

Walking in My Mother's Shoes: One Wisconsin Family's Experience at the Hayward Indian Boarding School



Kids Matter Inc.

May 2023

Resources

Where to learn more about the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and its long-lasting, ongoing impact on Indigenous people.

Kids Matter Inc. Website



[Native American Children: Kids Matter Inc. Web Page](#)

If you are caring for a Native American child, this page from the Kids Matter Inc. website can help you understand your child's rights, history and culture.

Reports and Articles

[Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report](#)

In June 2021, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland -- the first Native American ever to serve as a cabinet secretary -- directed the Department of the Interior to investigate the Federal Indian Boarding School system, focusing on the location of schools, burial sites and identification of children who attended the schools. This 106-page report was issued in May 2022.

[The Hayward Indian School: Realities Of An Off-Reservation Boarding School](#) by Titus Overturf

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Written as a senior thesis at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in 2009, this report provides an in-depth look, with no punches pulled, at what took place at the Hayward Indian Boarding School.



[Visibly Indigenous: How Milwaukee’s Native Community Is Working to Be Un-Erased](#)
Milwaukee Magazine, April 6, 2022

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, August 19, 2021

[“Wisconsin had at least 11 Native American boarding schools. Here’s what to know about them.”](#)

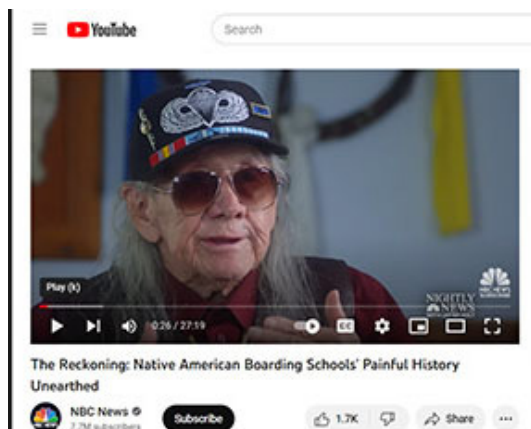
Oral Histories

[Shillinger, Sarah R, ““They Never Told Us They Wanted to Help Us:” An oral history of Saint Joseph’s Indian Industrial School” \(1995\). Dissertations available from ProQuest. AAI9543142.](#)

As part of Shillinger’s dissertation research, she recorded interviews with former students of the Saint Joseph’s Indian Industrial School located in Keshena, Wisconsin on the Menominee Reservation.

The [taped interviews](#) are available for library use at Marquette University in Milwaukee.

Videos



[The Reckoning: An American Genocide – NBC News](#)

NBC News’ Cynthia McFadden reports on the dark history of Native American boarding schools in the United States

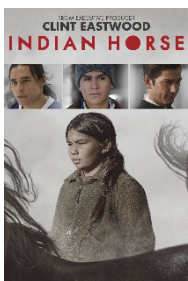
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[The Vanishing: Native American Boarding School Survivors Share Their Stories – MSNBC](#)

Survivors of government-funded boarding schools meant to forcibly assimilate Native American children say they were physically, emotionally and sexually abused. “Survivors have been trying to tell these stories for decades....”

[Schools Tried To Forcibly Assimilate Indigenous Kids. Can The U.S. Make Amends? – PBS](#)

In 2021 A mass grave with the remains of 215 children was found near the now-closed Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia, Canada, exposing a dark history of forcibly assimilating Indigenous people. The discovery helped inspire U.S. Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland to start a federal initiative to “uncover the truth and the lasting consequences of these schools” in the United States.



[Indian Horse](#)

This 2017 feature film follows the life of Native Canadian Saul Indian Horse as he survives residential school and life amid the racism of the 1970s. A talented hockey player, Saul must find his own path as he battles stereotypes and alcoholism. Available through Netflix, Prime Video and YouTube rental.

Books

The image is a screenshot of the Goodreads website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with "goodreads" logo, "Home", "My Books", "Browse", "Community", and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there is a section titled "Listopia" with a sub-section "Residential Schools". Underneath, there is a description: "Books about Indian Residential Schools/Boarding Schools/Day Schools. Fiction or Non-fiction." and a "Residential Schools" title. Below this, there is a list of five books with their covers, titles, authors, ratings, and "Want to Read" buttons. The books are: 1. "Fatty Legs: A True Story" by Christy Jordan Fenton; 2. "I Am Not a Number" by Jenny Kay Dupuis; 3. "Five Little Indians" by Michelle Good; 4. "When We Were Alone" by David Alexander Robertson; 5. "No Time to Say Goodbye: Children's Stories of Kuper Island Residential School".

