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The Creation of Choctaw Central High School and Its Transition to A Bureau of Indian

Affairs Contract School: An Oral History

Fredrick L. Hickmon

A Dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education

The University of Mississippi

by

Fredrick L. Hickmon

May 2017

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Abstract

The members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians are the invisible heroes of Mississippi. Because of the limited attention placed on the Tribe in Mississippi high school social studies curriculum, and no course of study in any post-secondary institutions in the State, citizens who do not live in close proximity are oblivious to the Choctaws' existence. Absent, is any thought on Mississippi Choctaws deep, rich, background, as the original defenders of the State, or their feelings and contributions toward education. As such this work explored the history of the Mississippi Choctaw with emphasis on education using data collected from Tribal member's stories.

The following study is a Native American Education History on the Creation of Choctaw Central High School, and its transition from a Bureau of Indian Affairs School to a school under local Tribal control. The lack of history written on the Mississippi Choctaw presents an opportunity to conduct quality research. Perceptions and ideas about these phenomena given by participants provide insight on the plight of the Mississippi Choctaws during their historical journey. Stories using oral history from in-depth interviews created a unique history that revealed important information about who the Mississippi Choctaw are, and their feelings about education.

Dedication

To my grandmother Nevary Scott Hickman, thank you for teaching me to carry my row.

List of Abbreviations

- BIA.....
..... Bureau of Indian Affairs
- BIE.....
..... Bureau of Indian Education
- MBCI.....
.....Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
- P.L.....
..... Public Law
- UM.....
..... University of Mississippi

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Very little history has been written on the formation of Choctaw Central High School. Choctaw Central High School is the only secondary education institution exclusively for Native American students in Mississippi. Under local control of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribal Council and the Choctaw Indian Chief, the school serves Tribal members as well as anyone with one-quarter Native American blood, as indicated by a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood. Because of the school's unique population and the significance Native Americans have in Mississippi history, a written account of Choctaw Central High School's establishment and continuance under Tribal control is an important study. In addition, a history of Choctaw Central High School will provide a valuable resource for those interested in teaching and learning about Choctaw Tribal Schools as well as educators' instructions on Native American education. Lastly, this study is an oral history, giving voice to Choctaw Tribal Members' stories, and is consistent with the current academic trend on emphasizing personal narratives when writing Native American Education History (Cervera, 2014).

Congressional Precedent

The basis for United States government control and support of Indian education were found in the Snyder Act of 1921 and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The Snyder Act states that Congress, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), under the Office of the Secretary of the

Interior, is to “direct, supervise, and expend” moneys allotted for “general support...including education.” The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act, stated the federal government would provide a “vocational education for Indians.” With federal precedent established, the Indian Education Act of 1972 created the Office of Indian Education later renamed the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). This act recognized the United States government’s responsibility to assist in providing an adequate education for all Native American students. The Indian Self Determination Act of 1975 offered contracts to allow the transfer of educational services, which the United States government had been exclusively providing, to local tribal control. Assuring United States government support of Indian Education, these pieces of legislation are the foundations of Native American Education History. Therefore, as in most Native American historical research, laws that establish and define the existence of tribal schools frame this study. This research adds to Native American Education History, by focusing on the unique story of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Scholars and Tribal members can use this study, to understand the perception and motives, of individuals involved in the creation and transition to tribal control of Choctaw Central High School.

Oral History

The need for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to have a voice in the account of their history is essential in their contribution to Native American Education History. According to Cervera (2014), researchers construct a more accurate story about the lives of Native Americans by using oral history. Cervera (2014) called for a change in how Native American Education History is written. This change would occur with historians’ use of oral history to write history about Native Americans. Noley (2008), states that education did not begin in America with European colonization. In fact, long before these settlements, Native American families, raised

crops, conserved the environment, and taught these skills to younger generations. As such the belief that Indigenous Peoples' education began with the written American English word is incorrect.

According to Noley (2008), in accordance with Cervera (2014), a new American Indian History should be written using Native American narratives. Lawrence (2014) introduces Epic Learning, a technique for writing this new history, in her description of the Santa Clara Pueblo Indians in New Mexico. Epic Learning is learning grounded in the experiences of those in the past (Lawrence, 2014). Facing Spain, Mexico, and the United States at different times in history, the Indigenous People of Santa Clara brokered deals that allowed them to maintain their culture and their land (Lawrence, 2014). Using information about land dealings from the Pueblo's perspective, Lawrence (2014) was able to demonstrate that Native Americans were as astute as their European and American counterparts. Lawrence (2014) states that the narratives or stories of groups or individuals, focusing on what they learned, how they made sense of what they learned, and the contextual elements that framed their learning, are essential in constructing Native American History. The argument concludes with the suggestion that new literature on American Indian Education needs to move away from a traditional non-Native emphasis on institutions and schooling, toward a history written with Native American voices.

According to Yow (2005), in-depth interviews provide collective narratives, which give intimate knowledge of participants being interviewed. This type of knowledge assists in recording rich descriptions of experiences of those who experienced the process of Choctaw Central High School's creation and its transition to a BIA contract school. Oral history connects the old with the young, the academic world with the outside world, and most importantly, allows connections in the interpretation of history (Thompson, 2000). Oral history given by Tribal members with a

“vested interest” and “insider vantage point” provided the depth needed to ensure the validity for this this Native American Education History (Noley, 2008). My skill as an oral historian as well as my relationship with tribal members ensures proper interpretation of the data collected.

Native Americans have a long, difficult history with the United States (Cohen, 1945). Although some stories have been chronicled, not all tribes have an accurate history recorded (Warren, 2014). I have the privilege of working with Mississippi’s only federally recognized tribe, The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI). After several years of working for MBCI, I have obtained the trust of Tribal Members. Along with the close proximity of individuals who experienced the creation and transition of Choctaw Central High School, and accessibility to these individuals, allowed me an opportunity to conduct this research. As an educator and historian, I recognized the need for writing a history of Choctaw Central High School. To obtain a rich description of Choctaw Central High School’s history based on first person accounts, I selected oral history as the method for this research. This narrative history of the creation of Choctaw Central High School in 1963, and its transfer to Tribal control under the Indian Self Determination Act (1975) in 1989 explored the experiences of Tribal members and other Tribal personnel and provides a better understanding of their role during this significant time in MBCI Education History.

Primarily, the history that was chronicled in this study is from 1963-1989. Some of the research, however, extends before and beyond these two periods, but these dates are pivotal in covering when Choctaw Central High School was formed and when it transitioned to a BIA contract school. Yow (2005) states that researchers, to conduct effective in-depth interviews, must have a sense of trust and understanding established with the interviewees. Because of my opportunity to serve as principal of Choctaw Central High school. I have the unique experience of working

with the MBCI, and having Tribal member relationships extending more than fifteen years. Over this time, members of the Tribe and I have developed high levels of trust and understanding.

Recognizing this unique relationship, I pursued permission to conduct this research from the Choctaw Tribal Council in 2015. The permission granted by the Tribal Council was in a formal resolution and was conditional on the fact that the Tribal Chief must approve any publications of written materials I created with data I collected from Tribal members (See Appendix M). I presented a copy of this research to the Tribal Chief as well as every member of the Choctaw Tribal Council for comments and questions before submitting it to the dissertation committee. Each member of the Council along with the Tribal Chief responded favorably about the research and affirmed that I fulfilled the resolution's purpose. Without suggesting changes in the design of the study, the information collected, or the manuscript in its entirety, the MBCI Tribal Chief and Tribal Council gladly accepted this work as Mississippi Choctaw History. In accordance to the resolution, I asked the Tribal Chief for permission to present and publish a portion of my dissertation at conferences and in academic journals. Her affirmative response came in a memorandum addressed to me (See Appendix N). As such, I presented at two academic conferences which focused on education history (See Curriculum Vita). The support received from the MBCI governing body enhanced this research based on capturing the stories about the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a BIA contract school by bringing validity and justification to this work. While considering a method, I decided that these relationships would provide an appropriate bridge between the subjects and I, allowing effective oral history research to occur. After realizing my unique subjectivity and relationship with the Tribe and the need for the members of the Tribe to have a voice in the telling of Mississippi Choctaw History, I have conducted an oral history study documenting the creation of Choctaw

Central High School under the BIA and its transition to a locally controlled Tribal school. Oral history provides a voice for Choctaw Tribal members and allows for rich in-depth narratives. As proposed by the literature, other ways to conduct historical research on Indigenous People are needed; oral history satisfies this request (Cervera, 2014). Because of the relationships built over time working with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and my qualifications as a historical researcher, I conducted interviews, recorded participants' stories, and reported a history that is easily read and understood.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this historical research was to explore, through participant stories, the perceptions and experiences of Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian Tribal members and key Tribal personnel during the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a locally controlled (BIA) contract school. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and Tribal personnel, giving more insight into the mindset, feelings, and ideas of those involved with the school's creation and its transition to a BIA contract school. An analysis of historical records with the results of the participants' stories provided a better understanding of the meaning of Choctaw Central High School specifically, and education in general, to the Choctaw People (Cervera, 2014).

Tribal records were collected from the Choctaw Tribal museum and archives and used in this study to provide historical context. Research conducted in Neshoba County and other surrounding counties with Tribal communities, also yielded historical settings for this study. I reviewed books from the Choctaw Central High School Library, J.D. Williams Library on the University of Mississippi's campus, and collected data from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. In addition, I gathered United States government documents addressing

Native American education from the Internet. After collecting oral history narratives from participants, I compared the information I collected with material extracted from in-depth interviews. Interview questions and topics of discussion were derived from the historical documents. Through purposeful sampling I used an original interview protocol that focused on the stories of participants. Transcripts and interview summaries were approved by each interviewee. An analysis of the transcription which consisted of a line by line reading to discover any convergence found in the data, was conducted (Patton, 2002). Convergent themes that emerge from the data were used as topical evidence during analysis. These topical categories guided the interpretation of results from in-depth interviews. Tribal members, who were not interviewed, conducted member checks, providing an external review of the data and ensuring trustworthiness. This study provides an accurate historical account of events occurring during the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its continuation under Tribal control.

Significance of the Study

This study used Native American stories to present historical meaning of the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transference to a BIA contract school. The historical facts found in this research will add to the Native American Education History field of study by expanding its focus to the Choctaw people, who have limited exposure. The use of Epic Learning gave sense to the stories of the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transfer to a BIA contract school. In addition, instruction on the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians during required Mississippi Studies classes in all Mississippi Public Schools are enhanced by this research. Lastly, anyone conducting research, and seeking a better understanding of Indigenous Peoples' history of Mississippi through lived experiences, will benefit from this study.

Central Phenomena and Research Questions

Oral history provides narratives that tell stories to answer questions (Yow, 2005). The narratives collected in this research, guided the study. The central phenomenon for this research explored the perceptions and experiences of students, teachers, and Tribal personnel during the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a BIA contract school under local Tribal control. The Indian Self Determination Act of 1975 allowed educational services, previously provided by the United States Federal Government to Native American students, transferred to local Tribal control. Therefore, local Tribal government, using Tribal and federal funds, directly controls the education of Native American Students.

Several ideas occurred to me upon reflection of the central phenomenon. I wonder about how participants felt after finding out that Choctaw Central High School was going to be a reality, and how interviewees felt about the schools transition to a BIA contract school. These anticipations and experiences were explored during in-depth interviews conducted in this research. In both instances perceived and real challenges encountered by participants were documented and analyzed. A discussion about the experiences related to the success of Choctaw Central High School after its creation and continued success after transition to local control, outlined interview questions. These topics are included in the central question of this research.

Given that oral history often provides a deeper understanding into significant events (Yow, 2005): What do the participants' stories say about the meaning of the creation of Choctaw Central High School and the school's transition to a Bureau of Indian Affairs Contract School to the Choctaw People?

Using oral history and other historical documents, the researcher answered the central question with the following topical sub-questions (See Appendix C):

1. What did the stories from the interviews say about anticipatory feelings shared about the events?
2. What challenges about the events are revealed in the participants' stories?
3. What did the participants' stories reveal about the impact of these events on their professional lives?
4. What does Mississippi Choctaw Tribal education mean to Tribal Members?

Organization

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background and organization of the study. This chapter gives an overview of the topic, question, and sub-questions that were answered by the research. Chapter 1 provides a description of literature that assists with the design of this study and detailed the need for this research. It also mentions oral history, which was used to conduct this study. In addition, federal laws that stated the United States Government's responsibility for the education of Native Americans as well as laws that provided for tribal schools continuation as a contract Bureau of Indian Affairs schools are presented.

Chapter 2 presents a literature review of education history, Native American Education History, and oral history. Focusing on Native American Education History, recent literature on the meaning of education history is reviewed, along with the previous challenges writing education history, and recommendations from leading historians on writing future education history. Chapter 2 also provides literature on oral history to support why oral history is appropriate for this study. Books and peer reviewed educational journal articles discussing oral history's affect and potential effect on writing Native American Education History are explored, giving the reader a clearer understanding of how outcomes were developed in this study.

Chapter 3 provides the methods used and discusses the basic characteristics of the study. Identification of techniques used to gather information from participants as well as the academic protocols are explained. The data analyses technique is also given in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is a history the Mississippi Choctaw with emphasis on education. I wrote a summative history of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians who are direct descendants of the Native Americans living in Mississippi who resisted Indian removal. This chapter reveals Federal and Tribal laws created to establish Choctaw Central High School and the school's continuance as a BIA contract school under local Tribal control as indicated in the Indian Self Determination Act of 1975.

Chapter 5 presents the interviews conducted for this study. Two sets of interviews were conducted to review the history of the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its continuance under Tribal control. Tribal personnel, School Administrators, School Teachers and Choctaw Central High School student's stories are re-presented as narratives in this chapter.

Chapter 6 gives an analysis of the interviews collected. Categories developed through in-depth interviews using the techniques outlined by Lawrence (2014) in *Epic Learning*, were analyzed and explained. I used samples from the interviews as evidential artifacts, to validate the findings.

Conclusion

This study provided the Choctaw people a voice in their history. Through oral history the perceptions, feelings, and motivations of key individuals involved in the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its continuance as a BIA contract school are recorded. I explain, through analysis, that education has always been an important part of Mississippi Choctaw's existence as a Tribe. This study is a significant chapter in the history of the Mississippi Band of

Choctaw Indians and a significant addition to American Indian Education History. This study I provides information to those who wish to know more about Choctaw Central High School, the Mississippi Choctaw Tribe, and Native American Education History.

Chapter 2

Introduction

The history of Choctaw Central High School's creation and continuance as a contract school through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) make this a study of American Indian Education. Several works have been written in this field of study that assists in the understanding of the importance of Native American education history. I review literature and research on education history, Native American Education History, and oral history to provide context, background, and methodological support for this research.

This chapter presents a literature review of education history, Native American education history, and a focus on the use of oral history to collect data. I chose this literature on education history to frame a conceptual picture for this study by providing a base where I began. The focus of the study became clearer with the Indian Education literature review. Leading authors in the field discuss the need for changes in collection of data about Indigenous People. Oral history, suggested by these authors, is the method of choice to collect data when researching Native American education history. I also provided a definition of oral history, its purpose, methods, and answers to challenges from traditional historians.

Education History

Credited with the creation of education history as a discipline, Cubberley (1920) presented a design that moved historical focus from Europe to the United States. Shifting from a focus on education theory, historians began writing on institutions and their function as

components of education and schooling (Cubberley, 1920). Cubberley (1920) stated that schools should not be places where “drill in mastering the rudiments of knowledge” occur. Instead, these institutions should train young people on how to engage socially, professionally, and academically in a complex modern world (Cubberley, 1920). With this premise, Cubberley encouraged historians to write about schools and the schooling that took place in American education. Known as progressivism or the progressive method, Cubberley’s writings were based on the notion that as the United States of America progressed, its success was contingent on the progress of education (Cervera, 2014). For forty-two years of virtually unopposed scholarship, historians wrote education history using this method. However, in the 1960s, an educational history revisionist movement began. During this time, historians began to question Cubberley’s techniques on “schooling” and challenged educational historians to develop new questions that focused on the function of institutions and the experiences of students (Cervera, 2014). Known as cultural revisionism, the ideas of Bailyn (1960) and Cremin (1965) signaled the conclusion of the use of progressive education history (Cervera, 2014). Bailyn (1960) began criticizing Cubberley and other traditional historians in his book *Education in the Forming of American Society*. Claiming the histories were predictable and similar, Bailyn (1960) requested a new look at how education should be recorded. In his book *The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cubberly*, Cremin (1965) stated that Cubberley’s method lacked understanding of what actually happened in education. He believed it is the responsibility of historians to provide insight to educators, not inspiration (Cremin, 1965). Bailyn (1960) wrote that education history occurs outside the school and is responsible to report folklore, literature, and medical beliefs in historical studies. Historians used opportunities outlined by Bailyn in creating new literature on education (Cervera, 2014).

Cremin's three book series *American Education* provides a definition for education in the United States and is considered an education historian's "manifesto" by some in the field (Wagoner, 1978). Cremin (1970) defines education as "the deliberate, systemic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort." Still considered the definitive study on American Education History, this series is often used by contemporary historians (Cervera, 2014). The cultural revisionists signaled a turning point in writing education histories and left a lasting impression into the present day.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a more radical movement in writing education history. Katz (2001) and others decided to write about the effect schools had on students who attended them, in particular the oppression marginalized groups felt at traditional educational institutions. Emphasizing the subjugation of women, people of color, immigrants, and those of different classes, Katz (2001) in his work *The Irony of Early School Reform*, reflected the important issues of the times. The Civil Rights Movement, Women's Rights Movement, and The War on Poverty are all examined in Katz's radical revisionist works. Producing reflection and reaction to current themes, radical revisionists sought to explain the plight of those hindered by traditional education in America (Cervera, 2014). Katz expressed that it was a traditional focus in schools that perpetuated negative connotations for marginalized populations and change would come if historians wrote about the struggles these individuals experienced while at school.

In the 1970s, Tyack (1974) called for a milder look at education history. Tyack favored a revision of previous education histories that had marginalized individuals. In his book *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*, Tyack (1974) provides a more balanced appraisal of the past. Stating that all organized societies have some form of social control, Tyack

says schools should not be harshly judged for their impact on students. In 1983, Kaestle stated that American dedication to traditional education systems was predicated on three ideas: republican government, Protestant religious beliefs, and capitalism. By this time, most historians were writing along the lines outlined by Kaestle, ignoring cultural revisionism. In their history of education history of the 1980s and 1990s, Donato and Lazeron (2000) stated that during this time there was a lack of radical revisionist writing on topics like students studying vocational skills, women, African Americans, and other marginalized groups. Native Americans were included in the groups ignored in education history research, creating a need for the writing of an Indigenous People's Education History.

Because of globalization and the removal of international walls due to technology, and Internet access, Albesetti (2013) claims a global approach to studying history is appropriate. Albesetti (2013) dismisses language and boarder barriers as hindrances, and states that American historians need to take the time to learn the cultures of the world as the realities of globalization is present in the United States.

Addressing the current state of American Education history, Finkelstein (2013) suggests that writers should explore history across boarders using narrative methods. Through oral history, authors should complete studies that transcend gender, ethnic, and international lines (Finkelstein, 2013). Like *Epic Learning*, Finkelstein states that history can be told by the analysis of life experiences and this data can frame a study useful for authors (Lawrence, 2014). Finkelstein (2013) asks historians not to neglect the rich diversity that has emerged in the teaching field, as evident by the many ethnic groups currently represented.

Fraser (2013) is also in agreement with educational historian focusing on oral history to collect data and report findings. After endorsing Finkelstein in his article "Where is Ellwood

Cubberley When you Need Him?” Fraser (2013) explores how the lack of education history taught in schools of education has hindered teacher development. In particular Fraser states that during Cubberley’s lifetime, 85 percent of students in education took a minimum of one education history course. By 1960, nineteen years after Cubberley's death, less than less than 50 percent of education students took any education history course (Fraser, 2013). Fraser (2013) asked several questions and gave possible answers that Cubberley may have given discussing the need for new education historians to move back to the schools of education at their respective universities for the sake of teacher development.

Gaither (2013), in his article on the challenges of writing a U.S. History textbook in modern times, states that “pre-contact” history of Native Americans does not exist. Expressing the need for historians to “fill the gaps,” Gaither says that in eleven years not a single article addressing pre-European contact of Indigenous people appeared in the *History of Education Quarterly*. This lack of historiographical prudence by the field has caused major deficits, and Gaither (2013) suggests a Bailyn-Cremin type revolution to assist historians. Gaither (2013) claims that a transcontinental master narrative is needed to produce quality change in the writing of American Education history. These recent discussions on the plight of American Education history indicate a move toward more narrative studies and the use of oral history as a method. The following section reviews literature discussing Native American Education History and ideas about how to improve the research field.

American Indian Education History

Farrell Davidson, (personal communication, August 18, 2015), a graduate of Native American Literature from the University of New Mexico and a Mississippi Choctaw Tribal member, claims Vine Deloria’s Jr. *Custer Died for Your Sins*(1988) is absolutely essential in any

discussion on Indian Education History. Deloria's work, written originally in 1969 and reprinted in 1988, discusses in detail the plight of American Indians, their past, and a projected future. Deloria (1988) specifically addresses American Indian Education stating that the Native student is taught to focus his or her goals beyond the reservation. Because of this, some of the reservation's highest achievers forgo opportunities to enhance their tribe in order to excel in the "white" world (Deloria, 1988). These traditional education views dominated Native American culture as reflected by the literature written about their education history (Cervera, 2014).

In 1995, Lomawaima wrote a history on the first woman ever appointed to a federal position by the United States Senate. Estelle Reel served as the Superintendent of Indian Schools from 1898-1910. Lomawaima (2000) describes Reel as a shrewd landowner and racist administrator. Reel stated that Native Americans were of a "lesser race" incapable of learning higher math and science curriculums. Lomawaima's description was an example of the radical revisionist writings that Donato and Lazeron (2000) claimed were mostly absent during the 1970s and 80s. Lomawaima's article provides a perspective from the Native Americans affected by Reel's decisions and the implications of those decisions that continue to plague curriculum used in Indian Schools (Cervera, 2014). American Indian Education History originally described boarding schools as places where students were sent in order to assimilate them into "American" culture (Cervera, 2014). With the conceptual and financial backing of the United States Government, these schools served as institutions of acculturation an attempted to remove the Indian from himself (Cervera, 2014).

General Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the first off reservation boarding school in the United States, built the school based on the premise of "the only good Indian was a dead one" (Cervera, 2014). Referring to the death of Native American culture, not a literal death of the

Indian race, Pratt is quoted as saying, “Kill the Indian in him, save the man” (Cervera, 2014). This idea served as the fundamental function for federally subsidized Native American Boarding schools (Cervera, 2014). In *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*, Lomawaima (2000) used the narratives given by students attending boarding schools to create an oral history from the Indian perspective. This work was important for Indian Education Historians, as there was a push to use the stories told by individuals who experienced the history, rather than just reporting history from recorded documents. Noley (2008) states that by using oral history, those interviewed have a greater stake, and might be willing to give details with more depth than simply rewriting documents. Noley (2008) posits that new approaches are required to consider the current educational needs of Native American students. He believes that scholars, in particular Native American scholars, conducting oral histories can effectively utilize these approaches.

Warren’s (2007) article “We the Peoples: When American Education Began,” discusses Indian Education History being written by Native American scholars as being in the same vein as oral history. In his description of the Iroquois’s influence on early American government, Warren (2007) mentions oral history as a method to collect the cultural context of Native Americans. Fixico (2009) says that Indian history is told more effectively when the writer rather than the events explain the experiences. In his article “American Indian History and Writing from Home: Constructing an Indian Perspective,” Fixico (2009) illustrates the perspective that good Indian history writing needs to be based on the “experiences” told in stories of oral traditions. In “Negotiating the History of Education: How the Histories of Indigenous Education Expand the Field,” Cervera (2014) calls for a shift in the theoretical framework for reporting American Indian Education. Stating that a writer of Indigenous Education History uses

reconstructivism, Cervera (2014) bases this claim on the fact that Native history is not written down, so the researcher must reconstruct the story using artifacts, inferences, and personal narratives. Cervera (2014) specifically calls for the use of oral history as a way to expand the field and broaden our use of education history. One of the techniques suggested by Cervera is Epic Learning.

