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And a small voice whispers
Home from Carlisle: A father's wish fulfilled after more than 130 years

**...and a small voice
whispers, "They
found us."**



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[The bodies of Aahnii students from Carlisle Boarding School on their way to Fort Belknap will be arriving at Big Muddy Creek east of Fort Kipp, then escorted by the Fort Peck Tribes through the reservation. Arrival at Big Muddy Creek is expected between 1 and 1:30 \(Thursday 9.19.24\)](#)



**Home from Carlisle: A father's wish fulfilled after more than 130 years
Oglala Sioux Chief Charging Shield wanted the remains of his daughter
Fannie to return home to Pine Ridge from Carlisle. She finally made it home.**

A group of Oglala Sioux gather by the grave of James Cornman (at lower left) at the Carlisle Barracks Post Cemetery in Pennsylvania. Three Oglala students who died at Carlisle - Fannie Charging Shield, Samuel Flying Horse, and James Cornman - were among 11 Native youths disinterred from the Carlisle cemetery starting Sept. 6, 2024, to be repatriated to their homelands. Pictured are, from left, Justin Pourier, Anna Diaz, Steve Durbay Jr., Steve Durbay Sr., and Jerome LeBeaux. (Photo by Charles Fox, special to ICT)

WARNING: This story contains disturbing details about residential and boarding schools. If you are feeling triggered, here is a [resource list for trauma responses](#) from the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition in the U.S. In Canada, the National Indian Residential School Crisis Hotline can be reached at 1-866-925-4419.

Charles Fox Special to [ICT](#) Sept 18, 2024

Oglala Sioux Chief Charging Shield sat beside the bed of his daughter, Fannie, in the hospital at the Carlisle Industrial Indian School as she struggled with tuberculosis.

Her initial improvement upon his arrival and the visits of students bringing flowers to her bedside had given him false hopes during the two-week vigil. Finally, however, the “shadow of eternity” crept across her face, according to a written account buried in historical archives.

After her final breath, he pulled her to his chest, her head against his heart. Joined by Chief American Horse, who had accompanied him to Carlisle, the two sang a death song, “a wail for the dead...a mournful and terrible lament.”

Then he laid her gently back in her bed and placed the pansies two female students had brought her earlier in the day into her hands.

Finally, more than 132 years after Fannie died at the Carlisle school in Pennsylvania, she has returned to her homelands in South Dakota, fulfilling her father's wishes. A memorial service and reburial are tentatively set for Saturday, Sept. 21.

"If it was his wish back in 1892 to return her, then at least we are doing something the father of Fannie wanted done," said Justin Pourier, the Oglala Sioux Tribe Fifth Member who accompanied the remains of Fannie and two other students on their way home to Pine Ridge.

"That helps me, reassures me, that what we're doing is something good," he said.



The grave of Fannie Charging Shield, shown here on Sept. 5, 2024, in the Carlisle Barracks Post Cemetery. Fannie, just 17, was among 11 Native youths disinterred from the Carlisle cemetery in Pennsylvania starting Sept. 6, 2024, and repatriated to their homelands. Fannie was one of three Oglala youths returned to Pine Ridge for reburial, along with Samuel Flying Horse and James Cornman. (Photo by Charles Fox, special to ICT)

Fannie, who was just 17 when she died, is among 11 Native youths being disinterred from the Carlisle Barracks Post Cemetery in Pennsylvania starting Sept. 6, 2024, and repatriated to their homelands. Fannie was one of three Oglala youths returned to Pine Ridge, along with Samuel Flying Horse and James Cornman, who also made the journey home in a special convoy.

The other remains disinterred at Carlisle are being returned to the Shoshone and Bannock Tribes; the Gros Ventre tribe, now the Nakoda and Aaniiih Nations on the Fort Belknap Indian Community in Montana; the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes; and another tribe that asked to remain anonymous.

The three Pine Ridge youths all died of tuberculosis, then known as consumption — the leading cause of death at the Carlisle school. Among the 11 being disinterred, at least two others also died from consumption, and several more died from what were described as lung ailments.

‘A True Incident’

The story of Fannie's death was published by the Massachusetts Indian Association in 1894, in an article entitled, "Chief Charging Shield: A True Incident."

While no author is credited, it seems to be based upon the eyewitness account of Alice Seabrook, the school's head nurse, and it appears she is the "Miss S" mentioned regularly in the story.

