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REVIEWS

American Indians in World War I: At War and At Home. By Thomas A. Britten. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. 256 pages. \$34.95 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

Cultural preservation versus forced assimilation is the perspective that Thomas A. Britten uses to explore the many facets of the World War I experience for Native Americans surviving both at home and abroad. The book argues that Native American cultural heritage was perpetuated and aided by the war effort, despite the irony that the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other government organizations felt that participation in the war would speed Native American assimilation into the dominant society.

The Native American experience in World War I should be and is described as a "patriotic contradiction" throughout the book. Many minorities fought and died in support of the United States and respects are given to the memories of these great soldiers. Native Americans served their country in disproportionate numbers to defend a flag that did not defend them. Britten describes nearly every reason Native Americans would have served and explains the complexity of the Native response to service.

World War I gave a new generation of Native Americans an opportunity to distinguish themselves among their tribespeople. Great acts of heroism and bravery allowed them access to leadership opportunities within their communities. The long standing warrior tradition of some tribes led both men and women to participate in the war, and Britten states that Native tradition often was strengthened as a result. In fact, rituals and customs manifested themselves in honor of Native American soldiers.

Britten taps topics in his book that might otherwise be overlooked in a book pertaining to more general World War I events and participants. For example, the book broaches the First World War's stereotypical perception of Native Americans as natural warriors. Many Native American soldiers lost their lives on European battlefields trying to live up to this belief.

The ideas behind the assimilation theories of the time turned, in part, on the belief that war service would provide Native Americans not only with an appreciation for modern society, but also with a complementary patriotism. This would in turn speed the assimilation process, leading to a solution to the

so-called "Indian problem." Conversely, military service provided Native Americans with exposure to members of many different tribes. As they learned of each, their knowledge promoted what the author calls "pan-Indianism." The book also includes some important comparisons among Native Americans and other minorities involved in World War I.

The early chapters of the book are well-grounded in their content. However, the later chapters should have been converted into charts and graphs dispersed throughout the first sections of the book. Overall this book examines and presents very interesting points about Native American involvement in World War I, and may be used as a supplemental text in history and American Indian studies courses. Without a doubt, readers will better understand the complexities of turn-of-the-century assimilation strategies and appreciate the different motivations that lead all Americans to service.

Alfonso E. Hernandez
Seattle, Washington

Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940. By Brenda J. Child. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. 143 pages. \$40.00 cloth; \$14.95 paper.

Drawing primarily from the archives of the Flandreau, Haskell, and Pipestone schools, Brenda Child's *Boarding School Seasons* focuses on letters written by students and their families. Child's investigation thus adds significantly to the work of previous scholars, including Sally McBeth, Celia Haig-Brown, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, who have employed oral history to place Indian peoples' stories at the center of the historical narrative. While acknowledging that any material found in school records must be met with a degree of skepticism, Child views the letters as a relatively uncensored opportunity to examine Indian attitudes and points of view.

Child begins the book with letters from her own family, which were recovered from boxes of materials stored in government archives. The first is from her great-grandfather, a former Carlisle School student, who wrote to the school officials at Flandreau in 1924, "I would like to have my daughter come home this summer Jeannette Jones she is got money to come send her home right away please" (p. xv). With these words, Child introduces one of the major themes of her book: American Indian parents' devotion to their children and their suffering as a result of the lengthy separations mandated by the school system. The parents' letters convey not only the anguish of separation, but also concern about the children's health and diet. In turn, the students' letters home, often returned by parents to the schools as evidence to document problems, describe their homesickness, their struggle to keep up with their workload, and their battle against disease. Together these letters reveal the degree to which American Indians lost control over key aspects of their lives as a result of forced assimilation. Nevertheless, as Child shows, these documents also record the resistance that students and their families