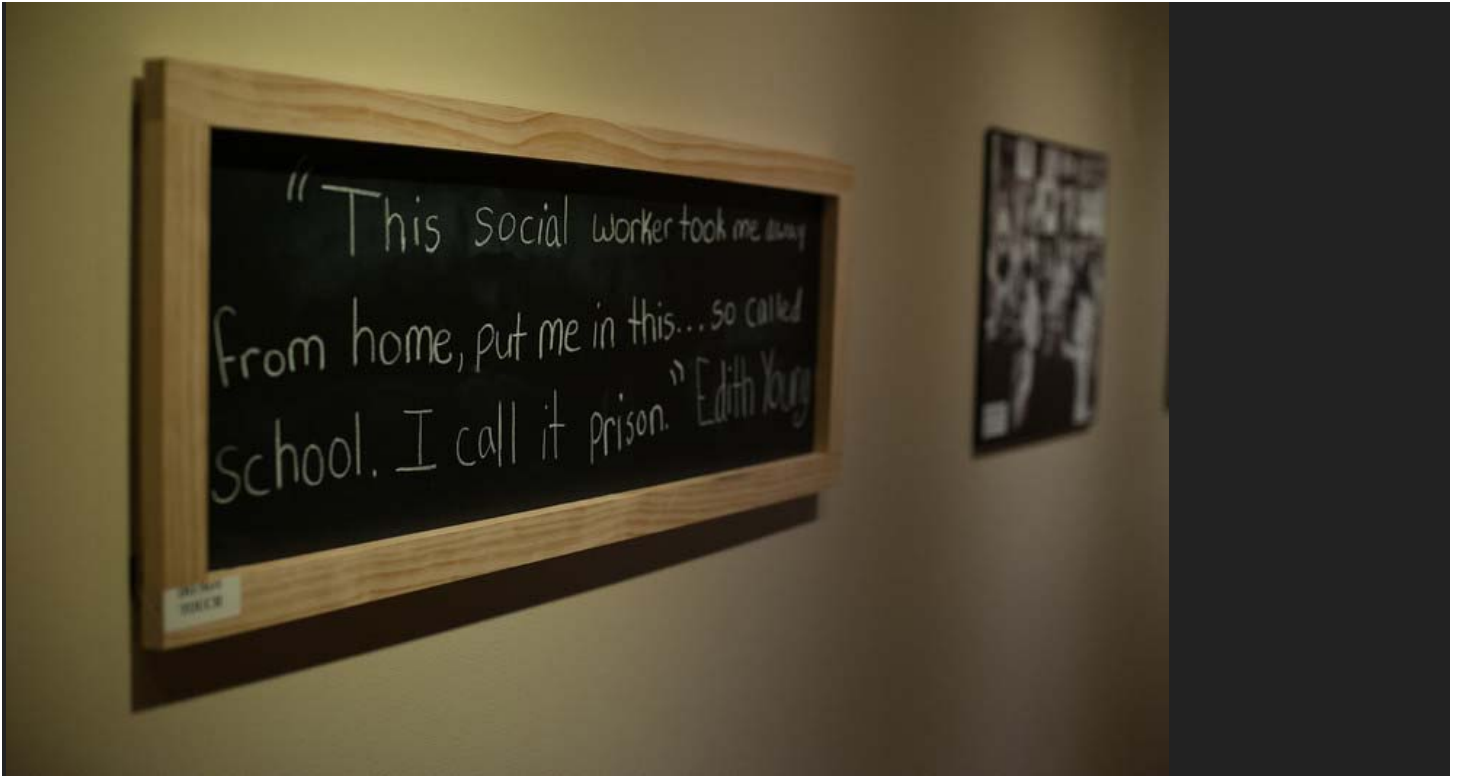
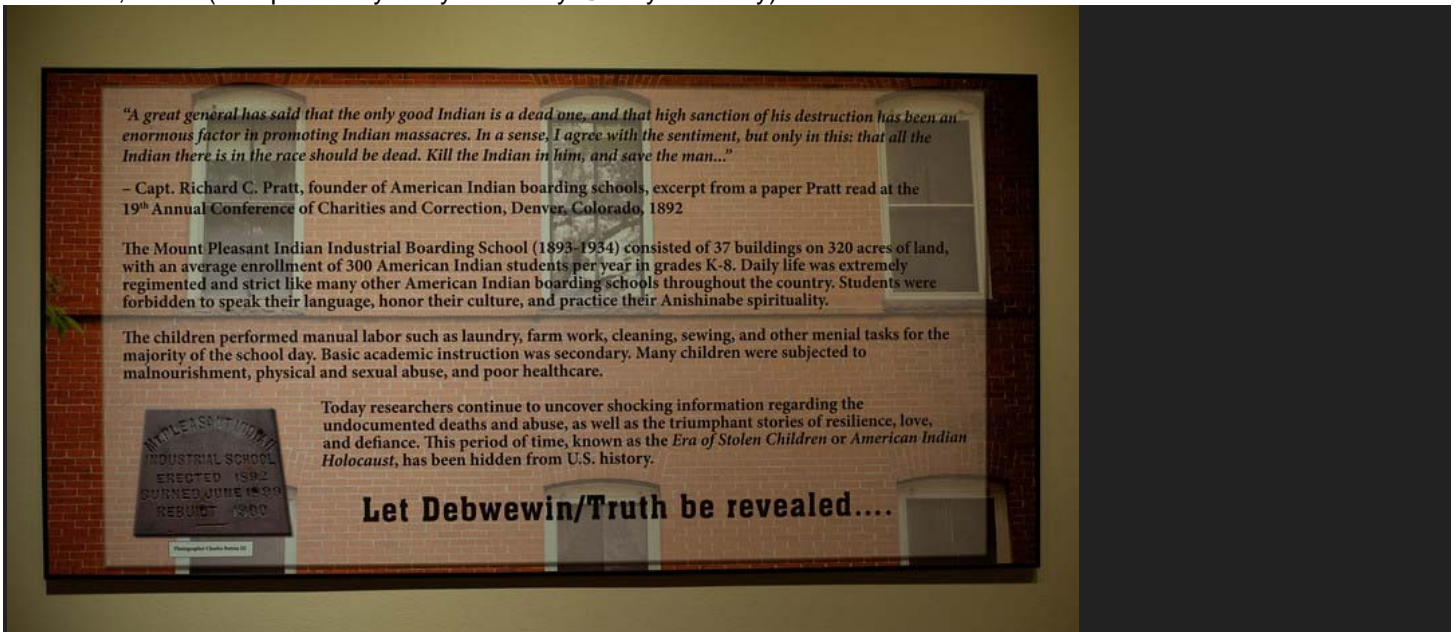


