UCLA
American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title
Indian Orphanages. By Marilyn Irvin Holt.

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/68p279pk

Journal
American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 26(1)

ISSN
0161-6463

Author
Million, Dian

Publication Date
2002

DOI
10.17953

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

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

who had established their league on a vision of peace. In light of French wars of genocide against the Fox, one might dispute the rather passive characterization of the French role in these wars (p. 175). Indians certainly recognized the power of print, but it is surely an overstatement to assert that they "were amazed by writing, which they saw as truly magical" (pp. 188–189). Finally—an error that presumably survived from the French edition—Tulsa's Gilcrease Museum is in Oklahoma, not Arizona (p. 101).

Scholars will no doubt continue to debate the motivations and contributions of the many players in this multinational summit. There is room for further examination of the Great Peace as an Indian-Indian event in an context of longstanding and ongoing Native alliances, a perspective that might reduce the French to the role of supporting actors. Nevertheless, the *Great Peace of Montreal* effectively reconstructs the multiethnic character of North American diplomacy and clearly demonstrates the significance of the Great Peace in the French colonial project.

Colin G. Calloway
Dartmouth College

Indian Orphanages. By Marilyn Irvin Holt. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001. 336 pages. $34.95 cloth.

"They knew they were orphans but they didn't know what an orphan was," says Alfred Half Moon, a Shawnee recalling his own Oklahoma childhood in the early 1900s (p. 18). This is the dilemma that author Marilyn Holt confronts in this sturdy history of the growth of the Indian orphanage, an institution that had no counterpart in tribal society until a certain level of chaos made caring for children a burden beyond the ability of distressed and dislocated families. Holt addresses the social conditions that preceded this particular development across several Indian nations, time periods, and regions. Although she focuses at length on the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, and Chickasaw (they had the most institutions and records), her work also spends time with the Seneca, Ojibwa, and Sioux, among others. Sometimes this no-frills historical account actually becomes fascinating, particularly as Holt reconstructs the history of the Cherokee's exceptional management of their orphaned or destitute children. After their brutal removal from their homelands in Georgia, the Cherokee confronted a new problem; how best to care for the number of destitute and orphaned children that had survived the removal. Since these children were thought of as a best chance for a future Cherokee Nation, the matter was considered a priority. Although devoted to Western education and Westernization in general even before relocation, the Cherokee did not immediately adopt institutionalization as a substitute for family. Their own social experiment with orphanages began in 1871 with the Cherokee Orphan Asylum established with $4,000 in tribal funds. Completely independent of the federal boarding school system and located in Tahlequah, the governmental and educational capital of the Cherokee Nation, this institution

reflected two important differences between residential schools and orphanages. First, because the Cherokee had a long history of managing their own schooling, they considered the care of destitute and orphaned children as an educational endeavor rather than a reformatory project or a charity. This is reflected in their selective use of several schooling options to fit the needs and prospects of dependent children. Second, they understood the importance of keeping the children in their own care and under the tutelage of their own nation. Holt's careful examination of Cherokee school management makes her subsequent account of the dissolution of the Cherokee Nation in the early part of the twentieth century and the loss of their institution to federal management other prime examples in a lengthy list of US bureaucratic overkills. Making Indian children into federal wards parallels the later propensity of Oklahoma citizens to actually make Indian children into orphans to gain control of their resources that became the riveting subject of Linda Hogan's novel, *Mean Spirit* (1992).

Beginning her history with the development of the Indian Child Welfare Act, Holt sensitizes the reader to the way that tribal children have often been pawns within succeeding generations of evolving US social/economic policies. Holt's long interest in orphaned children (her first book was *Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America* [1994]) is put to good use here where she differentiates between boarding schools and orphanages, a distinction she says is not usually made. Although interrelated, she reminds us that there is a history of Indian children in other institutional sites (orphanages, tuberculosis hospitals, et al.) that has yet to be fully examined. While it is true that the two experiences often overlap, sometimes in the course of one person's life, she makes the point that it was a distinct experience with its own advantages and losses. However, the differences sometimes become more apparent when you look at the tribal people's experience with establishing such institutions.

By comparing the more protracted and proactive experiences of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek peoples with the Lakota and Dakota, whom Holt calls Sioux, she is able to illustrate how prior Westernization, cooperation and familiarity with missionaries, and timing all had a place in the development of institutions. With no prior history with Westernized school systems and impoverished by their extended wars with the United States, the Lakota are actually ignored as a likely prospect to target for long-lasting or financially supported orphanages by Catholic dioceses, a primary missionizing force in the area. Also, Holt believes that the white public's image of the Lakota as "savage," "uneducable," and as participants in Custer's demise actually retard any church or lay effort to establish a modicum of social support for institutions among them in the waning nineteenth century. Thus little or no financial support materialized for any project beyond the reformatory residential schools modeled after military disciplines in this region. Seriously out of step with the height of interest in institutionalization (late 1800s through the early 1900s), Catholic orphanages for Lakota and Dakota children were not established with any seriousness until the 1930s.