BOOKS

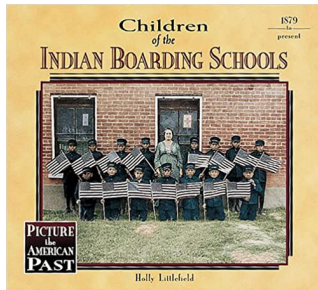
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Books

The online reading website Goodreads has links to an extensive [collection](#) of books on Native American boarding and day schools.

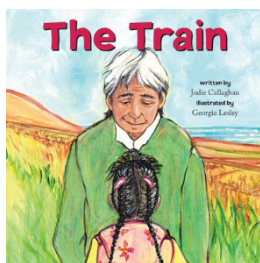
Here are selections from the Goodreads list for readers of different ages.

For Children



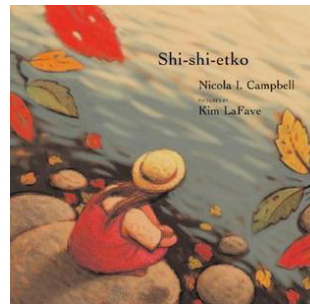
[Children of the Indian Boarding Schools](#)
by Holly Littlefield
Non-Fiction/Educational

This book uses short, simple text linked to large historical photographs to bring to life the unique ways in which children lived and worked in an earlier era.



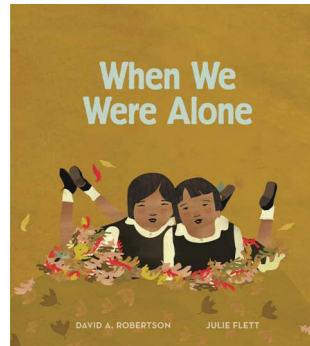
[The Train](#)
by Jodie Callaghan
Historical Fiction

Ashley meets her great-uncle by the old train tracks near their reserve in Nova Scotia. When she sees his sadness, he shares with her the history of those tracks: Uncle tells her that during his childhood, the train would bring their community supplies, but there came a day when the train took away something much more important.



[Shi-shi-etko](#)
by Nicola Campbell & Kim Lafave
Historical Fiction

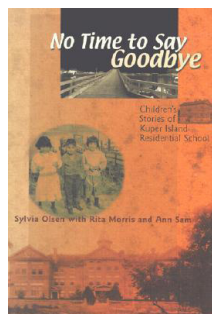
In just four days young Shi-shi-etko will have to leave her family and all that she knows to attend residential school. She spends her last days at home treasuring the beauty of her world: the dancing sunlight, the tall grass, each shiny rock, the tadpoles in the creek, her grandfather's paddle song. Her mother, father and grandmother, each in turn, share valuable teachings that they want her to remember. And so, Shi-shi-etko carefully gathers her memories for safekeeping.



[When We Were Alone](#)
by David A. Robertson & Julie Flett
Historical Fiction

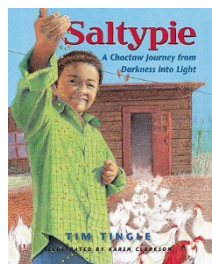
When a young girl helps tend to her grandmother's garden, she begins to notice things that make her curious. Why does her grandmother have long braided hair and beautifully colored clothing? Why does she speak another language and spend so much time with her family? As she asks her grandmother about these things, she is told about life in a residential school a long time ago, where all of these things were taken away. *When We Were Alone* is a story about a difficult time in history and, ultimately, one of empowerment and strength.

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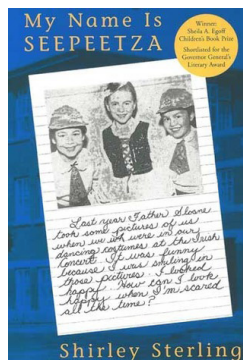
No Time to Say Goodbye: Children's Stories of Kuper Island Residential School by Sylvia Olsen with Rita Morris & Ann Sam Historical Fiction

A fictional account of five children sent to aboriginal boarding school in British Columbia, based on the recollections of a number of Tsartlip First Nations people. These unforgettable children are taken by government agents from Tsartlip Day School to live at Kuper Island Residential School. The five are isolated on the small island and life becomes regimented by the strict school routine. They experience the pain of homesickness and confusion while trying to adjust to a world completely different from their own.



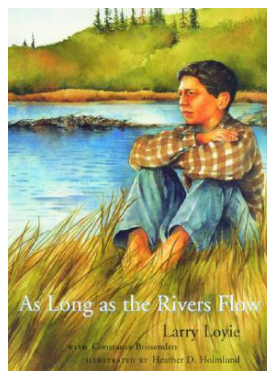
Saltpie: a Choctaw Journey from Darkness into Light by Tim Tingle Historical Fiction

Tingle says: "Stories of modern Indian families rarely grace the printed page. Long before I began writing, I knew this story must be told." Seen through the innocent eyes of a young boy, this is the story of one family's efforts to honor the past while struggling to gain a foothold in modern America.



