

The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition  
H.R. 5444 Testimony

Kathryn Marie (Sherer) Guimaraes



I am in favor of H.R. 5444 the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. Members of my family suffered during their years at Flandreau, South Dakota Indian school, My father and uncle were injured there. Another uncle died and the cause was not revealed. Other members of the family drowned their sorrows with alcohol. We have a tremendous amount of grief in our family.

My name is Kathryn Marie (Sherer) Guimaraes (White Earth band of Chippewa). My father's name is Frederick William Peake (Sherer). My father's grandfather, Harry Sherer, went to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and changed his name illegally. Harry Sherer said I want everyone who lives in my house to have the same surname. My surname is Sherer, therefore everyone who dwells in my house needs the surname of Sherer. Therefore the BIA changed my father's from Frederick William Peake , to Frederick William Sherer. He attended school, worked, drove a car, and bought a house with the wrong name. Therefore all my siblings went to school and did the normal things with the wrong name.

My father was born 4/20/1908 and died 4/19/1991. When Fred died, the funeral home would not bury him because there was no record of his birth or adoption. My family had to go to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and search the records, it was there that the discovery of the name change came to light. He was born Frederick William Peake. Therefore his records are not accurate. He was finally buried with the name Frederick William Peake (Sherer). He is buried at Epiphany Cemetery in Coon Rapids, MN.

Frederick William Peake (Sherer) attended school at Flandreau, South Dakota. Frederick fractured his leg when he was 13 years old, in 1921, it would not heal. Basically he started school when he was five years old. His first language was Anishinaabeg. Of course, he was punished for speaking it at Flandreau.

Frederick fractured his leg and lived in a hospital from the age of 13 until he was 26 years old. Frantically the hospital staff tried to discover the cause of the problem. It was suspected that Fred had tuberculosis but he did not have the usual symptoms. X-Rays of his lungs did not reveal anything. Finally, while he was at Gillette Children's Hospital, a pathologist injected a guinea pig with Fred's blood. The test was supposed to take 24 hours, but the doctor returned in one hour, and told Fred that he did not know how he survived for 13 years because the guinea pig died a few minutes after the injection. My father had tuberculosis of the bone, not of the lungs. He was treated for tuberculosis and recovered. Fred had to learn to hold up his head, he crawled before he walked. He wore a brace on his back and walked with a cane, until he could stand alone. Then he learned to walk without aid. After this painful ordeal, Frederick William Peake (Sherer) never returned to Flandreau to finish his education.

Frederick William Peake (Sherer) attended school with his siblings, Louise, Eddie, Lewis, Kenneth, Clifford, Burdette, Thelma and Elizabeth Sherer. I am not sure about the years. One of Fred's brothers died there but no explanation was given about his death, just that he was deceased. Frederick William had another brother named David Ebenezer Peake who also attended school at Flandreau, South Dakota. David was hit on the head at Flandreau and had a difficult time doing normal activities. David Ebenezer Peake is also deceased. Most of the family became alcoholics and spent time in jail before the law was passed that Indians could not be jailed if they drank alcohol. The memory of that time is painful.

My grandfather Charles Hobart Peake ( 1878-1946) married Charlotte Catherine Walters (1886-1926). My grandfather was from the Mille Lacs Band and Charlotte Catherine was from Fondu lac Band. The year my father was born the BIA assigned him to White Earth because there were too many children born that year on Fondu lac and Mille Lacs. The BIA has great power. Talk about being pushed around.

Charles Hobart Peake and his siblings attended Carlisle Indian School. Frederick William Peake (1871- 1935), David Ebenezer Peake (1873-1934) Emily Elizabeth Peake (1877-1946), Henry B Peake (1880 -1897), George Chase Peake (1883-1955) and Marion Peake (1886-1904). The women were taught housekeeping skills, and the men were taught industrial work.

My grandmother, Charlotte Catherine Walters Peake ( March 27, 1886) did not attend school, she is the daughter of George Walters and Lizette Elizabeth Beaupre. Charlotte Catherine died April 1926.

I definitely am in favor of H.R. 5444 the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. I would also like to receive an apology from the government for the way my relatives were treated during their stay at boarding school. Everyone was punished for speaking their first language, punished for not understanding a foreign language, put in tiny rooms without light, hit on the hands and other areas of the body. Members of my family were punished without understanding why. One of my uncles died at boarding school without an explanation of what happened. Memories are painful.

After all of these years of suffering silently, I want to thank the Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States for the opportunity to speak about the atrocities that happened to my family at the forced education that they received at the BIA school. In their formative years, the education changed them from gentle caring people to be like their aggressive instructors. Just as they were punished at school, so too, their offspring were beat and punished aggressively. BIA schools taught students to beat and punish, and they learned it well.

Kathryn Marie (Sherer) Guimaraes

May 22, 2022