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

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

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

Level of Degree
Doctoral

Degree Name
History

Department Name
History

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Spiritual Paths Teachers & Students. Roshi Joan Halifax, Thomas Keating, Imam Feisal, Ajan Sundara, Swami Atmarupananda, Sister Jose Hobday. Previous. “The Way of Faith and Devotion,” Aug. 22-24, Aspen Chapel, Aspen Institute, Aspen, with Sister Jose Hobday (Native American), Sister Bramapran, Sharon Saltzerg, Shaikh Kabir Helminski, Shaikha Camille Helmski, Dr. Ed Bastian. “The Way of the Mystic,” Sept. YS-22, La Casa de Maria, Santa Barbara, with Carol Lee Flinders, Prof. Quotations: A traditional Native American prayer: “O Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the winds and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me. I come before you, one of your children.  “If you take [a copy of] the Christian Bible and put it out in the wind and the rain, soon the paper on which the words are printed will disintegrate and the words will be gone. Our bible IS the wind.” Statement by an anonymous Native American woman. Introduction. A quote from Native American Religions by Arlene Hirschfelder and Paulette Molin (Facts on File, New York, 1992, ISBN 0-8160-2017-5) is instructive: “....the North American public remains ignorant about Native American religions. Native American Literature--selected bibliography, compiled by K.L. MacKay. A Brief History of Native American Written Literature. The first native American literary texts were offered orally, and they link the earth-surface people with the plants and animals, the rivers and rocks, and all things believed significant in the life of America's first people. The texts tie Indian people to the earth and its life through a spiritual kinship with the living and dead relatives of Native Americans. Coyote, raven, fox, hawk, turtle, rabbit and other animal characters in the stories are considered by ma