My name is Seepeetza by Shirley Sterling Historical Fiction

At 6 years old, Seepeetza is taken from her happy life on Joyaska Ranch to live as a boarder at Kalamak Indian Residential School. Life at the school is not easy, but Seepeetza still manages to find some bright spots. Always, thoughts of home make her school life bearable.

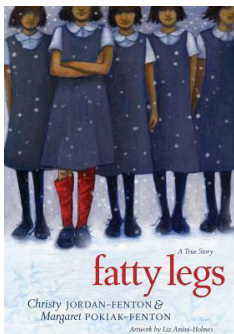


As Long as the Rivers Flow by Larry Loyie & Constance Brissenden Non-Fiction

The story of Loyie's last summer before entering residential school. It is a time of learning and adventure. He cares for an abandoned baby owl and watches his grandmother make winter moccasins. He helps the family prepare for a hunting and gathering trip.

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For Young Adults

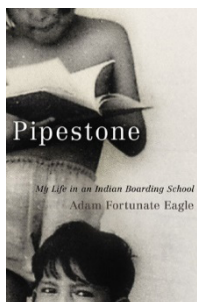


Fatty Legs (10th Anniversary Edition)

by Margaret- Olemaun Pokiak-Fenton & Christy Jordan-Fenton

Biography/Autobiography

Pokiak-Fenton's powerful story of residential school in the far North has been reissued to commemorate the memoir's 10th anniversary with updates to the text, reflections on the book's impact, and a bonus chapter from the acclaimed follow-up, [A Stranger at Home](#). New content includes a foreword from Dr. Debbie Reese, noted Indigenous scholar and founder of American Indians in Children's Literature. Christy Jordan-Fenton, mother of Margaret's grandchildren and a key player in helping Margaret share her stories, discusses the impact of the book in a new preface.



Pipestone: My Life in an Indian Boarding School

by Adam Fortunate Eagle

Non-Fiction

A renowned activist recalls his childhood years in an Indian boarding school. Best known as a leader of the Indian takeover of Alcatraz Island in 1969, Adam Fortunate Eagle no offers an unforgettable memoir of his years as a young student at Pipestone Indian Boarding School in Minnesota. Were all Indian boarding schools the dispiriting places that history suggested? This book allows readers to decide for themselves.

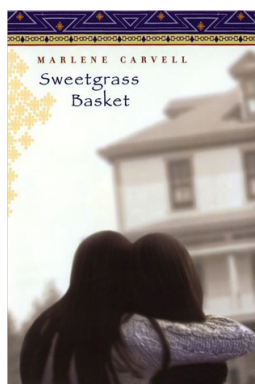


Apple: Skin to the Core

by Eric Gansworth

Memoir

In this YA memoir-in-verse, Gansworth tells the story of his life, of an Onondaga family living among the Tuscaroras, and Native people in America – including the damaging legacy of government boarding schools. In doing so he grapples with a slur common in Native communities for someone “red on the outside, white on the inside,” and reclaims it.



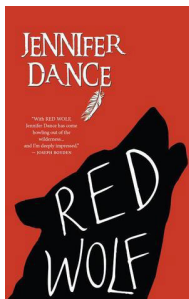
Sweetgrass Basket

by Marlene Carvell

Historical Fiction

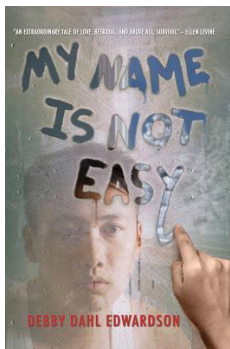
In prose poetry and alternating voices, Carvell weaves a heartbreakingly beautiful story based on the real-life experiences of Native-American children. Mattie and Sarah are two Mohawk sisters who are sent to an off-reservation school after the death of their mother. Subject to intimidation and corporal punishment, and with little hope of contact with their father, the girls are taught menial tasks to prepare them for a life domestic. How Mattie and Sarah protect their culture, memories of their family life, and their love for each other makes a powerful, unforgettable historical novel.

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Red Wolf by Jennifer Dance Historical Fiction

In the late 1800s, both Native people and wolves are being forced from the land. Starving and lonely, an orphaned timber wolf is befriended by a boy named Red Wolf. But under the Indian Act, Red Wolf is forced to attend a residential school far from the life he knows, and the wolf, Crooked Ear, is alone once more. Courage, love and fate reunite the pair, and they embark on a perilous journey home. But with winter closing in, will Red Wolf and Crooked Ear survive? And if they do, what will they find?



