

Researchers say Canada's indigenous communities no stranger to suffering

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The file photo shows people at a gathering in protest against discrimination against the indigenous community in Canada.

Ottawa, September 9 (RHC)-- An indigenous community, the epicenter of a deadly stabbing rampage in west-central Canada over the weekend, now suffers from multiple hardships, including drug addiction and racial discrimination, researchers say.

At least 10 people were killed and 15 others sent to hospital after stabbings in multiple locations on Sunday in the James Smith Cree Nation and in the village of Weldon, north-east of Saskatoon, police said.

Two brothers were identified as the suspects of the stabbing spree. One was found dead Monday, and the second died of self-inflicted wounds after being arrested on Wednesday.

Located in a territory spanning more than 15,000 hectares, the community's central village is in a rural area where people live off farming. Some 3,400 members of the Cree tribe – one of Canada's First Nations – live in this area including 2,000 in the village itself. Like many other indigenous communities in North America, it suffers from such problems as overcrowded housing and high unemployment. Housing still remains a major issue as nearly two-thirds of the homes need major repairs and about a third are overcrowded.

Half of the Cree village's population is younger than 24 years of age and the jobless rate is 24 percent amid low living standards, according to figures from the 2016 census. The community has repeatedly been rocked by shootings, beatings and other crimes over the past years.

In addition, several times since 2012 hundreds of people have had to be evacuated from the reservation because of flooding. In 2016, a leak from oil pipeline contaminated the river that provided the village's water source. The people of the village sued the provincial and federation governments but nothing came of it. The village also included people who spent time at now-notorious schools for indigenous children.

In recent years, the discovery of several mass graves belonging to indigenous children in Canada has been shocking. The latest abuse scandal broke out again in May 2021 after an indigenous community unmarked a mass grave containing the remains of 215 children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia.

Critics say Canada's infamous boarding schools, in which indigenous children were widely abused, were the shock troops of Canadian colonialism. Representatives of Canada's three major groups of indigenous peoples – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis – have held meetings with Pope Francis at the Vatican in recent days to call for an apology from the Catholic Church over its role in the abuse.

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