The heartfelt tale offers a glimpse into the type of human moment rarely recorded in school records. Most of the students who died at Carlisle not only died far from home but also far away

from the love of parents and family. It was unusual for a parent to be at the bedside of a dying child instead of being separated by perhaps 1,000 miles or more. Most parents of Carlisle students were often informed of their child's death by mail or telegraph, after their death.



Chief Charging Shield, Oglala Sioux Tribe, seated, was photographed in 1892 with an Oglala Sioux student, Samuel Flying Horse, at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. The chief had traveled to the school to visit his sick daughter, Fannie Charging Shield, who died March 7, 1892, of consumption while he was there. Flying Horse died the following year, also from consumption. Fannie, Samuel and another Oglala student, James Cornman, were disinterred in September 2024 and their remains returned to Pine Ridge for reburial. (Historic photo via Cumberland County Historical Society)

A recent investigative report released by the U.S. Department of the Interior found at least 973 students died at Indian boarding schools in the U.S. between 1819 and 1969, though some researchers have said the number may be [as high as 40,000](#).

<https://ictnews.org/news/apologize-report-calls-for-us-government-to-own-up-to-abusive-boarding-school-history>



Since 2017, the Office of Army Cemeteries — which oversees the Carlisle cemetery along with other military gravesites, including Arlington Cemetery — has disinterred and returned the remains of 32 children from Carlisle cemetery to 18 different tribes.

The graves of 146 students remained in the cemetery prior to the 2024 repatriations, according to office officials, though Frank Vitale of Millersville University and Jim Gerencser of the [Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center](#) at Dickinson College estimate 232 students died at Carlisle. That total includes students who died while assigned to work with local patrons in what was known as an “outing” program, and who were buried elsewhere.

The Carlisle school, which operated from 1879 to 1918, was among the first and best-known of the federally run boarding schools, established to force assimilation onto Native children by removing them from their families, culture and language. It became the model for more than 400 schools across 37 states and territories in the U.S., and provided a blueprint for Canada’s notorious residential school system.

Richard Moves Camp, a fifth-generation Lakota healer and spiritual leader who is an instructor at the University of Sinte Gleska in South Dakota, said education was sacred to Native people, but the federal government’s efforts were misguided.

“It was off-balanced education,” Moves Camp said. “They wanted us to erase the memories of our original teaching about humans and they forced one type of knowledge. We learned how to speak a foreign language, which is English ... and we learned how to forget our own language and we no longer have an idea about who we are. That was the intention.”

Heartbreak and confusion

“When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream.” -Black Elk

Arriving at the school less than two months after the massacre at Wounded Knee on Dec. 29, 1890, Fannie must have been uncomfortable traversing from the site of a massacre committed by the Army to a school run by the Army.

She had traveled from a land where hopes and dreams had been erased to a location that had all intentions of erasing all that she had known, and changing her into their image.

Fannie was 16 when she arrived on Feb. 19, 1891, as part of a group of nine girls and eight boys sent from Pine Ridge. It is likely they left for Carlisle from the same Rushville, Nebraska, train station that brought in the Fort Omaha troops who took part in the massacre.

“Put yourself in their shoes, I can't imagine it,” Pourier said. “Coming out here right after the Wounded Knee Massacre, what's going through their mind — the heartbreak, the confusion and the fear that these kids had when they came here. There was uncertainty on where they were going and if they were going to come home.”



A weathered rose sits on the grave of James Cornman at the Carlisle Barracks Post Cemetery in Pennsylvania on Sept. 5, 2024. James was one of three Oglala Sioux students who died while attending the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in the late 1800s and is among 11 Native youths disinterred from the Carlisle cemetery starting Sept. 6, 2024. They are being repatriated back to their homelands. Along with James, the remains of Oglala students Samuel Flying Horse and Fannie Charging Shield have been returned to Pine Ridge for reburial. (Photo by Charles Fox, special to ICT)

Fannie's time at the school was relatively brief. School records show that just a few months after she arrived, on June 25, 1891, she went to live and work with a family, known as a "patron," as part of the school's outing program, in Kennett Square in southern Chester County, Pennsylvania, near the Delaware border.

There is little account of how students were treated while on the outing program. Most worked as domestics or as farmhands. Others in trades. It was there, away from her people and family, she would have marked the first anniversary of the Wounded Knee Massacre.

On Jan. 8, 1892, she returned to the school and likely was already ill with tuberculosis. By then, she had spent more than half her time at Carlisle working away from the school.

She died on March 7, 1892, just two months after returning to the school.

