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Brandon Sanatorium named in lawsuit filed on behalf of 'Indian hospital' patients

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A Print Email

Hey there, time traveller!

This article was published 03/02/2018 (1653 days ago), so information in it may no longer be current.

A class-action lawsuit on behalf of former "Indian hospital" patients has named the "Brandon Indian Hospital" as one of the 29 segregated hospitals targeted.

This hospital is more commonly known as the Brandon Sanatorium, which served Indigenous tuberculosis patients from 1947 to 1958.

At the time of its closure, patients were shipped out to the Ninette Sanatorium and the Brandon location was restructured as the Assiniboine Hospital.



According to a CBC News story, the \$1.1-billion class-action lawsuit cites allegations of widespread mistreatment and abuse among so-called "Indian hospitals," where patients were forcibly detained.

Brandon woman Alice Marina Young spent approximately eight years at the Brandon Sanatorium in the 1950s, during which she said that she was shut off from her family and society at large.

She escaped on at least one occasion, only to be captured by a police officer and returned to the hospital.



Now an 83-year-old resident of the Valleyview Long Term Care Home in Brandon, her time at the Brandon Sanatorium remains cemented in her mind.

During a conversation with The Brandon Sun in September, she asked on several occasions whether she was at the Brandon Sanatorium.

Daughter Sharon Dixon said this week that although her mother has never said anything about being mistreated, she believes that the class-action lawsuit is worthwhile.

University of Winnipeg historian Mary Jane McCallum has been studying Manitoba's racially segregated tuberculosis treatment facilities with postdoctoral fellow Scott de Groot for the past few years, collecting the oral histories of those involved.

While certain cases of abuse might not have been overt, McCallum said she has found a parallel between how the Brandon Sanatorium operated and how the residential school system was structured.

Located at the corner of 10th Street and Queens Avenue, the Brandon Sanatorium had a "social orientation" program that helped assimilate patients into white communities.

McCallum and de Groot conducted and processed six substantial interviews with patients of Manitoba sanatoriums.

"All of the interviewees spoke about their experiences of being removed from their families and the hardships they faced — both short and long-term — as a result," McCallum wrote. "These consequences included a loss of language — which resulted in difficulties adjusting back to family and community life after their return from the hospitals."

These past patients also complained about the extreme isolation they faced at sanatoriums, as well as the length of time they were made to remain in the health-care facilities.

Manitoba Lung Association CEO Neil Johnston said that what he has heard from past patients of these sanatoriums has been "certainly very troubling and tragic and something that we're concerned about."

The Manitoba Lung Association was founded in 1975 as a division of the Sanatorium Board of Manitoba to tackle community health programs and education services.

The Sanatorium Board of Manitoba's only activity at present is its operation of the Manitoba Lung Association, and Johnston said that they've long since divested of medical records that individual sanatoriums would have kept.

Uncertain as to the local implications of the national classaction lawsuit, Johnston said that they're currently trying to figure out things themselves.

"Because we're basically starting from scratch ourselves, from a record perspective, we have to be careful and make sure we get the information we need to take any kind of steps," he said.

Although the Ninette Sanatorium is not listed in this class-action lawsuit, Winnipeg-based Indigenous advocate Gerald McIvor is working on developing a wider-reaching class-action lawsuit, which

he said on Friday would be national in scope and field in federal court.

This class-action lawsuit would centre on "a serious breach of human rights and Canada's fiduciary responsibility toward First Nations people," he said.

Unlike the Brandon Sanatorium, the Ninette Sanatorium was not dedicated exclusively to Indigenous people.

The class-action lawsuit that cites the "Brandon Indian Hospital" (Brandon Sanatorium) was filed in Toronto last week by Koskie Minsky LLP and Masuch Albert LLP of Alberta.

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