
Homeless man's dog on death row

Pit bull's aggressive behaviour disputed at courthouse

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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Daniel Stadt and his pit bull King Kong sit outside the North Vancouver provincial court Wednesday. The District of West Vancouver is seeking to have King Kong's mother Kora destroyed after alleged incidents of unprovoked aggression against neighbours. Stadt showed up in support of Kora. photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

A homeless Downtown Eastside man is hoping to save his dog from being destroyed after it was seized by the District of West Vancouver's bylaw officers.

The district is seeking a court order to euthanize Jairo Augusto Gonzales's pit bull Kora after several incidents of unprovoked aggression, according to court documents, though Augusto Gonzales and several advocates dispute the district's version of events.

Between October 2015 and March 2016, the district's bylaw officer made several visits to the 500-block of Craigmohr Drive in the British Properties where Augusto Gonzales and Kora were temporarily living with a friend. Neighbours complained she was running at large and off leash. On at least two occasions, they claimed she was lunging and barking aggressively.

On March 26, with a West Vancouver police officer on the scene, Kora again charged, the district alleges, causing the officer to draw his gun.

Four days later, the bylaw officer returned with a warrant to seize Kora and take her to the West Vancouver branch of

the SPCA. There was one other incident in which she lunged at a child from her kennel there.

“The animal control officer believes that Kora is likely to kill or seriously injure a person as a result of her unprovoked aggression to neighbours and strangers, and the inability or unwillingness of the respondent to ensure that Kora is properly secured at all times,” the district’s application to the court states.

Augusto Gonzales and his advocates, including former Vancouver Park Board commissioner Sarah Blyth, say Kora was never violent.

“I don’t understand under what grounds she believes that Kora is likely to kill or injure someone. Kora just barks. That is what dogs do,” Augusto Gonzales wrote in a response to the district application.

And Augusto Gonzales was working to train Kora and provide an enclosure for her, they say.

Aggressive behaviour is totally out of character for Kora, Blyth said.

“She’s been up and down the Downtown Eastside living there for many years, or at least visiting in the past few years. The market we operate has hundreds of people. She comes and hangs out there. There’s children there. We’ve never seen her act aggressively,” she said.

It is possible her behaviour could be related to her recently having had a litter of puppies, Augusto Gonzales suggested.

During a brief court appearance in North Vancouver Wednesday, district lawyer Francesca Marzari said she was still waiting for the completion of an assessment of Kora’s behaviour, and that a trial for the dog would likely have to happen in July. But Marzari said in a brief comment afterward, the district would prefer to resolve the matter with a solution everyone consents to – if one can be found.

Outside the court, Augusto Gonzales said Kora is critical to his protection on the street and his mental health. “I need my dog to protect me and to protect my family,” he said.

He produced a letter from his psychiatrist stating the importance of her companionship to him.

“I have post-traumatic stress disorder caused by war in Colombia. I was tortured in jail,” he said. “My psychiatrist recommended for me to have somebody who will listen to me. That is my dog.”

In the meantime, Augusto Gonzales and his advocates are hoping they can persuade the SPCA to release Kora to their care, pledging they’ll have her spayed and keep her leashed or in a fenced yard.

“We’re willing to work with the SPCA and the District of West Vancouver so that she’s got a good home,” Blyth said.

Emeric Le Morvan, who lives at the Craigmohr Drive home, also vouched for the dog. “I’ve known Kora since she was very young,” he said. “Kora is not just a beautiful dog. She’s family. She’s got a lot of people caring for her and a lot of people want what’s best for her.”

Kora was licensed to live at the Craigmohr home and bylaw officers were not aware that Augusto Gonzales was homeless until the Georgia Straight ran article about the dispute on Tuesday, according to the district.