



THE MISSISSAUGA NEWS

Mississauga man found guilty of killing drifter

Jury out for only three hours

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A Mississauga man has been found guilty of murdering a 20-year-old drifter in Meadowvale last year.

Jurors in the trial of Carl Gernhaelder returned their verdict Friday at around 2:30 p.m., finding him guilty of second degree murder in the Oct. 18, 2004 death of Richard Hughes.

It took the 12-member jury about three hours to come to their decision.

Gernhaelder, 24, had pleaded not guilty to the murder charge when the trial began earlier this month.

The conviction means an automatic life sentence for Gernhaelder with no chance of parole for a minimum 10 years, but the judge has yet to set a date for sentencing.

On the stand this week, Gernhaelder admitted stabbing and beating Hughes with two teenaged friends in a secluded forest on Oct. 18, 2004.

But, he denied killing the man, telling a jury that a teenage friend drowned the New Brunswick transient, known as Mohawk, holding his head under the shallow waters of a creek near Argentia and Derry Rds.

The teenager and a 15-year-old boy, whose identities are protected under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, are also charged with second-degree murder, but have yet to stand trial in connection with the homicide.

Crown prosecutor Alex Cornelius contended that Gernhaelder directed the beating and the murder after he became enraged when Hughes vomited after consuming the accused man's liquor.

Gernhaelder considered the vomiting to be "a waste of alcohol," Cornelius said.

Cornelius said the accused stabbed Hughes three times, including twice in the back and once in the neck, and clubbed him with thick tree branches, and drowned him.

In a police interrogation video played for jurors, Gernhaelder admits to a Peel Regional Police detective that he told the victim "Yo, you're gonna die."

But, on the stand last week, Gernhaelder said he doesn't remember saying that and testified he never said such a thing to Hughes.

Gernhaelder told jurors the attack was fueled by alcohol he had consumed that evening. He said there were certain parts of the beating he couldn't remember, including stabbing Hughes in the throat with a knife.

Gernhaelder said the teen killed Hughes so he wouldn't tell police about the horrific beating.

Gernhaelder said, after Hughes fell down a hill, the teens picked him up and threw him in the creek, but the water revived him.

Gernhaelder testified that he kicked Hughes to prevent him from getting out of the water, but didn't participate when one of the teens held Hughes under water until he drowned.

Cornelius said there was no way a 130-pound teen could hold down Hughes, who weighed 200 pounds. Instead, he told jurors, it was Gernhaelder, who at the time weighed more than 270 pounds, who drowned Hughes.

Cornelius told jurors that after the killing, Gernhaelder took some of his friends to see the lifeless victim.

Gernhaelder disputed testimony from friends during the trial that he told them he had killed Hughes.

The judge will hear victim impact statements on Nov. 1.