The Enduring Indians of Kansas
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The Enduring Indians of Kansas: A Century and a Half of Acculturation.

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One Fourth of July two young photographers, C. C. Isely and his brother, were uninvited spectators at the Green Corn Dance on the Kickapoo reservation near the towns of Horton and Hiawatha in northeast Kansas. The two white men intended to photograph the ceremony, but when they entered the dancing grounds with tripod and camera, an angry Kickapoo rushed toward them. He was a handsome Indian, the Iselys later said, with his black hair in braids hanging down his back and his multicolored coat bedecked with jewelry.

"I understand that you men want to take some pictures of our ceremony. If you try to do so, I warn you that you will get into trouble." His manner was curt, but his English was perfect.

Surprised, the white men explained that they simply wanted to honor the Kickapoos by recording their festival for posterity. But the Indian adamantly rejected their request. "When I want pictures," he exclaimed, "I will get them in Hiawatha."1

The ceremony proceeded without further interruption from the Iselys, who considered the Stars and Stripes waving nearby an indication that Indians had the constitutional right to practice religion without interference. The brothers watched in wonderment as Indian men, young and old, danced in a wide circle, many with sleigh bells fastened to their leggings. In the center of the dance ground stood a huge drum that eight men beat simultaneously; they and all the other men sang in a pitch and volume that alternately rose and fell. At least two Potawatomis joined in and danced vigorously. "The performance was fantastic," C. C. Isely recalled, "weird beyond telling, yet entrancingly interesting."

This dance occurred on the eve of the twentieth century, in 1897, but Indian culture was still vigorous in Kansas. The remaining Kickapoos and Potawatomis, as well as the Iowas, Missouri Sacs, Chippewas, and
Munsees, had overcome tremendous obstacles in their quest to survive. For many, a renewed religious spirit was an important factor in the struggle to hold on to their lands and traditions. Most Kickapoos and Potawatomis, the largest of the Kansas bands, clung to their Indian faiths; during the 1880s and 1890s, furthermore, both bands experienced a revitalization of their traditional religions. Some Iowas and Sacs, on the other hand, had begun to profess Christianity. Their Christianity differed, however, from that taught by the missionaries because they had kept various traditional Indian elements. The Chippewa experience was similar to that of the Iowas and Sacs, although by the turn of the century most Chippewas had joined the Munsees in following a more conventional form of Christianity. While their methods differed, each band had achieved its goal of remaining in Kansas.

Unlike the others, the Chippewas and Munsees had virtually assimilated into the dominant American culture; the 1890 United States census reported that these two bands had "almost ceased to be Indians" in the ordinary sense of the term. Their quest for equality with whites, however, had not always been problem free. Chippewa leaders Edward McCoonse and Lewis Gokey died in 1888 and 1889, respectively, leaving their small band in less capable but slightly more honest hands. McCoonse's sons, Robert and William, continued the family tradition of corruption; these descendants of Francis McCoonse [Eshtonoquot] missed few opportunities to acquire the lands and procure the annuities of less sophisticated neighbors. During the years after their father's death the brothers were charged by agents as being "the most troublesome and altogether unreliable members of the tribe, and . . . a constant source of trouble and annoyance" to their people and to the government. Robert was considered especially troublesome. In December 1894, Agent L. F. Pearson reported that Robert McCoonse, "a character not above reproach," was wanted by the authorities in Indian Territory. The Chippewa had returned to Kansas to claim the annuities of one of his "adopted" daughters. This had aroused the anger of the Moravian missionary, who also claimed to have adopted the girl and was collecting her annuities.

Despite his penchant for accumulating property and wealth by shady means, Robert McCoonse, like his opportunistic grandfather Eshtonoquot, was ever ready to defend the rights of all Chippewas and even Munsees. In 1897 the United States Congress passed a bill that
provided for terminating the government's relations with the two small bands; it also created a commission to settle all tribal land matters, including the issuance of land patents or titles to each family and the sale of the remaining acreage. Two years later, Robert McCoons and Agent William Honnell accompanied the federal commissioner to appraise the lands, and the three men managed to settle matters to the satisfaction of almost all of the eighty-seven Chippewas and Munsees. The government would buy the surplus lands for $42,700.5

