

Group wants church to reveal residential school burial sites

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The church should disclose the burial sites for thousands of aboriginal children who died or went missing after attending church-run residential schools, an aboriginal rights group said Sunday.

Supporters from Friends and Relatives of the Disappeared gathered outside the Metropolitan United Church on Sunday to protest what they say is church inaction on the issue.

"We gave the United, Anglican and Catholic churches 30 days to respond and we haven't heard anything," said protest organizer Kevin Annett.

The group said more protests are scheduled next week in Winnipeg and Vancouver.

"Some chiefs across the country think that because the churches are responsible for so many deaths, they're evicting them off their land within 72 hours."

The schools, which opened in 1840, were a hotbed of physical and sexual abuse and illness.

"A lot of the deaths happened because the church employees were deliberately putting kids sick with influenza or tuberculosis with healthy children," Annett said.

The students were between 7 and 16 years old.

Annett added that there are graves behind closed schools in British Columbia and at the Mohawk Residential School in Brantford, Ont.

It was that school house where 51-year-old Doreen Silversmith's late father lived.

"I remember my dad talking about being beaten for speaking his language," she said.

"I remember running away from him in the dark. It's genocide. That violence passed onto his family."

About 15 protesters and supporters gathered at the church in Toronto Sunday.

And around 11:30 a.m., five women from the group were asked by Rev. Malcolm Sinclair to leave after they unravelled a banner that claimed 50,000 children died at these schools.