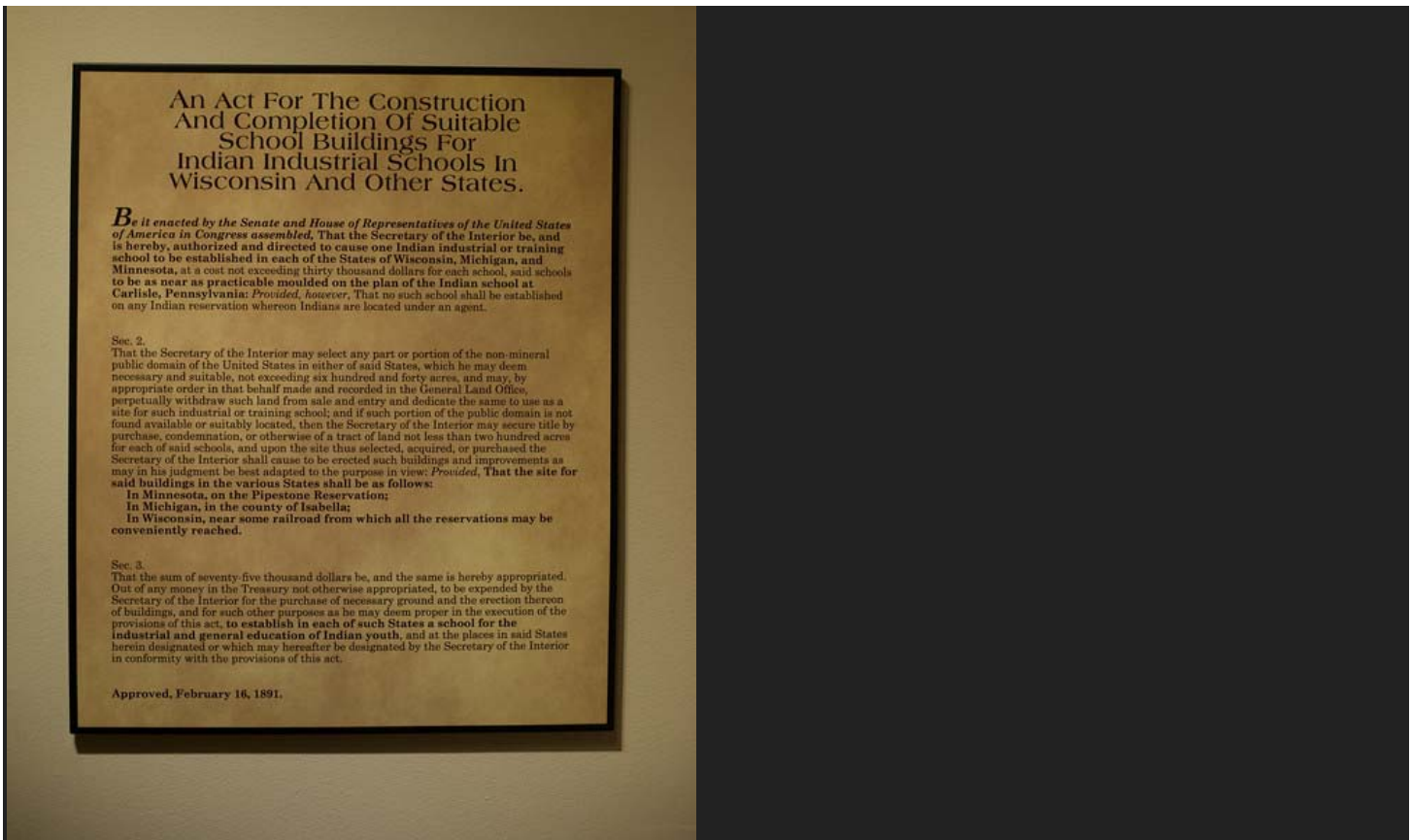
Ziibiwing Center opens new Indian Boarding School exhibit



