

Remains of children who died at Pennsylvania boarding school return to Rosebud Sioux tribe

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[Associated Press](#)

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Tribal elder Duane Hollow Horn Bear leads a procession in honor of the nine Rosebud children whose remains are being transported home Friday, July 16, 2021 at the Fort Randall Casino on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. The disinterred remains of nine Native American children who died more than a century ago while attending a government-run school in Pennsylvania are headed home to Rosebud Sioux tribal lands in South Dakota. (Erin Bormett/The Argus Leader via AP)

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — The remains of nine Native American children who died more than a century ago while attending a government-run school in Pennsylvania meant to assimilate them into white culture have been returned to their South Dakota tribe for burial on its reservation.

The Rosebud Sioux planned to reburial the remains during a ceremony on Saturday, [the Argus Leader reported](#).

The effort to return the remains took nearly six years. A caravan of young adults tasked with bringing the remains home to the reservation set out Tuesday from the site of the former Carlisle Indian Reform School, which is about 20 miles west of the Pennsylvania capital Harrisburg.

It made several stops along the way, including in Yankton and Whetstone on Friday for emotional ceremonies with tribal members. Another ceremony was held earlier Friday at a Missouri River landing near Sioux City, Iowa, which was where the children, who died between 1880 and 1910, boarded a steamboat for their journey east.

“This is a common sorrow we share, but on this day we have a common celebration,” Ben Rhodd, a member of the Rosebud Sioux, told the gathering in Yankton.

[\[More than a century later, disinterment kicks off Aleut girl's long journey home to St. Paul Island\]](#)

Rodney Bordeaux, the tribe's president, said Friday's events were historic and thanked the young people for bringing the remains back.

“This is going to make us that much stronger as a people as we reclaim who we are,” he said. “Indian Country nationwide is rising up. We're going to be stronger as we go forward.”



Ione Quigley, the Rosebud Sioux's historic preservation officer, returns to her seat after speaking during a ceremony at the U.S. Army's Carlisle Barracks, in Carlisle, Pa., Wednesday, July 14, 2021. The disinterred remains of nine Native American children who died more than a century ago while attending a government-run school in Pennsylvania were headed home to Rosebud Sioux tribal lands in South Dakota on Wednesday after a ceremony returning them to relatives. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke)



Family members of the nine children whose remains returned to South Dakota gather with the remains before private prayer and ceremony Friday, July 16, 2021 on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. The disinterred remains of nine Native American children who died more than a century ago while attending a government-run school in Pennsylvania are headed home to Rosebud Sioux tribal lands in South Dakota. (Erin Bormett/The Argus Leader via AP)

Christopher Eagle Bear, 23, who was part of the youth council responsible for bringing returning the remains, said, “On this day, it is an honor to be Lakota. Hopefully, what we do here can inspire another youth group to move the road further than what we have started.”

Some of the children will be reburied in a veterans’ cemetery on the reservation and others will be interred at family graveyards, tribal officials said.

U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland last month announced a nationwide investigation into the boarding schools that attempted to assimilate Indigenous children into white society.

Haaland, the first Native American to serve as a Cabinet secretary, said “forced assimilation practices” stripped away the children’s clothing, their language and their culture. She said the government aims to locate the schools and burial sites and identify the names and tribal affiliations of children from the boarding schools around the country.

[\[Uncovering boarding school history makes for monumental task\]](#)

The Carlisle school, which was founded by an Army officer and opened in 1880, was the first of its kind off a reservation and set an example later used by other schools to assimilate Native American children into white culture. It took drastic steps to separate students from their Indigenous cultures, including cutting their braids, dressing them in military-style uniforms and punishing them for speaking their native languages. They were also forced to adopt European names.

More than 10,000 Native American children were taught at the Carlisle school and endured harsh conditions that sometimes led to death from such diseases as tuberculosis.



Tribal elder Duane Hollow Horn Bear listens to a speech at an event for the nine Rosebud children whose remains are being transported home Friday, July 16, 2021 at the Fort Randall Casino on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. The disinterred remains of nine Native American children who died more than a century ago while attending a government-run school in Pennsylvania are headed home to Rosebud Sioux tribal lands in South Dakota. (Erin Bormett/The Argus Leader via AP)