

# United Church concludes sex abuse civil case in Newfoundland

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<p>Will Hiscock is a lawyer for former orphanage residents at Mount Cashel&nbsp;from the era 1940s to early 1960s. In background is Chris Blom, lawyer for the Catholic Church. — Photo by Barb Sweet/The Telegram</p>

**Warning:** Content may disturb some readers. The United Church has concluded its involvement as the second defendant in a Jane Doe sex abuse case from the 1960s, The Telegram has learned.

"The matter has been resolved. We are pleased with the resolution. It was a long time," said Jane Doe's lawyer, Will Hiscock of Budden and Associates.

"My client felt respected throughout the process and is pleased to have it behind her."

The church was the second defendant in a civil claim against Stephen James Collins, a former minister and doctor facing civil allegations similar to charges he was convicted of in this province decades ago.

The claim against Collins is still active — a discontinuance has been filed removing the church from the claim.

The church confirmed it has concluded the matter.

Hiscock said whether to proceed against Collins will be evaluated. It's not known if Collins is still alive — if he is, he is believed to be in Africa.

Hiscock doesn't have other civil cases against Collins, but acknowledged there are other potential victims.

The Jane Doe case sought compensation from Collins and the church for alleged abuse that dates back to the 1960s. Her community cannot be named.

The statement of claim contended the church failed to properly screen Collins or to properly supervise him and should have known there was "criminal behaviour against children."

The woman claims she was abused in the 1960s when she participated in church activities such as choir and Sunday school led by Collins.

Collins, diagnosed in the 1980s as a pedophile, was convicted in a criminal case involving children ranging in age from seven to 11 over the period 1975-86 in Baie Verte and La Scie. All but two of the children were girls.

Prior to attending medical school in Ontario in 1970, he was a minister in Labrador. Collins returned to Newfoundland to practice medicine in Baie Verte and La Scie.

The incidents for which Collins was convicted consisted of displaying and encouraging nudity, photographing and displaying photographs of nude children, fondling, kissing, masturbation, oral sex and attempts at sexual intercourse with a female child.

In 1986, Collins pleaded guilty to seven counts of sexual assault and four counts of indecent assault. On appeal in 1987, Collins was sentenced to two years in prison and three years' probation, during which time he was to receive treatment.

The Jane Doe was not among the victims involved in those criminal charges, but her abuse allegations are similar.

It is not the only civil action against Collins.

St. John's lawyer Bob Buckingham had already settled a Jane Doe case involving a woman who was among the children Collins was convicted of assaulting.

Collins grew up in Africa after being born to church missionary parents, but completed post-secondary degrees in Canada.

Collins' name was stricken from the register by this province's medical licensing board in 1987.

A man with a similar name and similar childhood experience in Africa is listed as practising medicine at a hospital in Angola.

The United Church placed Collins on the discontinued service list in 1986 and he is therefore no longer a United Church minister.

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