Lawrence (2014) introduced Epic Learning with her work with the Pueblo Indians in Santa Ana, New Mexico. Epic Learning is learning grounded in the experiences of those in the past. Using the information she gathered from land dealings between the Pueblos and the Europeans they encountered, Lawrence (2014) constructed a history that argued this group of Native Americans possessed a high level of education (Cervera, 2014). Comparatively, according to Lawrence's research, the Pueblo had more education than any of their European counterparts. The Santa Clarans were able to establish a locally controlled reservation of land from the United States because of their understanding of Spanish colonial laws under which they were previously governed. Epic Learning is exemplified by the Santa Clarans' ability to obtain the knowledge required to negotiate successful land dealings through the years and under several regimes (Lawrence, 2014).

In "Beyond Horace Mann: Telling Stories about Indian Education," Adams (2014) discusses how historians can write about Indian Education with depth and accuracy using oral history. Adams (2014) directly quotes Horace Mann (1848) as he refers to Native Americans as savages who can build tools to create means of travel to transport goods effectively in their region. Indicating that Native Americans were sophisticated, competent, and resourceful, Mann infers that American Indian Education was established decades before European colonization (Adams, 2014). Adams uses the rest of the article to explain how to report Indian Education

History. Stating, “oral history has rightfully emerged as a vitally important strategy for reconstructing the past, especially in societies where written sources are scarce,” Adams (2014) specifically emphasizes this method for writing Native American Education History.

Coleman (2012) attempted to tell the story of Native Americans and Irish School Children from 1820 to 1920. Believing that personal accounts of the history could best assist with the research, Coleman (2012) relied on autobiographies written by Native American and Irish school children for data. By employing five autobiographical tests, Coleman (2012) claimed that historians gained a better understanding of the writer’s experiences and feelings when writing the narratives. These tests are:

1. Internal consistency within a specific autobiographical account
2. Comparison of autobiographical accounts of schooling
3. Comparison with contemporaneous primary accounts by pupils
4. Comparison with official primary sources from the period under review
5. Comparison with lived experience of similar educational institutions (Coleman, 2012)

After enduring the scrutiny of these intense tests, Coleman stated that the autobiographies are plausible and tentatively credible. Coleman’s (2012) research found instances of neglect and abuse toward Native American and Irish school children during the 1820s – 1920s. Sent to boarding schools, miles away from their families, both groups experienced U.S. subsidized attempts at assimilation under the guise of education (Coleman, 2012). Coleman’s methods, demonstrates how the researcher can approach historical documents from a narrative perspective.

Penland (2010) wrote about the educational experiences of Native American students in the 1950s and 1960s. Eight participants were interviewed and their stories recorded, summarized, and analyzed to develop themes. Penland (2010) concluded that this

phenomenological study yielded pertinent ideas about the Native American student experience during the 1950s and 1960s. According to Penland (2010) the honest experiences, attitudes, and emotions of participants were captured by the study, resulting in quality Indian education history. A study of this methodology confirms the claims of earlier authors that oral history is an effective technique in gathering data during Native American Education History.

The next part of the chapter will review literature on oral history. The ideologies and techniques of this method are explored to illustrate the need for its use in historical data collection. Oral history is the selection for data collection of this study; therefore, I review the ideas of authors who use oral history in order to provide a better perspective of the work.

Oral History

Alessandro Portelli (2015) describes oral history as a supplemental tool for historians. Portelli states that the use of an oral history in its simplest form is recording the stories and oral narratives of those involved in events. According to Portelli (2015), since oral history is valid as a source for research, it is subject to the same scrutiny as other sources to determine its validity and reliability. A form of emergence design, Portelli (2015) writes that since oral history provides information about the participant's memory, narrative, and subjectivity, these interviews actually drive the agenda for research. Therefore, original research questions and the central phenomena changed as I collected data for this project (Patton, 2002).

Creswell (2012) describes oral history as narrative research design. Narrative research design is when researchers collect stories from individuals about their lives and experiences (Creswell, 2012). Narrative research is used when individuals are willing to share their stories with researchers. Use of this method allows the historian to report different ideas, motives, and perceptions about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Beginning in 1046 BC, the Zhou Dynasty of

China kept reports of court proceedings that are still being used today as historical references (Ritchie, 2003). Many historians, however, credit Thucydides and his collection of stories about the Peloponnesian Wars as the beginning of oral history (Yow, 1994). Spanish conquistadors reconstructed the history of the Americas when they returned home after raiding Native American lands (Ritchie, 2003). Jules Michelet used oral history while studying the French Revolution; completing the seven volumes *History of California 1884-1990*, in which students collected interviews from Mexican military governors (Ritchie, 2003). In the first half of the 1900s, according to Yow (2005), historians like Alan Nevins at Columbia University used heavy machines using wax cylinders to record oral narratives. Nevins established the first organized oral history program recording the thoughts of the white male elite in New York State (Yow, 2005). During the 1960s, a lighter, more portable recorder was invented, and oral history recordings became commonplace with no regard to individuals' class or color (Yow, 1994). Since then, the development of technology has caused a major shift in the collection of oral history. Cellular phones and other handheld data recording devices make data collection from interviews easier.

Yow (2005) defines oral history as the collection, transcription, and analyses of data from interviews. The process of selecting participants should begin with a request. The request should include clear notification that the interviewee may end the interview at any time, reject any or all content, or request an additional interview before publication (Yow, 2005). Furthermore, it is the researchers' responsibility to be well versed in the policies and procedures of the Institutional Review Board or other governing body they represent when conducting an interview (Ritchie, 2003).

Thompson (2000) states oral history “thrusts life” into history. When there is little evidence, an oral history can close the gaps in information identified by the researcher (Warren, 2014). According to Thompson (2000), oral history makes the stories “truer” as the information is based on that person’s experiences. Thompson (2000) also states the window closes when an individual dies without having an opportunity to share his or her story. When referencing Native Americans, Thompson (2000) explains that oral history is pivotal in legal battles between Indigenous People and the United States. Oral history has proven to be an effective way to record history throughout the years.

Yow (2005) states that in-depth interviewing is a specific research method that is close to the principle of grounded theory. Creswell (2012) defines grounded theory as a qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains at a broad conceptual level processes, actions, or interactions about a topic. Therefore, use of in-depth interviews is an attempt to gather information about the motives and perceptions behind a development, while generating a theory that can explain the phenomenon.

Ritchie (2003) explains in detail about reflexivity. In theory, questions should be objective and without bias; the researcher, however, should be aware that assumptions and interests could skew in-depth interviewing data collection (Creswell, 2012). Ritchie (2003) advises the interviewer to end with an open-ended question that will make the participant reflect on the topic and perhaps provide more information. I used in-depth interviews in this study to extract deep, rich content from the interviewee’s perspective and ended each session with open-ended questions.

Complaints about oral history range from the possibility of diminished memories to untruths and the absence of need for a historian. Ritchie (2003) addresses memory problems by

claiming that a well-prepared interviewer will know the mental state of the person he or she wishes to interview and will make the necessary preparation to collect the information. If an individual is elderly, the questions may be tailored to be more broad and open-ended rather than focusing on specifics. Researchers may bring participants to the actual location where an event happened, or, if this is not feasible, to a similar location (Ritchie, 2003). The creativity and competency of the interviewer will assist in problems with memory.

Portelli (1979) in “What Makes Oral History Different” defends the proponents of oral history from those historians who do not want to release their reins as “omniscient narrator.” Rejection of oral history based on the premise that professional historians should tell the story not novice narrators. These historians believe that the use of untrained amateurs voicing their perceived interpretations of events will take away from the validity of the reports (Portelli, 1979). In addition, if there is no need for their professional input to guide the reports, there will be no need for historians. Portelli (1979) explains that there is always a need for professional historians. Oral history enhances the context of research, but the explanation of concepts of history and its analyses is important work to be completed by academic historians (Portelli, 1979). Portelli (1979) advocates for the use of oral history because it produces only partial pictures of the past, and the pictures are often in conflict with each other. This conflict occurs according to Portelli (1979) because the partial pieces are in search of the truth. Because of these unique attributes, oral history remains interesting and unfinished. Therefore, the job of the historian is a continuation of conceptualizing collected pieces of history. A significant advantage, Portelli (1979) claims, exists with the use of oral history in the collection of historical data. Stating also that oral history should supplement traditional historical methods, Portelli (1979) argues that its use creates a clearer picture of the truth about events (Portelli, 2015).

Conclusion

Chapter two provides a literature review of the history of education, American Indian Education, and oral history. The information discussed in this chapter offers perspectives on the history of education history, the changes suggested by Native American Education Historians, and the use of oral history as a method of research.

The shift in education historical writing from an institutional, schooling focus to one that focuses on participant perspective is important to recognize. The cultural revisionist movement of the 1960s changed the way historians wrote about education as new ideas on student perspectives emerged. Revisionism continued through the 1970s, 80s, and 90s as it became apparent that there was a need for participants' input in education history. Writing about American Indian Education History necessitates the recording of student perspectives about their educational experience. Otherwise, a predictable, schooling history is written and adds little to the field of study (Cervera, 2014). The historian needs an adequate method of collecting data from the student perspective. Literature on American Indian Education confirms many authors believe oral history is the method that should be used in gaining participants' points-of-views. Oral history is the perception and experiences of those involved in a historical event. After identifying the event historians must locate individuals who were involved, ask them to be interviewed, and then record, and transcribe their words in order to conduct an analysis of the data. Authors of the literature on American Indian Education advocate that oral history is used when writing Native Education History. These factors contributed in my decision to use oral history in collecting data for this study. As such I was flexible experiencing emergent design and flexible with the projects scope and promise. Changes that occurred in the central phenomena and research questions were results of how participants answered topical questions,

which is consistent with the literature. Chapter three explains the method I used in this research, the ideals behind the selection of the method, and the techniques I used collecting data.

Chapter 3

Introduction

Giving a voice to individuals who experience significant events is essential in writing education history (Cervera, 2014). The use of oral history as a method to collect data for research allows participants to give eyewitness accounts of important historical moments (Yow, 2005). One such important moment was the creation of Choctaw Central High School, Mississippi's only secondary school exclusively serving Native American students. As such, the school's history is pertinent to the understanding of Indian Education in the state and is an addition to the limited work documenting Native American Education History. Little research has been conducted on the formation of Choctaw Central High School and its perpetuation as a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) contract school. This research explored the stories of those who participated in these historical events in efforts to better understand the influence Choctaw Central High School and Choctaw Education has on Tribal members.

Central Phenomenon and Research Question

The central phenomenon for this research is the perceptions and experiences of students, teachers, and Tribal personnel, during the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) contract school, under local Tribal control. The central research question for this study is: What do the participants' stories reveal about the meaning of the creation of Choctaw Central and its transition to a Bureau of Indian Education Contract School? Based on the central phenomenon, the following sub-questions were produced:

1. What did the stories from the interviews say about anticipatory feelings shared about the events?
2. What challenges about the events were revealed in the participant's stories?

3. What did the stories of the participants reveal about the impact of these events on their professional lives?

4. What does tribal education mean to participants?

Oral History Methods

In-depth interviewing is the method used during this research. Yow (2005) describes in-depth interviewing as a combination of how respondents interpret experiences and how researchers interject themselves into the process. I explain using Yow's (2005) technique on reflexivity and subjectivity its management in this research. Text data retrieved from recorded interviews of unscripted responses to open-ended questions were transcribed with the help of Priscilla Clemmons, tribal transcriptionist for *Chata Immi*, the Mississippi Choctaw Cultural Center, and transcribed into a written account of the participants' involvement (Creswell, 2012). After analyses of the transcriptions categories were developed according to Yow (2005). These categories were recurring concepts mentioned by participants and are presented in chapter 6 of this study.

In-depth Interview

Glaser (1992) states that qualitative researchers have restricted data collection, by having preconceived ideas before conducting interviews: therefore, I used broad topics and allow the responses from interviewees to guide the study. Creswell (2012) refers to this technique as emerging design. Yow (2005) quotes Renato Rosaldo:

Ethnographers begin research with a set of questions, revise them throughout the course of inquiry, and in the end emerge with different questions than they started with. One's surprise at the answer to a question, in other words, requires one to revise the question until lessening surprises or diminishing returns indicate a stopping point. (p. 8)

Because the in-depth interview is interactive, according to Lummis (1987) the data I gathered was designed to produce rich thick descriptions needed to accurately report history. Lummis (1987) said that “one is not left alone” during this type of research as is the case with document analysis. In-depth interviews provide the potential for interpretation of the data by participants according to Lummis (1987), and undocumented facts are revealed during this process. The use of in-depth interviews as suggested by Yow, Lummis and Rosaldo revealed rich thick descriptions about the creation of Choctaw Central High school and its transition to a BIA contract from participants. Asking Tribal Members involved in the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a BIA contract school, to explain their stories, I extracted significant data pertinent to understanding the influence Choctaw Central High School and Choctaw Education has on Tribal Members.

Ritchie (2003) states that when planning an interview the researcher should have a good understanding of the subject matter. I reviewed literature, viewed videos, and talked extensively to Mississippi Tribal members before beginning the formal research. From this work, I found that developing topical questions would be ideal as I learned that reading from a script yielded poor results with Mississippi Choctaw. My relationship with Tribal members allowed me to collect and understand the data from unique perspective. The number of questions prepared, according to Ritchie (2003), may exceed the number questions asked as the researcher is unsure of the direction of the interview. Interviews should be planned for no more than two hours. A “narcotic” effect, states Ritchie (2003), in which the interviewee becomes fatigued and distracted, occurs during long interviews. The number of times each participant will be interviewed will be contingent on the quality of the first interview. The researcher is prepared and the participants will be made aware of the potential of several interviews during initial

contact. According to Principles and Standards of the International Oral History Association, the responsibility to interviewees include that participants sign a legal release indicating the purpose and intent of the research. Researchers should not release any information about the interview until they have received permission from the interviewee (Ritchie, 2003). Following the aforementioned protocols, along with my strong relational connection with Tribal Members, ensured the collection of truthful data and was a part of my triangulation method.

Purposeful Sampling

Purposeful sampling used to select participants for this study was invaluable in choosing qualified individuals. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling will yield rich, thick descriptions aimed at answering the central question. Using the Class of 1964 photograph (Appendix I) displayed currently in Choctaw Central High School's hallway, I identified individuals and asked them to participate. Tribal members, including students and staff, whose family members are on this picture introduced me to these individuals. While deciding on the interviews for the school's transition to Tribal Control, I learned that the current Tribal Director of Education, Willa Brantley, was the Superintendent of Education during this time period. After contacting her, she informed me of others pertinent in the success of the school's transition from the BIA to local Tribal Control and they were contacted. Once subjects were identified, I delivered an informational letter (Appendix A) and a University of Mississippi legal release (Appendix B) describing the purpose of the interview and their role as potential contributors to this research. I interviewed students, in the creation of Choctaw Central High School and interviewed students, faculty, and Tribal personnel involved its transition to a BIA contract school using a topical question guide (Appendix C). I created a topical question guide using information revealed during the document analyses step in this study, as well as conversations

with Tribal members. Since many Choctaws reside on the Mississippi reservation, close proximity allowed access to these individuals. Researching the Class of 1964 and students who experienced the creation of Choctaw Central High School was in accordance to Ritchie (2003), who says that the oldest and most significant “players” of the event should be interviewed first. Some participants were dead, incapacitated, or refused to be interviewed. Therefore, I expanded my research to individuals who graduated approximately during the time of Choctaw Central High School’s creation and captured a larger picture of the feelings and motivations of students. I included an interview from a student who went to Choctaw Tribal High School and graduated before the creation of Choctaw Central High School as well as an individual who graduated a decade after creation, thus expanding the scope of the research and presenting a clearer picture of the event over time. This technique allowed me to interview seven students describing the creation of Choctaw Central High School and six participants explaining the transition from a BIA School to a contract school under local Tribal control.

Equipment and Transcription

According to Ritchie (2003), the equipment used in oral history is contingent on the project’s budget. In this research I used a Sony digital recorder along with a micro-San Disk high definition memory card, capable of recording 400 hours of interviews. As back up, I also recorded each interview with an I-Phone Six, in case I experienced technical difficulties.

According to Patton (2002) data immersion that provides a setting for emergent insights occurs when the researcher transcribes his or her own data. I transcribed the interviews with the help of the Tribal archival transcriptionist for *Chata Immi* (Choctaw Cultural Center) to verify findings. Participant’s approved the interviews and I created narrative summaries found in chapter five.

Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted document analyses of books and historical documents pertaining to the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a contract BIA school. I researched tribal council minutes and United States Government reports, grant applications, and academic theses to understand the context of this study. Miller (1997), states that qualitative researchers are in a unique position because the practical social context of everyday life can be studied. Miller (1997) claims documents are “sense making activities”, through which reconstruction, change, sustaining, or contesting of senses may occur during analysis. Researched documents provides evidence of the context revealed about the creation of Choctaw Central High School, and the legal ability set forth by federal laws to allow its perpetuation as a BIA contract school. Finally, these documents along with collected oral history narratives were examined and woven into historical narratives.

Portelli (1981) states in “The Peculiarities of Oral History” that instead of referring to the method as oral history, it should be called the use of oral sources in history. Following this idea, information I obtained from the interviews was the first step in data analysis. After the transcriptions were checked by the Tribal Archives Transcriptionist, I conducted a histographical summary of each interview using Epic Learning (Davis, Personal Communication December 14, 2015). Grounded in the experiences of those in the past, I verified the stories with a document analysis and developed a historical narrative explaining the central phenomena of the study and answering the research questions.

Triangulation

Coleman (2012) used five steps to ensure truthfulness while researching the voices of American Indian and Irish schoolchildren from 1820 and 1920. As a social historian, Coleman (2012) sought to disclose truthfulness of an event, and participants’ responses. Coleman (2012)

used student autobiographies as lived experiences to describe a clear picture of life in the assimilatory boarding schools American Indian and Irish schoolchildren attended. Checking for accuracy and authenticity Coleman (2012) developed a five-step method to assist with his efforts. I used Coleman's method in triangulation when determining the trustworthiness of the data collected.

Step One: Internal Consistency. It is important that a degree of consistency is established during data analysis. Coleman (2012) recognizes that lapses in the memories of participants may not mean the historical event is invalid but is an example of "fallibility of long-term human memory." While researching autobiographies, Coleman (2012) found that although it was against the rules for students to speak their native Irish language, teachers often used this dialect to illustrate points in the classroom. The native language of the Irish schoolchildren eventually became part of the school's curriculum (Coleman, 2012). During interviews, if a participant story contradicts, I delved deeper and asked questions about contradictory findings. This gave me entrance into a better understanding of particular events within the history.

Step Two: Comparisons of In-Depth Interviews. Coleman (2012) used narratives of Native American students, Irish students, and teachers from 1820-1920 comparatively. The research revealed that these government schools used assimilation to drive the curriculum and behavior of staff members (Coleman, 2012). I compared the in-depth interviews from participants who witnessed the creation of Choctaw Central High School to those who participated in the school's transition to a Bureau of Indian Affairs contract school. I found categories consistent in the influence Choctaw Central High School has on Mississippi Choctaw culture.

Step Three: Comparison with Contemporaneous Pupil Sources. Coleman (2012) was able to locate examples of student work that complied with his research findings. Essays and other writing assignments confirmed the autobiographical accounts used primarily in his study (Coleman, 2012). I used Choctaw Tribal School's first year book (Appendix K) I obtained from Norma Hickman to examine student's work and found a note written to a teacher indicating relationship parameters of participants with their instructors (Appendix L).

Step Four: Review of Contemporaneous Official Records. After finding Department of the Interior appropriations for Central High School in Philadelphia Mississippi from congressional records (See Appendix E), I asked participants about the construction of the high school and found that the information coincided. Similarly, upon reviewing tribal documents requesting tribal control over education (See Appendix F), it also verified stories I obtained from interviews. Coleman (2012) used this technique to identify the use of assimilation as policy for the schools in Ireland and America. Staff official records corroborated with information found in the autobiographies, further justifying the assimilatory claims (Coleman, 2012).

Step Five External Review: Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian Tribal members, Dr. Ken York, Roseanne Thompson and Farrell Davison read the research and presented endorsing comments about the history I re-presented. This external review is pivotal in the function of my work as lack of Mississippi Choctaw validation would make the work useless. Coleman (2012) could not conduct interviews as his study occurred several decades after the participants' deaths', he did use his experience as a student in Ireland and compared it with the autobiographies. Remembering events of his education, Coleman (2012) discovered consistency with reports from Irish students in the study, confirming his findings.

Reflexivity and Subjectivity

According to Patton (2002), there is no formula to determine the balance one needs to be completely objective or too subjective in qualitative research. Patton (2002) refers to this state of being as empathic neutrality. I was aware of my thoughts and feelings toward Choctaw Central High School and used questions suggested by Yow (1997) to record them.

Yow (1997) states that feelings researchers have about the data are as important as any data that is collected. She claims that researchers should ask themselves seven questions about research:

- What am I feeling about the narrator?
- What similarities and what differences impinge on this interpersonal situation?
- How does my own ideology affect this process? What group outside the process am I identifying with?
- Why am I doing the project in the first place?
- In selecting topics and question, what alternatives might I have taken? Why didn't I choose these? (Yow, 1997; p. 79)?

After answering these questions, I am confident that the results revealed and presented are sound qualitative research.

Transferability

Cronbach (1984) states that contextually social phenomenon is too variable to expect generalization from research. Calling it “generalization decay,” Cronbach (1984) argues that descriptions of situations over time diminishes and can only be referred to as history. Answers given on a particular day by a particular person may change if another individual interviews that same individual on another day (Creswell, 2012). Agreeing with Cronbach (1984), I believe that an attempt to generalize the research in this study is futile. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend

that qualitative research use transferability. The act of transferability is defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as fittingness, or the ability to apply a working premise between two similar contexts. In some research, it is expected that if the same procedures are followed, the researcher should obtain the same results. According to Cronbach (1984), this is not typical in qualitative research. I am confident that anyone interested in Native American Education history can depend on the accuracy and transferability of these results to trust this research.

Conclusion

The need for Mississippi Choctaw voices in Native American Education history was met in this research (Cervera, 2014). Participants' stories produced rich, thick descriptions from in-depth interviews. The external review ensures the truthfulness of the results and verified its authenticity. This research is a fully reviewed study that is useful in Native American Education history field, as well as an enhancement of the history of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Chapter 4 is a historical survey of the Mississippi Choctaw, providing the reader content and context about Tribal Members who are ignored by curriculum, schools, and educators at every level in the State of Mississippi.

Chapter Four

Introduction

The Mississippi Choctaws have a rich history revealing a culture that includes significant educational components (Noley, 1985). Information about the Tribe's establishment in Mississippi is based on stories told by early Choctaws. Because these stories have been interpreted many times, there are different versions of Choctaw History prior to European contact. As such, several stories are accepted to explain the origin of the Choctaw people. After reviewing the origin stories, a summary of the Mississippi Choctaw history is presented with emphasis on education for Tribal members. This history chapter will allow the reader to contextualize the educational development of Mississippi Choctaws from a historical perspective.

Choctaw Origin

When discussing the origin of the Choctaw people several stories are available to the researcher. Brescia (1985) explains that Choctaws used stories to explain life and all of its intricacies. For instance, there were stories about animals, weather, and the gift of corn (Noley, 1985). These stories, according to Brescia (1985), came in several categories with the purpose of addressing specific situations or answering specific questions. Choctaw origin stories fall into one of these categories. While giving insight on the beginning of the Choctaw people, they also give meaning to parts of the Choctaw culture.

