

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Contact:

Arsalan Shirazi, Author  
info@arsalanshirazi.com  
tel: 647-200-2778

### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **“Youth Believes the Pen Can be Stronger than the Gun”**

(Toronto, Ontario) –

The “year of the gun” caused a wide array of reactions from the public in 2005. The city witnessed everything from anti-violence rallies to increased policing. 20 year old Arsalan Shirazi’s reaction was somewhat different. He reacted the way he usually responds to challenging issues. He wrote about it.

“Ever since I can remember I’ve used different forms of writing to deal with difficult issues. In high school I wrote poems about racism and discrimination, and when a friend’s mother passed away, I wrote something for them because it was easier for me to express my sorrow to them that way.”

So when the third year University of Toronto student saw the tragic stories of gun violence which plagued our city in 2005, he once again felt compelled to write and began work on a fictional story about friends in Toronto who were affected by gun violence.

But what started as a personal method of approaching difficult issues, turned into something much more. Encouraged by interest in his story from friends and family, Shirazi decided to have his book published and made available to the public just one year later. The novel entitled “A Sense of Loss” is now available online and in stores everywhere, and deals with issues such as youth violence, poverty, and coping with love and loss. In addition through his More Than Words Program © Arsalan has dedicated 25% of all the money he makes from book sales towards a scholarship fund for at risk and underprivileged youth. The response, especially among high school and university students, has been incredible says Shirazi.

“I’ve been overwhelmed by the number of young adults who have contacted me and told me how much they have enjoyed this story because in it they find issues they can relate to, issues that affect their lives.”

Encouraged by this Shirazi has been going to schools with his “Writing your Life” © Presentation Series where he talks to students about the power of stories and setting positive goals for their lives. Students also get a chance to read Shirazi’s book and ask for help with their writing or other projects through a reading program he sets up with the school library. More information on the book and the program can be found online at [www.arsalanshirazi.com](http://www.arsalanshirazi.com)

“I was fortunate enough to have a lot of support and guidance during those confusing high school years which made it possible to achieve a lot of my goals and make positive choices. I guess I’m just trying to return the favour to a city which has given me so much.”