



Private boarding school sued again for sexual abuse

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LAKEVILLE – The exclusive “Indian Mountain School” in Lakeville is being sued once again for alleged sexual abuse and assaults on campus in the 1980s.

A federal civil lawsuit was filed Thursday by attorney Antonio Ponvert on behalf of client and alleged victim Peter J. Buck, Jr. The suit claims Buck was raped and drugged by teachers at Indian Mountain School at age 14.

“There was horrific wrongdoing done to little children at this school for a long

period of time that was covered up," said Ponvert.

Buck now lives in Colorado and his attorney said he did not want to comment publicly.

The alleged cover up spanned more than a decade at the school, which runs kindergarten through ninth grade, according to Ponvert.

The lawsuit claims Buck was molested by his English teacher, Christopher Simonds, and that it was ignored by headmaster Peter Carleton, as well as several other administrators. The suit alleges Simonds forced Buck and other boys to engage in oral sex with each other and with him, that he raped Buck and as many as 12 other young boys, and that he took pornographic photos of the acts to blackmail the kids.

Simonds allegedly also provided the boys with cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana as bribes. Another employee named Jim Hickey is accused of giving Buck heroin before trying to rape him.

"The complaint in this case is based almost entirely on admissions made by the school," said Ponvert.

Ponvert is referring to a slew of lawsuits settled in the 1990s by a different attorney on behalf of other students, who filed anonymously. The testimony from those prior depositions, made under oath, will be used in attempting to prove allegations in two current lawsuits.

Ponvert is also representing former Indian Mountain School student Brewster Brownville, who is the alleged victim in a similar lawsuit filed against the school in October 2014.

But why are Brownville and Buck filing so many years later?

"It is very common in child sexual abuse cases that people do not come forward for a number of years and that's why the Connecticut legislature

limitations to the age of 48. It takes them years and years and years of suffering, of humiliation, and shame and trauma and PTSD, to get to a point in their lives where they can handle coming out, speaking publicly and trying to take power over what has happened to them,” said Ponvert.

The current head of Indian Mountain School, Mark A. Devey, emailed a statement to Fox CT Thursday.

Recently we notified our school community that we were conducting an investigation in order to identify any alumni who may have been victimized while a student at Indian Mountain School in the past. We believe that it is best for both the school and its alumni to deal with these issues now.

It is heart wrenching to hear these allegations, and we are saddened by them. We will take the allegations very seriously, and we will support our alumni.

Both Simonds and Carleton are now deceased, so the only defendant named in the suit is the school.

“This may not be happening at Indian Mountain School anymore, but it’s happening at other schools, right now, today, and I think the lesson is, let’s protect our kids, let’s encourage people to come forward and let’s hold wrongdoers accountable,” said Ponvert.

Simonds was investigated by state police in the 1990s but never arrested, charged or prosecuted as the statute of limitations for criminal cases had expired.

But the civil statute of limitations allows alleged victims like Brownville and Ponvert to file suit as long as they haven’t reached the age of 48.

Ponvert said both cases should go to trial within 12 to 18 months.