

waste of talent and human endeavour—Native and non-Native alike. No doubt, some of the residential schools merit the scorn that both the media and some Native people are presently heaping upon them. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that there were many bold educational experiments and valiant efforts at training a people vastly different from their non-Native “educators.”

The churches involved in Native education can be applauded for sending teachers to difficult and threatening environments when many others were satisfied to teach in less challenging circumstances. At the same time, the churches need to be confronted (as indeed they now are) with the criticisms of cultural arrogance and insensitivity as well as denominational behaviour that was thoroughly incongruent with the purposes they claimed to advocate.

Rédacteur Huel and his colleagues at the Western Oblate History Project are to be commended for bringing together such poignant perspectives from across the academic and philosophical spectrum. It is hoped that, as the project matures, even broader perspectives will be represented (for example—more direct input from Native people, the nuns, victims, and other voices who have thus far not been heard). Taken together, these conference proceedings demonstrate a narrative of service to our nation that is both honourably and authentically human. We are learning more of the truth of what actually happened—warts and all.

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**Devon A. Mihesuah.** *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993. Pp. 212, illus.

The Cherokee Female Seminary was distinctive among North American Native educational institutions of the nineteenth century. In operation from 1851 to 1856, and from 1872 to 1909, it educated about 3,000 young Cherokee women, and graduated 238 of them, into white culture. Yet it was established and operated neither by federal government nor by a missionary group, but rather by the Cherokees themselves. As put by Devon Mihesuah in *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, “Whereas the federal boarding schools were controlled by white Americans, the Female Seminary was controlled by Cherokees who subscribed to the values of white Americans.”

The Cherokee Female Seminary’s unique character can be understood only in the context of Cherokee history more generally. From the eighteenth century, Cherokees had intermarried with non-Natives, creating generations of individuals who identified themselves as Cherokee, although, according to Mihesuah, they “appeared to have little interest in Cherokee customs and aspired to have their children receive a white man’s education.” In 1825 a quarter of the Cherokees were

"mixed-bloods" who increasingly exercised political, economic, and social dominance, both before and after the federal government mandated the Cherokees' removal in 1838-39 to Indian Territory. There the Cherokees, together with the other four "Civilized Tribes" forced west of the Mississippi River, were free to establish their own sovereign government and laws. In 1840 the Cherokee National Council, an elected body representing the eight districts into which the Cherokee Nation was divided, chose Tahlequah as the capital. Over the next decade Tahlequah became a sophisticated metropolis with its own businesses and post office, newspaper, government buildings, and even a Masonic Lodge.

The National Council was determined to operate its own secular educational system, as opposed to permitting mission boarding schools in its territory, and in 1841 provided for eleven public, or common, schools throughout the eight districts. By mid-century 1,100 Cherokees were enrolled in twenty-one schools, with fully half their teachers being of Cherokee descent. The logical next goal was the establishment of separate male and female high schools, or seminaries, in Tahlequah. They represented, in Mihesuah's words, "the ultimate expressions of the progressive Cherokees' desire for enlightenment and equality with whites." Therefore it hardly was surprising that, in looking for suitable curriculum and instructors for the female seminary, the Cherokees turned to one of the leading women's schools, Mount Holyoke Seminary, in Massachusetts, whose alumnae were already teaching among

several American tribes and abroad as missionaries.

The Cherokee Female Seminary's first life began in 1851 when, newly constructed, it opened with twenty-five students and lasted to 1856 when it was closed due to the tribe's financial difficulties and to full-blooded Cherokees' dissension over what they perceived as the school's elitism and racism. Of the seventy-five students who successfully passed the entrance examination and enrolled tuition-free during these years, just two were full-bloods; all the others were mixed-bloods, mostly the daughters of Cherokee government officials or affluent families. The seminary's four-year curriculum, designed by Mount Holyoke's principal, was a deliberate copy with emphasis on classical subjects, non-denominational Christianity, and what one early teacher imported from Mount Holyoke; no domestic science courses were taught, pupils being expected to learn any needed practical skills at home.

From the school newspaper, *Cherokee Rose Bud*, Mihesuah infers how students, who referred to themselves as "Rose Buds," saw themselves. Both the girls, and their counterparts at the male seminary, did not abandon their Cherokee identity. Rather, they sought to raise the Cherokees, whom they already believed to be superior to other tribes, to the "summit of civilization and refinement." The girls bought wholly into contemporary white notions of "true womanhood," and then anguished about how their physical appearance might prevent them from reaching the ideal. Stories in the *Rose Bud* written

by the girls themselves portrayed heroines with blue eyes as "the epitome of enlightenment and civilization." To the distress of full-blood Cherokees in the larger community, most students came to believe firmly that the lighter a girl's hair and colouring, the more likely she was to become a "true woman," and therefore the more superior she was.