The early Choctaw were mound builders. Mounds were earthen structures created by prehistoric indigenous people, primarily located in the southeastern United States. These mounds were ceremonial, often used for burial and social gatherings, or as centers of tribal communities (Cushman, 1899). At the center of early Choctaw life was the Nanih Waiya

mound. The English trader Adair, according to McGahey (1973), gave one of the first accounts of Nanih Waiya after visiting the site in the 1700s. Adair describes the area in great detail as being located about 12 miles from the upper northern parts of the Choctaw country. A level tract of land, the north-side of a creek, had two oblong mounds of earth within an arrow's shot of each other. These old garrisons, in an equal direction had a broad deep ditch enclosed with a fence breast high to secure the village from invaders, wild animals or any other potential destroying forces (McGahey, 1973). McGahey also stated that the mounds were located on the west side of what is known as Nanih Waiya Creek in the southern part of Winston County, Mississippi, about four hundred yards from the Neshoba County, Mississippi, line. Over time one of the mounds has been removed through agricultural plowing of the land, leaving only one Nanih Waiya mound which became under the protection of the Mississippi State Parks System (Brescia, 1985). Suggesting that Nanih Waiya was built for protective purposes in addition to ceremonial significance, Adair's description justifies Cervera (2014) claims of intellectual sophistication among indigenous people before European contact. The construction of two large hills with a deep ravine used as living space and a fence for protection suggests these inhabitants thought critically.

Approximately two miles from the Nanih Waiya mound is the Nanih Waiya Cave Mound. This mound is similar to the hill previously described but includes a cave or opening that descends into the earth. The reason for the construction of this mound is still speculation, but origin stories of the Choctaws are based on this location (Brescia, 1985).

According to Cushman (1899), Christian missions were established with the Choctaws in 1818. Elders told missionaries that war and overpopulation caused their ancestors to move from what is known today as the western United States. Two brothers Chahtah and Chickasha were

chosen as leaders and were guided by a spiritual pole called the fabussa. Cushman (1899) states the following:

The evening before their departure a “fabussa” (pole, pro. as fa-bus-sah) was firmly set up in the ground at the centre point of their encampment, by direction of the their chief medicine man and prophet, whose wisdom in matters pertaining to things supernatural was unquestioned and to whom, after many days fasting and supplication, the Great Spirit had revealed that the fabussa would indicate on the following morning, the direction they should march by its leaning (Cushman, 1899, p. 121).

Traveling east as the fabussa indicated the Choctaw forefathers came upon a great body of flowing water. Believing that this body of water was the source of all flowing water coming directly from the Great Father and beyond any age that can be calculated, the Choctaws named this body of water Misha Sipokni (Beyond Age). Cushman (1899) explains how the Choctaws crossed this obstacle to settle in their new home. Cushman (1899) recounts:

so continued until they stood upon the western banks of the Yazoo River and once more encamped for the night; and, as had been done for many months before, the fabussa was set up; but ere the morrow’s sun had plainly lit up the eastern horizon, many anxiously watching eyes that early rested upon its straight, slender, silent form, observe it stood erect as when set up the evening before. And then was borne upon that morning breeze throughout the vast sleeping encampment the joyful acclamation, “Fohah hupishno Yak! Fohah hupishno Yak!” (Rest, we all of us, here.) (Cushman, 1899, p.123).

The Choctaws built mounds to commemorate this journey and their home. Once the mounds were built, they realized that it was slanted so they named the mound Nunih Waiyah (mountain or mound, leaning). After a dispute between the two brothers Chahtah and Chickasah, a game

was played that changed the lives of these ancient people. After the contest it was determined that Chickasah would rule the northern portion of the country and take his followers with him. Today the Chickasaw people are named after this brother while the Choctaw people assumed the name of the remaining chief (Cushman, 1899).

Brescia (1985) quotes another story found in the notes of John Swanton located in the Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives. Swanton's notes gives an account of the origin of Mississippi Choctaws as told to him by Tribal member Olmon Comby. According to Comby, Choctaw, along with Cherokee, Chickasaw, and other southeastern indigenous people were formed out of the Earth on a hillside. Swanton referred to the location as a "certain hill" and never gave any other specifics. After ascending from the side of the hill, Comby claims the different tribes waited until the sun dried their earthen bodies and proceeded with their tribal lives. Chickasaw and Choctaw, Comby explains, came out of the hillside together. Named after the two brothers, the Chickasaw and Choctaw had a special relationship. The Chickasaw moved ahead of the Choctaw and left signs in the forest as direction for the Choctaw to follow. A fire significantly burned the forest leaving the Choctaw without directions and eventually causing them to settle in a different location than the Chickasaw which led to them developing a different language (Brescia, 1985).

Swanton (1931) gives another variation of the Choctaw origin story told by Isaac Pistonatubbee from Newton County, Mississippi. In this account the Muscogee tribe followed by two other tribes and a fourth, the Choctaw, all ascended from Nanih Waiya. This story provides inferential evidence that the hill it describes is the Nanih Waiya Cave mound (Brescia, 1985). The Muscogee, after leaving Nanih Waiya travelled east, but a fire burned the forest in which they travelled and their trail could not be followed by the Cherokee who were next to

ascend. After realizing they could not continue on the Muscogee path, Cherokees traveled north where they eventually settled. Chickasaws followed the Cherokees north, according to Pistonatubbee, and claimed their territories in nearby lands. Lastly, the Choctaws came out of Nanih Waiya and, as the other tribes did, allowed the sun to dry them before deciding to live in the area in which they were formed (Swanton, 1931).

European Contact

Noley (1985) suggests the first contact the Choctaw people had with Europeans was in 1540. Hernando de Soto was a Spanish explorer given the title of Governor of Cuba and allowed to venture in an area known as La Florida, present day southeastern United States (Ewen & Hann, 1998). De Soto was in search of gold to replenish his depleted personal accounts as he invested all of his wealth into this expedition to America. According to Noley (1985), stories about de Soto and his conquistadors raping, pillaging, and disrupting other tribes came to the Choctaws. These accounts became the topic of discussion at the annual Choctaw council meeting in 1540 (Noley, 1985). The annual council consisted of Choctaw leaders known as Mikos. These leaders or Mikos were categorized by their influence. Mikos were selected by the way in which they lived. If they were admired greatly and influenced many people, Mikos were held in high stature (Noley, 1985). A Miko could, however, lose this position if his respectability came into question or was lost. There was also a hierarchy among these leaders as some had more influence than others. Once the Mikos arrived, the national council began with a social gathering, reconnecting old acquaintances, and beginning new ones. A stickball game signaled the start of the meeting. As described by Noley (1985), individuals played stickball with two seasoned hickory tree branches about three feet long, with a webbed cup made of animal skin strips at one end of the stick, in the shape of a person's cupped hand. Players

attempted to toss a ball, also made of strips of animal skin, into poles placed upright at either end of a playing field. A referee would begin the game by throwing the ball in play and participants would either pick up the ball with their sticks and throw it against the pole or prevent the opposite team from doing the same (Noley, 1985). Men would play mainly for pride and representation of their communities; afterwards the women played, oftentimes for similar reasons. Tuscalusa, the principal Miko during the council held in 1540, lit the ceremonial fire and turned towards all four cardinal directions while lifting one finger indicating the number of issues to be discussed at that year's council. That year de Soto's terrorizing group of conquistadors was the topic. It was reported to the council that these Spaniards came into indigenous communities taking food, pearls, and gold, as well as indigenous peoples to use as slaves. The Spanish had no interest in creating settlements, Noley (1985) continued; the soldiers' intent was to take what they wanted and proceed to the next village. This was unsettling news to Tuscalusa and the council, so they decided their approach toward the invaders would be courteous. Without question to the decision and with total obedience toward the council, Mikos agreed and the meeting was adjourned.

Noley (1985) describes that as de Soto and his soldiers came towards Atahahchi, Tuscalusa's governing town, Tuscalusa's son and another tribal member met the conquistadors in the town of Talisi several miles away. Upon arriving at this town Tuscalusa's son realized that the Talisi inhabitants had left their homes because of their fear of de Soto and his men (Noley, 1985). Upon encountering the conquistadors, Tuscalusa's son gave the Spanish the message stating that he and his people eagerly awaited the visit from de Soto. The message stated the Spaniards would find service and obedience as they traveled through the area without fear of resistance. Because of this peaceful gesture, de Soto sent Tuscalusa's son back safely to

his father with gifts. Upon the soldiers entry into Atahahchi, de Soto and his men were greeted with hospitality and good will. After a short stay he was given all of the requests received from previous towns, including food and slaves, but Tuscalusa refused to provide women (Noley, 1985). Tuscalusa claimed that this request would be fulfilled in the next town of Mabila. In an interesting turn of events, de Soto required that Tuscalusa ride with him to this Mabila.

Tuscalusa sent a secret message to the chief of Mabila stating that de Soto and his men were approaching. Noley (1985) writes that de Soto's reconnaissance party met them reporting that the Mabila people were preparing to fight. Upon arriving in Mabila, the Spaniards were unexpectedly met with a kind reception of dancing, singing, and flute playing. Several gifts were given to de Soto as he and his party settled down to rest after their long journey. Tuscalusa left the invaders and ascended to a home protected by several Mabilan warriors with bow and arrows. Noley (1985) explains that when de Soto called for Tuscalusa, the Spanish leader was informed that the Chief would not be held against his will in his own country. Furthermore, it behooved the Spanish soldiers to depart from Mabila immediately if they wished to leave unscathed. A confrontation ensued, and several conquistadors were killed and injured. Noley (1985) writes that de Soto fell several times during the initial confrontation and was "seriously wounded" by Mabilan warriors. The people these soldiers enslaved from other tribes who carried the items the conquistadors had stolen, were freed. Having very few supplies, having no evidence of success, feeling ashamed, and defeated, de Soto and his men conducted numerous attacks on Mabila until they were able to break through and destroy the village. Afterwards as the expedition moved further into Choctaw territories, Choctaw warriors continually attacked de Soto until the conquistadores were removed from the area (Noley, 1985).

According to Cushman (1899), by 1670 the English and French came into contact with Choctaws and other southeastern tribes. The French in particular were allies of the Choctaws, participating in trade and political events (Cushman, 1899). The reports from these early European contacts provide evidence of the sophistication of early Choctaw tribal life. For instance Cushman (1899) describes an event held by the French in an attempt to impress tribal leadership. Chiefs were invited as a carnival of jesters, magicians and other European entertainers along with shiny trinkets as gifts were given to the Native guests. The Choctaw leaders commented on the lack of control French colonial leaders had during these performances and left unimpressed (Cushman, 1899). By the time European explorers came to the Southeastern United States, the Choctaws lived in towns that were settled, they had a communication system established between villages, and were governed by an unquestioned loyalty to a hierarchical meritocracy (Noley, 1985). Choctaws were a well-established society without European influence, thus exemplifying Noley's (2008) claim that education for Native Americans did not begin with European colonization.

Choctaw Treaties Before 1830

Beginning in 1786, the Choctaw people made nine treaties with the United States. Beginning with the Treaty of Hopewell signed on January 3, 1786, which gave 69,120 acres of Choctaw land to the United States in return for United States' protection of the Choctaw Confederacy (Ferguson, 1980; Kappler, 1927). Next in the treaty of Fort Adams, signed on December 17, 1801, the Choctaws relinquished 2,641,920 acres to the United States (Kappler, 1927). Choctaws signed this treaty during a drought and famine and were promised \$2,000.00 and blacksmith tools. In addition, a plan for construction of a road, the Natchez Trace, from Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee, was also agreed upon (Ferguson, 1980).

Boundary lines were the reason for the signing of the Treaty of Fort Confederation on October 17, 1802, in which the Choctaws ceded 50,000 more acres without compensation (Kappler, 1927). The rationale behind the decision was that these lines had not been clearly defined in the land survey and acreage belonging to the United States was identified (Ferguson, 1980). Clearing debt owed by the Choctaw people became a reoccurring theme for reasons to sign treaties. Trading businesses such as Pantan, Leslie and Company received payments from the United States on behalf of the Tribe as well as other trading companies as the Choctaws had created huge amounts of debt (Ferguson, 1980). It is unclear what was purchased, but the trading companies used its position to assist the United States government taking of Choctaw land for debt forgiveness. The Treaty of Hoe Buckintoopa on August 31, 1803, was signed using this premise (Kappler, 1927). The United States acquired 853,760 acres of land in exchange for paying the debts and giving several gifts to Tribal leaders (Ferguson, 1980). Debts to trading companies continued to be the driving force behind the signing of the Treaty of Mount Dexter on November 16, 1805. Annuities equaling \$48,000 per year were agreed to be paid to the Choctaws by the United States and used at the discretion of the Tribe's leadership. In exchange, the southern boundary of the Choctaw land or 4,142,720 acres were ceded to the U.S. government (Ferguson, 1980). The United States began to acquire eastern areas of the State with the signing of the Treaty of Fort Adams on October 24, 1816 (Kappler, 1927). Ten thousand acres of land in exchange for \$6,000.00 per year for twenty years was negotiated under the premise that the money would be used to establish schools. This action coincides with the opening of the first Choctaw schools in 1819 by Chief Mushulatubbee (Worsham, 1981). Mushulatubbee is quoted at the schools opening stating:

When I was young such a thing was not known here. I have heard of it, but never expected to see it. I rejoice that I have lived to see it. You must be obedient to your teachers, and learn all you can. I hope I shall live to see my council filled with the boys who are now in school; and that you will know much more than we know, and do much better than we do (Worsham, 1981, p. 31).

In addition to school building funds, \$10,000 in merchandise was to be sent to the Choctaw people (Ferguson, 1980). The Treaty of Doak's Stand signed on October 18, 1820, was brokered by Andrew Jackson and presented a different type of exchange (Kappler, 1927): land for land. The United States got 5,169,788 acres of rich, fertile, established farmland for 13,000,000 acres of what was known as a wild tract of land west of the Mississippi River (Ferguson, 1980). This also was the first time the idea of Indian Removal began to be openly discussed between the United States and the Tribe (Ethridge, 1939). The 13,000,000 acres included what is known today as the southern portion of Oklahoma and a large part of Arkansas. White settlers occupied much of the area designated in Arkansas before the Choctaws could actually move from Mississippi. The Treaty of Washington City signed on January 20, 1825, attempted to correct "errors" made by the Treaty of Doak's Stand in 1820 (Kappler, 1927). Correcting the so-called errors meant the Choctaw had to return two million of the thirteen million acres west of the Mississippi they had been given in return for their homeland. Choctaw debts owed to the U. S. Trading house on the Tombigbee were erased by signing this treaty, and a \$6,000 a year annuity was established with an agreement to compensate Choctaw veterans who served during the War of 1812 (Kappler, 1904). According to Kappler, this preliminary removal treaty indicates the United States intentions, without any stated reasons, to remove the Choctaw People from lands

east of the Mississippi River. These intentions came to fruition in 1830 when the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek was negotiated in a rural portion of central Mississippi.

Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek 1830

According to Farrell Davidson, (personal communication, December 19, 2015), a Choctaw Tribal member, the area in which Dancing Rabbit Creek was signed was once overflowing with rabbits. Davidson states that this area located in present day Noxubee County, Mississippi, was so inundated with rabbits that the Choctaw People referred to them as dancing. In April of 1830, Chief Greenwood LeFlore went to Washington, D.C., with a treaty that he believed the Choctaw people would accept. President Andrew Jackson, who was instrumental in the land swap treaty ten years prior, rejected LeFlore's proposal stating that it was too beneficial for the Choctaw Tribe (DeRossier, 1967). The stage was then set for a confrontation between the Tribe's desire to remain on their land and the United States' attempt at Choctaw Removal.

Jackson sent his trusted advisors Colonel John R. Coffee and Secretary of War John H. Eaton with the instructions that they return to Washington with a signed treaty ensuring Choctaw removal from Mississippi. As commissioners, Coffee and Eaton established a protocol for the treaty signing area (Smith, 1983). Saloons providing Okahomi, a strong alcoholic beverage, were allowed. Gambling areas were allowed to set up and thrive under the commissioners' instructions (Ferguson, 1980). However, when Colonel David Folsom, a Choctaw Christian Missionary, came with a congregation, the commissioners would not allow them on the treaty grounds. Believing Folsom and his missionaries would provide a negative influence on treaty negotiations; the commissioners made them stay on the outside of camp where they conducted nightly revival meetings (Ferguson, 1980).

Other participants included Chiefs LeFlore, Moshulitubee, Nittakechi, and Hopaii Iskitini (Smith, 1983). Six thousand Choctaws descended into this small southwest corner of Noxubee County, Mississippi, which today is only accessible by an unpaved road into a dense forest. Coming upon the campground one can experience the rolling hills and pristine natural landscape surrounding the area. It is quiet except for the sounds of the forest and wind as the location is approximately five miles from a paved road or modern homes. An occasional vehicle passes by breaking the impression that one has been transported back in history. The only reminder of the treaty signing is a granite statue erected in 1928 by the Bernard Romans Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DOI, 1996).

On September 22, 1830, after Tribal leaders had listened to the terms of the treaty, about sixty men and seven women sat together to express their feelings about signing. Only one affirmative vote came from a Choctaw man, who coincidentally expressed the wishes of the missionaries. In contrast to the commissioner's belief, missionaries were in favor of removal as it would allow Choctaws to focus more on God and move away from the bad influences of the white man (Ferguson, 1980). After the initial vote, this Choctaw delegation began serious contemplation about the treaty as indicated by the smoking of the peace pipe which signaled a time of quiet meditation for the Choctaws. On September 23, 1830, another negative vote was polled and the results revealed to the commissioners. Unhappy with the decision, Major Eaton began threatening the Choctaw people with the use of United States' military force if the treaty were not signed (Ferguson, 1980). He promised to leave the campgrounds and return with the military strength that would force the Tribe's removal. Not desiring to fight a losing battle, several leaders asked the commission to stay while the Choctaws continued to consider the treaty. Eaton's threats, as the Secretary of War, carried considerable significance with the

Choctaws, as they recalled the mighty force of the United States military during the Battle of New Orleans (Ferguson, 1980). On September 24, 1830, many of the leaders opposed to signing the treaty returned home. Weary of Eaton's threats, these individuals felt that their duties pertaining to the treaty had been fulfilled. Also, on this day LeFlore was asked by the commission to draft a new treaty, which LeFlore promised to produce within twenty-four hours (Ferguson, 1980). On September 25, 1830, another treaty was presented to the commissioners. Article fourteen was added to this treaty allowing any Choctaw who chose to stay in Mississippi to do so with land allotments: 640 acres of land for the head of a family, with an additional 320 acres for any children over the age of ten, and 160 acres given to any of the children under the age of ten (Satz, 1982). The Choctaw people were given six months after ratification of the treaty to register to stay in Mississippi. On September 27, 1830, Eaton continued to threaten the Choctaw people, along with the introduction of this new treaty. This time Eaton promised to remove all federal protection from the Choctaws, if they refused to sign the Treaty (Ferguson, 1980). At 1:00 p.m. that same day the remaining Choctaw leaders signed the treaty, giving up their rights to all land in Mississippi as a Tribe and completing the current geographical map of Mississippi (Ferguson, 1980; Kappler, 1927). Henry S. Halbert (1902) who based his writings on eyewitness accounts of Choctaws who attended the signing of Dancing Rabbit Creek Treaty states, "Intimidation and moral coercion simply made the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit." The United States Senate ratified the treaty on February 24, 1831, and President Jackson signed it. Afterwards, Choctaws who chose to remain in Mississippi were not allowed to register until August of the same year, nearing the end of the six-month window for such signings allowed by the treaty (Satz, 1982). According to Staz (1982), these antics by the United States Government along with the assignment of incompetent federal agents attempted to ensure that 15,000

Choctaws were removed from Mississippi while 6,000 remained. Those who remained were self-sustained and did not receive any support from the State of Mississippi or the United States Government. After 1830 and into the 20th century, the Mississippi Choctaws were unrecognized and were not given sustenance of any kind (Langford, 1986). This neglect by the federal government, however, did not prevent Tribal members from preserving their traditions, language, and many other educational aspects of being Choctaw. Further exemplifying how the Choctaw people value education and learning regardless of the social strain they endured.

From Choctaw Removal until Choctaw Central High School Creation and transfer to local Tribal control

When the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek was signed, the Choctaws were believed to have the best educational system in the south (Worsham, 1981). After removal the Mississippi Choctaws lost federal recognition as a tribe, and it would take decades to regain this status. In 1843 the Catholic Church established the first Mission in Neshoba County, Mississippi. Holy Rosary, in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary, was created in the modern-day Tucker Community (Langford, 1986). Led by Father B. J. Bekkers, in 1883 the Church recognized the poor living conditions experienced by many Choctaws and placed special emphasis on their lack of educational opportunities. H.S. Halbert, whom Cushman (1899) refers to as a true friend of his and to the North American Indian race, established a school in the Tucker community and became its first teacher. As in most places that depended on agriculture, during the harvesting season attendance at the school was low because the students were working to help sustain their families (Langford, 1986). The desire for learning and respect for education was obvious, as once the last of the cotton crop was harvested, Langford (1986) explains, the student attendance increased.

By 1900 Choctaw education experienced setbacks that placed a major strain on the Tribe's advancement in the new century. A second attempt to remove the Choctaws to lands west of the Mississippi river in 1903 reduced the number of students attending (Roberts, 1986). Also, during this time the Catholic school in Tucker closed when the United States government discontinued funding for all Catholic Indian schools (Langford, 1986). The Choctaws, however, were persistent; over 1,000 Choctaws resisted removal and remained on land owned by the Catholic Church that was protected from federal removal laws. In addition, many who left during the second removal realized the land that was given in the west was bleak and less productive for farming. These Choctaws returned to Mississippi and also lived on land owned by the church diocese (Langford, 1986). In 1913, the Choctaw Catholic School reopened under the guidance of Father Enis.

During this time the United States Government approach to Native Americans began to change. William H. Ketcham, a clergy in the Catholic Church, served as the director of the Catholic Indian Missions in Washington, D.C. (Langford, 1986). In 1917 Ketcham and several others served on a consultant group for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) known as the Board of Indian Commissioners. The House Committee on Investigation of Indian Service held hearings at the same time in Newton County, Mississippi. Known as the Condition of the Mississippi Choctaws Hearings, these inquiries by the United States Government were responsible for legislation that allocated \$75,000 in 1918 for Choctaw students attending common schools (Kappler, 1927). This is significant as the Mississippi Choctaws had now regained status as a federally recognized tribe, a position not held by Mississippi Choctaws since 1830 and the signing of the Dancing Rabbit Creek Treaty (Langford, 1986). A Choctaw Agency

was created in Philadelphia, Mississippi, for Tribal members that housed a hospital, maintained schools, and was responsible for buying necessities for farming (Martin, 2009).

The Choctaw Agency purchased large tracts of land and divided the acreage among its Choctaw residents. A barn and small dwelling place was constructed on every individual allotment to provide a home and subsistence for Tribal members (Langford, 1953). After the land was purchased, it was placed in federal trusts held by the United States Government (Martin, 2009). Langford (1953) states that once a tract of land was purchased, a day school was built by the agency to serve the educational and other community needs. According to a 1935 report by John Pearmain of the Choctaw Area Field Office, Mississippi Choctaws lived in seven main communities and each had its own day school (see appendix D, Langford, 1953).

The course of study for Choctaw community day schools mirrored the requirements for all Mississippi schools. Citing Pamphlet II Questions on Education, Health, Land, Citizenship, Economic Status, Etc., from the United States Indian Service, Langford (1953) states that the purpose of Indian schools was to cover all required courses to maintain accreditation in each state they operated. The Secretary of the Interior was given compulsory attendance powers to practice over Native children attending any school, public or tribal, in 1920 (Cohen, 1945). Cohen (1945) also insists that Native teachers were preferred, but due to lack of qualified applicants, non-Native teachers were hired to prevent the lowering of rigor in the classrooms. As such, by 1953 the Choctaw Agency operated seven day schools that went up to grade 11 for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (See Appendix D, Langford, 1953).

The Snyder Act in 1925 and the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934 both used language to ensure federal government support of Native American Education. After decades of failed removal of the Choctaws from Mississippi, the United States Government established a

reservation for Tribal members in 1944 (Satz, 1982). According to Martin (2009), the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians bylaws and government was approved by the Choctaw People first and then on April 20, 1945 by the United States Government, beginning a new era in Tribal existence.