The ceremonies that accompanied the Chippewa and Munsee final settlement and payment on November 8, 1900, illustrated to white spectators the degree of acculturation that the two bands had undergone since the mid-nineteenth century. The Moravian Joseph Romig had returned as their missionary after a thirty-year absence, and he assisted Agent Honnell and other officials in handing each Indian a
legal patent to his or her land and a check for $491. The elderly Romig, recalling the raucous 1860s, was pleased that "not a single case of rioting or drunkenness [sic] occurred at the time or afterwards." The Indians spent their money wisely. Indeed, a year later they pooled their cash and paid $23,000 to buy their own surplus lands back from the government. They were ready to enter mainstream American society, and they understood that their tribal relationships had come to an end. With a certain prescience, Romig wrote in April 1903 that it was "probable" that these Indians "will before many years be known only in history." The Chippewas and Munsees had become assimilated citizens. The irony was not lost on those hardy individuals—they had retained their lands, but they were no longer Indians.

The Iowas and Missouri Sacs had also become so highly acculturated by the late nineteenth century that many agents predicted a similar fate for them. The 1890 census counted one hundred sixty-five Iowas and eighty-seven Sacs on their small reservations straddling the Kansas-Nebraska border. The census report described them as a "civilized" and "fairly educated" people who "seem to be prosperous and happy." The Iowas were particularly "advanced; they dressed in "citizens' clothes" and acted very much like white people, "many of them so near white that the Indian blood is quite difficult to discover." Although an 1883 executive order granted them a reservation in Indian Territory and many had moved there, these "progressive" Indians stayed and reluctantly accepted allotments to their farms in the early 1890s.

Both bands nevertheless continued to revere their tribal heritages, and they often relied on traditional religions in the face of adversity. Agent John Blair reported that the Sacs practiced their traditional faith, but white visitors often mistook Sac religious ceremonies for Christian rites. The Indians had good reason to pattern their ceremonies after Christian models, for they realized that whites would then be more likely to accept them as neighbors rather than demand their removal. Sometimes, however, they threw propriety to the wind. When officials arrived in 1890 to pressure the Iowas into accepting allotments, they were greeted by "a grotesque dance to the music of a bass drum accompanied by sleigh-bells." The white men were shocked that Indian "heathens" still "invoked aid" from the Great Spirit when conducting tribal business. Although the Iowas as well as the Sacs relented and accepted allotment, they adamantly refused to move to
Present-day eastern Kansas, showing the Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Missouri Sac and Fox, and Iowa reservations.
Oklahoma. They may have been acculturated, but their land meant much to them and they still cherished their old customs.

By the early years of the twentieth century, most Iowas and Missouri Sacs spoke English and many could read and write. Participation in traditional ceremonies declined as the Indians blended in with the local farming community. In the summer of 1922, anthropologist Alanson Skinner declared that both tribes had “definitely abandoned their customs in favor of ours.” He added that some Iowas were Christians, but others were “peyote devotees.” How Skinner could have considered members of the pan-Indian peyote faith as being completely assimilated is difficult to ascertain—the use of peyote in religious ceremonies is exclusively an Indian custom. Indeed, the Iowas and Sacs continued to call themselves Indians; although acculturated, they had maintained an identity separate from their white neighbors. That their small reservations still exist gives ample testimony to this fact.

The Iowas and Missouri Sacs had been wise in refusing to leave Kansas, for in the 1890s their kinfolk who had been removed to Oklahoma were plagued by white squatters who encroached on their lands and stole their possessions. Allotment also took its toll. Many Indians lost their Oklahoma farms, but Mokohoko’s Sacs, now led by Chief Pawshepawho, endeavored to defend themselves against the forces of assimilation. In September 1892, their agent, Samuel Patrick, wrote to his superiors that the one hundred Indians had shunned tribal councils, refused to send children to school, and were generally “stubborn and rebellious.” Although they had been forced to accept allotments, they still lived in a village and farmed their contiguous lands “without regard to individual ownership.” Patrick lamented that they had evaded “the true meaning and intent of the allotment law” and clung to traditional ways. “Yet I must say,” he added, “that this band is above the average for sobriety, honesty, industry, and thrift, notwithstanding their determination not to follow the ways of the white man.”

