

# THE LONG STRUGGLE OF LINDA MACDONALD



**H**alf an hour into an interview, the phone rings in Linda Macdonald's Surrey apartment.

It's a Hollywood producer with good news: The film story about how Macdonald became the unwitting victim of government-sponsored brainwashing experiments is slated for fall production.

Macdonald, 53, is clearly pleased. One detects a twinkle of sweet revenge in her eye.

She sees the upcoming movie production as a vindication of her long struggle for justice — even if Ottawa still won't acknowledge any blame.

"I get really angry at the power big people have over little people," she says. "But more and more people are taking my side. I can feel we've got momentum going for us."

Budgeted at \$20 million, A Company of Strangers will show how Macdonald became a human guinea pig for Dr. Ewen Cameron's mind-bending research at Montreal's Allan Memorial Institute in 1963.

She received more than 100 electroshock treatments and was put in a drug-induced sleep for at least 86 days.

By the time she left five months later, Macdonald had lost all memory of the first 25 years of her life. She couldn't read or write, had to be toilet trained and didn't recognize her husband or five young children.

"For the first five years after I came out of the hospital, I was in the care of a young husband who I didn't know, with children I didn't know," she says. "I had no sense of responsibility because I didn't know what a mother was."

Although she later lost her husband and children and attempted suicide, Macdonald

By Bob Koss  
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**Brainwashing experiments wiped out the memory of her first 25 years. Hollywood is knocking on her door, but Ottawa is still turning a deaf ear.**

eventually rebuilt her life and now works as director of a Canadian Mental Health Association clubhouse in White Rock.

While last week's movie deal was good news, there's only been bad news in Macdonald's struggle for redress from Ottawa.

The federal government, along with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, sponsored Cameron's experiments on at least 53 unsuspecting Canadians in the 1950s and '60s.

Nine of those victims sued the CIA and settled out of court for \$100,000 each in 1988.

Macdonald was a patient of Cameron after CIA funding stopped but while his work was still supported by Ottawa.

Vancouver lawyer Tom Berger is acting for Macdonald and he made an 85-page submission last year seeking compensation — but that was flatly denied by Justice Minister Kim Campbell.

In a stinging rebuke last month, Berger accused Campbell of not bothering to read his brief and stubbornly sticking to a 1986 inquiry by ex-Tory MP George Cooper that absolved the federal government of any blame.

But Berger says the Cooper report was "flawed" because he didn't bother to interview any of the victims. He also says the report depended principally on the advice of three psychiatrists, "one of whom was later implicated in unethical experimentation himself."

"If the government were serious about this they'd have got someone with no government ties to do a proper inquiry under oath," says Berger. "Instead they got a Tory MP who conducts a superficial inquiry ... and then the government says, 'Well, George Cooper has exonerated us. What more can we do?'"

Citing Ottawa's decision to pay \$20,000 in legal costs to each of the nine victims who sued the CIA, Berger asked Campbell to fund the "impecunious" Macdonald's suit against Ottawa — but his request was denied.

"The fact that the CIA conceded its culpability and Canada will not ... and the fact Canada gave \$20,000 each to the Canadians who sued the CIA and won't finance Linda's case ... it seems very inconsistent to me," says Berger.

"Frankly, the way Linda's been treated makes me ashamed of my government."

To get any satisfaction now, Berger and co-counsel Ron Shulman must pursue Macdonald's lawsuit through the courts — a process that could take up to five years.

"Yes, we're getting stonewalled," sighs Berger. "But having set our hand to the plow, we intend to complete the furrow."

■ Linda Macdonald: Her terrifying tale is headed for the silver screen.

File photo