



# American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930

*Michael C. Coleman*

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From more than a hundred autobiographical accounts written by American Indians recalling their schooling in government and missionary institutions this book recovers a perspective that was almost lost.

In a system of pedagogy that was alien to their culture these and hundreds of others were wrested as youngsters from their tribal life and regimented to become American citizens. In the process of enlightening them to western codes and values, their memories of ethnic life were intentionally obscured for what was to be believed to be the greater good of the nation.

Drawing upon these Native American reminiscences reveals how young Indians responded to a system that attempted to eradicate the tribal codes that had nourished them. The Christian curriculum, the military-style discipline, the white staff of teachers and administrators, and the work-for-study demands were alien and bewildering to them, especially during their first days at the institutions.

The former pupils recall myriad kinds of adaptability, resistance, motivation, and rejection, as well as the many problems readjusting to changing tribal life upon their return from school. Here the history of the eighty-year epoch of such institutionalized schooling is placed in careful focus. Recounting this experience from the pupil's eyeview and comparing it with contemporary sources by white authors make this book a testament to the critical value of long-term autobiographical memory in the writing of history.

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