Mokohoko’s band fared relatively well for the next few years. Indian agents reported that their lands were the most fertile of the entire Sac and Fox reservation. On March 10, 1899, however, disaster struck as smallpox broke out and forty-three Sacs soon died; this was a devastating blow to a people who had long struggled against great odds to live as they thought the Great Spirit intended. Despite the tragedy, the
survivors picked up the pieces and continued to live as before. Agent W. C. Kohlenberg reported that they still acted as though allotments had never been made. Even more striking was the persistent rumor that the Indians intended to raise money, purchase land in Kansas, and reestablish their "old-time reservation."\textsuperscript{11}

The Sacs never returned to Kansas to live but remained in Oklahoma and maintained their traditional ways well into the twentieth century. Even today, many still remain aloof not only from whites but from more acculturated kinfolk; they continue to pay tribute to Mokohoko for his courageous stand against the forces that sought the destruction of their tribe. These people are still proud to call themselves Indians who never willingly submitted to the demands of the whites.

The greatest challenge that faced the Kansas tribes in the late nineteenth century had been defending their lands. Although Mokohoko's strategy of passive resistance ultimately failed to overcome governmental policy, the Kickapoos and Potawatomis retained their Kansas homes by following tactics similar to those of the luckless Sacs. They were fortunate that their paper chiefs, unlike Moses Keokuk of the Sacs, had not signed away all of their lands. Traditional Kickapoo and Potawatomi leaders dominated tribal affairs, despite interference from paternalistic Indian agents and the government-recognized chiefs. The revival of Indian religious ceremonies in the 1880s and 1890s, moreover, reinforced tribal solidarity during the crucial battle against the forces of allotment.

The Kickapoos and Potawatomis had undergone revitalization movements in the past; the prophet Kenekuk's teachings during the 1830s and 1840s in favor of group solidarity and against selling tribal lands were still followed in the late nineteenth century. Although several of Kenekuk's adherents accepted allotments in the late 1860s, they soon regretted their decision and asked to rejoin kinfolk holding lands in common. Members of the prophet's faith successfully followed a dual strategy of winning acceptance from whites and maintaining a uniquely Indian way of life. Agent Blair reported in 1890 that they "practiced a more advanced religion" than other Indians. Their spiritual leader was Nozhakum, the son of the elder Nozhakum who had brought many of his Potawatomis into Kenekuk's fold years before. The younger Nozhakum, wrote Blair, impressed both Indians and whites "by his directness, fervor, and sense of deep responsibility
evidenced by his manner and conduct in both public and private life." 12

Although whites considered the highly acculturated members of Kenekuk’s faith good neighbors who eventually would merge into mainstream American life, that religion actually served to reinforce Indian ways. Services were held in the Kickapoo or Potawatomi languages until the 1920s and 1930s when English began to appear. The prayer sticks would always prevail over the Bible. Adherents to the faith gave their children traditional names and disciplined them with the whip in the manner prescribed by Kenekuk. Their spiritual leaders, furthermore, passed on the knowledge of the prophet’s teachings and rituals to their successors. “I preach the same principals [sic] that old man [Kenekuk] did,” wrote John Masquequa in 1906, “and conduct the same form of services.” These services are still being held in Kansas by the Kickapoo and Potawatomi descendants of Kenekuk’s followers, who never relinquished their homes or their unique customs. 13

Most Potawatomis and Kickapoos, however, shunned the Kenekuk church in favor of faiths that more closely resembled traditional Indian religions. One such belief was the Drum Religion, or Dream Dance, introduced by Potawatomis from Wisconsin in the early 1880s. This religion was a mixture of Christianity and traditional belief and centered on the Great Drum, which possessed supernatural powers. This drum, adherents believed, could solve the Indians’ problems by bringing them renewed power. 14 Reporting in 1884 that the creed consisted “principally of dancing and exulting,” Agent H. C. Linn advised his superiors that the new faith was not a matter for official concern. “In those dances,” he noted, “the moral tendency is very good, as the teaching is in accordance with the Ten Commandments.” Like Kenekuk’s followers, moreover, the dancers abstained from alcohol and gambling during their ceremonies. “Under its teaching, drunkenness and gambling have been reduced 75 per cent,” Agent I. W. Patrick wrote a year later, “and a departure from virtue on the part of its members meets with the severest condemnation.” Agency physician Wilson Stuve, who attended several dances on the Potawatomi reservation, echoed these assessments. In 1888 Stuve testified that he had never seen “anything of an immoral character at the dances; on the contrary, the dances are exclusively of a religious character.” 15

The Drum Religion spread rapidly among Indians desperate for solu-
tions to the complex array of problems facing them. This religion lifted morale, strengthened the old clan networks, fostered intertribal solidarity, and enabled the Indians to present a united front against allotment. Most Potawatomis and Kickapoos realized that allotment would likely result in their destruction as tribes and the loss of their farms, and they prepared to defend themselves. The dances gave meaning to their world, a world turned upside down by bureaucrats and reformers who refused to consider the overwhelming evidence that allotment was destructive to the Indians.

