

By the Kansas Historical Society

Two Visions of Haskell's Purpose

Haskell Indian Nations University is located in Lawrence, Kansas. It was opened in 1884 as the United States Indian Industrial Training School. It was an off-reservation boarding school for American Indian youth from across the country. Initially serving students younger than 14 years of age, Haskell soon served as a high school as well. By the 1970s the school dropped all lower grades and provided two-year associate's degrees as a junior college. In 1993 it was renamed Haskell Indian Nations University in recognition of the school's four-year college degree programs.

Haskell's history reflects changes in American Indian educational policy and racial relations between American Indians and the government. The following primary documents are provided as evidence to explore those issues

Document A

Excerpt from Superintendent James Marvin's September 1884 opening address:

It is not a school for teachers to learn Indian, but for pupils to learn English, to speak, to write and think in English.

Here we hope to prepare them to share with us the blessings of enlightened people. In vision near we see . . . the Indian tribes turning their spears to pruning hooks, the tepe [sic] replaced by the cottage, fields of grain and the fragrance of orchards . . . all over that vast territory once assigned as the red man's burial ground. We see school houses and churches, villages and cities, a thrifty and happy people, and all the affairs of commerce and state growing under hands of men whose inspiration toward manhood were quickened into a nobler life at Haskell Institute.



Photograph of students at Haskell, 1887.

Document H

Mission Statement

The mission of Haskell Indian Nations University, a land grant institution, is to serve members of federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native nations as authorized by Congress and in partial fulfillment of treaty and trust obligations. With student learning as its focus, Haskell embraces the principles of sovereignty and self-determination through a culturally based holistic lifelong learning environment that promotes and upholds respect, rights, and responsibility.

Haskell Indian Nations University Mission statement, 2008

