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CITY & REGION

Natives march on church

Mon, March 10, 2008

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By **JENNY YUEN, SUN MEDIA**

TORONTO -- They call it an "Aboriginal Holocaust."

The group Friends and Relatives of the Disappeared claim thousands of Native children died or went missing after attending church-run Indian residential schools until they closed in 1940.

About 15 Aboriginal supporters gathered outside the Metropolitan United Church on Queen Street East yesterday demanding the church disclose to families where their dead are buried.

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

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

The schools, which opened in 1840, were a hotbed of physical and sexual abuse and illness. The average death rate was 30 to 60 per cent at that time.

"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 to 16 years old.

There are graves behind the schools in British Columbia and Mohawk Residential School in Brantford, claimed Annett. It was that school house 51-year-old Doreen Silversmith's late father survived.

"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."

Around 11:30 a.m., five women from the FRD were asked by Rev.

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Malcolm Sinclair to leave the Metropolitan church after they unravelled a banner that claimed 50,000 children died at these schools.

"He said he didn't believe what we're saying happened, but the United Church proper have previously acknowledged that there were deaths by beatings," said Carrie Lester, 48.

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Natives march on church

BREAKING NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Cdn woman in Mexican jail now under suicide watch

BELLEVILLE, Ont. — Brenda Martin, a Canadian woman imprisoned for two years in Mexico, has been moved into her prison's hospital room for her own safety, supporters said Sunday.


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Proprietor and Publisher - The London Free Press,
P.O. Box 2280, 369 York Street, London Ontario Canada N6A 4G1