The ceremonies so effectively roused Indian spirits that whites began to worry, and following Wahquahboshkuk's release from prison in 1892, the agents' attitudes toward the Drum Dance abruptly turned hostile. On October 7, 1892, Agent J. A. Scott reported that the Indians had been dancing for two weeks, and he warned that an uprising similar to the Wounded Knee tragedy in South Dakota two years earlier was brewing in Kansas. Scott asserted that the Potawatomi and Kickapoo dance was similar to the Sioux Ghost Dance—which he had never witnessed—and that violence was imminent. He lamented that the Indians had rejected Christianity for a religion that "conceives a God for the Indians alone," and he alleged that their ceremonies encouraged drinking and gambling. To avoid trouble, the agent ordered the Indians to confine themselves to their own reservations.

The dances continued, nevertheless, despite interference from Scott and subsequent agents. Although allotment was forced upon the Indians and much of their reservation lands eventually fell into white hands, their religions have survived and even prospered. Their ceremonies reinforced their resolve to remain in Kansas and enabled them to maintain a sense of pride in being Indians. They did not, however, wish to antagonize whites; on the contrary, they usually kept their ceremonies private to avoid white scorn or interference. The Drum Religion, Kenekuk's church, and the traditional bundle ceremony as well as the peyote religion introduced in 1910 are uniquely Indian faiths and still attract large followings on the Kansas Potawatomi and Kickapoo reservations.

In many ways, the religious practices and moral outlook of the Potawatomis, Kickapoos, and other Kansas bands paralleled the teachings of conservative Christianity and made the Indians more acceptable neighbors to whites. But even those who professed Christianity retained a distinctive Indian character in their religious observances.
that set them apart from other Kansans. The Iowas, for example, had rejected the staid Presbyterians Irvin and Hamilton but embraced the teachings of the charismatic "Holiness" Church in the late 1890s. This faith was introduced by a certain Sister Mollie, a white woman who preached against drunkenness and vice. Agent George James reported in 1897 that this woman had successfully "encouraged and promoted the practice of honesty and virtue" among the Iowas. 20

Whatever religion the Indians professed, they took their beliefs seriously and remained skeptical of strangers who endeavored to change them. The Potawatomis showed little concern when Russian immigrant Ike Gillberg arrived in July 1919 to preach among them. Methodist missionary Milton M. Thorne, however, was greatly alarmed that Communists were scheming to take over the reservation. Thorne advised federal authorities that Gillberg used the teachings of "spiritualism or some other ism" to "cloak" his real purpose of "spreading I.W.W. or Bolsheviki propaganda, or some other kind of 'ganda among the Indians." Thorne was relieved when Agent A. R. Snyder informed him that the Indians considered Gillberg to be "a joke." But Snyder thought that Gillberg might inculcate the Indians with the "Lenine [sic] doctrine." The agent suggested that Thorne keep his "ear close to the ground," and if the Russian "be foolish enough to hand out any [Communist] propaganda, kindly advise me immediately in the matter and there will be no trouble in making 'quick work' of him." 21

Missionary efforts among the Kansas Indians, usually of a more conventional nature than Gillberg's, have continued to the present day. Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and others have won many converts, even among the Potawatomis and Kickapoos. Tribal religions, however, remain viable, and, as is customary with Indians, individuals may be members of two or three different sects at the same time. One can profess Catholicism, for example, and also take part in the Dream Dance or the peyote ceremonies. Although Catholic authorities might object, the Indians see nothing wrong with this.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Indians of Kansas have continued to fight for the right to worship freely and to secure an adequate living in Kansas. The struggle to determine their own destiny while retaining their identity as Indians, however, has not been easy. In the 1920s, federal officials forced Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Iowa, and Sac children to leave their homes and attend nearby Haskell Institute or
Potawatomi dancers in Topeka, 1925. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