War, relocation, disease, starvation, and death are among the occasions that provide the social stresses and ultimately the opportunities for tribal peo-

Downloaded from http://meridian.allenpress.com/aicrj/article-pdf/26/1/129/1360428/aicr_26_1_10506125v2850052.pdf by University of California Los Angeles user on 19 January 2023

ples to make the decision to care for children outside of their families. That decision was never taken lightly. By positioning her study in several moments of social welfare discourse she is also able to show the changing mores of US child welfare advocates whose beliefs encompass institutional care and then abandon that answer in later generations to programs that took children completely out of their cultures as they were fostered and/or adopted out to mostly white families. This is a sensitive shift that Holt picks up on since it is this move that "sets the stage for a full scale invasion to take the children"(p. 254).

For those who have a greater familiarity with the history of residential schools and Indian history, it will be hard not to be bored sometimes with her patient recounting of US Indian policy, church and government collusion, removal, tribal dissolution, and the idea of forced Westernization through educational institutions. A new generation of American Indian historians have already done this with more skill (K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* [1994] and Brenda Childs, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* [1998], Devon A. Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851–1909* [1993]) while leaving us with a more nuanced account of policy and Indian families and children's interventions into this quintessential colonial process. Lomawaima once commented on the usual failings of histories heavily dependent on archives rather than tribal peoples' own accounts: "The historical narrative manufactured in the process, laudatory or critical, begins with *federal* as the subject and encodes *Native American* or *Indian* as its object, mirroring the crusade even as it strives to delineate it"(Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*, p. xii). This work, too, is heavily reliant on the official voice and lacks the tribal person's account. Except for an occasional first-hand tribal voice, we are left with only the voices of the administrators, missionaries, and journalists accounts. Holt does reference much of the new boarding-school literature as her secondary sources and makes wonderful use of the orphanage records opening the way for further research into the subject. It is left for another researcher to find the voices that I could not here. Yet it is the differences that Holt finds in the experience of being an orphaned or desperately poor child in Indian County that she meritoriously responds to. One should not dismiss this fine attempt at interweaving some complex issues. It's a beginning.

The author is a not an academic and I think she assumes, rightly so, that her audience, the proverbial American public, may not know much about Indian family histories. Unfortunately, in 2002, this is still the undisputed truth, so that a reader who finds this book after reading her first, more accessible book on immigrant families and orphan trains would be able to relate this book to a larger picture of US attempts to assimilate difference by "educating" or removing large numbers of socially displaced children from their communities. Her work does not shy from the real problem of Indian children's welfare in the United States. She is sensitive to and able to illustrate how the United States has both created and then attempted to ameliorate the resulting disastrous outcomes of their policies in Indian Country. To educate that public in anyway about the designed and resulting problems of Indian

families after the nineteenth-century institutional projects and twentieth-century social welfare blunders is a project that has my whole-hearted support.

Dian Million
University of California, Berkeley

The Institute of American Indian Arts: Modernism and U.S. Indian Policy. By Joy L. Gritton. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000. 208 pages. $45.00 cloth; $22.95 paper.

Joy Gritton's recent work presents the argument that the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and now a congressionally sponsored tribal art college in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was not in its early years the "cross-cultural refuge it was espoused to be" (p. 2). Rather, she claims, the IAIA's curriculum "favored a Western, modern aesthetic dominated by individualism . . . over indigenous aesthetics distinguished by concern for communal welfare" (p. 2). Gritton's analysis, which depends heavily on archival and written resources, attends largely to the Rockefeller Foundation sponsored precursors of the IAIA, the 1959 conference Directions in Indian Art and the 1960–1963 Southwestern Indian Arts Project at the University of Arizona. Webs of influence are drawn between institutions (the Museum of Modern Art, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board), individuals (notably Rene d'Harnoncourt), and politics (BIA termination efforts and anti-communism sentiments) that led to the creation of the IAIA.

A clear distinction should be articulated from the outset that the intent Gritton tediously outlines (IAIA administrators and supporters backing assimilationist policies) does not necessarily equate to the outcome of the theory in practice. In essence, this BIA- and Rockefeller-sponsored "experiment in the arts" has since its inception in 1962 continuously challenged its students, faculty, and administrators to think critically about Indian education and the place of the arts (in all its complexities) in tribal communities. Gregory Cajete states this succinctly in the introduction when he argues that despite an assimilationist foundation, many IAIA students find their cultural selves at the school, lending to a sense of cultural revivalism. Unlike Cajete, however, I doubt that this work will create dialogue for revitalizing the institute, for Gritton's book is condemnatory of the school throughout, a stance that actually weakens her theoretical aims.

The first passages of the book reference IAIA curriculum offerings from the 1960s, such as "The Artist in Business" and etiquette training, as examples of the BIA educators' efforts toward forcing the students to adopt "American consumerist habits" and thus an assimilated lifestyle. The faulty nature of this assumption lies in a premise that saturates the text: for a Native person to engage in mainstream education and business or to live a lifestyle that is described as modern necessitates their rejection of tribal values. This either/or philosophy projects a one-dimensional status onto Native Americans and robs individuals and communities from incorporating tools