



Native Students at Work: American Indian Labor and Sherman Institute's Outing Program, 1900- 1945 (Indigenous Confluences)

Kevin Whalen

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Native Students at Work tells the stories of Native people from around the American Southwest who participated in labor programs at Sherman Institute, a federal Indian boarding school in Riverside, California. The school placed young Native men and women in and around Los Angeles as domestic workers, farmhands, and factory laborers. For the first time, historian Kevin Whalen reveals the challenges these students faced as they left their homes for boarding schools and then endured an "outing program" that aimed to strip them of their identities and cultures by sending them to live and work among non-Native people. Tracing their journeys, Whalen shows how male students faced low pay and grueling conditions on industrial farms near the edge of the city, yet still made more money than they could near their reservations. Similarly, many young women serving as domestic workers in Los Angeles made the best of their situations by tapping into the city's indigenous social networks and even enrolling in its public schools. As Whalen reveals, despite cruel working conditions and poor treatment, Native people used the outing program to their advantage whenever they could, forming urban indigenous communities and sharing money and knowledge gained in the city with those back home. ?

A mostly overlooked chapter in Native American and labor histories, Native Students at Work deepens our understanding of the boarding school experience and sheds further light on Native American participation in the workforce.



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