Genoa Boarding School in Nebraska. Assimilating Indians remained the stated goal of federal officials such as Commissioner Charles H. Burke, who in 1925 announced that schools had "enabled the Indians to make greater progress than any other pagan race in a like period of which there is any written record." That "progress" involved Indian children reading and writing English, dressing like whites, going to church, and learning farming or a domestic trade. At Haskell Institute, a few young women found the opportunity to specialize in nursing, clerical work, or teaching. Most of what the students learned, however, had little practical application when they went back to the reservation. In return for this education, moreover, the children endured such hardships as overcrowding, malnutrition, frequent epidemics, and harsh discipline.²²

Besides formal schooling, other factors disrupted life on the reservations and pushed Indians closer to the white world. During the 1930s, the Indians of Kansas faced severe hardship as the Great Depression forced many to leave their homes. Although they remained on the
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official tribal census rolls, almost half of the reservation Indians moved to nearby cities such as Topeka, St. Joseph, and Kansas City in search of work; some even moved as far away as Oregon and Washington. The Indian Reorganization (Wheeler-Howard) Act of 1934, championed by Franklin Roosevelt's commissioner of Indian affairs, John Collier, provided some relief. It overturned the Dawes Act, ending the practice of land allotment and restoring the remaining surplus lands to tribal ownership; it also allowed for the restructuring of tribal governments.23

Although the act helped the Kansas Indians, with the exception of the Prairie Potawatomis, to reorganize their tribal councils, and federal loans enabled all the bands to buy supplies, equipment, and land, some of the old problems remained unsolved. By the time Commissioner Collier left office in 1945, poverty had become a way of life on the Kansas reservations. "The Indians do not have anything to farm with," a Potawatomi woman explained. "The people haven't even got a horse. They are just there, and they are just living and some have to go to Topeka to earn their livelihood."24 The New Deal had made little impact on the Kansas bands, and many more Indians left the reservations in search of work.

During the years following World War II yet another governmental program to "emancipate" the Indians emerged, posing as severe a threat to Indian survival as the Dawes Act. "Set the American Indians Free!" was the slogan of the new plan—a plan called "termination."25 Championed most emphatically by Dillon S. Myer and Glenn L. Emmons, commissioners of Indian affairs under the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, respectively, the advocates of termination asserted that Indians possessed the same capabilities as other Americans and that federal supervision violated their basic rights as individuals. Accordingly, the long-standing relationship between American Indians and the federal government must now be severed.

The power of the Bureau of Indian Affairs "has been too far-reaching and has gone on too long," Nebraska Sen. Hugh Butler wrote in September 1953. Butler, the chairman of the Senate Committee of Interior and Insular Affairs (the House of Representatives had an equivalent committee), was determined to press for termination. The policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs under the New Deal, he noted, had only "delayed the adjustment" of Indians to American life. "I feel strongly that any Indian who is competent to handle his own affairs should
have the right to do so. Along with such rights would naturally go responsibilities of private citizenship." According to Butler, the old paternalistic governmental policies were obsolete: "I think you will find a great many Indians deeply resent the policies which have kept them in the status of 'wards of the government.'" He failed to mention that the "responsibilities of private citizenship," which included paying taxes, had already cost great numbers of Indians their lands and way of life.

Such opinions as Butler's predominated in a conservative America mesmerized by the fear of Soviet aggression and domination—Indian tribes are, after all, "socialistic" entities—and during the 1950s, Congress attempted to end federal protection and jurisdiction over several tribes, including the Kickapoos, Potawatomis, Sacs, and Iowas of Kansas. Like the Dawes Act, however, the termination policy proved catastrophic for those unfortunate enough to be caught in its grip. The Menominees of Wisconsin and the Klamaths of Oregon, two tribes affected by termination, lost their lands, possessions, and self-respect when federal protection was withdrawn and the Indians, as individual citizens, attempted to manage their own affairs.

The termination policy was a direct assault on tribal solidarity, and it angered most American Indians, who cried out in protest against its implementation. In Kansas, the Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Sac, and Iowa tribal councils each passed resolutions opposing the plan. These Indians realized that if federal oversight was withdrawn, the state would tax their lands; in the late nineteenth century, many Kickapoos, Citizen Potawatomis, and others had lost their allotments for failing to pay taxes. As Ralph Simon of the Kickapoo council explained: "I have been brought up to depend on Uncle Sam to take care of my taxes and hold my land, and it is the way I was raised up." Simon had not taught his own children to be taxpaying citizens. "In other words, the whites raise their families to be conservative and to know their obligations, where, on the other hand, we weren't brought up that way."