Choctaw Central High School Creation

Coleman's work, *Seeking the Voices of American Indian and Irish Schoolchildren (1820-1920s): Autobiographical Reminiscence as Historical Source* (2012), identifies the challenges faced by historians when conducting lived experience research. Unlike sociologists and anthropologists who base their research on observed behavior or interviews, historians are oftentimes unable to use these methods due to the death of participants. Coleman (2012) suggests that historians use autobiographies to capture the perceptions and motivations of those who lived history. As such the discussion of the creation of Choctaw Central High School was obtained from reading an autobiography. *Chief* written by Phillip Martin (2009) gives a description of the experiences he and others endured during the creation of the high school. Chief Martin (2009) served as "Chief" or head of the executive branch of Tribal government for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians from the late 1970s until the 2000s. *Chief* (2009) assists in providing a Choctaw voice in this discussion of Choctaw Education History.

Phillip Martin began his political career with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in 1957 after being elected to its tribal council (Martin, 2009). In 1962 Martin became the full-time Tribal Chairman and devoted all of his time toward Choctaw Tribal affairs. In his autobiography *Chief*, Martin (2009) mentions several trips to Washington, lobbying on behalf of the Choctaw people. Education is the focus of a chapter in the book as Martin (2009) discusses his experiences obtaining the funds to build Choctaw Central High School. Martin (2009) states:

In the late 1950's, I spent a great deal of time with the tribal council discussing ways we might expand and improve our educational system. In particular, we need our own high school, centrally located on the reservation where Choctaw students could complete grades nine through twelve. (Martin, 2009)

In 1961 appropriations for Central High School in Choctaw Mississippi were proposed by the BIA (see appendix E). The school was built in 1963 with its first graduating class in 1964 (Worsham, 1981). This realization of a vision from tribal leadership is an example of the importance of education to the Choctaw people.

Mississippi Choctaws use of PL 93-638 and PL 100-297. According to the United States Department of Education, the Indian Education Act of 1972 was an appropriate law to address the unique challenges of instructing Native American students. The Indian Education Act of 1972 spoke to the needs of Native Americans by addressing comprehensively the fact that student education began in pre-school and continued until college. Indigenous tribes in Alaska, whose education needs were neglected by the BIA before the law, were provided for in this legislation. There was a reaffirmation by the United States government, with the passage of The Indian Education Act of 1972, toward assisting with the education of tribal members by acknowledging previous treaty agreements (USDOE, 2005). In 1975 Public Law 93-638 (PL 93-638) was passed with emphasis on self-governance and self-determination of Native Americans. The Indian Self Determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1975 provided contracts to tribes to conduct services previously controlled by the BIA. Healthcare, welfare, and education were some of the offices that could be transferred to local control (DOI, 2016). As early as 1988 the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians began passing resolutions to contract educational services (See Appendix F). The Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and

Secondary School Amendments of 1988 also known as Public Law 100-297 (P.L. 100-297), amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 into consolidated programs aimed at assisting disadvantaged youth (LOC, 1988). Title V of the P.L. 100-297 addressed the needs of Native Americans and Hawaiian born students. Under this law a single consolidated grant would be provided for tribal schools without BIA constraints, and Native American students could not be held under more restrictive eligibility standards for tribally controlled schools to receive these funds. Programs that included a department of Indian Education, early childhood development, talented and gifted classes, and a White House Conference on Indian Education were created because of this legislation, opening up opportunities for tribal members to have actual local control over schools (LOC, 1988). The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians applied for PL 100-297 status schools in June 1989. (See Appendix G) The Tribe began operating its education system under PL-638 on July 1, 1989 then achieved PL 100-297 status on October 1, 1989, and has functioned as such since.

Conclusion

This historical look into the education of the Mississippi Choctaw provides a better understanding of early Tribal life. Acknowledging these experiences places the reader on firm ground when attempting to approach a deeper investigation of the Choctaw educational history. Chapter four provides a perspective on Choctaw history that is helpful before reviewing the answers Tribal members gave about education on the reservation in the oral history interviews. Chapter five will be a narrative woven together from the interviews collected in this research from Tribal members who provided their knowledge and perceptions in relation to the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its continuation as a local tribally controlled grant school.

Chapter Five

Introduction

This chapter presents the story of Choctaw Central High School from the voices of the participants. Participants' memories woven together in an oral history explain events leading to the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transference into a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) contract school. Participants also expressed their perceptions and ideas from several viewpoints of the transfer of authority of Choctaw Central High School to local Tribal control with PL 93-638 and PL 100-297. The following is a clear, concise look into these significant Native American Educational Historical Events from those mostly affected Mississippi Choctaw Tribal Member participants.

Portelli (1979) stated that oral history is conflicting because it is a quest for truth. In this quest the researcher re-present the core of oral history, which according to Ritchie (2003), are the memories of the participants. The interviewees' memories in this research, hence the core of the study, are vital to the reader's understanding of the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a Bureau of Indian Affairs contract school.

Fixico (2009), states that good "Indian History" writing comes from participants' experiences. If extracted by a skilled researcher, these experiences are important artifacts woven into meaningful narratives. I completed a Master's Degree in the history discipline and prepared three years working with the Mississippi Choctaw before conducting interviews. As this study delves specifically into the field of Indigenous Peoples Education History, I conducted an

intensive review of the academic literature concerning this area. Cervera (2014) posits there needs to be a shift in writing Native American Education History. Reconstructivism, according to Cervera (2014), of Native American Education History is achieved by using oral history methods like Epic Learning. Epic Learning is a technique used by Lawrence (2014) in research to reconstruct the history of the Santa Ana Pueblo's relationship with European invaders and with the United States of America in land dealings. Using the experiences of those who participated in an event, researchers can develop a better understanding by reviewing autobiographical material, analyzing past interviews, or conducting oral history (Coleman, 2012; Lawrence, 2014). My expert qualifications as an oral historian, along with my understanding of Epic Learning, and other leading academic writings on the subject of Indigenous People Education History writing, qualifies my decision to conduct this oral history study. This chapter reveals the findings of my use Epic Learning while researching the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transference to a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) contract school under local Tribal control.

It is important to note that English is second language of the members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Tribal members rarely speak English unless addressing non-tribal members. To express the English used by tribal members, transcriptions accurately reflect the word-usage of the interviewees. As recommended by the Native American Educational History literature, no alteration or enhancement of speech occurred (Fixico, 2009).

This chapter provides a description of the location of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, along with an explanation of the Tribal governmental system as it pertains to education. Reconstruction of the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) follows this introduction. A biographical preview of each participant is

provided as voiced accounts of the events tell this story of Mississippi Choctaw Educational History.

Background

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian Reservation spans 35,000 acres of land in Mississippi, with additional land holding also in Henig Tennessee (MBCI, 2016). Divided into nine different communities in five different Mississippi Counties and one Tennessee County, Tribal government extends from people in these areas through a democratic process (See appendix H). The Tribal Chief serves a four-year term by an election process held throughout the reservation (MBCI, 2016). The seventeen-member Mississippi Choctaw Tribal Council are the legislative branch of government, chosen from their communities by local elections. Members of the Education Committee or local Tribal School Board are from the Tribal Council and create the laws that govern Choctaw Tribal Education. The Tribal Chief is the Executive Officer or Local Superintendent of Choctaw Tribal Schools with the Division Director of Education next in the administrative line. The Director of Schools reports to the Division Director and is also the administrator over all school principals (MBCI, 2016). Choctaw Central High School is a boarding school with a dormitory that has 180 beds. Female and male areas divided by a stairwell; with twenty-four-hour care by the dormitory staff, that is 100 percent Native American (personal communication Roy Smith, 08/05/2016). Students check in the dormitory on Sundays and stay until Friday afternoons. Choctaw Tribal Schools have a continual history of successfully maintaining a locally controlled boarding school for twenty-eight years. The following will be the results of interviews conducted exploring the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transfer to local Tribal control.

Participants' Descriptions of the Creation of Choctaw Central High School

Norma Steve Hickman (Class of 1964)

Part of the first graduating high school class of 1964 (See Appendix I), Mrs. Hickman was the Mississippi Choctaws' first high school valedictorian. In addition, she was the first editor of the high school's first yearbook *The Rivera* (See Appendix K). Mrs. Hickman has served as a teacher and currently librarian in Choctaw Tribal Schools since 1977. A member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and hailing from the Tucker Community in Neshoba County, Mississippi, Mrs. Hickman expresses her experiences, desires, and expectations about Tribal Schools.

The first graduating class in Choctaw Tribal School History was in 1964 (personal communication, 06/30/2016). Mrs. Hickman describes events that led to this monumental time in Choctaw Education History:

Norma Hickman: I think my mother came to me. She was good friend with the Chief. They would talk back and forth and she decided and he decided that we should have finish our senior year there and she announce to me that Chief and her had decided that I would stay one more year. Made me mad, but what could I do. Momma said Uncle said it so. That was it.

Researcher: In 1963 is when they built or completed the school. Where did you go to school if they were building the school? Where did they have these classes?

Norma Hickman: They just added on more classrooms. When they added on, we started with eighth grade. Then they added on ninth. Then they added on tenth. They didn't do it all in one year, you know. Eleventh.

Researcher: They did it [expanded the school to include twelfth grade] with your class?

Norma Hickman: Yeah, with my class. We had to stay. And they said they wanted us to stay, so what can you do?

Researcher: So then the creation of the high school began, I guess, technically in 1961 with you going in the ninth grade, 1962 to tenth grade, '63 to eleventh grade. No, let me back up. 1960 will begin the creation of the school, since you guys were in ninth grade.

Norma Hickman: Yeah, but it was not completed 'til around '63, '64. So, and I don't know who was responsible for this.

Researcher: But someone had a plan that began basically in 1960 with your class and...

Norma Hickman: Probably my mom and the Chief, and the councilman 'cause they were trying to experiment and see what was the best way of educating the students... and to alleviate some of the problems that the parents were complaining about, which were the money situation...money situation and kids' homesickness. Some of them ran away and they[parents] thought this was potentially dangerous (personal communication, 06/30/2016).

After discussing Mrs. Hickman's memories about the creation of the school, the researcher began inquiring about family members who may have been responsible for the creation of a complete secondary education on the Choctaw Reservation. In addition, Choctaw students like other Native Americans, attended boarding schools, hundreds of miles away from their homes and families. Mrs. Hickman explains the struggle many Choctaws faced as boarder students as well as her own experiences.

Researcher: And again, your mother's name? I want to make sure...

Norma Hickman: Is Rosalie Wilson Steve... Rosalie Wilson Steve.

Researcher: And she is previous Councilwoman?

Norma Hickman: Council Woman, Choctaw storyteller, and she worked with the Catholic Church since she was 9 years old translating the language... and when she was 9 years old, she was translating Choctaw to English. English to Choctaw to her relatives that were in the Choctaw nation in Oklahoma. This is how she knew how to read and write. She worked with the Sisters [Catholic Nuns] and they taught her how to do that and she did the Catechism...she just liked working with...trying to bring justice to the people.

Researcher: She was a translator pretty much her whole life then?

Norma Hickman: Yeah, uh huh.

Researcher: I want to go back again to the creation of the school. But other than the fact that you definitely wanted to go back to Sequoyah [Indian boarding school in Oklahoma] and you weren't crazy about finishing your senior year here [Choctaw Central High School], can you think of any other struggles? Did you have any other struggles? When I say..

Norma Hickman: Yeah, I know what you mean. The families had struggles providing monetary, you know, assistance to the students who went off. They needed shoes and more clothing, or heavy clothing, because the winters were harsh. They [students in Oklahoma] had harsh conditions over there, and I think the students got homesick, you know. They [boarding students] would write letters or they would try to run away, you know, and...so they [parents] prevailed upon the Chief to do something about the problem...so they [the Chief and council] came up with a good solution. I didn't have any problems because I was venturous and loved traveling and I was comfortable in most situations, but there were kids who were timid and didn't wanna mingle, you know. They

didn't know what to expect, and I was like, "Oh, another adventure, another place to travel." (personal communication, 06/30/2016).

Ray Thomas graduated one year before Mrs. Hickman and shared his varied experiences with Choctaw Tribal Education.

Ray Thomas (Class of 1963, Meridian High School)

Mr. Thomas graduated high school before the establishment of a Tribal twelfth grade education. To complete his high school education, Mr. Thomas was a boarding student in a family's Meridian home during his eleventh and twelfth grade years. Leaving high school to serve in Vietnam, Mr. Thomas worked in Tribal Administration after his tours of duty. He also worked as Superintendent or Head of the Choctaw Agency during Choctaw Central High School's transition to a BIA contract school. Mr. Thomas is a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians from the Conehatta Community in Newton County, Mississippi, and is currently retired.

Students at Pearl River High School, until 1963, could only complete the tenth grade.

Ray Thomas explains:

Ray Thomas: I'm from one of the parts of the Reservation called Conehatta, I was raised and went to elementary school in Conehatta through eighth grade. From there I came to Pearl River School. It wasn't high school then. It was... went up to tenth grade.. and when I...we finished the tenth grade, we had a choice of going to either boarding school in Lawrence, Kansas... or in Oklahoma... or some of us had an opportunity to go to Meridian High School...public school. And I was fortunate enough to be one of the students from the tribe...when we completed tenth grade... to attend Meridian High School where I graduated in 1963. Choctaw Central High School was not established

until 1963. I really didn't have the opportunity to go to high school on the Reservation, but the first graduating class was 1964 and I had already finished high school (personal communication, 07/08/2016).

To have a graduating class on the Choctaw Reservation was important to the Choctaw people. Education has always been an important aspect to Choctaw Culture and is significant to who Tribal members are today. Thelma Barnes a member of the first graduating class explains this significance by the decisions made by her parents.

Thelma Jim Barnes (Class of 1964)

Mrs. Barnes is a member of the first high school graduating class of the Mississippi Choctaws. At the request of her parents Mrs. Barnes left a job as a nursing assistant in 1962 to return to high school and become a part of that momentous class. Mrs. Barnes provides deep insight about her experiences as a student in Choctaw Tribal Schools, as well as her hope for the Choctaw people based on her faith in God. A member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Mrs. Barnes grew up in the Pearl River Community located in Neshoba County, Mississippi, and is currently retired.

Researcher: In previous interviews I found out that the Pearl River Indian School only went to a certain grade. Can you tell me about that and how things changed?

Thelma Barnes: We went till 10th grade. When I finished the 10th grade, my cousin and I went to Gulfport. We took a job as a nursing assistant and I was there for one year... and then... then Mom and Dad wanted me to come back. I decided I wanted to stay there and work for \$90 a month ...but they talked to me ...and want me to come back and finish the school. So I did come back, which I'm glad I did.

Researcher: You're saying then... when you finished the 10th grade, you began a job down in Gulfport of... \$90 a month as a nurse assistant and you were a teenager? Wow! After one year of doing that, you come back. Is this new.. this 11th grade for the Pearl River Indian School?

Thelma Barnes: Mmhmm (affirmative).

Researcher: This [having an 11th and 12th grade] is new for them [Mississippi Choctaws] or had it ever been done before?

Thelma Barnes: No, it was new for them.

Researcher: Do you know whose idea this was? Was it any of the politicians or...

Thelma Barnes: I don't know. I don't know.

Researcher: Your mom and dad knew that they [Mississippi Choctaws] had 11th grade. Did they [Mississippi Choctaws] also have a 12th when they decided to do the 11th grade or are they doing it [expanding the school] just year by year?

Thelma Barnes: No, they add both of them. When we finished the 11th grade, we were just going to continue going to 12th grade.

Researcher: Do you remember what year that was?

Thelma Barnes: Well, I graduated in 1964.

Researcher: When this change of adding these two grades occurred, do you recall anybody resisting or anybody saying it was a bad idea or anything along those lines?

Thelma Barnes: No. It seems like every parent was for it.

Researcher: Because their children left in the 10th grade.

Thelma Barnes: Right. Most of them [students who completed 10th grade] went out to Oklahoma... an area like that... but they [my parents] won't let me go, so then I just

decided to go into work...and make \$90 a month.. and send them [my parents]. I keep my \$10 and send the rest out to home.

Researcher: Wow! They got \$80 a month [approximately \$631 in 2016].

Thelma Barnes: Mmhmm [affirmative].

Researcher: But they would rather you go to school?

Thelma Barnes: Come back to school, mmhmm [affirmative].

Researcher: When you graduated and then they [Mississippi Band of Choctaws] built a new school or they're constructing... what are your memories about the construction of the school as they're constructing the school [Choctaw Central High School] that they have currently on campus?

Thelma Barnes: Well, I thought that was wonderful... that they did, which they didn't know I was in there... but it was good for the ones [Choctaw students] that's coming behind us.

Researcher: Now you all are the first graduating class...but the school ... well, the school was it completed in 1963?

Thelma Barnes: No. I don't think so.

Researcher: The construction of the school?

Thelma Barnes: Mmhmm [affirmative]. I don't remember that far off.

After the creation of a high school on the Choctaw Reservation, Tribal leaders decided to change the school's name to Choctaw Central High School in 1964 (See Appendix C), (personal communication 07/11/2016).

Mrs. Barnes and Mrs. Hickman, both members of the first graduating Class of 1964 described school life and their experiences as students at this new Choctaw phenomenon. Teachers, in this

Central Mississippi location, during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, at Pearl River Indian High School were all Caucasian, helpful and encouraging to these Native American Students.

Researcher: I understand that you were the editor of the school's first newspaper.

Norma Hickman: Yes. you can take this with you.

Researcher: Oh. thank you! Oh, so very much!

Norma Hickman: Give it to Sharon when you get through, okay. I just told them the truth okay.

Researcher: And this...what you just handed to me.. is what exactly (Rivera, Appendix D)?

Norma Hickman: I was the editor of first year book 1964, and we did a lot of thing. We didn't have the Indian fair and we didn't have a lot of money...so we have to work on our trip to Washington, D.C., that was our project for the whole year. We sold candy. We sponsor Basketball tournaments. And we helped sponsor first Indian fair that came. We even had our first Choctaw Indian princess which turned out to be my sister, who is 15 at the time. They asked me to run, the Tucker Community Development Club, but I had stage fright...and I didn't want to do it... and I said, "Can my sister do it?"... so... and they said, "Yeah"... so we talked her into it.

Researcher: I want to go back to one thing. We have a picture in the school of your class in Washington, D.C. Was it the picture taken when you were visiting Washington, D. C?

Norma Hickman: I knew my mother knew councilmans, so she asked me if we needed money...extra money...and I said, "Yes." She said, "How much you need?" I said, "About \$500." So she asked her councilmans to introduce resolution for us and they came up

with \$250. They didn't have much money. They had...you know...pick from their pockets and put it in the pot...and they gave us \$250 toward our trip. Our trip was like \$1,500.

And some of the staff donated money,too... and we had a coach drive the bus that took us up there and back.

Researcher: What was your perception of the staff?

Norma Hickman: I think that the part of the country we're in...southeastern...is mostly racist, prejudice. We had a good working staff. They always help us out. I had one friend. She was a music teacher...Ms. Minnie Hand. She would take me under her wings and try to help me out (See Appendix E) (personal communication, 6/30/2016).

Mrs. Barnes recalls:

Researcher: During an interview with one of your classmates, Mrs. Norma Hickman, she mentioned a class trip. Do you have any memories of something that you all may have done as a class or fun stuff...stuff that you want to talk about?

Thelma Barnes: Some of them [things the class did] I don't want to talk about.

Researcher: That's right, that's right, that's right! The Washington trip is what I was referring to.

Thelma Barnes: Yeah. We took East Coast trip that was fun. Just something that I'll never had if I didn't come back to school.

Researcher: Now, how did you all raise the money or did somebody...how was the money raised?

Thelma Barnes: I don't remember (personal communication, 7/11/2016).

After the building of the new school and the school's name change students at Choctaw Central High School began to have experiences common to all high schools in Mississippi and

around the country, but which were new for Mississippi Choctaws. For instance, Mississippi High School Football, with all its pageantries, band, homecoming, mascots etc..., became a reality for students at Choctaw Central High School. Participants gave detailed accounts of school life during these times in the following interviews.

Lois Willis Keats (Class of 1969)

Mrs. Keats spent her entire elementary and high school career in Choctaw Tribal Schools. She is Choctaw Central High School's first Homecoming Queen. Mrs. Keats describes her educational experiences in two different Tribal Elementary Schools as well as the time high school football was introduced to Choctaw Central High and its importance. Mrs. Keats, who is currently retired, is a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and has lived in both the Pearl River community in Neshoba County, Mississippi, and Bouge Homa community, in Jones County, Mississippi.

Researcher: In ninth grade you began as a freshman at Choctaw Central High School?

Lois Keats: Right, uh huh.

Researcher: What was that experience like?

Lois Keats: I enjoyed it. I enjoyed my ninth grade. That was like coming into a big school. It was an experience...you're afraid, you're scared a little bit. But the outcome was that those who you make friends with are very special. Educational wise...the teachers were good to us...made us...you know...work on our homework, and get our grades. It was okay.

Researcher: So, now you're in ninth grade. You're feeling good. You're happy to be home and everybody is happy to see you...and so tell me about the rest of your time spent at Choctaw Central until you graduated in 1969.

Lois Keats: In my freshman year... was a good year. My sophomore year... I did good. I had a lot of friends and education was good at that time. Our teachers were good at that time. Today, I could see where a lot of the mistakes that I might've made in ninth grade... tenth grade...eleventh grade...is that I was afraid to ask questions and find answers in class.

Researcher: It's now your senior year and tell me about your senior year.

Lois Keats: My senior year...I knew I was going to graduate. I looked forward to graduating. Well, I think you said 1963 the high school was built...and my brother was in... maybe...like four years ahead of me...and my aunt was four years ahead of me...and they graduated...and I knew that I wanted to graduate just like they did because they were my peers and I wanted to graduate...and that was I guess about the time in 1968 that I became the first homecoming queen

Researcher: Okay.

Lois Keats: Uh huh, it was in 1968 and at the same time, during those months, I think that Choctaw Central High School was recognized as with the M...what is it...Mississippi High School Association [Mississippi High School Activities Association]?

Researcher: That's right.

Lois Keats: They became affiliated with that, so now that we could have a football team and play other schools, they [school leaders] decided that we would have...the student body...would select the homecoming queen, and I was selected at that time as the homecoming queen

Researcher: So you were quite popular then?

Lois Keats: I believe I was.

Researcher: Alright, along with those events, can you remember...remember any other major events that were going on around or even news here on the Tribe or anywhere?

Can you think of any other events that were going on during your senior year?

Lois Keats: About the same year in 1968? Just like what I said about the high school team...our football team becoming organized with the MHSAA and that was very important to our coaches, to our school (Personal Communication, 07/22/2016).

Further discussion of student experiences after Choctaw Central High School's creation in 1963 yielded this conversation from Shirley Ben and Martha Ferguson. These lifelong friends, who are from two different Choctaw Communities, met at Choctaw Central High School and graduated one year apart, continue their strong bond of friendship. They spoke on the importance of athletics to the Mississippi Choctaw and how participating fused their relationship.

Shirley Ben & Martha Ferguson (Class of 1968, Class of 1969)

Mrs. Ben and Mrs. Ferguson requested that they be interviewed together. As lifelong friends and softball teammates in the 1960s, these ladies reviewed their educational experiences with the researcher in a session full of laughter and insight. Mrs. Ben is a member of Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians from the Tucker Community in Neshoba County, Mississippi, and currently serves as the Tribal Phone Operator. Mrs. Ferguson, from Standing Pine Community in Leake County, Mississippi, is a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians who works with Chata Immi, the Tribal cultural center.

Researcher: As you all went to high school, you are in this new building, or it was a new building at the time.

Martha Ferguson: Once we finished seventh and eighth and ninth grade ...

Shirley Ben: We moved on.

Martha Ferguson: Moved on to in that new building that was there, and then when we start switching classes. That was interesting.

Researcher: Tell me about...tell me about switching classes.

Martha Ferguson: I would never been into one classroom to another fast enough. It takes what? An hour? Was it 45 minutes for each period? And then when the bell rings, I was already lost on what class to take. I said, "What's going on?"

Shirley Ben: We had lockers on the outside.

