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## **Former Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Added to the National Register of Historic Places**

**Mount Pleasant, Michigan** – The National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, notified the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan that it listed the former Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, Mount Pleasant, Isabella County, Michigan in the National Register of Historic Places. The property encompasses extant former school buildings, the grounds associated with them and the Mission Creek Cemetery, including agricultural and woodland areas that historically formed parts of the school campus. The Keeper of the National Register listed the property on February 28, 2018.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archaeological resources. The former Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School is the 6<sup>th</sup> property in Isabella County to be given this distinction since 1974.

The Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School consisted of 37 buildings on 320 acres of land, with an average enrollment of 300 American Indian students per year in grades K-8. The school operated from 1893 to 1934. Like other American Indian boarding schools, students were forbidden to speak their language, honor their culture, and practice their spirituality. The students performed work such as laundry, farm work, cleaning, and other manual labor for the majority of the school day. They also received basic academic instruction for the remainder of the day. It represents the U.S. Federal Government's policy of cultural assimilation and genocide of Native American people. It was the only Federal boarding school in Michigan and the principle boarding school for many tribes throughout the Great Lakes.

The Saginaw Chippewa's Tribal Historic Preservation Office and Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Committee, with the assistance of faculty & students from Central Michigan University and special consultants, have been working on the nomination application package since 2015. The State Historic Preservation Review Board approved the nomination of the former Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School to the National Register of Historic Places at its meeting in Lansing, Michigan on January 13, 2017. Interim Tribal Historic Preservation Officer William Johnson received the official National Register of Historic Places notification letter and certificate on March 15, 2018.

Mr. William Johnson explains, “Since 1991, the Ziibiwing Cultural Society has been working diligently to document the history of the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School and its students. Recently, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, Central Michigan University and the City of Mount Pleasant were honored with a 2016 Governor’s Award for Historic Preservation. Governor Rick Snyder recognized our archaeological research and educational initiatives to understand the lives of the boarding school students and to promote healing. The Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School is now forever recognized on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district worthy of preservation. We’re very proud of our cultural and historical preservation efforts because we have worked together collaboratively to acknowledge the resilience of our ancestors and to always remember those that never came home.”

The 1855-56 Treaty with the Chippewa of Saginaw set aside six adjoining townships of land within Isabella County that would be used towards “the benefit of said Indians,” and that such benefits would include the “purchase and sale of land for school-houses, churches, and educational purposes.” A subsequent 1864 Treaty with the Saginaw, Swan Creek and Black River Bands provided for the establishment and support for ten years of a “manual-labor school” for the Indians to be run by the Methodist Missionary Society. In 1891, an Act of Congress appropriated funds for the purchase of land and construction of buildings for the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School.

Public Act 208 was signed into law by Governor Jennifer Granholm and became effective on October 25, 2010. The act authorized conveyance of a tract of land (the former Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School campus) to the City of Mount Pleasant and Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan. For \$1 each the City was offered 311.14 acres and the Tribe was offered 8.86 acres, which included six historic boarding school buildings and the Mission Creek Cemetery. The City and the Tribe were given 180 days to render a decision on whether to accept or reject the conveyances. On April 20, 2011, the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Council voted to accept their land conveyance.

While listing in the National Register does not place any legal restrictions on a property, it does allow for consideration in the planning for federal, federally-assisted, or federally-licensed projects; provides eligibility for certain federal tax benefits; qualifies properties for federal assistance for historic preservation grants, when funds are available; serves as a catalyst for economic development; fosters community pride; and promotes heritage tourism. Additionally, some granting organizations require or look favorably upon National Register-listed properties.

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