



Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940 (North American Indian Prose Award)

Brenda J. Child

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Boarding School Seasons offers a revealing look at the strong emotional history of Indian boarding school experiences in the first half of the twentieth century. At the heart of this book are the hundreds of letters written by parents, children, and school officials at Haskell Institute in Kansas and the Flandreau School in South Dakota. These revealing letters show how profoundly entire families were affected by their experiences.

Children, who often attended schools at great distances from their communities, suffered from homesickness, and their parents from loneliness. Parents worried continually about the emotional and physical health and the academic progress of their children. Families clashed repeatedly with school officials over rampant illnesses and deplorable living conditions and devised strategies to circumvent severely limiting visitation rules. Family intimacy was threatened by the school's suppression of traditional languages and Native cultural practices.

Although boarding schools were a threat to family life, profound changes occurred in the boarding school experiences as families turned to these institutions for relief during the Depression, when poverty and the loss of traditional seasonal economics proved a greater threat. Boarding School Seasons provides a multifaceted look at the aspirations and struggles of real people.

Brenda J. Child is an associate professor of American studies at the University of Minnesota.

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