Researcher: Okay, on the outside [open air]?

Shirley Ben: Uh-huh, yeah.

Martha Ferguson: We have only a few minutes to change books. I took all of it with me wherever I went because I wasn't sure the locker would open, and once I got to the library period, I asked for an excuse to go and put my books in the locker.

Researcher: Coming from 7th and 8th grades in which you stayed in one room classes 6 hours every day, then, all of the sudden, you're released and you're free.

Martha Ferguson: You're free.

Researcher: Same for you Mrs. Ben?

Shirley Ben: Same, that was a new experience, too, with changing class with the high school new building.

Researcher: How did your teachers treat you in your opinion? Were the teachers helpful? What were your experiences with teachers?

Shirley Ben: Yes.

Martha Ferguson: They were real helpful.

Shirley Ben: And then, kids were well-behaved. We had a teacher. Well, she was in the office, and she was assistant administrator. Her name was Ms. ...

Martha Ferguson: Fox?

Shirley Ben: What was her name?

Martha Ferguson: It was Ms. Fox.

Shirley Ben: No, the other one.

Martha Ferguson: Oh yeah, Str-

Shirley Ben: Bigger one.

Martha Ferguson: Streblin.

Shirley Ben: There was another one. I can't think of her name. I don't know. She's just like a momma to us, all the kids, and they listened to her.

Shirley Ben: I can't think of her name.

Martha Ferguson: "What you doing here?" What was the word she used?

Shirley Ben: She lived in town, here, Ms. Trapp.

Martha Ferguson: Ms. Trapp, yeah.

Shirley Ben: Ms. Trapp, T-R-A-P-P, and the kids think that she's mean, but she's not. If you're good, she's good to you. She's treating you good.

Martha Ferguson: She's pointing you in the right direction.

Shirley Ben: If you are out of line, she'll keep you in straight.

Researcher: Ms. Trapp.

Shirley Ben: Mm-hmm [affirmative], Ms. Trapp was her name (personal communication, 07/19/2016).

Seven years after Choctaw Central High School's creation, in the early 1970s, new perspectives emerged. Recounting the lived experiences of students in different decades captures a better understanding of how Choctaw students perceived the creation of Choctaw Central High School. Carl Steve shared some of these insights as a graduate of the next decade.

Carl Steve (Class of 1971)

Mr. Steve gives his perspective as a boarder student in Tribal schools. Graduating seven years after the first graduating class, Mr. Steve describes his experiences as a student at Choctaw Central High School. A Vietnam Veteran in the U.S. Navy, Mr. Steve also experienced the transfer from a BIA school to a locally controlled Tribal school, as a school maintenance employee. He describes in detail how this phenomenon occurred and affected Tribal workers. Mr. Steve is from the Tucker Community located in Neshoba County, Mississippi, is employed currently with Tribal School Maintenance, and is a Member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

Researcher: This morning, we're here with Carl Steve. Mr. Steve will introduce himself and will give us a description of what his school life was like here at Choctaw Central High School.

Carl Steve: I stayed in the old dorm, the old red brick building, until they opened up the new one, and then I stayed in it. School was school. Just a normal, everyday student. Nothing special.

Researcher: Do you remember who was in charge? The principal?

Carl Steve: D.W. Stripling was the principal at the time. He was in charge. He was a good man, fair. If you did wrong, he'd whack you, and if you did right, he'd be all right.

Researcher: What was your perception of your teachers, or the educators?

Carl Steve: They were good. They were excellent, excellent teachers. It was just me not doing my part a lot of times.

Researcher: What year did you graduate?

Carl Steve: In '71. 1971 (Personal Communication, 07/19/2016).

The Creation of Choctaw Central High School change education for the Mississippi Choctaw significantly. By obtaining their own high school, Tribal Members were no longer made to travel hundreds of miles away from families, friends and homes for education. Intrinsically developing a sense of ownership of their students' academic achievement, the Mississippi Choctaw sought to acquire more local control over education. Next, is a report on the participants' response on how control of Choctaw Central High School was transferred from BIA to the care of the Tribe.

Participant's description of Choctaw Central High School's Transition from a BIA to a Contract School

The dreams of Tribal leaders like Chief Mushulatubbee and Chief Phillip Martin had come into fruition. Tribal schools were a reality after 1964 and Choctaw children were given a choice between staying near family and friends or traveling hundreds of miles away to obtain their education. Tribal education, however, was controlled by the BIA which was located in Washington, D.C. As such, decisions, educational policy changes, and salaries, were contingent on individuals living in Washington, D.C. and communicated by telephone or the United States Postal Service. For instance, according to Roy Smith, school employees had to wait until their checks were delivered by mail from BIA (personal communication, 08/05/2016). Smith goes on to say that if there were any disruptions of any kind in the United States Postal Service, like

weather, vehicle malfunctions or clerical errors, educational employees had to wait to receive payment.

Roy Smith (Class of 1970)

Mr. Smith describes his experiences as a student in Choctaw Tribal Schools, and his more than thirty years of experience working with the dormitory, first as a BIA employee then as tribal employee. Mr. Smith is currently the director of the Choctaw Tribal School Dormitory, is a member of Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and is from the Conehatta Community located in Newton County, Mississippi. One of the first programs to be contracted under PL 93-638 was Choctaw Central Dormitory Program in 1986. Mr. Smith was working at the dormitory during this time and remembers:

Researcher: In 1986, you made the decision to work in the dorm as dorm manager at the time the dorm came under control of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI)?

Roy Smith: Yes, I did before then...10years...10 to 11years I worked under the Bureau as a teacher's aide and dormitory aide. It came to a point where they needed a change in the dormitory, so they recruited me to come to the dormitory as a dormitory manager and work here in the process. Maybe 3 years I was moved up to the home living specialist

Researcher: What did you teach?

Roy Smith: I taught physical education, science, and health.

Researcher: So now 1986 has come, and there is some discussion. Tell me the discussion within your department and the discussion within the Tribe about the school being transferred to Tribal control?

Roy Smith: Yes, it was. I guess with the dormitory getting things started, they wanted to know how would it work. When the Tribe contracted the dormitory, they contracted the

dormitory for about a year or two. Then they contracted the whole school system in the process. I was involved because I worked as a contact person, and I tried to help them as much as I can. I supported the idea because with local control, if I have question, it can be answered locally.

Researcher: Are you saying that one of the benefits of local control is not having to contact Washington to get answers?

Roy Smith: Yes, that's a long ways to Washington. We have to depend on the mail system at that time in 86 cause email and stuff was not developed yet. So that's a long situation where long distance phone call, mail, and then checks were mailed from Washington. After, contracting problems were easier to handle. I been in system almost 30 years, so over the years I've seen all the problems. We do still have problems, but it a lot easy to fix because of local control (Personal Communication, 08/05/2016).

Plans for Tribal control of education on the Choctaw Reservation occurred in the early 1970s. After years of BIA programs the Choctaws realized that effective change in education could be maintained if they were able to self-determine the school programs. Mr. Thomas was a part of Tribal Administration, as well as BIA Agency Superintendent throughout the entire process of contracting. According to Mr. Thomas:

Ray Thomas: I was drafted into the United States Army and served in the Vietnam War in 67...66 to 68...and after I got out of military, then I worked for the Tribe in an administration capacity. Prior to administration work, I did work with what they call a Pilot Project for Education with the Tribe, and that Pilot Project was the first step toward the possibility of the Tribe taking control of education. That was in 1972 when I worked with the Pilot Project, and of course after that, the planning stage continued to take

control of the education by the Tribe from the Federal Government. And the Tribe got more authority through Public Law 93-638 that was enacted and signed into law by the President of the United States in 1975 and is also known as Indian Determination Education Act. So that give the Tribe more opportunity and more authority to contract programs, not only education, but any program that they desire to contract from the Federal Government.

Researcher: What challenges were faced during the transfer of this control? What challenges do you remember?

Ray Thomas: Really...there wasn't too much challenge...the only thing...the Choctaw people back then...when they think about self-determination, they said that it could be self-termination. They were kinda reluctant with the...with the law because it says self-determination, but they look at it...self-termination. They didn't want to lose their...Tribal...identity through some, some law...but that wasn't the purpose of the...this...self-determination act. It was to give the Tribe more opportunity, authority to contract...take local control of program from the Federal Government so that was the only thing that I remember clearly...that the Choctaw Tribal members were afraid that it could be self-termination instead of self-determination

Researcher: Who spear-headed this?

Ray Thomas: Yes...the...of course our...Tribal council and Tribal chief are the governing body on the reservation, so they were the one who had to make the necessary plan and to take control of the...of the program...so they were...they were instrumental in doing all this planning as far as...as well as taking control

Researcher: What were the academic guidelines for accreditation that Choctaw Central had to operate under?

Ray Thomas: Well...of course our tribe has their own laws also but not necessarily an accreditation...but they do expect to...for the...for the high school to meet all the accreditation for State or Federal so and because of the Federal Program, they still have to follow the Federal regulation...requirement, too...regulation requirement.

Researcher: You have a daughter that went to school at Choctaw Central, or you have children that have gone to school at Choctaw Central?

Ray Thomas: Yes, I've got...I had two daughters. Two oldest daughters went to Choctaw Central.

Researcher: When did Tribal control over schools occur?

Ray Thomas: July 1, 1989 is when...Tribe contracted from the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the education.

Researcher: When that happened, did anybody go to the students and explain what was going on? Was there any type of meetings? Were there any effort to explain to the students what was going on?

Ray Thomas: Oh, yes. Like I was saying earlier, there was a Pilot Project and that was the first step. And Tribe did have what they call Board of Education or school board and it was their responsibility to go out into the community before the Tribe took a local control of education, which they did. I remember having a community meeting (personal communication, 07/08/2016).

Mr. Thomas memories about the perceptions Choctaw community members had about the release of government control through P.L. 93-638 gives insight on ideas and motivations about

education. Before the school's transfer other entities, like the dormitory, had been came under tribal control with little community discussion (personal communication Ray Thomas, 07/08/2016). Because of the importance of education to the Mississippi Choctaw, when its transference from its twenty year dominance by the federal government to local tribal control became imminent, community members expressed their sentiments using a double entendre "self-termination."

Carl Steve began working in Tribal School Maintenance as a BIA Employee and was one of the individuals who switched to a Tribal Employee during the transition. He explains his experience:

Researcher: You graduate high school. You're one of the first few graduates because the school began graduating high school in 1964, so this is within 10 years of the first graduating class. You graduate, and then you come back? Did you continue to work with the Tribe?

Carl Steve: No, I joined the Navy for 4 years. Went overseas and I came back. I worked at various jobs, factory jobs and things like that, and then one day there was an opening. A man had retired and I filled out the papers for the position. I got it back in 1983, January 10.

Researcher: That opening was for Tribal School Maintenance?

Carl Steve: It was for Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools.

Researcher: Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools job?

Carl Steve: Yeah.

Researcher: What was your job?

Carl Steve: Painter.

Researcher: A painter. Okay, all right.

Carl Steve: I helped Mr. Marlin York. He was the head painter at the time. Everybody painted. Then we got to where we could let 3 or 4 go and they went back to their regular jobs doing other things. Me and Marlin would finish it, the jobs.

Researcher: From 1983 to the present?

Carl Steve: Yes, I've been working for the school system.

Researcher: As a painter.

Carl Steve: Right.

Researcher: In 1989, there was a transfer of power. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Carl Steve: Yes. I was working BIA at the time and then they said ... I had worked there 7 years. That 7th year, that's when they say we could continue working for the Tribe. We just had to switch over things...retirements, insurances, and such things. Just a switch over is all it was. We switched from one boss to another.

Researcher: What was the attitude of the Tribal community in '89 with this switch?

Carl Steve: They were kind of afraid it was going to destroy the community, but it didn't because nothing really changed per se. The same work had to be done, the same people. It was just a transfer of paperwork.

Researcher: Was the change quick or did it happen gradually?

Carl Steve: Gradually. It was a gradual change where everything was set up.

Researcher: In your opinion, did the transfer go well?

Carl Steve: The transition went good, yeah. It went very well. They knew what they were doing.

Researcher: It's been over 20 years since this transfer where Tribal control has happened. Can you think of anything that should have been done differently?

Carl Steve: No, no. Things were done to the advantage of the workers, so they took advantage of the situation (personal communication, 07/19/2016).

As transition of Choctaw Central High School from a BIA School to a BIA Contract school occurred, stories from students, teachers and administrators capture the emotions felt by participants. It was a fearful time from many Tribal members' point-of-view as they thought of Tribal Control of Choctaw Education took away the “safety net” many Tribal members perceived the U.S. Government provided through the BIA (personal communication, Ray Thomas). Students, however, were encouraged at the attempts by their Tribe to ensure a better education. Diamond Hundley was a student during the time of Choctaw Central High School’s transition to a BIA contract school.

Diamond Hundley (Class of 1993)

Mrs. Hundley attended Tribal schools as an elementary student. She also attended a local public school in seventh and eighth grades. Upon attending Choctaw Central High School in the ninth grade (1989) she was a part of the first graduating class to experience secondary education in Choctaw Tribal Schools in its entirety. Mrs. Hundley is a college graduate and also served as head of the Education Committee (Tribal School Board) while representing her community, as a Tribal Councilwoman. Coming from Bok Chitto community in Neshoba County, Mississippi Mrs. Hundley is a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and is a physical education teacher and basketball coach in Tribal Schools.

Mrs. Hundley was a ninth grade student in 1990, one full year after the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians assumed control over educational services. Her stepfather was on the local

School Board at this time and she has strong, emotional memories, which she shared for this research.

Researcher: You were at Neshoba Central High School, a local public school, and then you came back to the Tribal schools in the ninth grade.

Diamond Hundley: Yes.

Researcher: What was it like when you got there?

Diamond Hundley: It seemed like it was a better transition because..Neshoba Central... like I said...I didn't get the "elephant in the room kind of feeling" at Neshoba, and so when I went on to Choctaw Central High School, there was no longer the "elephant in the room kind of feeling." I thought it was all good because I remember... like I said...in elementary school...you were given pencil and accounted for that pencil. Neshoba was like that. You bought your own supplies and stuff.

How I know there was a change as far as the classroom and being a student was...here it is...ninth grade...and I'm at Choctaw Central High School. Oh, you can break a pencil and get a pencil. It seemed like everything was just given to us. It was just no accountability. Again because we had unlimited paper, we could get unlimited pencils. As far as the teaching, I was blessed to have teachers...and I don't know if the transition helped...I would say that it did from BIA in one aspect...in the aspect of because it was not BIA hiring and firing so to speak. These teachers were on their toes, and to us students treated us better because...like I said...there's twofold. There was good on the classroom, but on the political end, it wasn't good for politics to come into play into education...because I'd seen that early on in ninth grade. Parents calling in school board. I think that was around the time school board was switching to Tribal council education

committee or what not, but you would hear people..."I'm gone call my mama"...and stuff like that. Like I said, it's twofold. It's not good because if the child is wrong and you got mom and daddy or the politics...leadership...coming in and trying to deal with the situation on a day-to-day basis, it hindered the teacher because the teacher felt like, "I can't do this," or "I can't do that." But if you was right, it was a good thing for leadership or having the open-door policy...I guess if you will...with the leadership to make a stand and stand up for you. There's a twofold from an instruction standpoint. Like I said, it seemed like from BIA, we were their robots and we did and spoke when we were spoken to. And "Yes, ma'am"...you had to say, "Yes, ma'am," "No, sir." Culturally, we [Choctaws] don't do that. But I remember. Being a teacher now, I don't impose that on my kids. Yes, it is a good thing. I encourage it, but I'm not going to make my kids say, "Yes, ma'am" because it's something in the [non-Choctaw] culture. I told this last year to another teacher. I said, "I just remember what I felt like being told...being made to say, 'Yes, ma'am,' 'No, ma'am.'"

Researcher: You're speaking about culture. I'm glad you brought that up. In the time when you were at Bogue Chitto and certainly when you came back to Choctaw Central, were there any efforts from the school to encourage culture or tradition?

Diamond Hundley: Yes. I was amazed to have Tribal Government in our curriculum at ninth grade. Terry Ben, I believe, was the teacher at that time. There was more relief to speak our language at ninth grade than we did at Bogue Chitto in my grade school years.

Researcher: Help me with "that"...to understand better... "more relief than at Bogue Chitto." You speak Choctaw at Bogue Chitto in elementary, what happens?

Diamond Hundley: It wasn't discouraged at 100%, but it wasn't encouraged, either. Like I said, we was almost like robots. We were spoken to, and you said, "Yes, ma'am," "No, ma'am." You did your work. You sat there. There was just no freedom as far as the teacher. There are some good teachers that didn't do that now at Bogue Chitto. I give them that...but majority...the ones that I come across... that I've seen other kids being mistreated...was either they [the Choctaw students] would laugh at each other in the Choctaw language and the teacher maybe felt like they were talking about him or her, and so I guess that's what I'm getting at as far as having more freedom to speak. Because in ninth grade, there was no sense of that. We talked Choctaw all day. For me, being Choctaw is my first language, and I loved it...because unless...and I used to say this... I used to say, "I don't speak English unless I'm spoken to in English," and primarily that would be my teachers at the high school...but as far as fellow classmates and what not, we spoke Choctaw, and there was no sense of being punished for it. It was good.

Researcher: Tell me, how did it feel when you walked into Terry Ben's classroom, another Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian member? How did it feel to walk in his classroom knowing that you could speak Choctaw and he understood and you could have maybe...deeper discussions? How did it feel? You tell me.

Diamond Hundley: I guess I want to take a step back. And, yes, I have a lot of respect for Mr. Ben and his education level and having to be his student and eventually working under his leadership, and then eventually having an opportunity to serve on the Education Committee where he was the Director of Schools. I have all the respect for him, but in the classroom sense, we didn't speak fluent Choctaw. Though he was a Tribal member and could speak the language, he did not speak to us. He did not teach us in Choctaw. No.

Researcher: That's interesting.

Diamond Hundley: Even when we spoke to him in Choctaw, he would speak English and Choctaw, primarily English, so there was no fluency from the instructor.

Researcher: I see.

Diamond Hundley: In one sense, I didn't know Terry Ben. All I know was he was a fellow Tribal member-educated and much respect to him. Then I thought, when he didn't speak Choctaw fluently like I did, I figured he come from somewhere else because he spoke more English. His dialect was different, just maybe because he didn't speak fluent Choctaw.

Researcher: Interesting. Very, very interesting. What year was it that you came to Choctaw Central in the ninth grade? What year was that?

Diamond Hundley: 1990.

Researcher: It's 1990. Therefore, the school has shifted from a BIA school, and by the time you get there, not only has it shifted to be a contract school, Tribally controlled by the council, it's also a grant school (under PL 100-297). Now, you say you got there, it just made you feel just freer, more free?

Diamond Hundley: It was, and like I said, the teachers seemed like they were ... I don't know if it was the crop of the teachers that we ended up with when I started in ninth grade, but it seemed like they cared more. They wanted to teach us more. It wasn't just a job for them. Now the ones that come through didn't last. The ones that made us feel inferior to them ...

Researcher: They did not last.

Diamond Hundley: They didn't last. No. Because we knew it and we could share with our parents, and I think that's where I've seen a lot of the difference because the parents felt like they could speak up for us through leadership more versus our parents didn't have anybody to look to when there was an issue of us feeling mistreated during the Bogue Chitto school days.

Researcher: If I'm hearing you correctly, while under BIA control, as a student, you felt that you had very little influence and your parents felt like they had their little influence, but when they had Tribally controlled schools, when the transfer happened, they felt they had more influence. Is that what you're saying?

Diamond Hundley: Yes. Exactly, influence, and our parents felt more like they had a say-so in our education. In hindsight, though, we had...I know I'm jumping...but when there was BIA school...parents, parent volunteers, PTOs, fundraising at the school. We used to have a lot of families... a lot of parent volunteers, and we used to have big old carnivals. When there's a PTO meeting, you'd see a lot of parents.

Researcher: Before beginning the 9th grade, do you remember conversations about shifting to contract schools?

Diamond Hundley: I don't remember anything as far as those conversations in sixth grade, but I remember some of that, even though I was at Neshoba...the family community. We talked about it, but I never come across any opinions. I think at the time... this is just my opinion...but everybody was like...because this was the way before today...and so...there was no economic development. It's just...whatever came, we took.

Researcher: Who spearheaded the discussions in seventh and eighth grade? Who did you hear? Is there anybody that you heard was really pushing this? Any individuals?

Diamond Hundley: Actually, my stepdad sat on the school board at some point.

Researcher: What was his name?

Diamond Hundley: Louie Morris.

Researcher: Louie Morris.

Diamond Hundley: I want to say, he was appointed by Phillip Martin to serve the end of somebody's tenure as Council, so that's how he ended up on the School Board around that time, I believe. That's how I remember.

Researcher: You say Mr. Morris was one of the people that pushed this idea or was it anybody else? Did you hear, or if you can remember? Do you remember him saying just, "We got to get this done," or "We need to do this?" Do you remember?

Diamond Hundley: I think a lot of the conversations that he would share just with my mother, and I would listen in on, was just fellow Tribal members, the other school board members. He would name them. The feeling I get when I think about those conversations is that they were supportive of the Tribe taking control.

Researcher: You said the word got around the community. What was the feeling in the community, if you remember?

Diamond Hundley: I believe it was positive and welcome and open because I think it was...more like...because that was going to be our own. It was going to be our own. We could control it. Who knows how to better treat your kids than yourself? That's the mentality.

Researcher: When you got to the ninth grade, Choctaw Central had been under Tribal control for one year. July 1989 is when the Tribal control took over, or when the Tribe took over the schools. The academic guideline, do you recall it being any different from

Neshoba to Choctaw Central? Do you recall anything being the requirement to do work in class?

Diamond Hundley: Oh, doing work in the class? It being different? No...from Neshoba to Choctaw. I know a lot of people say, "We don't do a lot of work." You might not do work, but the teacher does give us work. I feel like just a slight difference of requiring us to do so much class work or homework (personal communication, 09/01/2016).

Terry Ben, who was mentioned by Mrs. Hundley as a teacher at Choctaw Central High School, was interviewed and asked to give a teacher's perspective of the transition. Mr. Ben eagerly, agreed to this discussion and informed the researcher about the effect teacher unions had on transition efforts. Working for BIA and then under local tribal control Mr. Ben explained his experiences as well as those with whom he worked during the transition.

Terry Ben (Class of 1975, South Leake High School)

As a Social Studies teacher during the transfer of Choctaw Central High School, Mr. Ben gives a perspective about this phenomenon. Afterwards he became the Director of Schools for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and served as the administrator of all primary and secondary Tribal education. Mr. Ben is from the Standing Pine Community in Leake County, Mississippi, is a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and works as the director of Adult Education Services for the Tribe.

Researcher: In 1981, you have gotten your first degree, and I'm assuming you need a job?

Terry Ben: Well, around in July...from Mississippi College, and I was in contact with people at CCHS and interview there. Then, I believe, I graduated in August during that time probably. But a week after I graduated, I had a job at CCHS teaching history... 9th-

12th history...whatever they put me in...freshman history or senior class history...

whatever you know. I was given kids during that time period starting of August in 1981.

Researcher: Tell me...tell about your experience there...saying 1981 up to 1989, which in 1989 of course, is the day of the transfer of the school? So what was it like?

Terry Ben: Well, from my end, I try to have high expectation of every student who went there. I try to challenge them in term of to excel at everything, not only my classes but all the classes that they took. I try to push my students to excel as much as possible. I gave lots of work...homework...reading assignment...all my history classes or social studies classes during that time period. I also like to have, maybe, a club to work with the students, and I was sponsor of what they call Indian Club in that time period. And we did thing like skits and just the like that learn more about Choctaw History during that time period in certain club setting. And so as young teacher, I was just trying to survive in that time period...get along with everybody. And it was enjoyable experience during that time period from one perspective by my mind. But in other way, what I find disturbing with the BIA system was that some of the teachers...some of more older experienced teachers...belong to unions, and this was allowed by the BIA. And they had the union during the time period for discussing of...maybe...better working condition, or pay increases, or whatever. Under the BIA and of course during that time period...in one respect...I don't think that expectation from the teacher in general...during that time period...toward Choctaw student...was not as high either. That was my observation during that time period.

