Creator’s Statement

“Every Child Counts” is an activist visual argument that brings awareness to the past atrocities First Nations peoples encountered while at residential schools. Recently, over 3,200 bodies were recovered from unmarked graves at residential schools across Canada and the U.S., who were likely victims of abuse and disease due to the mistreatment and poor sanitation at these facilities. In recognition of the tragic loss these children’s lives, my composition reflects imagery from the “Every Child Matters” movement currently sweeping across the nation. The use of the color orange, indicating the movement itself, along with images of butterflies – a symbol of transformation, the circle of life, and children in many indigenous cultures – generates solidarity in a time of collective grief from those communities this discovery impacts most. Rather than focus on the atrocities of residential schools itself, I wanted to highlight the sense of loss through the use of footprints. The larger footprints were inspired by the ink footprints infants receive on their birth certificate, prompting viewers to reflect on the children in their own lives. The smaller footprints, arranged in a sunburst pattern, plays with the idea of empty space to suggest that children, who were once here, have now disappeared, alluding to the sinister practices employed by residential schools. While viewing my visual argument, I urge the viewer to take their personal experiences into consideration to sympathize with the indigenous community as they mourn the loss of their ancestors.