Images from the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School special exhibit at the Ziibiwing Center in Mt. Pleasant are shown on March 18, 2014. (Sun photos by Holly Mahaffey/@hollymahaffey)



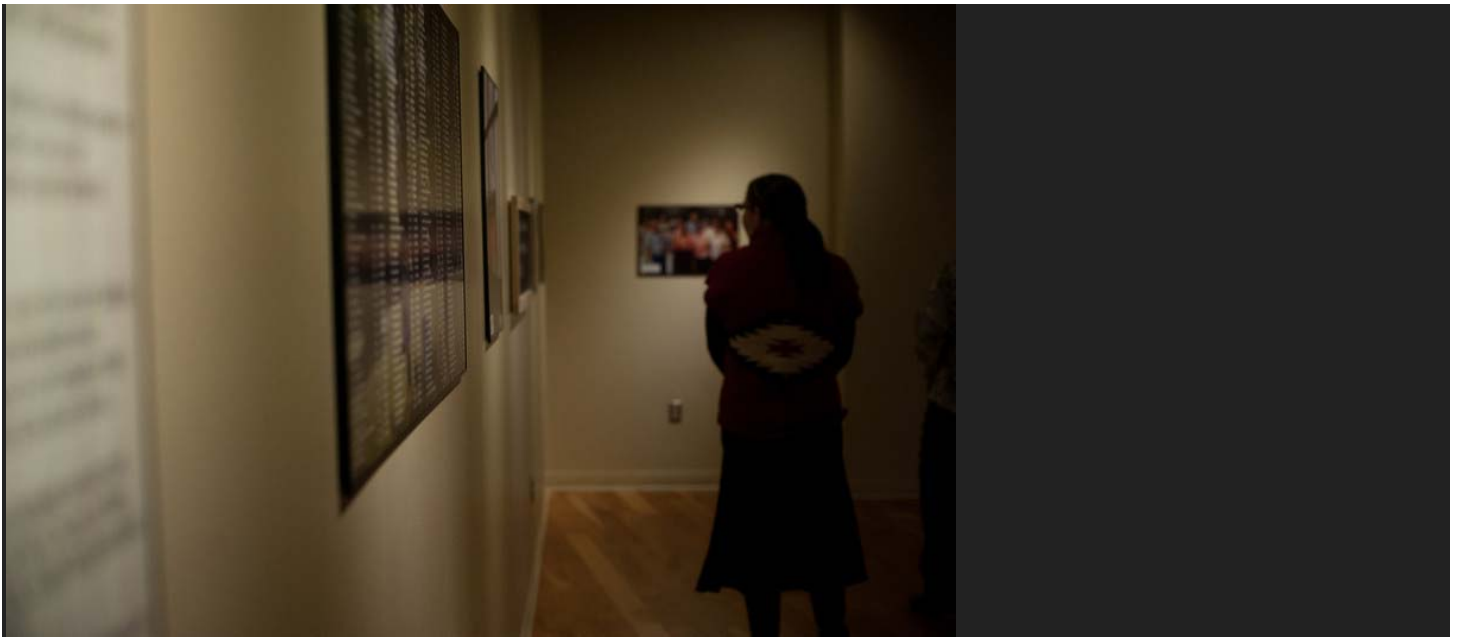
Images from the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School special exhibit at the Ziibiwing Center in Mt. Pleasant are shown on March 18, 2014. (Sun photos by Holly Mahaffey/@hollymahaffey)



