

Saints were excited when in 1831 a series of revelations identified Missouri as the general location of the city of Zion, that "Independence is the center place, and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse" (D&C 57:1-3; 45:64-66; 48:4-6; 52:1-5, 42-43). Subsequently, Joseph Smith also indicated that the Jackson County area had been the location of the GARDEN OF EDEN.

Independence, Missouri, county seat of Jackson County, was the preparation and departure point in the 1830s and 1840s for trappers, explorers, and pioneers who were going to western America over the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California trails. The Latter-day Saints, however, anticipating permanent residence, purchased land, built homes, prepared their farms, and dedicated a temple site.

After one year of living peacefully in Independence and vicinity, the Saints began to be persecuted by their non-Mormon neighbors. Social, religious, and political differences finally developed into open hostilities, and the Latter-day Saints were driven into neighboring Clay County in 1833, where they petitioned for a peaceful settlement so that they could return to their homes. A settlement never came, but Latter-day Saints still look forward to a time when the city of Zion, the New Jerusalem, will be built in the area of Independence, Missouri.

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INDIAN STUDENT PLACEMENT SERVICES

The Indian Student Placement Services was established among NATIVE AMERICANS by the LDS Church in part to fulfill the obligation felt by the Church to help care for the Indians in the Americas (2 Ne. 10:18-19). The program places Indian students in Latter-day Saint homes, where they live while attending the public school of the community during the academic year. Another goal of Indian Student Placement Services, in addition to

giving Indian youth better opportunities for education, has been to develop leadership and to promote greater understanding between Indians and non-Indians.

The program started in 1947 in Richfield, Utah, when Helen John, a sixteen-year-old daughter of Navajo beet-field workers, requested permission to stay in Richfield to attend school. As an outgrowth of this request, Golden Buchanan of the Sevier Stake presidency and Miles Jensen, with Elder Spencer W. KIMBALL's support, organized an informal placement program that grew from three students in 1947 to sixty-eight in 1954, with foster homes in four western states.

In July 1954 the program was formalized under Church SOCIAL SERVICES and the Southwest Indian Mission. For the next several years the program grew rapidly, peaking at 4,997 in 1972. The policy for participation was that the natural parents had to request the placement; then foster parents (recommended for the program by their bishop) provided free board, room, and clothing for the Indian children to help them have additional educational, spiritual, and sociocultural experiences. The Indian children, had to be at least eight years of age, baptized members of the Church, and in good health. In 1972 the responsibility for recruiting and screening students for the program was given to local priesthood leaders, and the number of students leveled in the mid and late 1970s to around 2,500 a year.

In the early 1980s several of the Indian tribes from whom many of the placement students had come replaced their boarding schools with dramatically improved education on the reservations. In support of this move, the Church limited Indian Placement Student Services to high school students. New goals emphasized the development and strengthening of LDS family and religious values, with Church Social Services taking responsibility for establishing stronger ties and communication between natural families and foster families. The placement service would introduce young Native Americans to mainstream values and social roles without demanding the abandonment of the old for the new. In 1990 the program served about 500 high school students.

Supporters of the services believe that bicultural experiences have great value. Critics view intervention as an intrusion on the right to be fully Native American, a weakening of cultural pluralism, and a cause of psychological damage. How-

ever, empirical studies, even by critics, are ambivalent. One claims that the program has failed to raise achievement and IQ scores of placement students, but notes that placement students read more than their reservation counterparts. A second suggests that students suffer intercultural conflict within their foster families, but expresses surprise that these students function without major symptoms of psychological distress. Still another asserts that the placement experience interferes with the process of identity formation, but acknowledges that the program has done more for the Indian people than any other program to date.

Many theses, dissertations, formal reports, and published articles find that the program has been successful and valuable. Placement students usually come from rural families with stable but limited economic and cultural opportunities. Starting with limited language skills, the students in the placement program come out with less fear of failure, more confidence in their future, and higher academic skills and grades, and a better self-image than their reservation peers. Other studies indicate that placement services graduates are aware of a great variety of occupations open to them and are anxious to continue their education to prepare for them. They typically have come to believe in working hard for future rewards and feel that being Indian does not hold them down. They graduate from high school in larger numbers than non-placement Native Americans, and the college grades of rural placement students are on a par with the grades of urban Indian students.

Most placement students express more pride and interest in Indian culture than do students from Indian boarding schools. That they perceive themselves as truly bicultural, at ease in both societies, is confirmed by their rate of interaction with Indian students as well as with Anglo peers. They also become Church leaders. Most of them are active in the Church, go on missions, and agree with major Church beliefs; many marry in the temple.

Foster parents volunteer for religious reasons and remain in the program to see the child grow and develop emotionally and spiritually. They typically become very attached to their Indian children, maintaining a close relationship with them after graduation from school.

Accusations that the LDS Church used its influence to push children into joining the program prompted the U.S. government in 1977 to commission a study conducted under the auspices of

the Interstate Compact Secretariat. Its findings rejected such accusations. In the resulting report, written by Robert E. Leach, Native American parents emphatically stated that they, not the children, decided to apply for placement. These parents typically stated that they were pleased that the program led their children to happiness and a better economic situation while the children still identified with their Indian heritage. This participation, they claimed, also helped the rest of the family to understand and deal more effectively with Anglos. They consistently expressed appreciation to the foster families for caring for their children. Some Indian leaders were intent on limiting the placement of Indian children among Anglos. However, after hearing testimony and examining current research, the committee agreed in 1977 to permit the LDS Indian Student Placement program to continue.

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INDIVIDUALITY

It is LDS doctrine that every human being has an eternal identity, existing from the premortal state and continuing forever (Abr. 3:22-23). Moreover, all individuals are responsible for their own choices, and all will stand before the Lord to present an accounting of their lives at the Judgment Day (A of F 2; Moro. 10:27). This, however, does not mean that individuals are autonomous or alone. All individuals are spirit children of God the Father, who organized them into relationships in order to maximize their growth and happiness through loving and serving one another.