Thank you for coming this evening!

For those attending in person, please grab a seat.
We will pass around a sign in sheet.

For those online, the presentation will begin soon.

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SOUTH BRUNSWICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY EST 1971

# Orange Shirt Day: Truth and Reconciliation in History

A South Brunswick Historical Society Presentation

September 2026

# Agenda

- Sign-in sheet
- Introduction
- Presentation
- Q&A
- Upcoming events and information

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This presentation will highlight the background of Orange Shirt Day, a.k.a the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the history of Indigenous Boarding, Residential, and Industrial Schools in North America, and the history of South Brunswick's Indigenous Community

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# A note on historical empathy and content

- Throughout this presentation, you may notice differences in word choice used to describe the topics we are discussing
- Historical empathy is something that looks to change the narrative about how we use language to describe the situation or condition of someone or something
- In the context of early-American history and the history of Indigenous and Native American communities, some aspects of this discussion apply as well
- We want to emphasize the humanity of the individual rather than place labels based on the condition applied to them by others

# What is Orange Shirt Day?

- Orange Shirt Day was first observed in 2013 and elevated to a statutory holiday in 2021
  - Established by the Parliament of Canada
- Known officially as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, it was created following the continued discovery of unmarked graves at Residential Schools across Canada
  - Now what does this mean?

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, CultureAlly, https://www.cultureally.com/blog/national-day-truth-reconciliation

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# What Were Residential Schools?

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- Canadian Gov. formally introduced the residential school system in 1883
- Generally the goal was:
  - “Educating” Indigenous children
  - Education was primarily given to erase Indigenous culture
  - Children were forced to conform to specific ideologies. Not allowed to speak their native language or represent their culture in any way at risk of severe punishment
- Between 1831 and the late 1990s, 140 schools operated throughout Canada, with the last school closing officially in 1996 in Saskatchewan

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, CultureAlly, https://www.cultureally.com/blog/national-day-truth-reconciliation

# Why the Color Orange?

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- Phyllis Webstad was born in 1967 and attended the St. Joseph Mission Indian Residential School for one year in 1973-1974. She was 6 years old.
- She lived with her grandmother on the Dog Creek Reserve
- Before attending school, she picked out a new orange shirt to wear
- When she arrived at The Mission, the staff stripped her of her clothes, including her orange shirt, which was never returned
- Through her advocacy for remembering the history of these schools, the orange shirt has become a symbol of the movement

Phyllis Webstad (Northern Secwepemc), author and activist and the creator of Orange Shirt Day.
https://orangeshirtday.org/about/phyllis-story/.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phyllis_Webstad.

# The “Problem”

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- A quote by Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, professor and head of the department of American Studies at the University of Arizona
  - “When I lecture on Indian education, I often first introduce my students to the so-called Indian Problem, providing a lens for students to understand how non-Native people viewed Indians—not as an asset or benefit, but as a “problem” that needed to be addressed and eliminated. …[E]liminated in the sense of eradicating culture and identity.”
- Federal mission to prepare students with general education but also manual and domestic labor
- A physical and mental battle over the mind ensued to separate a sense of culture and tradition

Image sourced from the Library of Congress in “Confronting the Past: The Legacy of American Indian Boarding Schools in the United States, https://www.historyassociates.com/legacy-american-indian-boarding-schools-united-states/.

