



Jane-Finch.com, the voice of a neighbourhood for more than a decade, gets GG award

Paul Nguyen started making and promoting rap videos

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Paul Nguyen, in the forefront, at the helm of his media site, Jane-Finch.com. He will be recognized for his efforts to tell the stories of Jane and Finch by the Governor General this week. (Jane-Finch.com)

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For more than a decade, Jane-Finch.com has been chronicling the successes and struggles of the neighbourhood in Toronto's north-west end.

The site's founder, Paul Nguyen, will be in Ottawa this week to receive a Meritorious Service Medal from Governor-General David Johnson at Rideau Hall. He is being recognized for giving people in his neighbourhood, the hardscrabble Jane and Finch area in the northwest of the city, a chance to be heard.

He had that idea in 2004, and started the site as a way to broadcast what was going on in the community. Originally, that was through rap videos.

"Our roots are in rap videos," he told *Metro Morning*. "I started promoting music in the area. I made a video of a Vietnamese rapper, and it went viral. This was before the days of YouTube."

The site became a hub for more than music. It was a vital resource for residents of the area during the so-called Summer of the Gun, a few months of higher-than-normal gun violence.

In 2012, Nguyen was honoured for that work with a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Now the site is for both residents of Jane and Finch, and people that have never been there. Many people have negative views of the area, which he encounters when he meets people. Part of his idea was to change those preconceptions.

"Usually people are digging hard for something nice to say, which feels forced," he said when people talk to him about his neighbourhood. "Or they ask if it's a dangerous place. I respond by saying it's not what

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you've heard."

But at the same time, he wants to accurately reflect what goes on there. "It's not all nice," Nguyen said. "We deal with difficult issues."



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