Cornman was already at Carlisle when Fannie arrived. He had arrived at the school at age 22 on Aug. 12, 1887, and spent more than two years working for a family in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He returned from his outing in January 1891, and by April 21, 1891, he had also died of consumption.

Flying Horse arrived at Carlisle a few months later at age 18, on June 24, 1891, just as Fannie was about to leave for her outing. His school records don't show any outings during his time at the school. He died at age 19 or 20 nearly two years later, on May 31, 1893, of what the school newspaper described as "a lingering illness," consumption.

A father's grief

After Fannie's death, Chief Charging Shield revealed his plan to take his daughter's body back to Pine Ridge for burial, with hopes of boarding an evening train, according to the written account of her death.

The medical staff informed him they would need time to prepare her body. They involved Charging Shield in the process, allowing him to pick out her burial clothes, a red dress with lace around the neck and wrists. She had bought the dress with the money she earned through the outing program. The nurses and a group of Lakota girls then dressed her, being sure to replace

the pansies in her hands. With tears in his eyes and his hand on his heart, he spoke through an interpreter, according to the written account.

“When I see her face my heart is broken with sadness,” Charging Shield said. “But, when I see all of your kindness to my poor child, then there is gladness in my heart. I thank you.”

The staff then prepared an adjacent room for him to sleep in the next two days to continue the mourning process and keep a vigilant watch over his daughter’s body.

Although Charging Shield was determined to return his daughter to Pine Ridge for burial, school officials told him that since the school had paid for his trip to the school, there were not funds available to cover shipment of her body.

His reaction to the school’s refusal to ship the body home is not recorded, but the written account said he was touched by the casket, with its glittering handles and trimmings, white cloth lining and flowers. An interpreter relayed his feelings.

“We have plenty of flowers in our own land, but we never think of using them like this,” he said.

Reaching out and touching the flowers and the casket, Charging Shield made his final request through an interpreter.

“I cannot tell her mother about this (casket and floral arrangement),” he said. “I could not make her understand. Give me a picture of it, so she may understand; then she will be content.”

Fannie’s funeral was held at St. John’s Episcopal Church located on the Carlisle square.

While the whereabouts of that photo is unknown, there is a photo of Chief Charging Shield with Flying Horse, an orphan who was also known as Tasunke Kinyela and Tasune Kekineyela.

‘Not forgotten’

The six Oglala representatives arrived in Carlisle late on the night of Sept. 5, three by automobile and three by plane.

Early the next morning, after meeting the crew with the Office of Army Cemeteries, they visited the graves of the three Pine Ridge students and performed graveside ceremonies. The remains of Fannie and James would be simultaneously disinterred that day, with Samuel’s the following day.

In the early evening, Richard Moves Camp gathered a trio of men into prayer in town.

They stood in an old industrial section of Carlisle’s East Louther Street. An abandoned semi-trailer loomed over them, and a row of empty loading docks lined the opposite side of the gravel lot. The visiting Oglala men had come to the site searching for evidence that this was the location where Carlisle students arrived on the trains that had brought them East.

They had come to honor the children in a location where so much began to change for so many the moment they stepped off the train. Moves Camp prayed in Lakota. His deep, baritone voice

emotionally acknowledged the spirits of those who attended the school and the heartbroken families they had left behind.

“We can never make the past history right, but maybe we can make it better,” Steve Dubray Sr., one of the Oglala men who arrived to oversee the disinterment, said earlier in the day when they gathered outside the cemetery. “Let them (the students) know they were not forgotten.”



Three Oglala Sioux men - from left, Justin Pourier, Steve Dubray Sr. and Richard Moves Camp - searched the town of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in September 2024 for this abandoned site on East Louthier Street where Native students are believed to have arrived by train in the late 1800s to attend the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. The men came to perform a ceremony and to be present for the disinterment of three Oglala students who died while attending the school more than 100 years ago - Fannie Charging Shield , Samuel Flying Horse, and James Cornman. The three were among 11 Native youths who were to be disinterred from the Carlisle Barracks Post Cemetery starting Sept. 6, 2024, and repatriated to their homelands. (Photo by Charles Fox, special to ICT)

Gerencser, of Dickinson College, had expressed his belief that students exited the South Mountain Junction — also called the Gettysburg Junction — of the Cumberland Valley Railroad at the site to make the short walk to the school grounds.

As the men searched along an overgrown fence line, the low angle of the early evening sunlight revealed regular indentations seemingly caused by railroad ties.

