

Privatized Playground At North Vancouver's Cousteau International French School Angers Parent

<http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/24/privatized-playground-at- n 6744326.html>

CBC

Posted: 02/24/2015 10:37 am EST Updated: 1 hour ago

A North Vancouver mother is raising concerns that a private school in her neighbourhood won't let other children play on its playground during the day. But the principal of the school says he has done nothing wrong by asking the family to leave. Anne Fischer says on Monday afternoon around 4:30 p.m. PT she and another mother took their children to play at the playground at [Cousteau French International School of Vancouver](#).

She says they were approached by a security guard, who then called the school principal when they refused to leave.

Fischer says when she refused again, the principal, who is identified as Gérard Martinez on the school website, started yelling and that's when the other mother began recording the interaction with her cellphone camera.

"There is security issues. I have children from my school," the principal can be heard saying in the video.

"Security issues? From children playing at the playground I raised money for? That I raised money for?" responds Fisher.

"Okay, I call the police, I have nothing to say," said the principal.

In the video, the school principal says only students from the school are allowed on the playground until after 5 p.m.

Principal defends actions

In an interview with Radio Canada, Martinez said the school's signs clearly say the playground is closed to the public during school hours, which run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. PT.

"If other [children] are playing with them, it is a question of liability and responsibility ... I just want the mother and children to follow the regulations," he said.

He denies he was responsible for the heated nature of the confrontation.

"The security guard asked two times for the mother to leave. She refused, she was yelling at her," he said.

Martinez said he did call the police after the incident and they confirmed he has the right to ask people to leave the school grounds.

"Police tell me that is my right as head of the school to make the regulations, and the regulation is that it is private until five o'clock," he said.

Community efforts

Fischer told CBC News she believes that's not right because she says the playground was built with money raised by the local Parent Advisory Committee when the school was part of the North Vancouver School District.

When the school was closed in 2010, the [land was leased to the privately run International French School of Vancouver](#).

Fisher says signs were put up saying the public was not allowed on the playground, and she takes issue with that.

"This is a school playground that the PAC committee from Fromme Elementary school raised the funds for, planned, and implemented," Fisher told CBC News.

"And to take away a community space and turn it into a private school where the local kids are not allowed to use the playground is just completely unacceptable," she said.