# How Was This Carried Out?

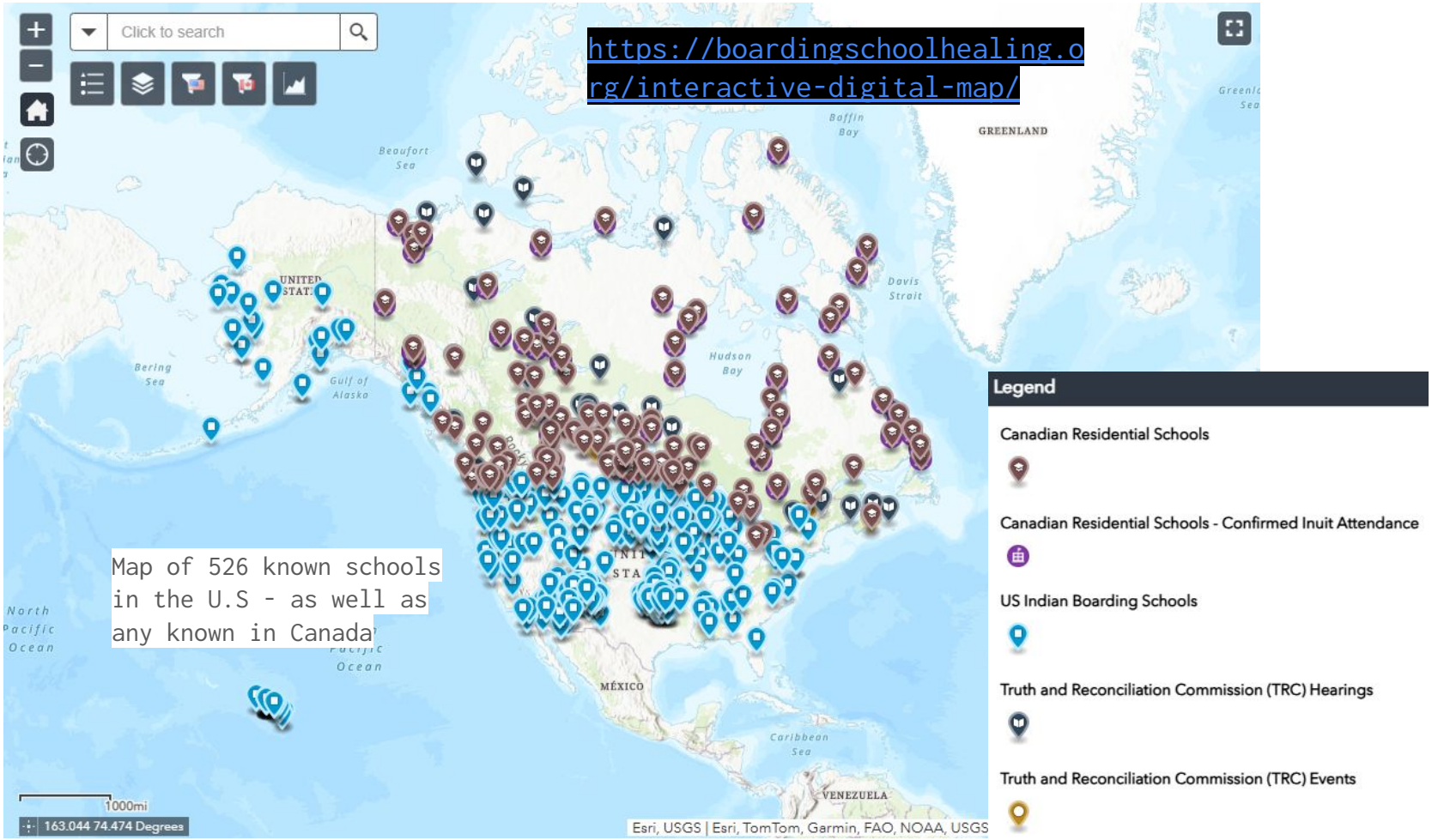
- In the United States, Federal Indian Agents were appointed
- Carry out policy toward Native Americans
  - Forcibly take children from reservations
  - Enroll them in church or government run boarding schools
  - Children as young as 4 were taken or persuaded to attend these schools often far away from their tribes or families
- Agents would receive annuities for their work, create legislation to regulate the children at the schools, and controlled the distribution of rations, clothing, and other materials to parents whose children were attending school

Image sourced from the Library of Congress in "Confronting the Past: The Legacy of American Indian Boarding Schools in the United States, https://www.historyassociates.com/legacy-american-indian-boarding-schools-united-states/.

# Life at the Schools

- Typically poor across schools in the United States and Canada
- Discouraging schedules, work requirements, living conditions, sanitary care, etc.
- Typically harsh methods of punishment
  - Cutting hair short
  - Chew soap
  - Labor
  - Withheld nourishing food and water
    - A number of additional examples
- Children maintained a rigid schedule
- Schools also maintained a more positive image to the public, often improving conditions for visitors and lying when communicating with parents

Entrance to Indian School, Carlisle Pa., https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/


Click to search
https://boardingschoolhealing.org/interactive-digital-map/
Map of 526 known schools in the U.S - as well as any known in Canada
Legend
Canadian Residential Schools
Canadian Residential Schools - Confirmed Inuit Attendance
US Indian Boarding Schools
Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Hearings
Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Events
Esri, USGS | Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS
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# The Carlisle Indian Industrial School

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- One of the most important representations of these schools in the United States
  - The first federally-managed off-reservation boarding school
  - Operated from 1879 to August 1918
  - “Aimed to assimilate Indigenous young people into the dominant white culture of the era” (CISDRC)
- Operated at the Carlisle Barracks, a former army installation in Carlisle, PA
- The site today is operated by the US Army War College, a higher education institution, where you can visit
- One notable alumni of Carlisle was Jim Thorpe

First group of male students, c.1879. NAA_73344; Photo Lot 81-12 06811800, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Accessed September 16, 2026, via CISDRC, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/images/first-group-male-students-staggered-pose-version-1-1879.

