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Canada



Gov't settles with CIA brainwashing survivor

Updated Tue, Jul. 3 2007 5:43 PM ET

Canadian Press

MONTREAL -- A Montreal senior who survived Cold War-era brainwashing experiments picked up a cheque for compensation from the federal government on Tuesday.

Janine Huard, 79, accepted an offer to end her class-action lawsuit against the federal government, which jointly funded the experiments with the Central Intelligence Agency.

The terms of the settlement are confidential, but Huard says it will allow her to live out her days in peace, with some peace of mind.

"I was really so exhausted from fighting for so many years," Huard told The Canadian Press in an interview.

"I don't think it's enough after having been hurt so much, and my kids and family. . . but at least justice has been done a little bit."

Huard was a young mother of four suffering from post-partum depression when she checked herself into McGill's renowned Allen Memorial Institute in 1950.

On and off for the next 15 years, she was one of hundreds of patients of Dr. Ewan Cameron subjected to experimental treatments that included massive electroshock therapy, experimental pills and LSD.

The patients were induced into comas and exposed to repetitive messages for days on end to brainwash them.

Cameron pioneered a technique called psychic driving, which he believed could erase harmful memories and rebuild psyches without psychiatric defect.

The idea intrigued the CIA, which recruited him to experiment with mind control beginning in 1950.

Until 1964, Cameron conducted a range of experiments at the McGill institute, often without the knowledge or the permission of his patients.

The experiments were part of a larger CIA program called MK-ULTRA, which saw LSD administered to U.S. prison inmates and patrons of brothels without their knowledge, according to testimony before a 1977 U.S. Senate committee.

Huard said the treatment left her unable to care for her children. She suffered memory loss and migraines for many years to come and had to



Janine Huard, right, and her daughter, Maime, arrive to speak to reporters about her class action suit at the Federal Courthouse in Montreal, Que., Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2007. (CP / Ryan Remiorz)

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have her mother move in with her.

Huard was one of nine Canadians who received nearly US\$67,000 each from the CIA in 1988.

But her claim for compensation from the federal government was rejected three times. Only 77 former patients who were reduced to a childlike state received \$100,000 payments.

Huard was seeking Federal Court approval for a class action lawsuit on behalf of those potentially hundreds of other patients.

Earlier this year, a Federal Court judge rejected the federal government motion to dismiss the lawsuit.

Huard said the settlement money will allow her to live out her days as she always wanted.

"I'm moving to a peaceful place to see nice scenery, near the country," she said. "I want to finish my days like that.

"I will try to forget all that because it's too painful."

The settlement ends Huard's class-action lawsuit on behalf of all patients but her lawyer, Alan Stein, says a class-action will go ahead in the future under another patient's name.

"It was a miscarriage of justice. There's no doubt about it," Stein said. "It won't be the end, believe me, because I feel the other people should be compensated as well, (people) whose claims were denied."

Stein said he's been contacted by about 30 other former patients of Cameron.

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