

Mass Indigenous graves found at another Catholic school in Canada

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Another mass grave of indigneous children found in Canada

Ottawa, June 24 (RHC)-- Hundreds of unmarked graves have been found near a former Catholic residential school for Indigenous children in western Canada, local media reported late on Wednesday, weeks after the discovery of the remains of hundreds of Indigenous schoolchildren sent shock waves

through the country.

In a statement quoted by several Canadian media, including CBC and CTV, the Indigenous Cowessess community said on Wednesday it had made “the horrific and shocking discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves” during excavations at the former Marieval boarding school.

“The number of unmarked graves will be the most significantly substantial to date in Canada,” according to the statement from the Cowessess First Nation and the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous First Nations (FSIN), which represents Saskatchewan’s First Nations.

Last month, the remains of 215 children -- some as young as three years old -- were found buried on the site of what was once Canada’s largest Indigenous residential school near Kamloops, British Columbia.

The new find was made at the Marieval Indian Residential School, which operated from 1899 to 1997 where Cowessess is now located, about 140km (87 miles) east of Regina, the capital of Saskatchewan.

Perry Bellegarde, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said the news was “absolutely tragic, but not surprising. I urge all Canadians to stand with First Nations in this extremely difficult and emotional time.”

After the discovery of the remains in British Columbia, excavations were undertaken near several former schools for Indigenous children across Canada, with the assistance of government authorities.

The Marieval residential school in eastern Saskatchewan hosted Indigenous children between 1899 and 1997 before being demolished and replaced by a day school. Some 150,000 Native American, Metis and Inuit children were forcibly sent up until the 1990s in 139 of these residential schools across Canada, where they were isolated from their families, their language and their culture to assimilate them into Canadian society.

Many were subjected to ill-treatment and sexual abuse, and more than 4,000 died in the schools, according to a commission of inquiry that concluded Canada had committed “cultural genocide” against its Indigenous communities.

The latest finds have revived calls on the Pope and the Catholic Church to apologise for the abuse and violence suffered by the students at these boarding schools, where they were forcibly assimilated into the dominant culture.

United Nations rights experts called on Canada and the Catholic Church to carry out thorough investigations in the wake of the latest finds, while Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau blasted the church for ignoring its past crimes.

The Canadian government apologised in parliament in 2008 and admitted that physical and sexual abuse in the schools was rampant. Many students recall being beaten for speaking their native languages; they also lost touch with their parents and customs.

Indigenous leaders have cited that legacy of abuse and isolation as the root cause of epidemic rates of alcoholism and drug addiction on reservations.

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