Researcher: Are you saying that unions were one of the challenges during school transfer?

Terry Ben: Yes, of course. Obviously, if the Tribe is going to take over and the BIA was not going to be here anymore, the unions fight against this. The teaching union locally here fought against the Tribe contracting the school from the BIA and this one of the thing that was sticking point along the way. I was not involved in any aspect of negotiation what-so-ever, but you know I kind of heard it indirectly during that time period.

Researcher: You were not a union member?

Terry Ben: I was not a union member and did not aspire to.

Researcher: When the transfer occurred, was the Tribe given total control at once or was there a process that led...Well, let me back up. In 1989, you are still a teacher or becoming an administrator?

Terry Ben: I was still a teacher during that time period and that period of transition. I forgot exactly what year...about 1989 I believe...probably. I forgot the year.

Researcher: July 1st, 1989

Terry Ben: And thereafter, teachers...we had sign new contracts. You know, with the Tribe instead with the BIA, and so basically everybody was upset sorta and did not know what to do or what's going to happen down the road and all that, but once you know teacher got contracts, then slowly thing begin to settle down, and then going into 1989... just typical school opening as I remember. The only difference was that you had different personnel. You had lot of retirement because of contracting...because these union members...you know...they opt out and did not to sign contracts with the Tribe. They retired, and I remember during that time period, they had sizable group of new teachers

coming in to the high school during that time period. but the... it was a rather smooth transition as I remember.

Researcher: Now, who spearheaded this transition? Do you remember? Was a politician? Was a community member or...

Terry Ben: Now...I could be mistaken...but during that time period, I believe Chief Martin wanted to contract away from BIA. I believe he spearheaded during that time period. He wanted to...Tribal control over education. Basically, he heard the same thing out in community..that they...we hear...low expectations, low test scores, high drop outs rates...you know during that time period. He heard about the teacher spending more time probably trying to set up union meetings than taking care of business in the classrooms, and so as I remember it...was Chief Martin and of course some of his other supporters who spear headed this movement during that time period

Researcher: What was the attitude of Tribal communities about the transition?

Terry Ben: Well, during that time period, I would say little apprehension...you know? People use to have federal government there as a crutch during that time period and a little apprehension. But as things roll along and busses roll as usual, and people were there in classrooms, and all that...really there was no major changes going into fall of 1989. The community probably had a little apprehensive, but once school started...when things ironed out...you know, it was good thing for the community.

Researcher: Were the students explained...were there any type of meeting where they brought students together or did you hear about a meeting in class?

Terry Ben: Well, as I remember during that time period, I don't remember students ever brought in as a whole group. But certainly it was discuss in the classroom...little bit...and

for most part, students were very appreciative of the effort to get the Tribe to take over from the BIA. Basically, I would say during that time period, there was also apprehension from students, but they were glad the Tribe was going to be taking over.

Researcher: Tribe is now taking over and what were the academic guidelines? What did they tell you teachers to teach?

Terry Ben: Well, during that time period, kinda redesign curriculum...you know...had to be done, and if I remember right, during that time period, one of the big thing was to push to increase...in particular...test scores. BIA was using what they call the old CAT...California Achievement Test score...and all that I think during that transition going into 1989...the test was switch over to Stanford Achievement Test, if I remember right during that time period. During this time when the Tribe took a higher expectation of everything...more challenging, more higher aspirations for the student to do better academically was taking place.

Researcher: After the transfer of local control, was there anything done to insure Tribal customs and tradition were not lost or were they lost?

Terry Ben: Well, during that transition period, the good thing was with the new stream line curricula tailored to what Tribe wanted. Choctaw History was put in place...the teaching about the Choctaw history was up in place as an official class at Choctaw Central High School to be given as a unit of credit, and also it had to be required also for graduation. That was one those of big things that took place, and also during that time period there was a movement toward teaching Choctaw language also in the school system during that time period. It started so that students could keep the language also.

Researcher: It's been almost 30 years since the transfer of Tribal control. Looking back, are there any specific things that you think should have been done differently?

Terry Ben: In looking back at the year, 1989 was typical turning point. The only thing I would say is I wish it happened sooner for the sake of the student before 1989, so that they can be better prepare in term of their academic preparation for graduation, so that maybe perhaps most kids gone to college. But I am just as glad it happen, but I wish it happen sooner (Personal Communication, 08/07/2016).

To present a broader view from key contributors' perspectives on the transition of Choctaw Central High School to a BIA Contract school under local control, the researcher interviewed the highest administrator during this significant historical event in Choctaw Education. Willa Brantley served as the Principal of Standing Pine Elementary School and Superintendent of Education of the BIA Philadelphia Agency at the same time. With more than forty miles physically separating the location of these two jobs, this twenty something year old mother of two was instrumental in administering Choctaw Central High School's transition into a BIA contract school.

Willa Brantley (Class of 1975)

Ms. Brantley held the position of Superintendent of Education at the BIA Choctaw Agency during the time of Choctaw Central High School's transition to a BIA contract school. Having experience in both Tribal and state public schools in the Carthage School District, Ms. Brantley gives a detailed account of her perception of her experiences at Choctaw Tribal Schools. She became an administrator in Choctaw Tribal schools then with the BIA Choctaw Agency and was pivotal in its transition to a BIA contract school. Currently Ms. Brantley serves as the Education Division Director for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, is from the Red

Water Community located in Leake County, Mississippi, and is a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

Researcher: You went to East Central Community College, Wood College, and Jackson State University. Which degree(s) did you obtain?

Willa Brantley: I had a BS degree with a minor in English and Reading ... Not English, Reading and History.

Researcher: Now, you have that degree, what did you decide?

Willa Brantley: I already had a job set up to be a counselor for higher education, but I had gone into elementary education and the Bureau (BIA), Robert Dan and Jimmy Gibson, they came and recruited me, and they said "You're only making \$9,999 here a year." He said "We can pay you \$13,000 for nine months." I took the job as a teacher.

Researcher: As a teacher, and you worked where?

Willa Brantley: I worked at Standing Pine. I was a teacher for two years, and within that two years, I had gotten my administrator certification. The longest and most boring test was a test that I had to take to become an administrator. They sat me in a room with nothing, just a bare wall, except for pen and pad. They give you six questions and you had to choose four and write about that with all the authorities for that topic.

Researcher: Now, you are talking about the School Leader Licensure Assessment or SLLA?

Willa Brantley: Uh-huh [affirmative].

Researcher: Yes, ma'am. I do understand very well. The thing I wanted to know though is what...where did you get your Master's degree in educational leadership?

Willa Brantley: Mississippi State.

Researcher: From Mississippi State University?

Willa Brantley: Uh-huh [affirmative].

Researcher: Now, you're an administrator. You passed SLLA. What happens now?

Willa Brantley: At that time, an opening came up. It was Title 1 [PL 100-297] and then it became Chapter I, so I applied for the job and I get it. It was Anthony Thompson leaving for Washington, but I was serving two positions. I was still being principal and ... No, I wasn't a principal yet. What happened then was within a month later, Mr. Peterson left. He was the superintendent for education. They detailed me into that position and I had to handle that as well as my title and position.

Researcher: That's at the Choctaw Agency?

Willa Brantley: Choctaw Agency, uh-huh [affirmative].

Researcher: What year did this occur?

Willa Brantley: This is like '81. As early as that, I started working as an administrator. Then, they had interim people that they would hire that wouldn't work out. Then, I would be called to go back and work, be the interval until they hire someone else. Then, I had to clean up.

Researcher: Between '81 and 1989, did you work as a principal anywhere?

Willa Brantley: Standing Pine, but I was also working both.

Researcher: You were working as a principal and superintendent.

Willa Brantley: And the other, yeah. That was because they were looking for someone. They should have hired me just to begin with and they would have been done with, but it wasn't until we were fixing a contract that I was given a permanent position.

Researcher: With two small children?

Willa Brantley: Uh-huh [affirmative], with two small children and dragging them around everywhere I went. We were playing ball, too, very active in playing ball.

Researcher: You were playing ball?

Willa Brantley: Yeah, I was playing ball. It was an independent basketball team. My independent team beat the high school though, Choctaw Central, and I got the MVP.

Researcher: I want to make sure that this is clear. You worked at the Standing Pine community as the principal of Standing Pine?-

Willa Brantley: Teacher and then the principal.

Researcher: Teacher and then principal, and working as the...

Willa Brantley: Agency superintendent for education.

Willa Brantley: I got promoted from Chapter 1 to an Ed specialist. Then, I had signed the contract for an assistant superintendent for education, Then, '89, when I was on task force to contract Tribal Schools, going to meetings with Chief Martin. I usually traveled with Patricia who was Chief Martin's daughter that I supervised or his wife, Bonnie Martin. Mr. William Bell [current Title 1 Director], was one of my mentors, too. Not too many women were in administration, especially young women, so the mentor that I got, Betty Walker, she was from Minneapolis, originally from Oklahoma, and she was a Creek Indian and very smart. Even with that, I got teased a lot from other administrators.

Researcher: You were teased from as a child up until that point. It seems that people are just trying to befriend you. Isn't that what you think?

Willa Brantley: That's what it was. They were trying to befriend me, but there were some that were inappropriate. When this happened I was ready to fight. Because when I

grew up, all my cousins my age were boys, so I grew up with boys. Since I don't have any brothers, and they taught me to fight.

Researcher: We're going to move up to 1989 during the school transfer. What was your role in the transfer of the school to contract school and then on to a grant school?

Willa Brantley: I was pretty much the educational contracting officer. I serve pretty much as a liaison between the eastern area contracting and grants officer and the Tribe. I was the one who provided what they needed to process in order to do that throughout. How we got started was for five years, the Tribe had been the one to contract the school and that's why Special Ed was taken to try it out in '83. But for five years there was a lot of commotion from the community. They had this notion that if we didn't do well that we may lose a school and end up being in state schools, or go back totally to the bureau of schools. I guess they didn't want to see the Tribe as a failure. They always felt like we weren't prepared. I remember Chief Martin asking me. He already had and knew the answer to it. He always called me Willow, and he said, "Willow, what do you think we need to do to bring about more local control?" I said, "There's no way you can bring about more local control without contracting." He said, "638?" I said, "638, but there's a new program coming up and it's the grant." We went from, within one month, Bureau operated, a 638 contract, and then a grant school. The reason that I recommended a one-school system, and so did everyone else, was because of the fact that I had had the experience at Standing Pine. There was never enough money, and they will give us a leeway, the Bureau would.

Researcher: When you say "the bureau," is "the bureau...?"

Willa Brantley: BIA. It was called Bureau of Indian Affairs then. I entered a classroom that had no updated textbooks, no resource whatsoever. I went in there, more or less, to teach the students which is what I knew basically. My lesson plans were developed from what I had learned. Jackson State had prepared me well.

Researcher: With the transfer, you talked about the community being afraid.

Willa Brantley: Yeah, they were afraid. The remarks were being made that if we weren't successful...if the Tribe wasn't successful...in running the school that the state would take over. I think this had to do with their [Mississippi Choctaw] experience because it wasn't so long ago. My grandparents were children when the Removal [Indian Removal of 1903] took place, so it wasn't that long ago and the family still remembers how they were forced to be made state citizen.

Researcher: Who would you say spearheaded the transfer from BIA school to a contract school?

Willa Brantley: I work with planning, but the primary person that I stayed in touch with ...and that's why we're like a brother and sister today...Doug Weaver [current Chief Financial Officer of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians].

Researcher: What were the academic guidelines for Tribal schools after the transition?

Willa Brantley: We had a BIA manual that we use as our standards, but the Tribe could make up their own. We went to the state [Mississippi] standards as a tribe.

Researcher: From the government part where you were working, were the students ever brought in? Were there ever an efforts for the students who were going to Choctaw Central to be made aware of what was going on?

Willa Brantley: All I remember is discussing a survey. Whether that was fully completed or not, I can't quite say it was. The teachers very well knew and everybody was talking about it, so the kids knew from that.

Researcher: There was no effort to have a group meeting with the students or question and answer, or anything?

Willa Brantley: I think there was a community meeting for the parents, for the students who are with them, but not directly just within the school...but because the students were picking up on something that was going on because of the teachers...a lot of the teachers who are against it totally because they did not want to give up their federal benefits... which was good. We don't have union, but we did with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I had to work with them...and they requested if I could negotiate with the Tribe...that the people that they maintain to hire...that if they could keep their federal benefits...and there is a process...there's a form...but the Tribe totally had to agree to do it...and I was able to convince the Tribe that this [not agreeing to keep federal benefits] would be a good non-resistance way for the good teachers that you want to keep. We had a lot of negative media. I had to deal with that...because of the non-Indians going to the media to try to force us not to contract. Then, there were staff who realized that they weren't going to get hired into the system. It was beyond my control. A lot of them blamed me, but the authority was left to the Tribe, so the Tribe didn't hire them. There was no way I could force them to be hired. There was a few incidents, I think, where they almost banged down Chief Martin's door because some staff acted frantically. They couldn't take it.

Researcher: After all of this commotion what were the feelings in the communities at the time of the transition?

Willa Brantley: When the contract started, the Choctaw people just kind of went along with it.

Researcher: The transition...was it in phases or was it done all at one time?

Willa Brantley: The only phase that we had to complete was to meet the requirements. They advertise the positions right away...all positions that they were going to have. We had to do the organizational chart because we were making it a one-school system. Like I said, the experience I had at Standing Pine without never having enough money was one of the reasons why I wanted a central staff where money could be utilized to assist.... Then...throughout the process...and my supervisor says, "You're doing something no one has ever done,"...and it was the crossover as a Bureau employee to be a Travel Director, Department of Ed. I didn't get any other benefits because I stayed back a year later to close up Choctaw Agency for Education. As Superintendent, I also set up the education personnel contracts. That was handy to assist the Tribe in setting up their own contract through the educational process system. I had to take courses on my own to learn how to do that. When I got to the Bureau, I had a lot of non-college courses...a lot of self-help courses that you take to learn about the Bureau organization and when a new ruling came in...there was always...like you could take a class...or a certification class...or something... that certified your expertise in that area. Not only I, but I would take all my principals. I wanted them to take it, too, because they would be working with the children.

Researcher: The changes that were made in 1989, in your opinion, do you think they benefited the students? If so, how?

Willa Brantley: They had benefited the students in a lot of ways. Now, centralizing is how we helped

Researcher: When you say "centralizing," you're saying what?

Willa Brantley: For instance, as a small school district, we rolled all our grants; we did all our budgets from one pot.

Researcher: After the Tribe transferred local control, what was done in the schools or was there an effort to ensure that Tribal customs and traditions were still practiced?

Willa Brantley: We always had spring festivals displaying Choctaw culture through dance and other activities. With the Bureau, we had speech contests, public speaking contests, which I always won, at the time, and we explored diverse cultures, and now, the focus is mainly on our culture.

Researcher: It's almost 30 years. In 2019, it will be 30 years. In the...the 20 plus years since the transfer, is there anything that should have been done different?

Willa Brantley: One thing that I never thought...or didn't even think about the reason for that. When we were with the Bureau, we had local school boards. Now, we can go back to that because even now...Back then, we had wise, rational individuals who were really interested in the progress of the school (Personal Communication, 09/02/2016).

Conclusion

According to Ritchie (2003) memories extracted through recorded interviews constitutes oral history. It is these memories Ritchie (2003) continues, corroborated with other historically significant evidence that validates an oral history projects. The interviewer must understand that participants will remember what they think is important about the event, not necessarily, what the question is asking or exactly what prior interviewees stated. When participants in this study were asked, who spearheaded the transition of Choctaw Central High School from a BIA school to a MBCI Tribally controlled school, different answers were given because participants has

different perceptions about the question. This is common when conducting oral history and I asked the question to extract a better understanding of meaning of the transfer by having the participants give their memory of who they felt initiated the change.

While interviewing both Mrs. Brantley and Mr. Ben, Ritchie's (2003) ideas on memory, are prevalent. Mr. Ben is adamant about his refusal to join the teacher union and is vocal about their practices during Choctaw Central High School's transition to local Tribal control.

person did not have to join in the union which I did not!; As far as High school side I felt like the union were a hindrance to the academic responsibility that I felt like teachers should have toward students. Teachers who belong to unions monthly or sometimes weekly had meeting somewhere either on campus off campus dealing with union issues during school. It seemed like they were more interested in dealing with union issues than dealing with the kids in terms of their academic aspiration and achievement so that is one big thing I felt like that was wrong during that time. (personal interview Terry Ben, 8/8/2016)

Mrs. Brantley expressed a sentiment about Choctaw Central High School transfer from a BIA School to local Tribal control from the teacher union members' perspective: "a lot of teachers who were against it totally because they did not want to give up their federal benefits, which was good" (personal communication Willa Brantley, 09/02/2016). Memories I collected in this report of unions during Choctaw Central High School transfer to Tribal Control contradictory nature, gives deeper understanding of the feeling of those experiencing the event. According to Bailey (1999) narratives, in which the writer is an author, reporting day to day activities of different participants produces momentum that propels research. According to Ritchie (2003) purposeful, effective oral history is exemplified as presented in this study.

The previous paragraphs were samples of the Choctaw voice woven into a collective narrative explaining significant historical moments in Native American Education History. The creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a BIA Contract School is a story rich with understanding about education's significance to the Mississippi Choctaw. These perspectives provided by students, parents, teachers, Tribal School Maintenance employees, and administrators gave a look into historically significant moments of Choctaw Education history. In chapter six, an analysis of Choctaw Education using interviews as evidence is presented.

Chapter Six

Introduction

In this research I present a story of the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) contract school, then I re-present stories I collected using oral history from participants of these historical events. My use of oral history allowed Mississippi Choctaw's who participated in the events to have a voice in creating their own historical record. Participants were selected based on their participation in and contributions to these significant events. I conducted interviews with teachers, administrators, school maintenance personnel, and parents, all members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, to extract pertinent information. In this chapter I give the information revealed from an analysis of the interviews collected in the research using parts of the interviews as evidence of the claims I made.

Terkel's (1992) use of oral history is one in which includes very little analysis, thus allowing the speech of the participants to explain the event more accurately and in greater detail. Davis (1998) refers to Terkel's technique as an art, and he describes the researcher as an artist who allows the story to be told by the participants. This permits the event to be "clearly and accurately" expressed according to Davis (1998). Therefore, limited interpretation and analysis of in-depth interviews produce a truer picture of the phenomenon, if conducted by a competent historian/artist.

Yow (2005), writes her final chapter of *Recording Oral History; A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* on interpretation of oral history data. Using an interdisciplinary approach, Yow (2005) says that one way to conduct analysis is to use the ideas of folklorist Patrick Mullen (1992) who suggests the researcher seek symbolism in the interviews. Using these symbols, according to Mullen (1992), makes the participants come to life on paper because of the readers' recognition of their own mortality. Yow (2005) continues her interdisciplinary explanation of oral history analyses with anthropologists Langness, Langness, and Frank (1981), who urge researchers to discern the role participants play in phenomenon. Langness, Langness, and Frank (1981) state that understanding the roles individuals had in an occurrence, paints a clearer picture for anthropologists to analyze. Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, Ehrlich, & Sabshin, (1975) present a common idea in qualitative research, Yow (2005) writes. Categorizing, or making categories of the notes taken during oral history interviews, gives structure to pages of paper collected during research (Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, Ehrlich, & Sabshin, 1975). Connections are found between these identified categories, and a theoretical scheme emerges allowing theoretical analyses of the interviews (Schatzman and Strauss, 1975). Seeking the common meaning of the shared experiences is the idea Yow (2005) presents as practiced by those in the historical field and is the one I used in this research. Yow (2005) continues that if an individual is researching life histories gathered around a general topic, or historical event, the common meanings or the meanings important to the participants is what is worth reporting. This concept in conjunction with Epic Learning (Lawrence 2014) matched closest with the work I conducted in this study. Although the ideals of Terkel (1992) and Davis (1998) are integral to me, analyses are included to provide scholarly interpretation of the meaning of these narratives.

Categories revealed through interviews

Importance of Choctaw Language in Choctaw Tribal Education

Participants revealed their indigenous Choctaw language as central to the relationship between formal education and cultural cohesion. For instance:

Researcher: Before they made the High School, where did you go to school ninth through eleventh grade?

Norma Hickman: Ninth through eleventh, I was at Pearl River High School...okay...so 8th grade, I went to Sequoya in Oklahoma for 8th grade. From 1st grade -7th grade I was in a Catholic orphanage in...this was in Natchez, MS, and I attended the St. Mary's Cathedral School. That was for 7 years. I lived down there in Catholic home. My momma finally decided to bring us home...it was my sister and myself. That's how we lost the Choctaw language through isolation. So I only speak English, but I understand Choctaw since I been living here.

Researcher: Since you been living here, you learn how to speak and learn how to understand Choctaw, but you said you lost language through "isolation." Could you explain that please?

Norma Hickman: We didn't have anybody to speak with, you know? It was just the two of us. When I transferred to intermediate class, she was by herself in the elementary class, and I was up in...to intermediate class with no one to converse with (personal communication, 06/30/2016).

The lack of communication in Choctaw during her primary elementary years hindered Mrs. Hickman's fluency of the language. Reuniting with the Tribe, however, allowed Mrs. Hickman to overcome this interruption and she currently leads instruction in Choctaw Language at Bogue Chitto Tribal School (personal communication, 06/30/2016).

Some participants had struggled early in their schooling because English is the second language for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Oftentimes, younger students had not heard English spoken because their parents spoke fluent Choctaw. Students attending Tribal schools were taught exclusively in English, presenting a challenge in learning as described by Thelma Barnes:

Researcher: Tell me about your first experiences at school from the first grade or kindergarten?

Thelma Barnes: When I first start school, I didn't know how to speak English because I was talking Choctaw all the time. Well, when we get to school, they teach us to just talk to English. Well, I got confused, but then a little bit later on I got used to it and learned both Choctaw and English. But I talked mostly Choctaw at my home because my mom and dad said we're supposed to talk Choctaw.

Researcher: Early on as an elementary student, how did that make you feel or how did the teachers help you learn English? What were their methods?

Thelma Barnes: Their method was just constantly talking to us, just stay on us. Those teachers will stay on us all the time. I mean "stay on us" meaning constantly talking to us or teaching us something.

Researcher: First grade or ... Was it kindergarten or first grade?

Thelma Barnes: First grade.

Researcher: First grade, you started here at Pearl River or were you somewhere else?

Thelma Barnes: No, Pearl River. (Personal Communication, 07/11/2016)

Carl Steve explained that language was definitely a challenge for Mississippi Choctaw Students in his description of Choctaw Central High School building which was constructed in 1964.

Carl Steve: Yes, yes. Yeah, I remember. It was amazing. A big building, lots of classrooms. It was big enough then, but today it's not. There's so many students that come to the school. Yeah.

Researcher: If I understand you correctly, before then it was a smaller building. There were more students than ...

Carl Steve: No, it was a large building. There were classes where there was 12 and 9 in classrooms and stuff, but the body of students has grown tremendously, and that's a great change. They speak more English than they do Choctaw.

Researcher: Was that a challenge for you?

Carl Steve: No. I could speak both languages, so it was no big deal to me. But I know there was a lot of students who spoke mostly Choctaw, who struggled with the English language (personal communication, 07/19/2016).

Diamond Hundley, and her early elementary experience with Choctaw Tribal Schools, presented a detailed aspect of language for students.

Researcher: I want to go back to your early education at Bogue Chitto Elementary School.

Diamond Hundley: What I recall was being at Bogue Chitto Elementary. I had a feeling the teachers were there to teach us, but at the same time, you could feel some level of prejudiceness, even from the teachers there. Like I said, they seemed like they wanted to teach us, but at the same time, there were things that they would say or do that would not be allowed today. Now we did have good teachers...but at the same time, I don't know. It just felt like because we were Tribal members, they [the teachers] felt like they could get away with slapping us with a ruler over the hand or pulling the ears. Now given, they

never done me that way, but I have seen it done to many kids. Being I'm half-white, I don't know if that played a role...and I just thought about that, but I know a lot of my classmates who had been pulled by the ear and slapped with a ruler and what not. But like I said, those are things educators wouldn't get away with today.

