

My name is Amanda Schaeffle. My family are Ojibwe from Red Lake, Minnesota.

My Great-Grandfather Joseph Morrison was sent to Carlisle on September 23rd, 1890 and left January 16th, 1893.

My Grandmother Frances (Bunty) Louise Gurneau was sent to Pipestone Indian School in September of 1936 where she attended for a year.

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

On June 25th, 2004 I found my Father's obituary online. He passed away on March 4th, 2004.

I never got to meet him.

My parents met in May of 1983 at an Indian Drug and Alcohol Treatment Center my mom was a receptionist at in Minneapolis, MN. My father was dropping a friend off.

My mother Cheryl Schaeffle is Scandinavian from Concrete, ND. My father Richard John Morrison was Ojibwe from Red Lake, MN. When they met, my mom had been sober for 3 years. My dad was sober, though I don't know for what amount of time.

After dating for a while, they moved together to Lake George, MN where they lived for 6 months. My dad was not able to maintain sobriety.

My mom relocated to Fargo, ND in April of 1984 after he became physically abusive. She didn't realize she was pregnant with me until she was around 12 weeks.

I was born January 1st, 1985. My mom had made plans to give me up for adoption and I spent my first month in foster care. She decided to keep me and we ended up settling in Fargo.

My dad and I have that in common. We have both spent time away from our families in foster care. I was fortunate and placed with a great family that I had a continued relationship with well into my childhood.

My grandmother Bunty struggled with alcoholism throughout her life. She passed away in 1988 from diabetes and I was never able to meet her. She was sent to Pipestone after her mother passed. Her father remarried, had a one room cabin, and multiple children. It says "no home" in her student records, her reason for needing to go at 14. After a year there, she came back to Red Lake and lived with her Aunt. She attended Flandreau College as an adult.

I'm told she was complicated. Hard, but loving. She had a temper. Loved fashion and crackers. She was honest and opinionated. She loved her eleven children. Had a lot of pride for her traditions and how her children worked hard to learn and carry them forward.

I don't really know much about my grandfather, Winfield Morrison. He served in the Army during WWII. He was in the 32nd Station Hospital. I've seen one picture of him. He worked at the hospital in Red Lake after the war. My dad was five when Winfield passed.

In the late 60's, Bunty lost her children due to her alcoholism. My dad was placed off-reservation with a German family.

It's hard to hear everything that happened to him and his siblings during that time. There were multiple forms of abuse, and it was severe.

He cut his hair in an effort to prevent the mother from being able to catch him. She just grabbed him by the ears instead.

They would regularly chain the children to the wall in one of their rooms to beat them. There was more and even worse abuse. It's too hard to say.

All of Bunty's children struggled after. Some found a way to heal, and some did not.

My Dad was never able to recover. He wasn't able to maintain relationships. Not even with his own children. He suffered from bipolar disorder, alcoholism, and drug addiction. He could be violent. He hurt multiple partners and his children. He was committed for a time, and was able to reach a point where he did not hurt anyone again.

He was a champion grass dancer. He took every opportunity he could to pass on everything he had learned. He taught dancing, beading, drumming, singing, and made countless amounts of Regalia.

He died at 47 from heart failure. His death certificate lists multiple self induced causes that led to his premature death.

I'm a 37 year old highschool dropout. I've dealt with severe anxiety and depression since I was a teenager. I didn't have behavioral issues, I've never even been in any kind of trouble. I've spent a long time avoiding living life.

I've never managed to maintain a full time employment schedule. I've worked part time barely contributing to our household. I'm only qualified to work with animals and in childcare.

I've spent 26 years in therapy and mental health treatment. Continuously trying everything they have offered. Often feeling and believing myself a failure when none of it has worked.

In some ways I've been quite fortunate. I have a partner and 2 young children. A home, food, and a minivan. I've still avoided. I've struggled every day to just let myself be present and enjoy time with my children.

I never had any kind of family structure modeled for me to learn from. Thankfully my Mom has maintained her sobriety. Though she has struggled immensely with her own trauma and mental health.

For a time I had a step dad/adopted dad. He was also an avoider. He moved to California when I was 11, and eventually settled in Taiwan. He passed in 2006. He left me a gift of a bonus family.

I've felt so ungrateful. I should just be okay. I've always had food, shelter, and clothing. I've never been physically harmed in any way. I should be okay, but I've never been okay.

How incredibly selfish of me to sit here with all I've been given and still be in pain. Pain that I have let hold me back from so much.

Last year at 36 years old, my therapist and psychiatrist started to consider ADHD. By this time we've tried everything. Different kinds of therapy, a whole long list of medications. I was still anxious, depressed because I was anxious and just had a list of nasty side effects from meds to show for it.

