UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Phoenix Indian School. By Robert Trennert.

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7js5h69g

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 12(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Foster, Carl G.

Publication Date

1988

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

If they entered into the area at a time prior to the movement of the Nootkan and Chimaukuan groups onto the Olympic Peninsula, they would have developed their own coastal culture independently. Movement from the interior to the coast would also explain the archaeological record which shows earlier stone implements but later wood/stone tools and a corresponding shift from game animals to fishing. As Suttles points out, the Coast Salish were in place for a considerable time and underwent a series of phases.

The writing found in *Coast Salish Essays* tends to be in a popular style. Notions are often vague rather than explicit. For example, Suttles speaks of one group being "hosts to" another, leaving it unclear whether the visitors stay in the hosts' houses, camp in or adjacent to the host's village, or camp in an area of their own with the acknowledgment that they are allowed to do so by the group owning the territory. Other times he fails to make consistent statements regarding the vast number of related cultural factors he addresses. For example, in Essay 2 we are told that high status comes from sharing food. This appears to contradict Essay 1, where we were told that high status comes from being born into the right family.

Production problems with the volume, such as the maps (used as endpapers) being printed in the wrong order, are of minor consequence. Of major impact, to the specialist and layperson alike, are the failure of the index to list all occurrences of an entry and the absence of a detailed map of the Central Coast Salish peoples and their territory.

Fortunately, most of the problems outlined above do not detract from the majority of the arguments or the overall usefulness of the book.

Nile Thompson
Steilacoom Tribal Museum and University of Washington

Phoenix Indian School. By Robert Trennert. Los Angeles: Indian Press, 1984. 345 pp. \$23.50 Cloth. \$8.95 Paper.

The *Phoenix Indian School* is must reading for every American Indian and anyone interested in the American Indian.

Robert Trennert has recounted forty-four years of federal treatment of the American Indian. This chronology centers around the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its execution of federal policies. The portrayal of Phoenix Indian School offers insight into the education of the American Indian and lays a foundation for today's Bureau of Indian Affairs' education programming.

Trennert reported that the Phoenix Indian School was one of many "off reservation" schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He presented a picture of the school as being operated in accordance with military discipline, vocational training and elementary academic skills. He cynically pointed out that these curricula were school planned to terminate the student's "savage" ways and teach acceptable white values. According to Trennert, the school's goal was to produce American Indians who had the necessary white society values and skills to be a participant in that society.

Throughout this book, account after account was presented to show that tribal customs, dress and language were not accepted. Students were forbidden to speak their language or to practice their religious beliefs. Tribal enemies were often placed into the same dormitory and forced to interact. Any student caught speaking their native language or practicing their tribal custom was severely punished. Most importantly, students were prohibited from wearing customary clothing and were required to wear military uniforms. Consequently, all tribal customs and beliefs were rarely practiced.

The strong vocational offerings, Trennert felt, exploited the student and offered benefits to the school and the community. Because funding was always lacking, students performed a great deal of labor vital to operating the school. As the student became assimilated into the white society, girls were hired in the community as housekeepers and maids. Boys worked in the community's agrarian related fields. As Trennert pointed out, boys were viewed by the community as a threat to the working force while the girls were seen as a welcome addition in the home.

Phoenix Indian School was viewed as an asset to the community and an example of successful federal policies. For all who attended, the school left a lasting impression. Some students developed white society skills and were productive in the white community. Some returned to the reservation and used the white

society's views in leadership. Some became displaced and could not function in either the white or the Indian world. All were effected by the school's removal of "savage" values.

Phoenix Indian School is a four decade documentary of the federal government's policies toward the American Indian and the Bureau of Indian Affairs' execution of these policies. The school was viewed to be a successful operation where Indian students learned the white ways. But, account after account was presented which showed that students were forced to attend, forced to work and forced to give up the life of their father and their grandfather. This account of one federal government-run school offers insight into the education of the American Indian. This book addresses only a forty-four year period, but it strongly brings out values and beliefs which were present then and are present today in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The past determines the future. Is Trennert warning us about the future by showing us the past?

Carl G. Foster University of Arizona

The Good Red Road: Passages into Native America. By Kenneth Lincoln with Al Logan Slagle. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.

The Good Red Road is a composite story of events in the lives of the authors during the period roughly from 1975 to 1981. Kenneth Lincoln, accompanied by his four year old daughter, leads a group of four university students, one of whom is co-author Al Logan Slagle, in an ''on-the-road seminar.'' The seminar is intended to trace back the American Indian literature Lincoln teaches ''to where these Native American writings come from'' (page 8). The trip's second, more important, purpose is for the group to discover and experience the texture and meaning of the American Indian worlds through which they pass as they travel from California through Arizona, New Mexico, Nebraska, and South Dakota to Jamestown, North Dakota.

Those worlds are populated by Indians and whites of various hues. The American Indians met by the Lincoln entourage are a varied and fascinating lot. There are Navajo traders of art and