I do remember a sense of...almost some of the stories that you hear of the older generation...going to boarding schools and the treatment they had, but not to that extreme. But you could feel that there was some tension.

Researcher: You speak Choctaw at Bogue Chitto Elementary, what happens?

Diamond Hundley: It wasn't discouraged at 100%, but it wasn't encouraged, either. Like I said, we was almost like robots. We were spoken to, and you said, "Yes, ma'am," "No, ma'am." You did your work. You sat there. There was just no freedom as far as the teacher. There are some good teachers that didn't do that now at Bogue Chitto. I give them that...but majority...the ones that I come across... that I've seen other kids being mistreated...was either they [the Choctaw students] would laugh at each other in the Choctaw language and the teacher maybe felt like they were talking about him or her, and so I guess that's what I'm getting at as far as having more freedom to speak. Because in ninth grade, there was no sense of that. We talked Choctaw all day. For me, being Choctaw is my first language, and I loved it...because unless...and I used to say this... I used to say, "I don't speak English unless I'm spoken to in English," and primarily that would be my teachers at the high school...but as far as fellow classmates and what not, we spoke Choctaw, and there was no sense of being punished for it. It was good (personal communication, 09/01/2016).

Working in the Tribal School dormitory for nearly forty years Roy Smith's gives insight on how Mississippi Choctaws are formally educated.

Researcher: After the transfer of local control, was there anything done to insure the Tribal customs and Tribal tradition were not lost?

Roy Smith: At this point...when that happen, we made sure that we kept our Choctaw language in the school system because this very important. And people had stepped up, and said this is what...we need this. But we had to convince parents, also, because we as parents supposed to teach our children Choctaw at home. But it's not being done effectively. So when you send your child to school...you send your child to school to learn to go college...and in college there's no Choctaw Language. But in order for us to survive, we have to learn English. So we had to get people's mind to change, to the point where you can better learn our school work...school lesson through Choctaw and English. So we had to intertwine them. It's been a process, and we made sure that a lot of the thing that happen at our school system has a Choctaw theme attach to it (personal communication, 08/05/2016).

Language is an important aspect of culture. It use is vital in education and the struggle experienced by Mississippi Choctaw is documented in these interviews. The "Choctaw theme" mentioned by Mr. Smith, transitions to the next category pertaining to the expectation of Choctaw Culture during school in the next section.

Use of Traditional Choctaw Culture in Tribal Schools

All participants were asked to share experiences of the role of Choctaw Culture in Tribal Education.. Interviewees agreed Choctaw Culture is a priority at Choctaw Tribal Schools, as part of the school curriculum, and interwoven in classroom instruction. Tribal Schools are

venues to teach Tribal culture; however, as stated by several participants, much of what students learned about Tribal Traditions were taught at home. Fixico (2009) explains, Native American Education was present before European contact. What Indigenous People learned to prosper as a civilization was taught in their homes. Home learning of Tribal Traditions is still practiced by the Choctaws while using Tribal Education to assist in teaching Choctaw Culture. Participating in several cultural events, such as traditional dances, funerals, and celebrations, this researcher has witnessed the importance of maintaining a rich traditional Tribal Heritage. Lois Keats, Choctaw Central High School's first homecoming queen explains:

Researcher: What emphasis on culture were made or do you think should've been made...during the time you were in school? Or were there any emphasis on culture?

Lois Keats: Yes, we have always kept our Tribal tradition alive. Through the years, I have seen so many changes that has taken place up to now. But you know even up to today, we're still keeping our culture alive through our fairs, through the princess pageant, through the community booth (at the Choctaw Indian Fair). (Personal Communication, 07/22/2016).

Martha Ferguson and Shirley Ben gave these responses about the use of culture in Tribal Classrooms.

Researcher: What is your opinion on education in Choctaw culture, as you all have experienced it? Either one may answer.

Shirley Ben: Back then, what I see in my culture was ... like at the fair...like cooking hominy. They dance...they wore Choctaw clothing. But I didn't hardly see the basket weaving at that time. But later on, they came up with that. Basket weaving.

Researcher: Was anything introduced in the schools while you were in school?

Shirley Ben: During the school, I don't remember.

Martha Ferguson: I don't believe they introduced any Choctaw culture...except pushing me to speak English...and a lot of time...a lot of us not quite understand them about the English...and how it was spoken.

Shirley Ben: It was hard to become a bilingual.

Martha Ferguson: And talking it..or...some of them were really shy. That's what I normally saw growing up.

Shirley Ben: You have to do a lot of reading to understand the English.

Martha Ferguson: A lot of the culture stuff was taught back at home. We learned how to cook at home by my parents, grandma, cooking outside with one black pot. And how to use it...how much to put in it...and go out in that field and bring in food to able to cook. And my uncles going hunting to bring in the ... At Thanksgiving, they have to hunt and bring food in by the time we ate supper. That was taught to us, and cooking from our own family, growing up, and that was culture. And then if they have a dance, we would be told they have dance. They took us over there [to the dance], so we could participate and learn. Grandma made sure of that.

Researcher: Do you think that more Tribal customs and traditions were lost because of the way Tribal schools follow State or federal requirements?

Shirley Ben: Okay, as far as Tribal customs, Tribal culture we stress even today. We don't lose all that, so it works hand-in -and. The Tribe has programs now that work with students to not lose our culture or custom. So it really didn't change, and hopefully, it never change because we don't want to lose our identity (personal communication, 07/19/2016).

Meaning of Choctaw Education to the Participants

Interviewed Tribal members were asked what Tribal Education meant to them. All answers were in the affirmative, with responses ranging from hope for the Tribe's future through education to the flowing of nostalgic tears after emotional contemplation about the question. Lawrence's (2014) ideas about Epic Learning claimed that a better understanding of an event occurs when the memories are captured in reference to the time and space in which the event happened. Willa Brantley expressed awareness of a volatile time in which she experienced racial prejudice in Central Mississippi:

Researcher: If I'm hearing you correctly, you are at Red Water School in the Red Water Community...

Willa: I'm at Red Water Elementary School and there was a 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th...

Researcher: In one...

Willa: In one classroom.

Researcher: You began public school in the 7th grade?

Willa Brantley: Right. The schools were still segregated in public school. Mr. Komintski [School Principal] said that "It would be good for you to experience diversity." We were already experiencing that within our family. Anyway, I grew up under a diverse environment. He talked to my mom and they sent me to public school. I went to the [Red Water] Elementary school until the 5th grade. Then desegregation...so I ended up at Carthage Junior High Public School...6th, 7th, and 8th the following year. They said it was desegregated, but it wasn't desegregated totally because all white kids went to white teachers and all black kids went to black teachers. Here I was...half white, half Choctaw, and then there was a guy named Arnold Smith. He was a black guy. We were the only two

there that were not white, and they didn't know where to put us. Arnold could go with the black, but they didn't know where to put me because I didn't have a category to fall in and the half white didn't count (personal communication, 9/02/2016).

While attending public schools, Ms. Brantley thrived, including winning “white” maid on the homecoming court (personal communication, 9/02/2016). However, she chose to complete her secondary education at Choctaw Central High School during Junior Year because of her strong belief in being Choctaw.

Willa Brantley: It should have been an early beginning of managing our own affairs, educating our people to where we would have more local Choctaw teachers. There will always be room for non-Indians...there will always be...but if you want to elevate your community, you must work with the resource that live there. Our people and our youth are the ones that we have to educate, and in order to do that, they have to have good paying jobs (personal communication, 9/2/2016).

It is this strong belief that motivates the Choctaws to persist as they have for centuries. When asked about the meaning of Choctaw Tribal education Carl Steve said:

Carl Steve: It means the future. It means advancement of Choctaw culture. It has a part, and there is a part that goes along with the rest of the world and how things are done. It keeps square with the world (personal communication, 07/19/2016).

Tribal education is lifelong, a continuation of ideas passed down from generation to generation as well as proving proficiency in academia. Terry Ben explains:

Terry Ben: Education is always the key to unlock anything, and so with the education as far as with the Tribe, it never ends. It just continues (personal communication, 08/07/2016).

Simply put Mrs. Barnes answered the question with the following statement.

Thelma Barnes: It [Tribal Education] means a lot to me (personal communication, 7/11/2016).

Diamond Hundley stated the following, when asked the meaning of Tribal Education:

Diamond Hundley: Choctaw tribal education? You're going to get me crying. Education means to me self-determination. That's what our constitution is based on since 1945. And I've tried to live my life based on that, meaning Choctaw tribal schools educated me... educated me to be able to provide a better life for my family today than I did when I was growing up [tears flowing]. I think we've come a long way from...Tribal schools continuing to improve, but at the same time, there's a world that we have to be competitive with. That would be the only thing I would say that we...can we compete with anybody? Just as people, yes. I feel like we can compete with anybody. Do our kids need all the tools, and do we give them all the tools they need to be competitive with the next Joe and Mary outside the Tribal schools? We're getting there. We're getting there, but the self-esteem? To me, I was blessed with a lot of...at Choctaw Central High School...with people that cared, people that believed in me, people that pushed you. They pushed you enough to where you realize you could do it on your own. Because...I was one of those they used to say...I'd never leave the reservation. I graduated as Valedictorian not even trying. But I didn't know my worth until Choctaw Central High School. (Personal Communications, 09/01/2016)

After conducting these interviews it is apparent that Choctaw Tribal Education is an integral part of Tribal members' lives. Graduates from three different decades consistently testified positively about the personal value of Choctaw Tribal Education.

Mississippi Choctaw's zeal for education

As early as 1816 and Mushulatubbee comments about the first Choctaw schools readers can identify the importance of education to Mississippi Choctaws. Building and rebuilding Choctaw Schools by the Catholic Church indicates a resolve for education possessed by Tribal Members. One of the first uses of U.S. Government funding, after two attempts at removal, in 1917 was development of day schools in each Choctaw Community. Relentless early Tribal Leadership secured funding for buildings and infrastructure used to educate children. This along with the oral history collected are clear indicators of how high Mississippi Choctaws value education. Mrs. Barnes describes her parent's view:

Researcher: In previous interviews I found out that the Pearl River Indian School only went to a certain grade. Can you tell me about that and how things changed?

Thelma Barnes: We went till 10th grade. When I finished the 10th grade my cousin and I went to Gulfport. We took a job as a nursing assistant and I was there for one year and then mom and dad want me to come back. I decided I wanted to stay there and work for \$90 a month. But they talked to me and want me to come back and finish school, so I did come back, which I'm glad I did.

Researcher: You're saying then when you finished the 10th grade, you began a job down in Gulfport of \$90 a month as a nurse assistant and you were a teenager. Wow. After one year of doing that you come back. Is this new, this 11th grade for the Pearl River Indian School?

Thelma Barnes: Mmhmm [affirmative] (Personal Communication, 07/11/16).

Terry Ben, also discuss how his primary inspiration for education came from his grandparents:

Researcher: Well, you definitely showed great resolve and great education, great perseverance as a student, to come from Standing Pine and making a way all the way to MC with 2 degrees from Mississippi College.

Terry Ben: Three degrees in Mississippi College.

Researcher: I am sorry...all three degrees from Mississippi College. It says a lot about your feeling on education does it not?

Terry Ben: Yes it does. Just lot of good experience and lot of good memories...lot of hard working...sweat. I don't regret it one bit.

Researcher: Who do you attribute...or is it somebody or something that happen in your life...that really help you really have this feeling about this education?

Terry Ben: Like I said earlier, I was raised by my grandparents at Standing Pine and my granddaddy had only 3rd grade education and my grandma during that time period had on 5th grade education. They told me that during that time period that education is very, very, super important, and that's the only way to compete in the world during that time period. You just got to work out there and work hard sweat. And you can get that degree and you can get that respect. And so basically I tribute the driving push from my elderly grandparents who had very, very little education. (Personal Communication, 8/8/2016)

Mrs. Hickman, Choctaw Central High School's first valedictorian, gave the following academic advice to her classmates:

Norma Hickman: I told the kids [her 1964 graduating classmates]. I said, "If you don't study"...they were telling me, "You studying too much...need to go out and have fun"...and I said, "Well if you don't study, at the end of 4 years, I am going to get all the awards." I said, "Wait...will see what happens." I got all the awards: I got the

valedictorian, I got the math, I got the English, literature, and science. (personal communication, 8/10/16)

Education is important to the Mississippi Choctaw and has been vital to their existence as a Tribe. Blending academic learning in school classrooms with cultural aspects of “being” Choctaw, is a major component to the continual existence of Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. It is this zeal that became evident after reviewing pages of participants responses involved in this study.

Conclusion

Research Implications

The value of this research reaches far beyond the purview of a dissertation manuscript. This look into the perception of the participants on the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transition to a BIA Contract School allowed deep, rich description of Choctaw viewpoints from Choctaw voices. Individuals interested in interdisciplinary studies of the Mississippi Choctaws can use information revealed to study a plethora of other academic queries.

Lack of Academic Literature about Mississippi Choctaws. My research revealed a lack of academic writing about the MBCI. Peer reviewed academic journals with emphasis on Indigenous People had no information about the Mississippi Choctaws nor their contribution to Native American History. I obtained data through books, newspapers articles and oral history to complete this research. I now feel a responsibility to produce academic writing about the Mississippi Choctaws from the information gathered in this study.

Limited Reporting of Choctaw History in Mississippi Studies Curriculum. After reviewing Mississippi Department of Education’s (MDE), Mississippi Studies Curriculum, I noticed a lack of required information about the Mississippi Choctaws. The Indigenous People

section of the curriculum is generalized and never attempts and in-depth look at these Mississippians who pivotal to its history. Because of the lack of effort in previous years to uncover this history, oral history using in-depth interviews and Epic Learning are venues to be used in writing a better state curriculum.

Need for the Use of Oral History in the Reporting of Mississippi Choctaws. Cervera (2014), states, changes in reporting of Native American History through the use of oral history is required. Time is literally running out as many who can provide this rich, thick information are dying without leaving autobiographical material that can be interpreted (Coleman, 2012). Therefore, it is my responsibility to collect oral history information while I have access to these individuals and provided histories explaining the Mississippi Choctaws significance.

Interdisciplinary Research Opportunities. While conducting this research, several ideas outside of Native American Education History emerged. Participants talked about aspects of being Mississippi Choctaw that can be used in other studies. The racist backlash to the Civil Rights Movement in Neshoba County, for instance, is infamous with stories of destruction of churches, public lynching, and the deaths of three Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee members in 1964. The Mississippi Choctaw perspective on this significant piece of Mississippi History is currently not recorded. In addition, throughout the interviews participants spoke of economic situations they experienced and how they improved them through education. A study on economic stratification in the Tribe would yield information unknown to most Mississippians about how money works for Mississippi Choctaws. Examination of Choctaw finances would provide opportunities for economic development to businesses, giving a truer economic picture of Mississippi, as well as allowing the non-Tribal members a better understanding of the Mississippi Choctaw.

Although this study was Native American Educational History, its use is not limited to this field because of the information contained in the interviews provided by the participants. Use of Epic Learning, in-depth interviews, and my more than fifteen years of personal experience with the members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, allowed accessibility to Tribal Member's perceptions, ideas, and beliefs about Choctaw Central High School that have never been recorded before. As such, those interested in seeking any information on the Mississippi Choctaw will find this research to be purposeful, unique, and useful.

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Appendix

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Appendix B: UM Release Request
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Appendix F: MBCI Resolution to contract Tribal education
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Appendix I: Picture of the Class of 1964 Senior Trip to Washington D.C.
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Appendix A

Interview Request Letter

Fredrick L. Hickmon

110 Goodman Street

Kosciusko Ms. 39090

Name of the Participant,

I am currently writing a dissertation to complete the requirements for Ph.D. in educational leadership at the University of Mississippi. The topic I have chosen is the creation of Choctaw Central High School and its transfer to a Bureau of Indian Affairs contract school. The purpose of my research is to give Tribal members a voice in written history, by giving those who experienced these events an opportunity to speak. I have chosen in depth interviews or oral history as the method to retrieve information about these events. Oral history is the recording of memories of those who experienced the experience. As a participant in this study, you have the right to, end the interview, refuse to allow what was said in the interview to be written, and review the writings before it is published. Recordings of these interviews will be archived with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Archives. If you have any questions please call Fred Hickmon at 6014163297.

Thank You,

Fredrick L. Hickmon

Appendix B

University of Mississippi Release Request

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

RELEASE

For valuable consideration, I do hereby authorize The University of Mississippi, its assignees, agents, employees, designees, and those acting pursuant to its authority (“UM”) to:

- a. Record my participation and appearance on video tape, audio tape, film, photograph or any other medium (“Recordings”).
- b. Use my name, likeness, voice and biographical material in connection with these recordings.
- c. Exhibit, copy, reproduce, perform, display or distribute such Recordings (and to create derivative works from them) in whole or in part without restrictions or limitation in any format or medium for any purpose which The University of Mississippi, and those acting pursuant to its authority, deem appropriate.
- d. I release UM from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of such Recordings including any claims for defamation, invasion of privacy, rights of publicity, or copyright.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____

Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if under 18): _____

Appendix C

Topical Interview Questions

School Creation

1. Whose idea prompted the building of the new school and what were the major challenges faced during this time?
2. Who was in charge and what were their positions?
3. What resistance did those in charge and you, what support did you all receive?
4. What were the attitudes and perceptions you felt during the building of the school?
5. Prior to the creation of the new school, where were the students going to school?
6. Along with the creation of a new school, what other major events were going on at this time.
7. What economic effects did the building of this school have on the community?
8. What academic guidelines did tribal members abide during this time?
9. What does Tribal education mean to you?

School Transfer

1. Was the tribe given total control all at once, if not, what were the processes that lead to the transfer of local tribal control?
2. What challenges were faced during this transfer of control to the tribe?
3. Who spearheaded this transition?
4. What was the attitude of the tribal community once local control was achieved?
5. What academic guidelines did Choctaw Central High School operate under after the transfer of local control to the tribe?
6. When this historic event took place, was it explained to the students of Choctaw Central High School the meaning of this?
7. Since the initial transfer of local tribal control in 1989, what major changes have been made at Choctaw Central High School? Has the effect of those changes proven to be beneficial to the students, if so what evidence exist to validate this claim?
8. After the transfer of local control, what was done to ensure that tribal customs and traditions were not lost?
9. It has been over 20 years since the transfer of tribal control, in looking back, are there specific things that could/should have been doing differently?

Appendix D

TABLE I

* INDIAN DAY SCHOOLS OF MISSISSIPPI

School	Date Established	Distance From Agency	County	Grades
Bogue Chitto	1930	13 miles	Neshoba	1 - 6
Bogue Homa	1922	97 miles	Jones	1 - 6
Conehatta	1928	31 miles	Newton	1 - 8
Fearl River	1920	10 miles	Neshoba	1 - 11
Red Water	1925	34 miles	Leake	1 - 8
Standing Pine	1920	25 miles	Leake	1 - 6
Tucker	1921	8 miles	Neshoba	1 - 6

* Statement of John Pearmain as reported in the Indian Office Handbook of Information, Mississippi Choctaws, compiled September 1935, pp. 22-24.

Langford, A study of the educational development of the Choctaw Indians of

Mississippi. (1953)

Appendix E

106 INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS, 1964

Buildings and utilities construction program, fiscal year 1961

Summary of projects by States	Additional spaces	Replacement spaces	Estimated cost
NEW CONSTRUCTION			
A. States other than Navajo-Hopi:			
Alaska:			
Barrow High School.....	210	0	\$1,632,000
Barter Island Day School.....	30	30	324,000
Circle Day School.....	0	30	180,000
Ellin Day School.....	30	30	210,000
Goodnews Bay Day School.....	30	30	208,000
Grayling Day School.....	30	30	230,000
Kasigluk Day School.....	60	60	478,000
Kolliganek Day School.....	30	30	258,000
Kotzebue High School.....	210	0	1,900,000
Total, Alaska.....	630	240	5,430,000
Arizona:			
Phoenix shop building.....	0	0	526,000
Sells gas system.....	0	0	50,000
Total, Arizona.....	0	0	576,000
Mississippi:			
Bogue Chitto and Connehatta water storage.....	0	0	60,000
Central High School.....	210	0	1,110,000
Total, Mississippi.....	210	0	1,170,000
Montana: Busby water improvements.....			
Total, Montana.....	0	0	60,000
Oklahoma:			
Jones Academy water.....	0	0	70,000
Seneca sewage disposal.....	0	0	60,000
Total, Oklahoma.....	0	0	130,000
Total, States other than Navajo-Hopi.....	840	240	7,366,000
B. Navajo-Hopi:			
Arizona:			
Auxiliary water supply.....	0	0	94,000
Chilchinbeto Day School.....	70	50	593,000
Hahazatel Day School.....	275	175	1,469,000
Kaibeto Boarding School.....	660	0	4,824,000
Lone Mesa Boarding School.....	1,020	0	6,662,000
Rough Rock Boarding School.....	270	60	2,557,000
Shonto Boarding School.....	750	0	5,135,000
White Cone Boarding School.....	570	90	1,973,000
Total, Arizona.....	3,615	375	23,307,000
New Mexico:			
Auxiliary water supply.....	0	0	124,000
Choshgal Boarding School.....	660	0	4,819,000
Kimbeto Day School.....	190	50	865,000
Magdalena Dormitory.....	128	0	1,185,000
Wingate High School.....	1,020	0	6,639,000
Total, New Mexico.....	1,998	50	13,632,000
Total, Navajo-Hopi.....	5,613	425	36,939,000
Quarters, various, bureauwide.....	0	0	700,000
Water exploration and development.....	0	0	245,000
Advance planning.....	0	0	450,000
Total, new construction.....	6,453	665	45,700,000
Major alterations and improvements.....	0	0	5,000,000
Grand total.....	6,453	665	50,700,000

Hearings before an appropriations subcommittee of the 88th Congress (1963)

Appendix F

87-88
(04-26-88)

MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

RESOLUTION CHO 59-88

A RESOLUTION TO CONTRACT OPERATIONS OF BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS PROGRAMS
FISCAL YEAR 1989

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has since its inception contracted for the operations of Bureau of Indian Affairs programs under the Indian Self-Determination Act, Public Law 93-638, and prior to that under the Buy Indian Act, and

WHEREAS, this effort has resulted in the improvement of the quality and quantity of services provided to the Choctaw people, and

WHEREAS, all of the programs covered by this Resolution are already under contract, and

WHEREAS, this Resolution has been reviewed and approved by the Committee on Budgets and Finance of the Tribal Council, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Tribal Council does hereby authorize the Chief and Secretary-Treasurer to apply for, negotiate, and sign contracts for the following Bureau programs for fiscal year 1989, the twelve months commencing October 1, 1988:

- 1. Scholarships
- 2. Adult Education
- 3. Agricultural Extension Services
- 4. Other Aid to Tribal Government
- 5. Court
- 6. Social Services
- 7. Law Enforcement
- 8. Adult Vocational Training
- 9. Credit and Financing
- 10. Agriculture
- 11. Forestry
- 12. Other Real Estate Services
- 13. Johnson-O'Malley
- 14. Chapter 1
- 15. Housing Improvement
- 16. Special Education
- 17. School Operations (ESL, Dorm, and IRG only)
- 18. School Board Training

CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned, as Secretary-Treasurer of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, certify that the Tribal Council of said Band is composed of 16 members, of whom 12, constituting a quorum, were present at a regular

COPY

Resolution CHO 59-88
Page 2

meeting thereof, duly called, noticed, convened, and held this 12th day of April, 1988; and that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by a vote of 12 members in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstaining.

Dated this 12th day of April, 1988.

