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Boy, 15, dies in Toronto school shooting

Melissa Leong and Matthew Coutts, CanWest News Service
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Courtesy Global News

TORONTO -- A 15-year-old boy was shot to death inside a Toronto high school Wednesday, causing students to hide under their desks while police locked the school down for hours.

Police were called to C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute in the city's troubled northwest end about 2:30 p.m.

Jordan Manners, a Grade 9 student, was taken to hospital without any vital signs. He was later identified as the victim.

Police had not made any arrests Wednesday night and had not recovered a weapon. The incident reportedly stemmed from a fight at a nearby pool.

Members of the force's tactical unit conducted a room-by-room sweep of the school, which has about 850 students, and secured all of its exits.

When Anthony Shulz and his classmates first heard the shots, they thought it was firecrackers. But his Grade 10 math teacher told the students to crouch under their

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decks, away from the door, as practised.

"We had a practice lock-down after Virginia Tech so we thought it was someone imitating that," the 16-year-old student said after police, with guns drawn, had led the students out single-file.

"It was panic. No one knew what to do. I was nervous, shocked. How could this happen at our school?"

Meanwhile outside, a crowd of anxious, grim-faced parents and family members massed along the police tape in front of the school. Many became increasingly frustrated with the lack of information and spoke of security concerns, of shootings at Virginia Tech, at Dawson College.

Several parents approached Victoria Zorzella as she spoke on a cellphone to her 14-year-old daughter, Michelle, who was being kept in a library under the watch of teachers. They shouted out the names of their children so Zorzella could confirm with Michelle that they were fine.

"My concern is the shooter is still at large," Zorzella, a 48-year-old mother of six, said over the growl of two overhead helicopters.

Her twin daughters had been standing with Manners in the hallway; they left and returned shortly to find that he had been shot.

"It was real quick," Zorzella said. "They were all just standing right there. He was only a little guy." "We are in that school. I have put officers in every hallway, every classroom," Police Chief Bill Blair told media from behind the police tape.

After 5:30 p.m., hundreds of students in the school were lead out into waiting buses and taken to a middle school down the street to be reunited with family.

Earlier that afternoon, the dead boy's mother had arrived at the school; upon hearing the news, she collapsed.

"She was hyper-ventilating, close to passing out. So I just wanted to help keep her together until she got to the hospital," said another parent, Julie Clyke. Toronto Mayor David Miller told reporters Wednesday night he planned to meet with the family, but will wait until a time that is "more appropriate."

He added: "What we've been doing to try to make Toronto safe and ensure that tragedies like this don't happen is very clear. We put 400 more officers on the street, the chief has changed the approach to policing, they now try to get intelligence first." Toronto filmmakers Mark Simms and Paul Nguyen featured Manners in their CBC documentary Lost In the Struggle. The film traced the lives three men grew up in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood where they encountered violence both as victims and perpetrators.

Manner's story did not make the film's final cut which first aired in October 2006, Simms said.

He remembered Manners as a "good kid," whom he had at one time given fitness instruction. Nguyen suspected Manners had been the victim of a retaliation.

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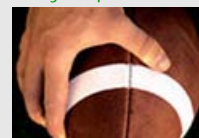
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"From what I heard, it was probably some sort of beef. Usually that's the case anyways," he said. "I don't know specifically, but I just heard on the street it's a beef. That's just what's on the street."

National Post, with files from Natalie Alcoba, Katie Rook and Kelly Patrick

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