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22 » 2008

Dead boy, assailant fought earlier: friend

Stabbing occurred 45 minutes after shove led to brawl

David Gonczol, with files from Jessey Bird

The Ottawa Citizen

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

CORNWALL - Less than an hour before he was stabbed to death in an alternative school classroom here Monday, the 16-year-old victim scuffled with his assailant in the schoolyard, a friend of the dead teenager said yesterday.

Brandon Busch told the Citizen that as he and the victim were walking through the back doors of T.R. Leger School about 11 a.m., they passed another student coming out of the doors.

The victim apparently playfully tugged on the other student's book bag, which led to a shoving match and a challenge to step outside and settle the disagreement.

"He (the victim) was, like, OK, whatever," Mr. Busch said. "He took off his jacket and went outside to fight him."

In the ensuing scuffle, the victim was eventually put in a headlock on the ground. With his face turning purple, Mr. Busch and another friend pulled the two apart.

"Then they both stood up and (the victim) punched him in the face and the kid ran home," Mr. Busch said. Neither the victim nor Mr. Busch knew the other student.

Forty-five minutes later, the student burst screaming into a math class wielding a large dagger and chased the victim around the room before stabbing him twice in the back, Mr. Busch said.

"He comes in, pulls out the big dagger, comes around the desk, flips it, (my friend) tries to run, hops over another desk, the kid flips it in front of him, (my friend) was up against the wall so he couldn't move," he recalled.

With four or five people in the class watching, the assailant plunged the knife twice into the victim's back, he said.

"My friend was laying on the desk making groaning noises and turning white ... they were putting pressure on his back and we just chased that kid down."

Mr. Busch said he and two friends chased the assailant and caught him a short distance from the school. They held him until police arrived.

A 17-year-old youth appeared in a Cornwall court yesterday to face a first-degree murder charge. Neither the victim or assailant can be named under federal law.

During his court appearance, the accused was remanded in custody until May 20, when he's scheduled to return to court.

Justice of the Peace Louise Girault banned him from contacting a list of 10

"complainants and witnesses." She also placed a publication ban on any evidence given in court.

Classes at T.R. Leger, an alternative education school on the campus of St. Lawrence College, were cancelled yesterday although the school remained open. The third floor of Moulinette Hall, where the stabbing took place, was cordoned off for the police investigation.

"We had a crisis support team to provide necessary support to students and staff," said Terry Simzer, spokesman for the Upper Canada District School Board, adding classes will resume today.

"We will be monitoring closely how all the students and staff are doing."

Mr. Simzer said the school also plans to conduct its own internal investigation into the incident.

"We will be doing our best to determine how it happened, why it happened, and using that information to decide whether any changes (in security) are required," he said.

Marie Balagh, a friend of the victim's family, said the family is upset because no one from the school or police called to let them know their son had been killed.

"They found out when a couple of kids called them from a payphone," Mrs. Balagh said.

Mr. Simzer said he had not heard of the complaint.

"That is speculative," he said.

"We need to determine the facts and until we know the facts it is inappropriate to provide any comment."

Meanwhile, Mandy Parent, an 18-year-old student at St. Lawrence College, is spearheading a memorial for the victim, who was a friend. Bouquets of flowers and a candle have been set up, but the memorial is also becoming a place to protest security at the school.

Signs have sprouted demanding metal detectors, more security guards and surveillance cameras.

"We want to try and stop the violence, but the major thing is that we are doing this for our friend who just died," said Ms. Parent.

The college has also placed a book of condolences at the front entrance of the school for students to sign.

This killing was Cornwall's second homicide of the year.

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