I was prescribed Ritalin. For the first time I was able to sit with, slow down, and identify my thoughts and feelings. I was given a way to be able to process. My anxiety eased when I was able to identify what caused it. Before that I couldn't even express that noise can be so incredibly overwhelming, lighting is even distracting. I didn't even know. I, my therapist, and psychiatrist just thought it was anxiety socially, without considering the environment outside of the social aspect.

Following an ADHD diagnosis and treatment came an Autism diagnosis. Turns out I'm not JUST socially awkward and socially phobic. A whole lot of my life started to make sense and my struggles within it. Through this I've learned to give myself grace and compassion. Care and understanding that I didn't give myself before.

There was still the pain, at times even more amplified than before. I wasn't able to just avoid it anymore. I was at a place with an ability to focus and process that I had not previously been able to get to. My therapist guided me through many sessions on trauma. You can carry it without ever having been physically abused. Loss and even absence can cause it. I'm quite stubborn, so it took me a while to even accept that I have trauma.

I met my dad's family, my family for the first time when I was 19. After I spent a lot of time avoiding them and the pain I wasn't ready to acknowledge.

I'm lucky, my family is understanding of everything. Understanding of me. Pretty sure every single one of them is crazy, but they're funny and wonderful. They've always had a place for me, unconditional love, and belonging. No judgment on anything, they've all been there.

I realized I didn't know anything about our family history. A year ago I wasn't able to tell you who my great grandparents were.

Within my family, I wasn't alone in my lack of knowledge. Names on enrollment papers and not much information on who they were has been passed down. The people who would have known them, gone.

Census records. State records. Draft records. Attainable information. Names and locations. Loggers, farmers, carpenters. Evidence they lived.

I know how my grandparents and our relatives came to be in Minnesota. Some records and ancestry information cousins had pieced together online didn't make sense.

Why was Joseph Morrison married to someone who is not my great grandmother in Pennsylvania. Who is R. H. Pratt, and why are they listed as his father on some records and ancestry sites when I know Joseph's father was William.

Before that I'd heard of the boarding schools. Like everyone else I knew they were bad. That's it. What I was told in school and society.

R. H. Pratt. Richard Henry Pratt...

Joseph left Carlisle with his first wife, Cecilia Wheelock. They were married and left together because she was pregnant.

I don't know all of Joseph's story. He was with Cecilia and their daughter Cora for a year or so. I've spoken with Cora's grandchildren. Cecilia's father didn't like Joseph and had him leave. Joseph never saw Cora again, her children and family had a lot of questions too.

Eventually a picture was posted online in the Carlisle records. Joseph's student records. His brothers and cousins records. Some added information about his life from him. His sarcasm is even evident in the answers on his ex-student questionnaires. I find that comforting.

Richard Henry Pratt. I don't think I could ever properly convey the anger I felt learning who he was and what he was allowed to do. The effect that's had on all of my relatives. Even more anger with myself when the realization hit that I was compliant in living exactly how he had envisioned I live.

Disconnected and raised away from a part of who I am.

It's not our fault that we don't know. Our parents, and the generations before them didn't have their emotional needs met either. Suffered unspeakable abuse. How could anyone expect them to be okay? They weren't, and we're not because of it.

My family and I are moving to Bemidji, MN this year. My Aunt said we all come home eventually. I'm going home.

I'm going to focus on healing and my family. I'm giving my children what took me a long time to find within myself. A connection to their identity, to their family, and a community.

They will never question who they are or where they belong. We can give that to them.

My dad had eleven children....that we know of. Eight of us have found each other. Three more to find, I've got first names and three different states to search. When the time is right I'll find them.

I don't know what I'm going to do in the future, long term. I'd like to help others like me. Let them know they're not alone, we never have been.

I'm no longer going to hold myself back from enjoying my life. That is going to be a lifelong process and commitment to make sure I take care of myself. For now we're rolling with it and looking forward to wherever this takes us.

In 1986 Bunty decided to create an amazing gift for us. Her voice. We had to get our Uncle to dig through his things to find a cassette she made.

I heard her and my dad's voices for the first time this year. I really needed to hear what she had to say.

I'm going to end this with her voice. What she gave us is powerful and important. She would also get a kick from me sending this to the House of Congress.

"I used to be confused by the two cultures. Which way do I believe anyway? So, I took a few years, by the time I got to be 12 and 13 to realize. I'm Indian. I can worship as I please. I can call on my Great Spirit, because I don't know the white man's God. I don't know anything about him other than what I was taught in school." - Frances L. Morrison

Thank you to the Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States for listening to my words.

Amanda Schaeffe