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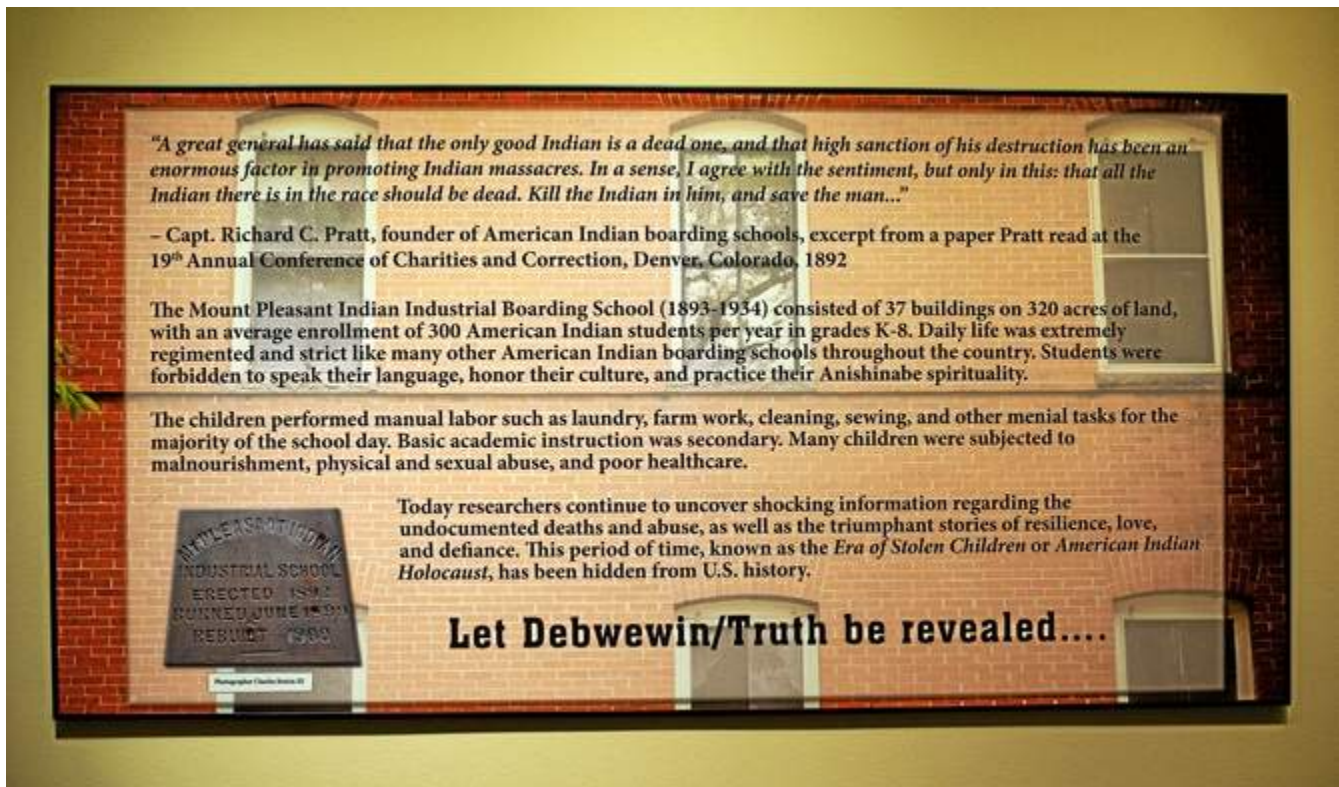
Tribal historic preservation officer Charmaine Shawana and Public Relations Manager Marcella Hadden



Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe Public Relations Manager Marcella Hadden walks through the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School special exhibit at the Ziibiwing Center on March 18, 2014. (Sun photos by Holly Mahaffey/@hollymahaffey)

By Holly Mahaffey, The Morning Sun

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Holly Mahaffey - The Morning Sun Images from the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School special exhibit at the Ziibiwing Center in Mt. Pleasant are shown on March 18, 2014.

The Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways, 6650 E. Broadway St. in Mt. Pleasant, recently opened a new exhibit focusing on the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School.

“The Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School belongs to a period of time known as the Era of Stolen Children or the American Indian holocaust,” said Frank Cloutier in a press release. Cloutier is Public Relations Director for the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.

The Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School was in operation from 1893 until 1934. The grounds of the school are visible from Crawford Road just south of Pickard St., with very few of the original buildings still standing today. When the school opened, children from three area tribes were sent to the school - each year on June 6, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe holds a “Day of Remembrance” on the grounds. Each year at the event, survivors share their recollections and detail their experience to the community members in attendance.

Native American boarding schools were common in America, Canada and abroad during the late 1800s and lasted into the early 1980s.

“Kill the Indian, save the man,” was a concept from Army Captain Richard H. Pratt, founder of the first boarding school in Carlisle, PA.

The practice removed Native children from their parents, stripping them of their culture and identity to conform to white ideals and Christianity. Today, the concept is considered genocidal, as it forced Native children to forget their language and religion, prohibiting them from practicing anything learned from their families. Children as young as five or six were taken from their families and placed at the schools until high school graduation. Accounts of physical, mental and sexual abuse are common, and historians have likened the era to cultural genocide.

“We are still realizing the impact of this today,” said Charmaine Shawana, Tribal historic preservation officer for the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Shawana said her mother was in the United States Industrial Training School, now known as Haskell Indian Nations University, in Lawrence, KS.

The exhibit shows photos, historical documents and a video loop about an hour long with speakers who have participated in the day of remembrance at the Industrial school grounds in Mt. Pleasant last year.

Included in the videos is a moving speech by Dennis Banks, a Native American leader, teacher, lecturer, activist and author, who is an Anishinaabe born on the Leech Lake Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota. Banks spoke of the forced round-up of children his age, being taken away from his mother, his time at schools in Minnesota, and the beatings he endured for trying to speak his native language.

In the exhibit are quotes written on chalkboards by children of Tribal members who worked on the exhibit - Aiyanah Eliyah Borton and Christopher Spencer-Ruiz provided their penmanship to lend to the exhibit.

“Whenever there is something at Ziibiwing, everyone helps - it really helps,” said Shawana.

“This Federal school ‘educated’ and systematically assimilated an average enrollment of 300 students per year from 1893 - 1934,” Cloutier said. “Administrative records indicate that only five children perished while attending the school during its 41 years of operation. To date, Ziibiwing researchers have identified over 200 undocumented deaths directly to this institution.”

Information released by the Ziibiwing Center says in 1891, the United States Congress established the school, which consisted of 37 buildings on 320 acres of land, with an average enrollment of 300 American Indian students per year in grades K-8.

A blog entry by the Ziibiwing center about the exhibit states, “The languages and spiritual practices of the American Indian culture were broadly misunderstood. American Indians were viewed as savages, rather than self-sufficient, knowledgeable, creative and independent people. Policymakers were uncomfortable with the

American Indian culture and rendered them inferior. On May 17, 1882, The United States Congress passed a bill known as the Indian Appropriation Act. This bill allocated money to go toward building the first American Indian boarding school.”

The Ziibiwing Center’s exhibit, which held a grand opening on March 15, will be open through September 30, 2014. An open house with light refreshments will be held on Thursday, March 27 at 4 p.m., which is free to the public and an opportunity for community members to meet Shawana in her role as Tribal historical preservation officer.

After the exhibit runs through September, it has already been requested as a moving exhibit by two museums, and Ziibiwing plans to open another exhibit in the future with artifacts found on the grounds of the Mt. Pleasant boarding school location.