My Name is Not Easy by Debby Dahl Edwardson Historical Fiction

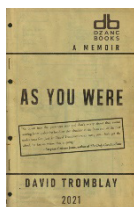
Luke knows his l'nupiaq name is full of sounds white people can't pronounce. He knows he'll have to leave it behind when he and his brothers are sent to boarding school hundreds of miles from their Arctic village. At Sacred Heart School things are different: Instead of family, there are students – Eskimo, Indian, White – who line up on different sides of the cafeteria like there's some kind of war going on. Luke struggles to survive at Sacred Heart. But he's not the only one. Each has their own story to tell. But once their separate stories come together, things at Sacred Heart School -- and in the wider world -- will never be the same.



For Adults

Grandmother's Grandchild: My Crow Indian Life by Alma Hogan Snell Memoir/Biography

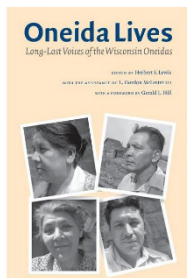
The remarkable story of Alma Hogan Snell (1923-2008), a Crow woman brought up by her grandmother, the famous medicine woman Pretty Shield. Snell grew up during the 1920s and 1930s, part of the second generation of Crows to be born into reservation life. Like many of her contemporaries, she experienced poverty, personal hardships, and prejudice and left home to attend federal Indian schools.



As You Were: A Memoir by David Tromblay Autobiography

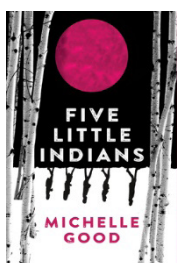
In sharp and unflinching prose, Tromblay recounts his childhood: bouncing between his father, who wrestles with anger, alcoholism, and a traumatic brain injury; his grandmother, who survived Indian boarding schools but mistook the corporal punishment she endured for proper child-rearing; and his mother, a part-time waitress, dancer and locksmith, who hides from David's father in church basements and the folded-down back seat of her car until winter forces her to abandon her son on his grandmother's doorstep. Years later, David confronts the compounded traumas of his childhood, searching for the domino that fell and forced his family into the cycle of brutality and denial of their own identity.

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[Oneida Lives: Long-Lost Voices of the Wisconsin Oneidas](#) by Herbert S. Lewis, Gerald L. Hiss, & L. Gordon McLester III Non-Fiction

In this intimate volume, the long-lost voices of Wisconsin Oneida men and women speak of all aspects of life: growing up, work and economic struggles, family relations, belief and religious practice, boarding-school life, love, sex, sports, and politics. These voices are drawn from a collection of handwritten accounts recently rediscovered after more than fifty years, the result of WPA Federal Writers' Project undertaking called the Oneida Ethnological Study (1940-42) in which a dozen Oneida men and women were hired to interview their families and friends and record their own experiences and observations. Selected from more than five hundred biographical narratives, these sixty-five chronicles, told by fifty-eight women and men, present a picture of Oneida Indian life from 1880s, before the Dawes Allotment Act, through World War I and the Great Depression, to the beginning of World War II. Despite the narrators' struggles against harsh economic conditions, the theft of their land, and neglect, their firsthand histories are rendered with frankness and wit and present a remarkable picture of an era and a people.

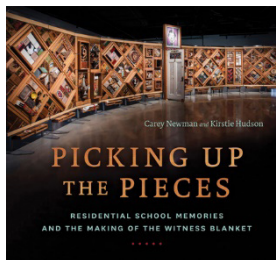


[Five Little Indians](#) by Michelle Good Historical Fiction

Taken from their families when they are very small and sent to a remote, church-run residential school, Kenny,

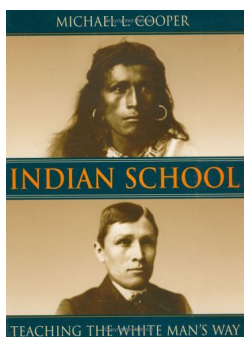
Lucy, Clara, Howie and Maisie are barely out of childhood when they are finally released after years of detention. With compassion and insight, *Five Little Indians* chronicles the desperate quest of these residential school survivors to come to terms with their past and, ultimately, find a way forward.

For Everyone:



[Picking Up the Pieces: Residential School Memories and the Making of the Witness Blanket](#) by Carey Newman Non-Fiction

The story of the making of the Witness Blanket, a living work of art conceived and created by Indigenous artist Carey Newman. It details hundreds of items collected from residential schools across Canada: everything from bricks, photos and letters to hockey skates and braids. Every object tells a story.



[Indian School: Teaching the White Man's Way](#) by Michael Cooper Non-Fiction

Cooper examines the Indian Schools and tells the personal stories, often in their own words, of several young students, including Zitkala-Sa, who wrote: "Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God."