provided means by which they can make at least a standard of living comparable with non-Indians in that area. He stated how much lower the income of these Indians was as compared to the others in the state. Mr. Belvin said that the need to provide these underprivileged Indians with a skill to earn a living is not restricted to any state, but is first the responsibility of the federal government and then the individual states.

Education and spiritual culture are among the saving graces of the Indians. They need an education of the right sort that will fit the individual and he feels that the education of the young will eventually do more to bring the Indian up to his proper level in the economic strata than anything else that we can do for the Indian group. Those things that are good in the culture and heritage of the Indians should be forever a part of the culture of this country. Keep this rich heritage that the Indians have contributed to the benefit of this country. Mr. Belvin pointed out that the state legislature has a committee on Indian Affairs and they are at the present time making a study of the entire Indian problem of Oklahoma and that he is sure that this conference can expect the cooperation of this group in any matters in which they might be able to give assistance. He complimented the work of the conference and expressed the hope that it could develop and enlarge its facilities and carry out the program which had been established at this meeting.

The meeting adjourned.