Cherokee common schools remained open after the seminaries closed in 1856, and fifteen of the twenty-six female graduates were soon teaching there. The female seminary reopened briefly in 1861, but the outbreak of the Civil War disrupted all aspects of Cherokee life, including education. The Cherokee leadership, many of whom were long-time slave owners, allied with the Confederacy, although some full-bloods supported the Union. The treaty ending the war forced the Cherokees to sell part of their land, using half of the proceeds to support common schools and assist the one in four Cherokee children orphaned by the war.

In 1872 the Cherokee National Council reopened the Cherokee Female Seminary, with students now required to pay fees to help renovate its dilapidated buildings. A year later the Council made the school more accessible to full-bloods by adding grades 1-8 and permitting "indigent" children from the "Cherokee-speaking classes" to attend free of charge. By the mid-1870s the seminary was successfully re-established under a strong-minded, "quasi-feminist" principal, who encouraged students to pursue careers as well as become wives and mothers. Despite the special provisions, full-

bloods comprised only about ten percent of students, and they experienced much the same discrimination as during the seminary's first life. While the reasons had to do in part with their different status in the school and the more traditional outlook, they related in good part to the school's ethos. Teachers not only "relentlessly reinforced the importance of learning and retaining the values of white society," but both "students and teachers also took every opportunity to flaunt their white ancestry at the expense of the fullbloods."

The seminary's demise was an almost inevitable consequence of changing federal policy. Growing paternalism towards Indian people combined with ongoing white efforts to gain control of the Indian Territory. By the end of the century Cherokee tribal title to land had been replaced with individual allotments and the concept of sovereign tribal government legislated out of existence. In 1907 the Indian Territory became the state of Oklahoma, and two years later its legislature made the male seminary co-educational and turned its female counterpart into a teacher-training institution, the Northeastern State Normal School, now Northeastern State University.

The Cherokee Female Seminary played an important role in the lives of its 3,000 students, most of whom saw themselves as "new and improved Cherokees," and who with their counterparts from the male seminary became a kind of Cherokee elite that would prove critical, according to Mihesuah, to "maintaining tribal continuity." Mihesuah, a self-described

"acculturated mixed-blood with a Ph.D.," leaves unanswered the question as to "whether or not the Female Seminary was entirely beneficial or entirely detrimental to the Cherokees," observing only that "it was perhaps a bit of both." She also does not fully explore what in fact constituted Cherokee identity for the two generations of mixed-bloods who set the tone of the school, or for the tribal leaders who were the seminary's supporters. Mihesuah asserts that past students remained "intensely proud of their Cherokee lineage," but does not explore in any detail what it actually meant—and means today—to be a "Cherokee."

*Cultivating the Rosebuds* is an extraordinarily intriguing case study of the critical role played by formal education in shaping identity. Despite the Cherokee Female Seminary's records having been lost in a school fire in 1887, Devon Mihesuah has recreated the school's ethos in captivating fashion. Mihesuah's larger goal was to "show that, historically and today, Cherokee women are especially complex individuals." This point she also makes graphically and effectively, not just for the Cherokees but, by inference, for Native women across North America.

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**Abbie Morgan Madenwald.** *Arctic Schoolteacher, Kulukak, Alaska, 1931-1933.* Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.

**Volume 59 in the Western Frontier Library.** Pp. 196, illus. \$19.95 U.S. cloth.

In August 1931, a young American couple set off for the Alaska hamlet of Kulukak as economic refugees from the Great Depression. Naive but enthusiastic, they gradually made a home for themselves and in the process were welcomed into the lives of the people of the region. This little book is a charming memoir of Abbie Morgan Madenwald's experiences as a teacher for two years in Kulukak.

This is not a book for those who would like an examination of pedagogical theory and technique in the 1930s, nor will it be particularly useful for those looking for ethnographic details on a northern society in transition. Instead, it is a collection of anecdotes with all the classic elements of a good story: tragedy, comedy, suspense, action, and even romance. The author's photographs add an interesting visual dimension to the tale.

At a time when it is fashionable to agonize over the assimilation programme foisted upon aboriginal children through North American schools, this book is a quiet reminder that the assimilation programme was carried out by some very well-meaning individuals. The author came to teach in Alaska with very little knowledge of the people and apparently no clear sense of intention other than to be a good teacher. While she and her husband learned to accommodate to the realities of their spartan situation, there was always a hidden assumption that things ought to be done "properly" as