



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

By 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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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

"An emotional history of American Indian boarding schools in the early twentieth century. The boarding schools were begun in an attempt to 'civilize' Indians but helped develop a sense of Pan-Indian interests by mixing various tribes, languages, and cultures. Child recounts the cultural and emotional toll the schools took on Indian families."

"Brenda J. Child, a Red Lake Ojibwe and a descendant of boarding school students, brings to light previously unpublished archival letters from the Flandreau school in South Dakota and the Haskell Institute in Kansas-letters written by students, parents and administrators. This correspondence chronicles the emotional and cultural impact that boarding schools had on individuals, families and communities. To assess that impact, the author examines several key areas: the effects of separation on children and parents; the dangers of illness; the nature of boarding school work; and the techniques of resistance and rebellion. The author's thoughtful approach and her willingness to let the letter writers tell their own stories allow the complexities and paradoxes of boarding school life to emerge unfettered by historical preconceptions or stereotypes. As a result, the voices of these letters become a testament not to the power of an institution, but to the resourcefulness and resilience of a people."-"Native Peoples,"

#### **About the Author**

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

### **Users Review**

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##### **Donald Lester:**

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