

Forced to Fit In Indian Boarding Schools

What was an Indian boarding school?

Indian **boarding schools** were schools that only native children attended. These schools were in the United States and Canada. In Canada, they were called residential (rehz-ih-dehn-shul) schools. Many boarding schools were run by churches, but they all had to follow the government's (gov-ern-ments) laws. Michigan had three of these boarding schools. They were located in Baraga, Harbor Springs, and Mount Pleasant. Harbor Springs was the last to close in 1983.

What is the longest time you have spent away from your family? How old were you? How did it make you feel?



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Why did native kids have to go to boarding schools?

In the 1800s, the United States wanted to change the lives of native people to be more like white Americans. Laws were made to force this change. It became illegal for natives to practice their own religion. Native people were moved onto small areas of land called reservations (rehz-er-vay-shuns).

In the 1880s, native children were forced to go to boarding schools by the U.S. government. Many people in the United States in the 1800s thought natives were "uncivilized" (un-cih-vih-lized), or wild, and needed to change. Boarding schools were created to start those changes.

The boys in this picture and the girls on the next page went to the Holy Childhood Boarding School in Harbor Springs, which was the longest-running boarding school in the country, closing its doors in 1983.



What happened at the boarding schools?

Native kids, as young as six years old, would go to the school. Kids would live at the school and not be allowed to go home. Once at the school, they were not allowed to speak their native language, celebrate their **traditions** (trah-dish-ens), or practice their native religion.

Kids wore uniforms and had their hair cut short, and any personal items were taken away. In many schools, kids had to attend church twice a day. Some kids were sent to schools hundreds of miles away from their families.

If children were caught speaking their language or practicing their **traditions**, they were punished. Punishments were being beaten, having to do extra chores, or not being allowed to visit family.

But not all native children had bad experiences at boarding schools. Many learned art, played sports, and made friends.

Try to find the words listed in the puzzle.

boarding	punished
chores	reservation
language	school
laws	sports
native	tradition
policies	uniform



Boys and girls had some classes together, like reading and math, but were separated when they learned trades or special skills. Both these pictures were taken in the early 1900s.

All the photos are from LTSS Odawa Repatriation, Archives, and Records.

This story was written by Eric Hemenway, who is an Anishnaabe/Odawa. He is the Director of Repatriation, Archives, and Records for the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians.

R	U	S	B	M	N	A	B	E	T	C	T
N	E	M	P	A	A	O	Y	G	R	H	P
D	J	S	T	O	A	J	M	A	A	O	D
O	E	I	E	R	R	R	K	U	D	R	D
T	V	H	D	R	O	T	F	G	I	E	A
E	O	I	S	F	V	P	S	N	T	S	Q
E	N	Y	I	I	I	A	C	A	I	H	P
G	O	N	Y	D	N	D	T	L	O	C	H
M	U	S	W	A	L	U	Y	I	N	F	O
I	S	C	H	O	O	L	P	B	O	M	G
Z	A	S	F	A	H	F	C	R	R	N	B
S	E	I	C	I	L	O	P	T	H	D	Z