

Indigenous Women, Work and History 1940-1980

Mary Jane Logan McCallum

Lack of study leads to erroneous assumptions that Indigenous men were the main or sole source of support for family's survival. Carol Williams's seasonal labour and doorstep economies late 19th century BC, Tressa Berman kinship, production of goods, wage work and informal economies North Dakota - women essential to family survival. Argue shift from products women made to women's labour in making products. Few studies after the war and few bridge before and after war. Most non-white women (Patty Leow) did not have Rosie the Riveter jobs – worked in clerical, domestic, telephone, etc.

Native women workers subject to common understanding that for women work in cities bad for women. Native women worked as domestics, field racialized and gendered. Pg 6. Labour part of colonial apparatus meant to extinguish Aboriginal title and status. Employment twinned with cultural decline and interation. Aboriginal workers themselves associate wage labour with social and cultural responsibilities of building Indigenous communities and resisting Canadian state. Taught to think of Aboriginal women as private sphere individuals. In public Native women suffered the worst moral and social regulation of the era, subjected to separate schooling, added surveillance, ad special laws meant to contain and discipline them". Balance gender, Indigeneity, patriarchy, colonialism?

Modernity and tradition false dichotomy. Discomfort with Aboriginal modernity. Shift from historical to sociological research. After fur trade and buffalo deemed irrelevant to the economy. Historians, easy to find proof of absence vs presence.

Domestic labour – location of girls in Northern Ontario residential schools as domestics in Ottawa; Whiteness and nursing, Aboriginal nursing ; Placement and Relocation program (hair dressers), teachers. Community Health Representatives.

She argues that "Native women were not displaced by modernity, but rather laboured in modern Native ways from the 1940s to the 1970s". pg. 20

Native women worked at federally run, segregated Indian schools and hospitals and homes of non-local, itinerant workforce of church and government officials. Waged work made invisible as posed as transition from training in schools.

Second domestic labour private homes, hotels, tourist resorts, non-Indian hospitals and homes for elderly.

Young women's help at home counted on by multigenerational families, but when family resources strained wage work as housekeeper, farm labourer, waitress, secretary, department store clerk sought. For family and respondents domestic labour was part of longer list of jobs that included "waitressing, working as a cook.." pg. 25 and domestic work associated with hard times. Domestic work associated with a social, traveling life, widen social circle, work could be readily obtained. Pg 25

1880s – 1951 "half-day" system, split day between academic and training. Supposed to be lessons in self-sufficiency. Forced to stay to 16 in order to fill labour needs of institutions. Local demand was strong. Apprenticeship domestic service, then placement as domestics once left the schools. Indian hospitals also depended on Native domestic labour. "

Pg.45 Ottawa placement program. Principal Blanchard of Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf Mutes requested from DIA, 3 waitresses (clean rooms, set tables, serve food, clear tables, use dishwashing machine. \$35/month compared to war industry work which was 19.33 – 31.81/week.

“The state treated all Indian labour as principally ward status. Sometimes “ward status” was used by young women to resist their parents demands that they leave employment. Women who did not comply with conditions of work, etc. disciplined, sent back to schools for retraining, or institutionalized as incorrigible.

Indian Placement and Relocation Program – DIA 1957 -male trades, relocation to cities, focus on young men, young families, program also tracked and studied social migration. Women – decline, vulnerability, success in narratives. IPRP – most popular programs business college – stenography, clerking, secretarial, and then hairdressing. Mirrors Canada wide trend for women. The program had a lot of failure, one women left for waitressing, paid better and more enjoyable.