ATTEST:

Philip Martin
Chief

[Signature]
Secretary-Treasurer

RECOMMENDED:

Robert C. Beaman
Superintendent, Choctaw Agency

4-26-88
Date

Resolution for Tribal control of education services (1988)

COPY

MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS



Long
ROUTE 7, BOX 21
PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI 39350
TELEPHONE (601) 656-5251

June 1, 1989

Ms. Willa Brantley
Superintendent for Education
Choctaw Agency
421 Powell Street
Philadelphia MS 39350

Dear Ms. Brantley:

Attached please find the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians application for conversion of existing 638 elementary and secondary education contracts to a Part B Grant under auspices of P.L. 100-297.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is requesting initiation of the P.L. 100-297 Grant effective October 1, 1989. It is the understanding of the tribe that since we were not a 638 contract school at the time of passage of P.L. 100-297 that we must apply for conversion to grant with Standard Form 424 and that the request include an alternate starting date if desired.

We are also unsure of how the transition clauses for conversion to the administrative costs formula from an established indirect costs rate will effect us since we are only operating a 638 school contract for school operation during the fourth quarter of FY 1989--the year immediately preceding the requested grant period of October 1, 1989 to September 30, 1989. It is clear that the transition clause was written to assist contractors such as the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians who must adjust from a negotiated indirect cost rate of 29 percent to an administrative cost rate estimated to be less than 15 percent.

Should you need additional information, please contact either myself or Douglas Weaver, Education Planner. We are looking forward to an early negotiation of the attached grant and the start of a new school year.

Sincerely,

Phillip Martin
Phillip Martin
Tribal Chief

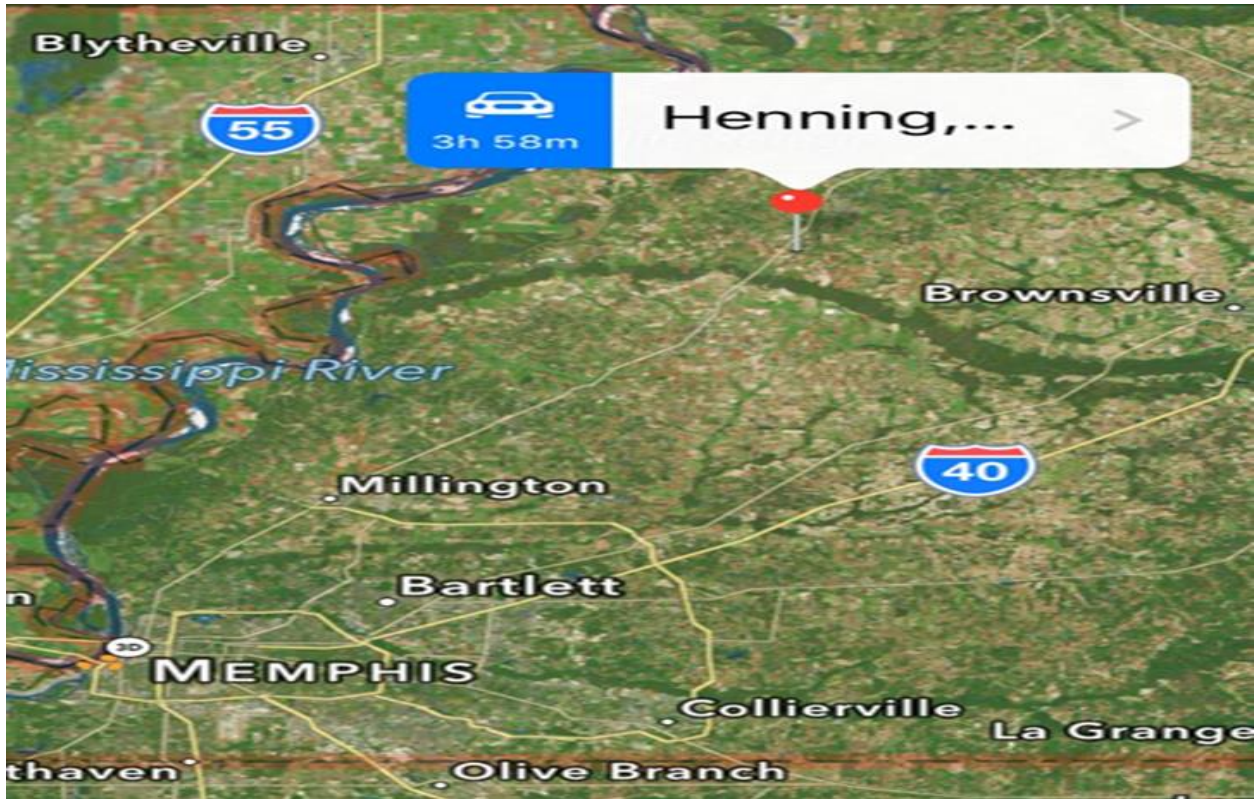
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"CHOCTAW SELF-DETERMINATION" /

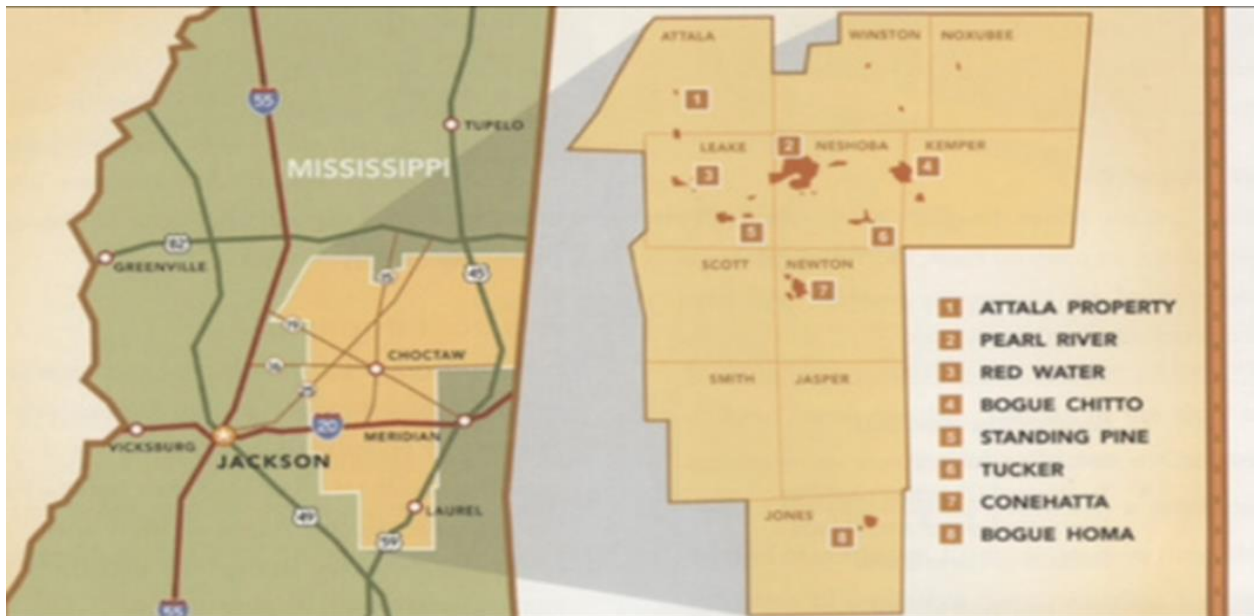
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Cover letter for PL 100-297 application (1989)

Appendix H



Google Maps



Chata Immi (Choctaw Culture Center) Brochures 2001

Appendix I



1964 Pearl River High School - First Graduation Class
*Left to Right - Back Row: Wendell Lewis, Harold Isaac, Kirby Wilks, James Mosley, Teacher Dora Mosley,
Counselor Leonard Apala, Frank Bell Jr., Jerry Thompson, Edwin Thomas. Front Row: Wynona Farris,
Nellie Fathy, Doree Jim, Annie K. Bell, Norma Steve, Wynona Shoranska, Roslyn Anderson,
Verna Shoranska, Nellie Mae Williams, Thelma Bell, Thelma Jim.*

Picture of the first graduating class as it hangs in the hallway of Choctaw Central High School

Appendix J

Cho-10-65

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Bureau of Indian Affairs has under construction new high school facilities at the Pearl River School, and

WHEREAS, These facilities will serve high school students from all the Indian Communities,

NOW, THEREFORE, Be it resolved by the Tribal Council of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians during its regular meeting held this the 13th day of October 1964, do hereby recommend that the new high school be officially named Choctaw Central High School.

CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned, as Secretary-Treasurer of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, certify that the Tribal Council of said Band is composed of sixteen members, _____ of whom constitute a quorum; there were present at a meeting thereof duly and regularly called, noticed, convened and held on the 13th day of October, 1964, 15 members; the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the affirmative vote of 15 members present and that said Resolution has not been rescinded or amended.

Dated this 13th day of October, 1964.

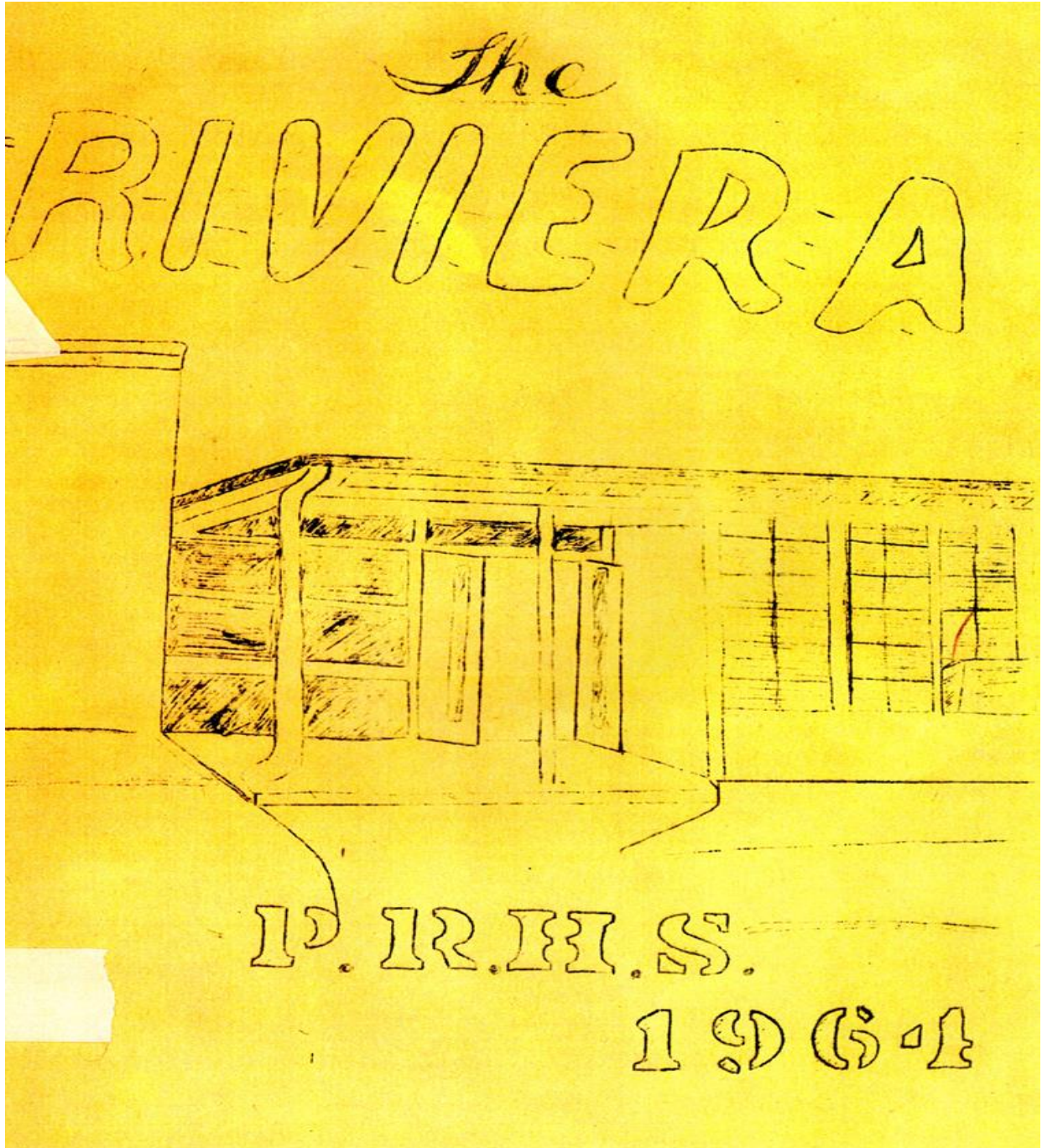
ATTEST:

Shirley Martin
Chairman, Tribal Council

Ernest Hill
Secretary-Treasurer

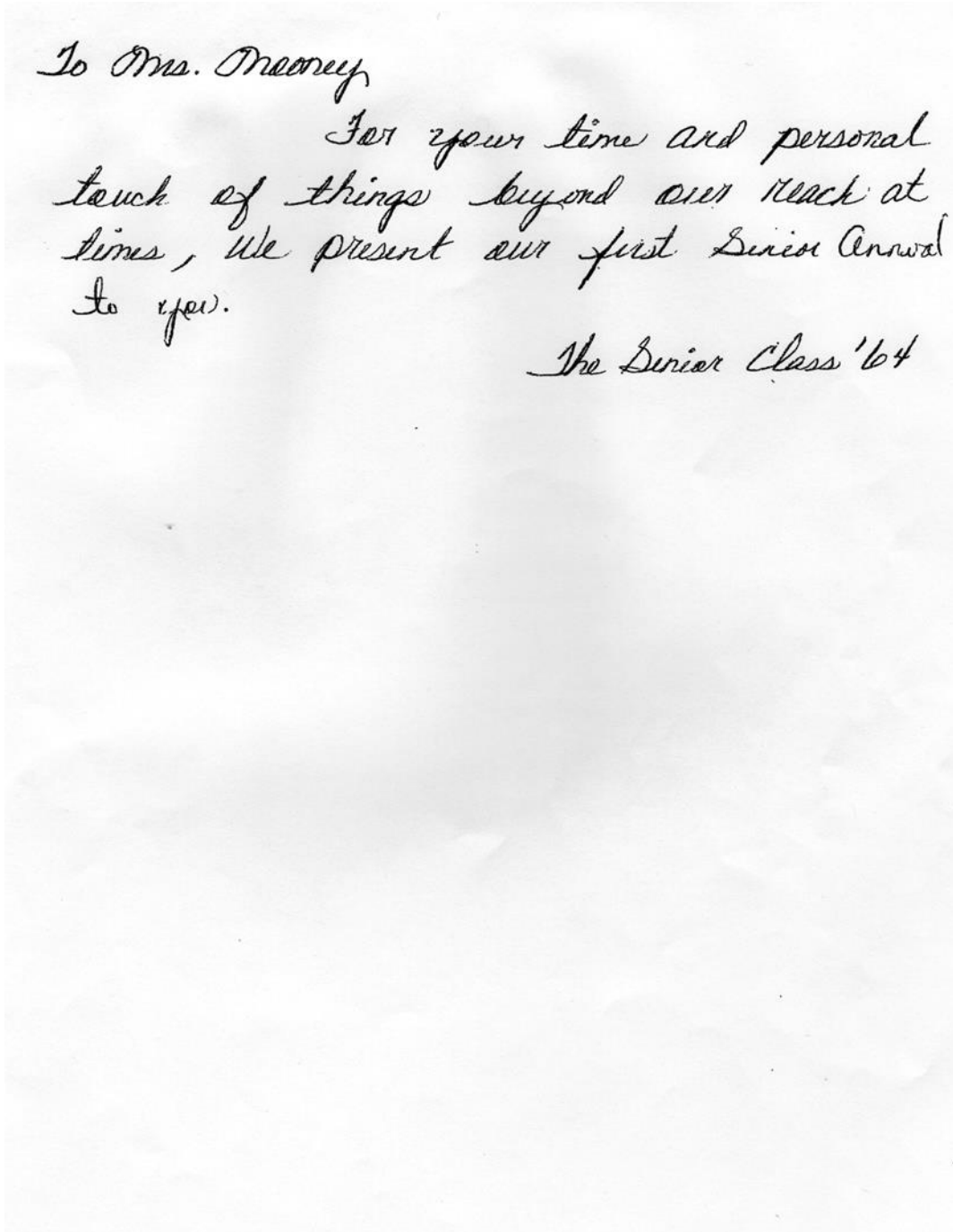
Resolution to change Pearl River Indian School to Choctaw Central High School (1964)

Appendix K



The cover of the original Pearl River High School Annual handed to me by Mrs. Norma Hickman, now an electronic document found in *Chata Immi*, Choctaw Cultural Center.

Appendix L



Mrs. Mooney was the teacher that assisted the class in the publication of the Annual. This note to her is an example of the feelings about the staff found in *Chata Immi*, Choctaw Cultural Center.

Appendix M

MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

RESOLUTION CHO 16-004

A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE FREDRICK L. HICKMON TO CONDUCT A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF A HISTORY OF CHOCTAW CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

WHEREAS, the Tribal Council of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (“Tribe”) is authorized under Article VIII Section 1(a) “To negotiate with and to approve or disapprove contracts or agreements with Federal, State, or local governments, with private persons, or with corporate bodies”; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hickmon is the current Choctaw Central High School Principal; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hickmon is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Philosophy degree at the University of Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hickmon wishes to conduct a qualitative study of a history of Choctaw Central High School to be used as the basis for his dissertation; and

WHEREAS, the Tribal Council Committee on Education has reviewed the attached dissertation proposal and is recommending its approval; and

WHEREAS, there will be no financial requirements from the Tribe to participate in this extended research; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Tribal Council does hereby authorize Mr. Fredrick L. Hickmon to conduct a qualitative study of the history of Choctaw Central High School for use in a Doctorate of Philosophy dissertation at the University of Mississippi; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Tribal Council does hereby authorize the Tribal Chief to sign a letter or agreement with the University of Mississippi agreeing to allow Mr. Hickmon to conduct the research study; and be it further

RESOLVED, the dissertation will be made available to the Tribal Chief and Tribal Council when available; and be it further

RESOLVED, that any publication of the research or dissertation shall be approved by the Tribal Chief prior to publication.

CERTIFICATION

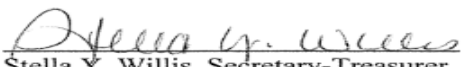
I, the undersigned, as Secretary-Treasurer of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, certify that the Tribal Council of said Band is composed of 17 members, 13 of whom, constituting a quorum, were present at Regular meeting thereof, duly called, noticed, convened and held this 13th day of October, 2015; and that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by a vote of 13 members in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstaining.

CHO 16-004
Page 2

Dated this 13th day of October, 2015.

ATTEST:


Phylliss J. Anderson, Tribal Chief


Stella Y. Willis, Secretary-Treasurer

Resolution allowing this study (2015).

Appendix N



OFFICE OF THE TRIBAL CHIEF PHYLISS J. ANDERSON
101 Industrial Road • P. O. Box 6010 • Choctaw, Mississippi 39350
Phone: (601) 650-1501 • Fax: (601) 650-1606

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fredrick L. Hickmon, Ed.S.
Choctaw Central High School Principal

FROM: Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson

DATE: 19 SEP 16

RE: Approval of Chapter 4 in Compliance with Tribal Resolution CHO 16-004

This memorandum is to advise you that the Office of the Tribal Chief has approved your submission of Chapter 4 in compliance with Tribal Council Resolution CHO 16-004, a Resolution to Authorize Fredrick L. Hickmon to Conduct a Qualitative Study of a History of Choctaw Central High School.

Your request to present this narrative at the Society of Philosophy and History of Education as a panel discussion and to publish it in the Journal of American Indian Education is approved.

Thank you.

Chief Phyliss J. Anderson

C: File

"CHOCTAW SELF-DETERMINATION"

Memorandum confirming the use of part of this dissertation for further academic presentation and publishing (2016)

Curriculum Vitae

Curriculum Vitae
Fredrick L. Hickmon
110 Goodman Street
Kosciusko MS. 39090

Mississippi Department of Education
Curriculum Development

2016

- Presented at Society of Philosophy and History of Education Annual Conference in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Chapter four of my dissertation on the history of the Mississippi Choctaw with emphasis on education.
- Co-Presented at the Spring Conference of the Mississippi Association of School Administrators. Along with Dr. Carla Evers, discussed best practices preparing students for the ACT.
- Presented and completed at the Millsap Principal's Institute
- Completed the National Dropout Prevention Certification as a National Dropout Prevention Specialist
- Successfully defended my dissertation prospectus for partial requirement of a Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Mississippi School of Leadership and Counselor Education
- Presented at the First Annual Indigenous Education Research Conference at the University of New Mexico. The 1830 Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek: Forming Mississippi, explaining how Mississippi topographical map formed after implementation of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek.
- Served as a consultant with Madison County High Schools on the U.S. History Subject Area Test in Mississippi

2015

- Presented at Mississippi ACT State Council Meeting to schools about best practices for increasing test scores
- Served as a consultant with Madison County High Schools on the U.S. History Subject Area Test in Mississippi

2014

- Began Doctoral program with the University of Mississippi
- Invited and served as guest instructor in an Educational Leadership Class at the University of Mississippi
- Served on review committee of United States Tribal Schools with Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewel
- Served as a consultant with Mississippi High Schools on the U.S. History Subject Area Test. Sub-contracted IMPACT Education Group and Mississippi Department of

Education, Worked in Madison County School District, Ocean Springs School District, Marshall County School District, Quitman County School District

- Student at Choctaw Central High School ACT average scores improved from a composite of 14 in 2012 to a composite score of 17 this year
- Participated in Mississippi Association of Secondary School Principals Summer Conference
- Served on the Teachers Advocacy Group for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

2013

- 100% pass on the U.S. History Subject Area Test Program as Principal of the School
- Served on the Office of School Assessment Cut Score Committee for the U.S. History Subject Area Test in Mississippi
- Served as a consultant with Mississippi High Schools on the U.S. History Subject Area Test. Sub-contracted with Greene Educational Group, worked in Madison County School District, Yazoo City School District, West Tallahatchie School District as well as trained other consultants for Greene
- Participated in the University of Mississippi Leadership Consortium
- Chosen Support Staff of the Year at Choctaw Central High School
- Served on the Teachers Advocacy Group for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

2012

- Served on the Psychometric Cut Score Committee for U.S. History Subject Area Test
- Served on the Office of School Assessment Cut Score Committee
- Accepted Principal Job at Choctaw Central High School
- Served on the Teachers Advocacy Group for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

2011

- 100% pass on the Subject Area Test Program
- Chosen Teacher of the Year at Kosciusko High School
- Served on the State Textbook Committee selecting U.S. History textbooks
- Served on the Alternate Assessment Committee for History Subject Area Test
- Served on the Teachers Advocacy Group for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

2010

- Graduated from University of Mississippi with a Specialist in Education
- 100% pass on the Subject Area Test Program
- Served on the Data Review Committee History Subject Area Testing
- Hired as Online/Face to Face Adjunct History Instructor at Holmes Community College responsible for setting up my classes in Blackboard, instructing students and

reporting results to the college. The LMS was changed to Canvass and I learned the new system while providing the previous information stated

- Served on the Teachers Advocacy Group for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

2009

- 100% pass on the Subject Area Test Program
- Served on the Item Specifications Team for U.S. History Subject Area Testing

2008

- 100% pass on the Subject Area Test Program with no minimum scores
- Developed Questions for Subject Area Testing Program
- Assisted in the writing of the new Mississippi Social Studies Curriculum

Work Experience

Choctaw Tribal Schools

2012-Present

- Principal of the High School

2010-2015

Holmes County Community College

- Adjunct Online Instructor

2007

Magnolia Bible College

- Adjunct Instructor

2004-2012

Kosciusko Separate School District

- Teacher/ U.S. History, World History, Mississippi Studies
- Subject Area Testing Program Administrator
- American College Test Administrator
- Basketball Coach
- Teacher Support Team Member
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes Sponsor
- Program for Effective Teaching Training

2001-2004

Louisville Municipal School District

- Teacher/U.S. History, World History, Mississippi Studies
- Basketball Coach/ Coach of the Year
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes Sponsor

1998-2001

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

- Teacher/ 8th Grade Social Studies, 7th and 8th grade Physical Education
- Teacher of the Year
- Summer Teaching Institute
- Program for Effective Teaching Training
- Basketball Coach
- Football Coach
- Choctaw Language Course

1997-1998

Kemper County Schools

- Teacher/ U.S. History
- Subject Area Test Program Coordinator
- Football Coach
- Basketball Coach