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Education for extinction is a history of the American Indians education during the assimilation era precisely in boarding schools. Adams explains that the boarding schools were used by the government as the major communication channel for communicating the American Indian issues. Even if the student failed in the assimilation, the schools left cultural and psychological marks on the lives of the students.
The war was against the Native American children in the classrooms and dormitories of government schools. Those in the authority thought that taking Indian students from their homes for long periods could cause civilization of the white and the child's memories of the Indian war would fade away with time. The assault to the Native Americans was done in many ways. Some of them include that; the students were given humiliating punishments, they faced attacks on their ancient religion, and they were also assigned new names and being suppressed because of their tribal languages.
Adam reveals how the graduates had a difficult time in establishing their lives and how they used their school experience and knowledge in negotiating for the tribal and personal survival in a world that was full of the white men. Most of the years spent in boarding schools by the Native Americans had a great impact on their lives. The author organizes the book into four sections that was taking place during that time. The first section is the civilization section. The section shows the philosophy that was used for assimilation, the creation of movement, such as the Indian reform movement, different types of school models and the emergence of the Indian education system.
The second section was the education section which focused on the ways the schools were established, how the classroom environment was established and the ceremonies that were observed during the academic years. The third section is the response and this explains how the students reacted in the boarding schools in the way they resisted and how some accommodated the new system. He tries to research on the effect of assimilation to the students as they go back to their homes long after they were subjected to the Indian education system in the year 1920s.
Adams insists that the Indian school administration comprised of multinational institutions with different leaders, community support and the student congregation. The local communities had a different obligation in supporting the school while those who controlled the school had certain agenda and personalities that shaped the institutions. The students came with different knowledge and experience from different backgrounds from those who were schooling in America. Some Indian commissioners tried to change and unify the education system through national legislation and the bureaucratic structures, but the politics on the local level is what controlled the direction of the schools.
Adam uses the government boarding school as a forum in analyzing the intercultural relationship, cultural tenacity and in analyzing the identity information. By doing this, the author criticizes the replacement that took place that caused the cultural change through which Christian reformers who hoped to replace the trial traditions with the American identity.