

## Protests disturbing, says sister of man fatally - St. Paul Pioneer Press (MN) - August 11, 2018 - page A1

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Libby Meyers wishes her brother were still alive. And she wishes the noise would stop.

As Meyers made funeral arrangements for **William James Hughes**, she has been disturbed by the public firestorm that emerged since St. Paul police officers shot her brother last weekend.

"It's really hard when you lose somebody, it's really hard when you lose them like this and it's really hard when all of this stuff is on the news with people chanting 'Racism,' " Meyers said. "I don't think it had anything to do with his race."

Hughes, 43, was a member of the White Earth Nation, a northern Minnesota Ojibwe community.

Native Lives Matter organizers, activists and other relatives of Hughes held protests during the week, calling for justice.

Meyers doesn't understand why her brother was killed, but she doesn't want to speculate. She said she will wait for answers until she can see officers' body camera footage and the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension does its investigation.

"I'm not pointing fingers," Meyers said.

### RESPONSE TO 911 CALL

The man who said he called 911 told the Pioneer Press he was a longtime friend of Hughes.

He said they were watching TV at Hughes' apartment in the Summit-University neighborhood when Hughes suddenly jumped up and fired two shots at the wall. He was fearful, ran out of the the apartment and called 911 to report shots fired.

The man, who asked not to be named for his safety, went to a friend's house and found out later that Hughes had been killed.

St. Paul police officers responded to a 911 call of multiple shots fired on the upper floor of a multi-unit dwelling at 905 St. Anthony Ave., the BCA has said.

After Hughes came out of an apartment door, two officers shot him. The BCA has not said what led officers to shoot Hughes.

Officers were wearing body cameras and St. Paul Police Chief Todd Axtell said Tuesday he anticipates releasing videos within 10 days, after letting Hughes' family view them first.

## GREW UP IN PLYMOUTH WITH ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT

The snowboard that Hughes held in one of his high school senior pictures hinted at his adventurous spirit.

"He wanted to see the whole planet," Meyers said.

The siblings grew up in Plymouth, where Meyers said she watched over her younger brother. They also have a younger half sister.

Hughes attended the Wayzata Public Schools, including Wayzata High School.

Hughes and Meyers used to work together, processing mortgages -- "he was very meticulous and detail orientated," Meyers remembered. But they lost their jobs when the housing bubble burst.

Hughes was also mechanically inclined. He would mow lawns, shovel driveways, and do plumbing and electrical work.

Neighbors in the St. Paul apartment building where Hughes was shot said he did handyman work and painting around the building. Hearing about that didn't surprise Meyers -- "he was very kind-hearted," she said.

## BROTHER STRUGGLED WITH CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

There was a point that Hughes and Meyers were next-door neighbors in Crystal, but they hadn't been in contact in recent years.

Hughes struggled with chemical dependency, though he had done well in treatment at one point, Meyers remembered.

But about five years ago, Meyers said, "I put my foot down one day and I said, 'I can't be in your life if you're doing that because I can't see you do that.' I wish I would have ended with saying, 'Call me when you stop doing it.'"

As far as Meyers knows, Hughes wasn't in touch with most relatives, though a cousin contacted him about six weeks ago.

Hughes told the cousin "he was really sick" with a disease that caused scar tissue to form on his organs and he said "his doctor thought he had less than a year left," according to Meyers.

## 'IS MY BROTHER DEAD?'

When BCA agents and St. Paul police investigators came to Meyers' home on Sunday, she said she asked them, "Is my brother dead?"

"I didn't know why else the police would be coming to me," she said. "I was thinking that he

overdosed and they told me that he was killed in an officer-involved shooting."

Axtell, the police chief, called Meyers on Sunday.

"He said he was really sorry about my loss and when they know more information, they'll convey it to me," Meyers said.

Meyers held a private funeral service for Hughes on Friday. She said she hopes to save up money to purchase a headstone.

#### OTHER RELATIVES SAY THEY WANT TO HOLD RALLIES

At a rally for Hughes on Monday, a woman who identified herself as relative said that Hughes was a cousin of Philip Quinn, who was fatally shot by St. Paul officers in 2015.

Meyers said on Friday that she had never heard of Quinn before.

But Hughes' half sister, Melissa Waukazo, and her cousin, Deana Waukazo, said Friday that the men were related.

Deana Waukazo said they have wanted to hold rallies for Hughes because "this whole thing just doesn't make sense to us. We want justice and we don't want him to be forgotten."

Mara H. Gottfried can be reached at 651-228-5262 and [mgottfried@pioneerpress.com](mailto:mgottfried@pioneerpress.com), or on Twitter at [@MaraGottfried](https://twitter.com/MaraGottfried).