

Jane-Finch neighbourhood co-operated with police to find alleged murder suspects

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TORONTO -- In a neighbourhood notorious for gang violence and crime, the community decided to eschew the label of "snitch." Instead, co-operation with police resulted in the arrest of two suspects days after the fatal shooting of a 15-year-old boy.

"Fortunately a number of people have come forward. They have shown courage and as a result we were able to execute a number of search warrants ... and two young offenders are now charged with first-degree murder in relation to this case," said Toronto police Staff Insp. Brian Raybould at a morning press conference.



CREDIT: CP PHOTO/Frank Gunn

A Police officer strings tape at C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute in Toronto on Wednesday May 23, 2007.

Paul Nguyen, founder of www.Jane-Finch.com, a website devoted to the culture and attractions of the neighbourhood said people in this community wanted to get to the bottom of this crime.

"It could be a testament to maybe the people are just fed up of this happening over and over again," he said. "Jordan was a young kid and wasn't a crook. People wanted to come out and help."

But he does think the arrests could have been made sooner if people took their suspicions to police right away.

"Things could have moved a lot faster," he said. "From my understanding people on the street knew already while the cops were still looking for suspects."

"The people who know right away, those are the ones who can't really go to the cops because they are connected to the street level stuff ...and there is already a sour relationship (with police)."

Nguyen said that if this shooting was drug or gang related, the police wouldn't have had much co-operation at all from the public because people don't want to play the hero and face possible retaliations.

A few days after his 15th birthday, Jordan Manners was shot in the chest last Wednesday in the hallway of his high school, C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute. He died later that day.

Two teens, who had been classmates of Manners for years, were arrested Sunday on charges of first degree murder.

They made their first court appearance on the allegations Monday.

Despite words of courage from police on Monday - the first day of classes since the shooting - a pall covered the student body at C.W. Jefferys.

Instead of basking in the noontime sun, students spoke quietly in small groups, showing little more than disdain for the many reporters stalking the schoolgrounds.

When asked about the killing, one boy dismissed the question and uttered an expletive, while standing with an emotionless entourage, near a poster of the slain boy on the window behind them.

One girl said she was still scared and didn't really want to talk with police because she is scared of cops.

"I didn't want to be part of it," said Tuyet Nguyen, a 14-year-old Grade 9 student who had seen Manners around and knew him to be a good guy. "I wanted to stay far away from it."

Tuyet is no relation to Paul Nguyen,

"People our age don't really like to snitch," she said.

Barbara Coloroso, a parenting and bullying expert, said there is a code of silence for teens that starts with parents telling toddlers not to tattle.

Coloroso was speaking in an interview last week about the slaying of Manners.

"In their own isolated world they are afraid that adults are going to make it worse or we are going to punish them," she said, referring to the fact that the Jane-Finch murder happened in a school, where kids must have witnessed some kind of dispute.

"All of this is teaching kids not to tattle but to tell. Ratting isn't reporting," she said, adding that it is a critical lesson that can save a life.

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