

Audio Clip 6 [Claudia]

How the sterilization law worked was quite complicated in some ways, and very elegant and simple in others. People came before the eugenics board primarily through institutions, but also through what were called, guidance clinics, that operated in fixed locations in Edmonton and Calgary and that also operated in traveling clinics that visited smaller communities and set up business for a short period of time. The people who worked at the guidance clinics were appointed by the Provincial government and they would announce their arrival at a location and would then schedule cases that were referred by local professionals such as social workers, a lot of family physicians and probation, or sorry, truancy officers and school boards as well. There were also rare cases where a pastor or a religious leader in the community would suggest a name for hearing at the guidance clinics and forwarding forward to the eugenics boards. That said, the vast majority of the cases came from within institutions, and this has to do with the structure of the legislation itself, which had this provision in it that if an individual had Huntington's Chorea or were in a state of psychosis or was deemed to be mentally defective(i.e. had an IQ a score below 70) then the requirement for their consent was relaxed and they could be put forward by the board itself. As well as I mentioned before, the inter---relationship between the eugenics board and the leadership of the institutions of the province was quite tight. Meetings were held in the institutions and Levin, for example, who was the superintendent of provincial training school/Michener centre sat on the eugenics board for many many years.

So, when an individual was put forward to the board, it was a fairly routinized way of viewing files. Janet Greukel, who is a professor at the university of Alberta, did a study for her dissertation actually, on the Eugenic Board procedures and she estimated that each case over the duration of the hearings lasted an average of eleven minutes. So, there was not a great deal of attention paid in the actual hearings, and it's fair to say that it would be very very rare – in fact, almost unheard of – for a case to be put forward and not approved. Now, that doesn't mean that a case would be put forward and an operation would occur. So, if you look, for example, at the annual report from 1968, which presents cumulative data from 1929 forward, you'll see that there are a number of cases that are presented and passed, but that that number is significantly higher at 4526 than the number of operations which were at 2641 by the end of 1968. The difference between those two tallies represents the difference between consent and non---consent. Those cases that would have been deemed to be suitable for eugenic sterilization were not always people who were within the institutions, not always people who were deemed psychotic, not always people who were deemed to be mentally defective. And those cases required consent. So, even if the board approved you as someone who ought to be sterilized, (i.e. cases "presented and passed") there was a characterization on the forms called "passed clear", so we can read on page 166 of the eugenics board report that the board considered a total of 103 cases, 96 were passed, so a very high percentage were seen as suitable. 6 were deferred because they didn't have appropriate documentation or they didn't fit. And one case actually had somebody show up and defend it. So, mostly they were passed without any kind of real hearing at all. Of the 96 cases that were passed by

the board, 36 were males, 60 were female. 18 were passed subject to their own consent. And then the balance of them were cases that were passed without a requirement for consent. [28:46]. So you can see that there was a little gap there and that the most vulnerable people to eugenic sterilization were those who were already institutionalized.