



# The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe Of Michigan

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DATE:** January 31, 2017

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### **State Historic Preservation Review Board approves nomination of the former Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School to the National Register of Historic Places**

The State Historic Preservation Review Board approved a nomination of the former Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School to the National Register of Historic Places at its meeting in Lansing, Michigan on Friday, January 13, 2017. The nominated property encompassed 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.

Robert O. Christensen National Register Coordinator at the State Historic Preservation Office presented the nomination to the State Historic Preservation Review Board.

Mr. Christensen explains, “The speakers from the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe showcased the importance and meaning of the school to all the Michigan tribes and made a strong impression on the SHPO staff that I spoke to. It is one thing to know about the history as a historian, and understand that our history is not all positive, but quite another – and far more valuable and instructive – but to be presented with living history, spoken in a language that would have been forbidden at the school, by exhibiting clothes that would have been forbidden, and hearing from descendants of those who lived the history and what it meant to them was truly impactful.”

The 1855-56 Treaty with the Chippewa of Saginaw set aside twelve 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.

The Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School is a property that is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our collective history. 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. Traditional boys and girls regalia was present during the presentation to represent the unfulfilled lives of the 225 students that perished while attending the school as documented by the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeway’s’ Research Center.

During a public comment period, William Johnson Interim Tribal Historic Preservation Officer defended the nomination along with Dr. Sarah Surface Evans of Central Michigan University’s Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Science, Michael Fisher of the Saginaw Chippewa Planning Department and Shannon Martin, Director of the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways.

“It was an honor to present information to the State Historic Preservation Review Board. We were able to impart why the designation was being sought, what the site and the designation means for the tribe and how the site will be used in the future. It made me very proud when the twelve Federally-recognized Indian Tribes in the State of Michigan were called by name because their ancestors were former students of the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School as well,” Mr. Johnson said.

On April 9, 2013, the National Park Service approved the proposal of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan to assume certain State Historic Preservation Office duties within the Tribe’s reservation and on tribal lands in Michigan. A primary responsibility of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan’s Tribal Historic Preservation Office is to nominate eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places. The former Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School is within the boundaries of the Isabella Indian Reservation.

Mr. Christensen has been with the State Historic Preservation Office for over 38 years and has seen over 1,700 nominations come through the office. He mentions, “This was an unforgettable part of my long experience with SHPO and with the review board. The national register designation will help to mark the history and help in identifying this as one of the places across the country where similar history took place.”

The nomination will be forwarded to the National Register, part of the U. S. Department of the Interior’s National Park Service for formal listing in the register. The listing will provide recognition as part of a federal list of properties across the country evaluated against a standard criteria as important to the nation’s heritage.

Please contact Erik Rodriguez, Interim Public Relations Director, at (989) 775-4076 or at [erodriguez@sagchip.org](mailto:erodriguez@sagchip.org) for more information on the announcement.

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