

Dear Laura Ingalls Wilder,

My mom has been reading the Little House series to me before bedtime, and we're almost done with the series! Little House on the Prairie is my favorite book of the series because your family began an adventure to Indian territory. I would have loved watching Pa and Ma build a log cabin like my Lincoln Log toys, and I would have really liked trying to catch the velvety brown gophers.

I was seven when we were reading the book. When we got to the chapters on your encounters with the Native Americans, I remember how terrified you were whenever you saw them. At that time I only knew that Native Americans were not treated well. Writing your experiences with the Native Americans painted a picture for me of your feelings during the 1800s in Kansas.

Like you as a younger girl, I also live among Native Americans. The Nisqually tribe reservation is a short drive from my house, and this summer I got to see many tribes carry their tradition of paddling their canoe to the Nisqually reservation. I hunt for mushrooms on Quinault tribe land, go camping near the Skykomish reservation, and one of my classmates is Native American. So it seemed extreme that Mary thought the Native Americans would kill your dog Jack. I was also a little shocked that Ma was hostile, yet scared towards Native Americans, and that Pa almost called them "screeching devils." When two Plains Indians came into your home wanting cornbread and tobacco, Ma shoved it towards them in fear. If it had been your neighbor Mr. Scott, Ma would have handed him the cornbread and tobacco like she would hand it to Pa. Ma was frightened of the Native Americans simply because they were Native Americans. Maybe if you had all gotten to know them as neighbors and individuals like Mr. Scott, you would not be so frightened and hostile towards them. They would also not seem so scary to you.

Before reading your book, I did not think very much about how Native Americans were treated back then, or even now. Now I think that the way they are treated now is still a bit like in your time. My school had an assembly when Billy Frank Jr. died a few years ago. I learned that he was a Nisqually Indian who got arrested over fifty times just for fishing salmon, even though the treaty gave him the right to fish in his land. My class also talked about the Dakota access pipeline, and the conversation took thirty minutes. I don't think the Standing Rock Sioux got a very fair chance to voice their opinion on the pipeline plans other than protesting.

Although I don't share the same attitude and feelings towards Native Americans that you had, I now understand how you thought back then. That helps me understand a little of what is happening today.

Sincerely,

Mia Louise Widrow