The Indians of Kansas were irate that such a bill could even be proposed, considering the long train of abuses their people had suffered under past governmental policies. Fortunately, they had gained valuable experience in defending themselves against the federal bureaucracy, and they took immediate action to counter the termination proposal. In the summer of 1953, the Prairie Potawatomis hired attorney O. R. McGuire of Washington, D.C., to defend their band's interests. In
November, hoping to rally public sympathy to their side, band members alerted local newspapers that Uncle Sam was "up to his old tricks in Indian affairs—he still wants to break his treaties with the Indians, which he swore when he made them would be good forever and ever, and take the Indians' land away from them." 29 A short time later, an overwhelming majority of the Potawatomis voted in favor of sending delegates to Washington to speak against termination. Their lawyer, McGuire, helped plan the defense strategy; but the Indians themselves would carry the responsibility of defeating the termination proposal. 30 Unlike the fight against allotment, this battle would not be lost.

Early the following year, just before the tribal delegates were to leave by train for Washington, two hundred Potawatomi men, women, and children gathered at the home of tribal chairwoman Minnie Evans for a traditional feast. 31 Joe Western, a reporter for the Topeka State Journal, looked on as many of the Potawatomis jammed into the Evans living room for the start of the festivities. The Indians first passed around an old calumet, or peace pipe, which their ancestors had brought to Kansas in the 1840s; everyone then took a drink of water—the symbol of life. The reporter noted that James Wahbñosah, one of those chosen to go to Washington, "led the ceremonial rites, asking continued blessings through fire (to cook the food and for warmth) from the spirits of the universe and from the Creator. The eating came next, and after that, Frank Masha, 73, one of the oldest members of the tribe, rose to ask the spirits of the universe to fulfill the wishes of the tribe." 32

Four days later, February 18, 1954, Minnie Evans, John Wahwassuck, and James Wahbñosah of the Potawatomis, and Vestana Cadue and Ralph Simon of the Kickapoos spoke against termination before a joint hearing of House and Senate subcommittees on Indian affairs in Washington. Despite the tension-filled atmosphere, not to mention the usual patronizing and ethnocentric rhetoric of the congressmen, the Indians spoke with a united voice in opposition to the termination plan. Indeed, the delegates were as steadfast in defense of their people's rights that day as Kenekuk, Mokohoko, and Wahquahboshkuk had been in earlier times, as they argued in favor of continuing the federal supervision of the Kansas bands.

Like the eloquent Kenekuk over a century earlier, Vestana Cadue, the Kickapoo tribal chairwoman, scolded federal officials, instructing them of their duty to abide by the old treaty obligations and demanding that they withdraw the termination measure. "We feel that this
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Kickapoo women in Horton, Kansas, ca. 1916–1917. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

bill should not become law," she asserted, "because in doing so we are thrown upon the public not as assets but as liabilities." She pointed out that very few Kickapoos would be able to keep their lands if taxes were assessed. "We want our lands to remain for our children and our children's children as was promised our forefathers when they were forced to move from place to place always with the assurance that they would be protected and their treaty rights respected."

Minnie Evans was the most outspoken of the delegates that day. She realized that her Potawatomis and others could not afford to lose what little remained of their original reservations. Determined to defeat the termination proposal, she refused to back down in the face of tough questioning from the chairman of the Senate subcommittee, Arthur T. Watkins of Utah. Her stand against termination took courage, for she knew that past opponents of governmental policy had been sent to jail. She reminded Senator Watkins and the other congressmen that during the 1890s, agents had violated the Potawatomi treaty and had gone "to work and forced allotments and when these two old men
[Wahquahboshkuk and Uwactote] defended that treaty, [the authorities] placed them in Fort Riley."\textsuperscript{34} Federal officials had already threatened to confine her in a women's penitentiary for denouncing the allotment program and for advocating a complete return to the common ownership of the Potawatomi reservation.\textsuperscript{35}

