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Sunday, 15 January, 2006 | [Montréal](#) [Vancouver](#)
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Get crackin' in the pantry. You know what they say: When life hands you eggs ... make mushroom strata. Monday in 24 hours.

Local students get vocal on violence

By SOPHIE NICHOLLS, 24 HOURS

Drowning out the sound of gunfire plaguing our city streets, hundreds of GTA students are the latest hip-hop stars getting vocal on violence.

Creating Music Together -- a new anti-violence program -- is carrying its tune through 10 Toronto elementary schools targeting neighbourhoods hardest hit by violence, including Rexdale, Jane and Finch and Scarborough.

"The arts has the ability to motivate us intrinsically," says Program Director Anita Wong.

"In a congested urban environment it provides the space for an individual to express themselves."

Founded and led by Toronto hip-hop artist Tough Dumplin -- a youth mentor since 2000 -- the program works with Grade 4 -6 students to construct, write and record their own hip-hop songs, channelling their emotions on issues like diversity and violence into the lyrics.



Toronto hip-hop artist Tough Dumplin, founder of Creating Music Together - a new anti-violence program targeting local youth.



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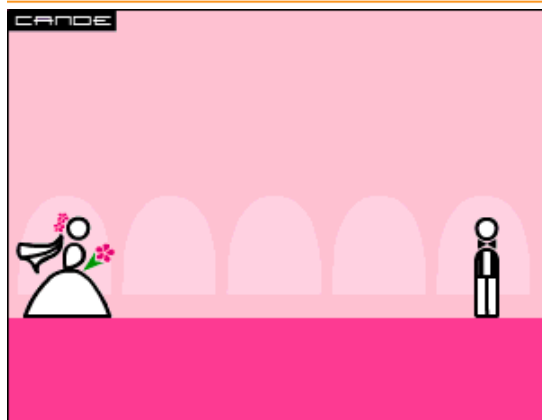
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Each student receives a CD recording of their song and gets to create cover art and a poster hung around the school to promote their work.

"I'm overwhelmed," said Tough Dumplin, adding that many students were right on beat with their lyrics memorized.

"The kids are really natural ... you can't underestimate them."

Starting the program in 2004 at two schools in north Toronto, Tough Dumplin had aspirations to reach out to kids across the city. That's when he approached The 411 Initiative For Change -- a not-for-profit organization that brings similar programs to schools across the country -- and received \$10,000 of funding from The Canada Council for the Arts.

"I would like to take it as far as it can go and give kids the opportunity for their voices to be heard," says Tough Dumplin.

"Channeling their energy now ... they will know the steps to take ... to get through life."

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