Although they were satisfied that they had found the location they sought, the discovery produced more questions about what the students had endured. Answers evaded them like a distant echo unable to be clearly understood.

There was not much known about the three Oglala students whose remains they hoped to bring home. They knew when they arrived at the school and when they died of consumption. But information about what they experienced between those dates was lacking. The unknown details were haunting.

Three days later, after the disinterment of Fannie, Samuel, and James, they received some welcomed answers. The forensic findings of the remains matched the appropriate age and sex of the three students, enough to initiate healing and assuage their fears. At least three students have

been found to be misidentified since 2017, and there are 17 graves now marked as unknown in the cemetery.

On Tuesday, Sept. 10, the caskets were carried out from a tent following a distinguished transfer ceremony with the Office of Army Cemeteries. They were greeted by a cloudless, blue sky stretching across the horizon to begin their transport back to Pine Ridge. Hope filled the air.



Elder Eugene Black Crow Sr. speaks before praying at the distinguished transfer ceremony on Sept. 10, 2024, in front of caskets of three Oglala Sioux students who died at Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania more than 100 years earlier. The remains of Fannie Charging Shield, Samuel Flying Horse, and James Cornman were returned to the Oglala Sioux in Pine Ridge for reburial. (Photo by Charles Fox, special to ICT)

The ceremony had left Pourier shaken. The presentation of the ceremonial flag brought back memories of his grandfather, Eugene Ryan, who served in the U.S. Army and was wounded in World War II. The rest of the Pine Ridge entourage had to return home the preceding day, leaving him to shoulder the emotional experience alone. About 25 people, mainly the staff of the Office of Army Cemeteries, gathered in a circle. A few Native individuals from the region attended to lend support.

Like Chief Charging Shield, Pourier was touched by the efforts of strangers.

He then began his long drive home, back to South Dakota.

After departing west on the Pennsylvania Turnpike from Carlisle, Pourier soon found his SUV navigating the rolling hills of the Appalachian Mountains, with the leaves just beginning to make their autumn transition in color.

The landscape and emotional weight of Carlisle was behind him. His mood was uplifted by “the excitement of going home,” he said, with a goal accomplished.

“All that trauma stuff that happened to our people back in the 1800s still is in our people,” Pourier had said earlier in the day at Carlisle. “Somehow, we need to turn that around and start having a healing. This return of these three students will be a big step in that direction. ... That's my constant prayer. I hope this helps somebody back home to start healing.”

A ‘broken circle’ healed

The three students finally returned to South Dakota on Thursday, Sept. 12, for the first time in more than 130 years.

Over the final leg of their return home, from Vermillion to Pine Ridge, they were welcomed by bikers, student groups, riders on horseback, elders, spiritual leaders, and members of the Rosebud Sioux's Sicangu Youth Council, the youth group whose efforts in 2016 had initiated the repatriations from Carlisle.

Near Pine Ridge, the caravan was estimated to be a mile long. Pourier would call the homecoming gatherings "our common shared prayer."

"We rejoiced in the joyous celebration of a 100-year-old plus, broken circle," said Moves Camp, who led a prayer with the crowd gathered in Martin, South Dakota. "It came back together. It was a historical event..."

"People feel that something's completed now," he said. "Our children that went away came back, and they fulfilled the brokenness, the broken circle."

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Charles Fox has been a staff photographer at The Philadelphia Inquirer for 36 years. He has been involved in numerous stories and projects on the Carlisle Indian Industrial School for the newspaper, as well as magazines and books, including covering the six repatriations from the school cemetery. Having grown up in Carlisle, telling the story of the Carlisle boarding school and its students has always been of great importance to Fox. It was a history he wasn't taught as a youth.



[Caravan brings children home from Carlisle'](#)

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Cheryl Horn



Update: 7:00 MALTA

Today our babies come home. Took a few days to drive them home. 3 of them...two died within about one year of being at Carlisle Indian School. "THEY FOUND US" we found our babies and so many emotions are surfacing. I've cried at work. I've cried at home. I'm crying as I write this.

I can't imagine what they all went through. Can't imagine their last thoughts of home They are all our children. We all feel the same...

Ft Peck will escort them through their Rez as they will also be getting three Assiniboine babies back soon.

Wear orange if you can and we will welcome them home along highway 2 today 6pm. We love all our babies and I hope we find all of them that never made it home! Follow to Hays if possible for the wake tonight. Funeral and Burial tomorrow Friday