During her testimony, nevertheless, Evans forcefully reiterated her stand against allotment, termination, and all other plans that appeared designed to rob Indians of their lands. "Well, our main trip here," she announced, "is to hang on to the treaty laws, what the United States made with our tribe, and they [officials] made those rules and agreements on their own and nobody asked them to put those rules out."\textsuperscript{36}

Following Evans's testimony, John Wahwassuck engaged in a brisk dialogue with Senator Watkins over such issues as allotment, taxation, and federal supervision of Indian affairs. Wahwassuck denounced land allotment, which had caused severe hardship on the Potawatomi reserve. Under the allotment program, Indian agents had connived with "land-graft men" and "racketeers" to usurp Indian lands:

The Indians, they were swindled out of what land they really actually had, all of the good land. That is why I say the white man is just like a fox. He is a fox, and he will take all of the good land which the poor Indians have. I am still poor. All we have been living on all of these years is promises, and promises and promise upon promise. We still haven't accomplished anything yet.

Senator Watkins then asked why, if federal agents were not trustworthy and the Kansas lands were worthless, did Wahwassuck and the others oppose lifting federal supervision? Why did the Indians worry about paying taxes on unproductive land? The answer to these questions should have been obvious to Watkins and the other advocates of termination. The Indians had little faith in promises that termination was for their benefit. "The only thing that I am proud of," Wahwassuck replied, "is that we have got a home, whether the land is worth anything or not, we have got a place to go."\textsuperscript{37}

Indeed, they still had a home in Kansas, a home their ancestors had fought for, a home the Potawatomis, Kickapoos, and the others did not want to lose. Fortunately for them, the termination policy was never implemented in Kansas. By the late 1950s, facing Indian protest and
opposition from states concerned about losing federal funds, Congress had lost interest in implementing the termination program.\textsuperscript{38} Although it remained official policy until the late 1960s, termination was no longer a priority. For Indians, however, many of the old problems remained, as poverty and disease still haunted the nation’s reservations. The federal government’s attempts to better conditions on the reservations often made matters worse. Reductions in federal services forced the closing of schools and medical facilities. During the 1950s, moreover, while Congress debated termination, the Bureau of Indian Affairs actively pursued a program of “relocating” Indians to the cities. Bureau officials believed that to attain an adequate standard of living, it was likely “that more than half of all Indians would have to seek their livelihood off [the] reservation.” Relocation centers were established in cities such as Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, and Los Angeles—sites far removed from the Indian homelands. Despite opposition to the program from the leaders of the Kansas bands, many jobless Kickapoos, Potawatomis, and others took advantage of the bureau’s offer and left their homes seeking employment during the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{39}

Although the years of termination and relocation were difficult for the Kansas bands, the 1970s proved to be a decade of renewal and hope. President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty had provided some relief, but it was Richard Nixon’s call for Indian self-determination that provided the biggest boost for the Kansas bands. In a message to Congress on July 8, 1970, President Nixon announced that federal officials must now “act on the basis of what the Indians themselves have long been telling us. The time has come to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions.” Finally, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act of 1975 provided for increased Indian participation in administering service programs, Indian control of reservation schools, and additional federal funds to promote the economic development of the reservations.\textsuperscript{40}

A change for the better was immediately felt in Kansas, especially on the Kickapoo reservation. During the 1970s, the Kickapoos acquired federal funds to build new homes and to buy land. With federal loans, they managed to reacquire more than twenty-four hundred reservation acres that had previously fallen into white hands; by the early 1980s, the band held about thirty-five hundred acres in common, with an
"Sophia Keesis, Kickapoo, operates a disc on her father, Jesse Keesis', farm. In this rural area, the Indians are nearly all farmers and lately, through revolving credit loans, have managed to improve their farms and equipment. Now they are adding considerably to the food production of the nation. So many of the young men have gone into the military services, it is necessary for the women and girls to help in the fields." So read the original caption for this photograph, which was taken in 1943 for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. (Courtesy of the National Archives, Washington, D.C)

additional thirty-six hundred acres owned by allottees. The Kickapoos also constructed a water treatment plant, printing press, gymnasium, senior citizens' center, library, trading post, youth center, day-care facility, and tribal farm. The rapid development of the reservation led to expanded economic opportunity and, as a result, many Indians returned from the cities to their homelands. The reservation population soared to nearly six hundred souls in the 1980s—a turn of events that would have pleased the old prophet, Kenekuk.41

