

North America is often treated as a rather picturesque but irrelevant prelude to American history, and most references to Indians are made in terms of the Indian wars or the problems presented by Indians to the Anglo-American settlement of the continent. History books are largely silent upon the course of Indian history since the end of the reservation period, and upon issues--such as treaty-breaking--which have been of great importance to Indian people. For many years the general assumption seems to have been that Indians were going to become assimilated into the Anglo-American population, and that Indian history from an Indian point of view would cease to be meaningful to persons of Indian descent. Today, however, when most Indians and non-Indians alike agree that assimilation is neither inevitable nor particularly desirable, and with the increasingly articulate demand of Indian scholars and leaders for new Indian histories which are relevant to modern Indians, it is especially urgent to collect and preserve any documents upon which such histories can be based. The building of an Indian oral history collection will not automatically guarantee a revised, more balanced approach to American history with fuller consideration given to American Indians, nor the writing of the much-needed new Indian histories. However the building of the Duke Indian Oral History Collection is a major step forward in achieving this end. The materials now available and the interest generated by this Project among Oklahoma scholars, both Indian and non-Indian, will, it is hoped, lead soon to the publication of new historical materials on the American Indian.

In working toward its ultimate objective of building a research collection of primary historical documents, the Project has concentrated