



Indian School Days

Basil H. Johnston

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This book is the humorous, bitter-sweet autobiography of a Canadian Ojibwa who was taken from his family at age ten and placed in Jesuit boarding school in northern Ontario. It was 1939 when the feared Indian agent visited Basil Johnston's family and removed him and his four-year-old sister to St. Peter Claver's school, run by the priests in a community known as Spanish, 75 miles from Sudbury.

"Spanish! It was a word synonymous with residential school, penitentiary, reformatory, exile, dungeon, whippings, kicks, slaps, all rolled into one," Johnston recalls. But despite the aching loneliness, the deprivation, the culture shock and the numbing routine, his story is engaging and compassionate. Johnston creates marvelous portraits of the young Indian boys who struggled to adapt to strange ways and unthinking, unfeeling discipline. Even the Jesuit teachers, whose flashes of humor occasionally broke through their stern demeanor, are portrayed with an understanding born of hindsight.

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