Unfortunately, President Ronald Reagan came to office in 1981 with "new" ideas on governmental relations with Indians. According to
Reagan, the old methods had been counterproductive, and state and local governments should take over many responsibilities for Indian affairs. "Instead of fostering and encouraging self-government," he announced, "federal policies have by and large inhibited the political and economic development of the tribes." The secretary of the Interior, James Watt, was even more emphatic in denouncing past governmental policy. "If you want an example of the failure of socialism," Watt advised television audiences, "don't go to Russia, come to America and go to the Indian reservations." Drug abuse, alcoholism, unemployment, and other social problems among Indians have been fostered "because of socialistic government policies." The secretary also blamed tribal leaders who "are interested in keeping this group of people assembled in a desert environment where there are no jobs, no agricultural potential, no water, because if Indians were allowed to be liberated, they'd go and get a job and that guy wouldn't have his hand-out as a paid government Indian official." 42

The Reagan solution was to make drastic cuts in federal expenditures for American Indians—cuts that have almost completely reversed the economic fortunes of the Kickapoos and the other Kansas bands. Donald D. Stull, a University of Kansas anthropologist who worked closely with the Kansas bands in their striving toward self-sufficiency, reported that the Reagan administration's budget cuts have brought the Kickapoo "tribal economy to its knees. The number of tribal employees plunged from an all-time high of 142 in August 1980 to 16 in January 1982—in a mere 18 months the unemployment rate had soared from 34 percent to 93 percent!" In addition, lack of funding forced the closing of the Kickapoo gymnasium (except on weekends for bingo), the library, and the trading post; several tribal buildings have been abandoned and many houses need repair.43

Like the Kickapoos, the Sacs, Iowas, and Potawatomis enjoyed a brief economic recovery as a result of the Self-Determination Act. But the "Reagan revolution" has brought severe problems for them as well. The business office of the Sacs, for example, is full of empty desks for lack of federal grants to pay secretaries and managers. Although the more fortunate Iowas have managed to pay their bills, their reservation road maintenance has fallen behind and other services have been reduced. The Potawatomis have also suffered; in 1982 they borrowed federal funds to repurchase fifteen-hundred acres of their reservation to start a tribal farm. Operations had just gotten under way when a mas-
sive downturn in the national farm economy put a severe strain on the band's financial resources, which were already feeling the effects of the federal budget cuts. Despite such problems, the Potawatomis stayed with the farming project, barely scraping together enough funds to continue. "We don't want to give up on farming," a council member reported in February 1987, "but we're leaning that way."

Despite these setbacks and problems, the Kansas bands are determined to persevere. The Indians realize that the struggle will be as difficult as it was for their ancestors. They intend to stick with the basic strategies that those ancestors taught them—strategies that allowed the Indians of Kansas to acculturate without assimilating into white society. Their strategies have enabled them to find the middle ground between complete acceptance of white ways and observance of cherished traditional customs. Despite overwhelming odds, the Kickapoos, Potawatomis, Iowas, Sacs, and others have managed to survive. The nineteenth century had seen tremendous pressures placed upon them to become a part of white society. The twentieth century brought different but no less severe pressures, and many American Indians have succumbed, losing their customs and lands.

Yet there are many more who have retained their essential identity as Indians; for this, possessing the reservations has been vital, even for those who work elsewhere. This is especially true of the Kansas Potawatomis and Kickapoos; the Iowas and Missouri Sacs live much like their white Kansas neighbors, but their tribal councils and yearly powwows reinforce a sense of their Indian heritage. The Chippewas and Munsees have far weaker ties to the old ways, for they live among whites who might not even be aware that their neighbors are Indians. But they, like members of the other tribes, are proud to recall that their ancestors were the first American pioneers to settle Kansas. To them, Eshtonoquot, White Cloud, No Heart, Nesourquoit, Mokohoko, Nozhakum, and Wahquahboshkuk—names unfamiliar to white Americans—remain heroic figures who carved homelands out of the wilderness and in the face of insuperable odds preserved at least a part of those homelands for their descendants. Since their arrival in Kansas, the Kickapoos, Chippewas, Munsees, Iowas, Sacs, and Potawatomis have loved their homes, have viewed their lands with reverence, and have resisted every effort to evict them from the state. For them, the end of Indian Kansas was unacceptable; they have remained on the lands that they had once been promised were theirs forever.