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Review of Indian Education in Canada: Volume 1: The Legacy

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Indian Education in Canada: Volume 1: The Legacy. Edited by Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and Don McCaskill. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986. Notes, illustrations, index. 180 pp. \$10.95.

This eight-essay volume offers a historical and regional overview of Indian education in Canada and deals largely with very specific examples of the types of education provided to Canada's Indian people up to the decade of the 1970s. Of note, the essays are mostly written by non-Indian authors, although all appear to be knowledgeable about their topics.

The introduction to the volume, written by the three editors, provides an admirable overview of Canada's approach to Indian education from the days of initial contact to the present. It goes beyond a simple introduction to the volume and places a complex topic into a comprehensive framework, presenting issues past and present and offsetting the historical presentation of policy with a section on "The Indian Response." This section introduces the Indian perspective through quotations from the spoken and written works of Indian people. Both as an introduction and in its own right, the overview presents issues pertaining to Indian education in Canada in a simple and understandable format.

While the eight succeeding essays are of interest to those involved in Indian education,

only two concern the Great Plains region. The first of these, "Creating Little Dominions Within the Dominion: Early Catholic Indian Schools in Saskatchewan and British Columbia," studies two schools to address issues of the residential school system operated by the missionaries in Canada. Gresko writes that "educational efforts and native responses to the residential school system varied according to the Native culture, the particular school programmes, and the nature of White settlement." The Qu'Appelle School at Lebret, Saskatchewan, still in operation, was founded in 1884 for Saulteaux, Assiniboine, Sioux, and especially Plains Cree students. This group had no special educational institutions until white contact. The essay outlines the routine imposed upon the students at Lebret, describes the facilities, and then speaks to the native response to both schools. Generally the response was negative although some specific activities, such as smallpox vaccination, were appreciated. In spite of the attempt to institutionalize education, throughout the history of the school the Indian people persisted in such traditional activities as dance gatherings. Overly well documented with ninety-four footnotes, this essay will satisfy the academic but it is readable by a more general audience.

The second essay of interest to the plains reader is "The Changing Experience of Indian Residential Schooling: Blue Quills, 1931-1970." Here Diane Perrson presents the history of one northeastern Alberta residential school from its missionary inception in 1931 through the assumption of control by the Indian people in September 1970. Blue Quills is important because it was the first school in Canada

officially to be administered by Indian people. Perrson divides the history of Blue Quills into three principal phases and characterizes each in relation to the Catholic church and to the Indian people. The third phase, 1960-1970, which was marked by a sit-in of approximately three hundred people, is of particular note. Perrson outlines how the evolution of Indian control at Blue Quills paralleled the growing political commitment to Indian control of Indian education. The changes, both in the school and in the growing Indian consciousness, typify the process that in the years following Blue Quills became commonplace. The essay is informative and calls on the experiences of those involved to lend authenticity to the account of the takeover of the school.

Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy brings a number of historical views to a rapidly changing and complex situation. The potential seen in the editors' essay, however, does not appear to be fully realized in this volume. Perhaps this will be remedied in the next volume(s). The essays are separate in focus, bound together by little more than the title and a common topic, but there is something here for most readers interested in Indian education in Canada. My criticism is that I am left with a feeling of reading something incomplete. I look forward to both this and the shortage of Indian authorship being addressed in the next volume(s).

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