# The Case of Andrew Doxtator

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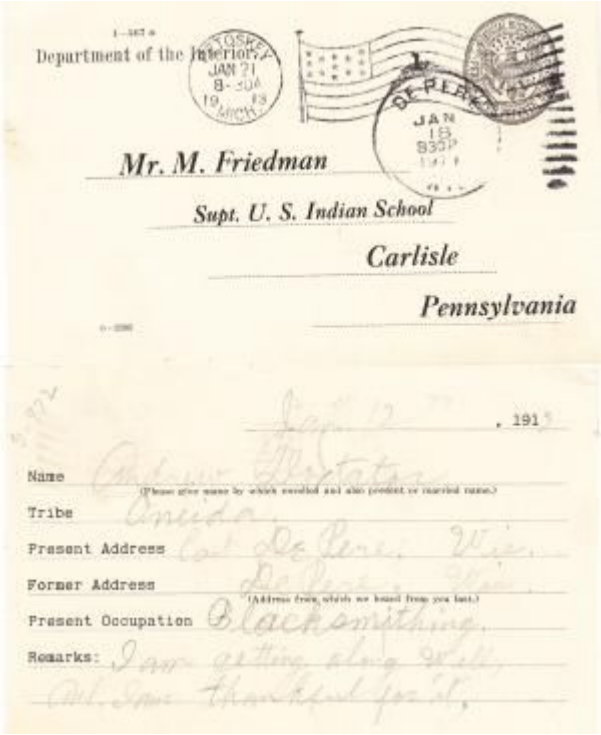
- 16 y.o. Boy from the Oneida reservation in Wisconsin
- Entered Carlisle on August 28, 1897
- Reasoning as to how he got to Carlisle was in question
- Andrew's father Henry wrote to request the return of his son, who he claims he was kidnapped
- Contentious communication back and forth between government officials as to how Andrew got to Carlisle
- Departed Carlisle on May 2nd, 1906
- Student file says his trade was blacksmithing


Department of the Interior

Mr. M. Friedman

Supt. U. S. Indian School

Carlisle

Pennsylvania

, 191

Name

Tribe Oneida

Present Address

Former Address

Present Occupation Blacksmithing

Remarks:

Student File, Andrew Doxtator, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center and NARA, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/andrew-doxtator-student-file.

# Remembrance and Repatriation

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- As of September 9, the remains of three children were brought back from Carlisle to Fort Peck, Montana
- The three children arrived at Carlisle on April 15, 1890 after an 1800 mile trip from Montana to Pennsylvania
- Their names were
  - Christine Redstone (right)
  - Peter Howe (left)
  - Richard Morgan (no known photo)
- They were welcomed by members of their community including a 25 car caravan
- Extended family/descendents of Christine Redstone were present to view the service
- Yet another example of the repatriation efforts and the reach that these schools had

"We're all related" ICT News, https://ictnews.org/news/were-all-related-montana-welcome-greets-children-home-from-carlisle-after-more-than-100-years/.

# Remembrance and Repatriation cont.

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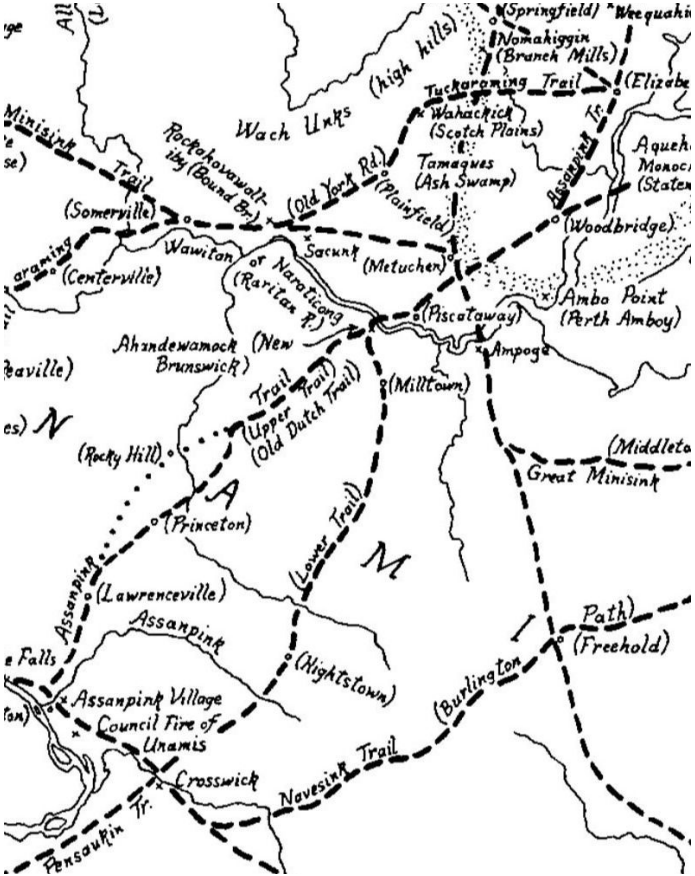
- Today, the legacy of the 973 documented passings and the estimated number of over 3,100 passings of those at the schools is recognized through movements such as Orange Shirt Day (in the US)
  - Canada's estimation is 4,000 to over 6,000
- Continued efforts to hear from those who survived the experience and respect their stories (ex. Phyllis Webstad)
- Raise awareness within local communities about Indigenous history and recognizing Orange Shirt Day within the U.S. at the federal level

