

School Reaches Settlement In Sexual Harassment Case

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By KBJR News 1
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Mesabi Range Community and Technical College in Eveleth has reached a settlement with a former student who says she was the victim of sexual harassment.

Chris Buckley has our story.

In 2007, Kirstie Jones decided to go back to school. At that time she was the only female enrolled in Mesabi Range's millwright program. She says other students - two in particular - started harassing her from day one.

"The very first day I was at school I was told I should be barefoot and pregnant. I told the instructors and they pulled in all the students and told them there was no tolerance for that kind of behavior."

But it didn't stop. Crude comments, obscene gestures. It went on for months.

"I was literally sick to my stomach every day I went there, but I stuck to it because of my children."

"So she took it matter to the schools administration, and while she says they were quick to react and immediately started an investigation, the harassment only got worse."

" Phone calls, threats at my home in regards to what happened there."

"Because you went to the administration?"

"Because I took it to the administration."

She ended up quitting the program and moving back to her hometown of Hoyt Lakes.

Then she got in contact with personal injury attorney Harry Sieben.

"The only reason I took this case is I was shocked this was happening. This should not happen any place in the world, certainly Minnesota, and certainly not in a taxpayer-funded institution."

They sued the school and one of the instructors and the case was recently settled for a 6-figure sum.

"We think the settlement was fair and does get the attention of the administration"

More importantly, they hope it sends a message.

"I hope that this allows any other person to go through that course unharrassed, whether it's a man or a woman."

Though Jones will never set foot on the campus again - as part of that settlement.

That settlement is not an admission of any wrongdoing or liability by the college or the state.

Officials with the Minnesota Department of Administration would not comment on any disciplinary action taken by the school.

They say sexual harassment is an issue that everyone takes seriously and is not tolerated - period.