

Hello,

My name is Mary Erickson. I live in the northwest suburbs of Chicago Illinois. I did not go to a boarding school. But my grandmother, Frieda Genevieve Smith did. She was born and raised on Red Lake Indian reservation in Minnesota. More specifically Redby, MN. But went to boarding school. I believe it was Saint Mary's on that same reservation.

I support "H.R. 5444 the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act"

My grandmother grew up in a boarding school. And when she was 18 she hitchhiked to Chicago to live out the rest of her life. It was in Chicago she married and raised a family of seven children. She hid the fact that she was Ojibwe. And she told her kids to not tell anybody they were Ojibwe. I believe it is because she didn't want them to go through the same scary things that she went through being an American Indian. She would never speak Ojibwe even though she was fluent in it and it's how she communicated with her mother and grandmother, who only spoke with Ojibwe. She wouldn't teach her kids nor would she teach her grandkids, myself included. She would just say "you don't want to know that" to us anytime we asked her to teach us. I believe it was Saint Mary's mission that she went to. She never got to go home and visit her parents. Her parents were mostly never allowed to come see her. She talked about how mean the nuns were to her and her friends and siblings at the school. I believe my grandmother is a clear case of the outcome of being stripped of her heritage and background due to the goings on at these Indian boarding schools. It wasn't until my grandmother was in her late '80s that she would speak some of the Ojibwe language to us. Because of her being forced into the ways of the boarding school we have missed out on our Ojibwe heritage, language, teachings and ceremonies. I support all that this initiative does to uncover the sinister past of boarding schools and missionaries of both government and Catholic run entities have done to our indigenous history and background. I thank the committee or task force for the opportunity to speak

Thank you to the Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States

Regards,

Mary Erickson

Proud Ojibwe descendant of Frida Genevieve (Smith) Stattner, survivor of an Indian boarding school.