

# Audio clip 7 [Claudia]

---

I've had the opportunity also to interview people who lived at Michener Centre/Provincial training school and who experienced Eugenic sterilization first-hand. There seems to have been a fairly common understanding at Michener that once you hit puberty, this was an operation that was fairly routinely going to occur to you. People referred to it in the interviews as "getting snipped" or "being cut" and that this was something that people kind of smirkingly had knowledge of within the institution. When an individual hit puberty, they were very often told that they were going to go in front of a panel, they were going to have their appendix removed, they were given a physical examination, and I have interviewed one person who could describe the hearing he actually did represent himself at a eugenic board hearing as a young man. He describes having a physical examination from a female doctor, which at sixteen years of age he found completely embarrassing. It was not explained to him why that procedure was going to occur or being done. He then described several months later being taken to the administrative offices and sitting in front of a panel of people who asked him a number of questions and these questions had to do with things like caring for children and keeping track of household expenses and the idea seems to have been that the questions were really focused on whether or not... determining whether or not ...this individual could manage a home and raise a child responsibly. Of course, in the case of Michener centre, this was a really unreasonable question to ask of anyone because those inmates were often interned in very early childhood and lived through to adulthood without any opportunities until they were discharged of learning how to run a chequing account or manage a household or do dishes or, you know, buy groceries or any of those kinds of things. Their institutional skills were extremely limited, so asking them how they would manage a family and then determining their reproductive future on that basis was a really unreasonable practice. I should also note ironically that a number of people who I interviewed who lived at Michener centre and who had been sterilized, a number of women, excuse me, had ironically worked in the community as part of their vocational training as nannies and babysitters and housekeepers to families in Red Deer. So, while they were not seen as suitable to having their own children, there seems to have been little problem with them raising and caring for other's people's children. [32:43]

[32:50ish]One of the things that I have learned in interviewing people who survived at Michener and who others have told me probably were sterilized is that a significant amount of shame attached to the overall question of shame attached to whether or not one had had this happen to them. Not everyone participated in class-action suits against the government, for example, and I recently interviewed a woman who was sterilized at Michener who did work as a Nanny for many families in the Red Deer area over her 39 years of incarceration, who did not participate in the lawsuit because she said "I wanted to put that behind me." So, the notion of secrecy, and silence, and slyness about sterilization has left a legacy of shame with some survivors at the very least.