The Halifax Thunderbirds wore Every Child Matters uniforms during their NLL game on Dec. 4, 2021. – TREVOR MacMILLAN / HALIFAX THUNDERBIRDS, https://www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/honouring-every-child-matters-thunderbirds-home-game-friday-part-of-nlls-three-week-awareness-campaign-100818398.

# A Local Perspective

- New Jersey does not have any documented Indigenous schools like the ones we have looked at today (as of 2026)
- Still valuable to recognize the history of those who lived in our area as their impact is still being felt today
- Indigenous communities in South Brunswick likely established themselves over 13,000 to 20,000 years ago
- Early communities were most likely capable of tool-making and thus consuming meat from hunt animals
- Also consistent with other groups, capable at making fur clothing
- South Brunswick was in a transitional area between the outer coastal plain




The Story of New Jersey Civil Boundaries 1202-1968 by John P. Snyder, millstonevalley.org/lenape.html.

# A Local Perspective cont.

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- The most significant of native communities was the Lenni-Lenape
- Many communities in our area came across the Mississippi River to the East Coast
- We most often connect their locality within South Brunswick to areas on
  - The Assunpink Trail (Rt. 27 area), Millstone River, Lawrence Brook, Crosswicksung, Rocky Hill, Dayton, and other sites around town
- Indigenous artifacts have been recovered over the years across town
  - Richard Ilnicki had presented some artifacts during his time
- Records describe an “Indian Mission” called Bethel, two miles northeast of Cranbury (Local History Files - Native Americans - Lenni Lenape - Box 32 - Folder 24)

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# Thank you!
# Any questions?

# Additional Business

- Join the SB Historical Society Email List!
- Next event: **Genealogy Workshop**
  - October 28th - 6:30-8 PM
  - Conference Room
- Future historical society meetings will be here in the new meeting room unless otherwise notes
- Pancakes at Kingston FD - 10/4 - 8-1
- Meet John Adams at Rockingham - 10/10 - 2 PM
- Land Cleanup at Mapleton Preserve - 10/17 - 9:30 AM
- Black Refugees and American Freedom at Franklin TWP Library - 10/24 - 2 PM

# Links, Images, and Sources available on SBPL Local History -> Historical Society Page

- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, CultureAlly, https://www.cultureally.com/blog/national-day-truth-reconciliation
- Phyllis Webstad (Northern Secwepemc), author and activist and the creator of Orange Shirt Day. https://orangeshirtday.org/about/phyllis-story/. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phyllis_Webstad.
- Image sourced from the Library of Congress in “Confronting the Past: The Legacy of American Indian Boarding Schools in the United States, https://www.historyassociates.com/legacy-american-indian-boarding-schools-united-states/.
- Student File, Andrew Doxtator, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center and NARA, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/andrew-doxtator-student-file.
- First group of male students, c.1879. NAA_73344; Photo Lot 81-12 06811800, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Accessed September 16, 2026, via CISDRC, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/images/first-group-male-students-staggered-pose-version-1-1879.
- “We’re all related” ICT News, https://ictnews.org/news/were-all-related-montana-welcome-greets-children-home-from-carlisle-after-more-than-100-years/.
- The Halifax Thunderbirds wore Every Child Matters uniforms during their NLL game on Dec. 4, 2021. - TREVOR MacMILLAN / HALIFAX THUNDERBIRDS, https://www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/honouring-every-child-matters-thunderbirds-home-game-friday-part-of-nlls-three-week-awareness-campaign-100818398.
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South Brunswick Local History