

Coming September 2010!

A new resource on homelessness for senior high-school teachers

Learning about Homelessness in British Columbia

Integrating homelessness issues into senior social sciences and humanities courses, including Civics 11, Social Studies 11, Economics 12, First Nations 12, Law 12, and Social Justice 12

Developed with the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada under their Strategic Joint Initiatives Program in cooperation with the National Homelessness Secretariat. Additional administrative support was provided by the Metropolis British Columbia Center of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
THINKING OF THE WORLD



Overview

Learning about Homelessness in British Columbia is a resource guide for teachers to use with their students to support aspects of British Columbia senior high school courses, including **Civics 11, Social Studies 11, Economics 12, First Nations 12, Law 12, and Social Justice 12**. The lessons contained in the resource meet learning outcomes that are part of the mandated curriculum in the British Columbia Ministry of Education Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs).

The resource includes:

- a teacher backgrounder on homelessness
- a set of activities and lessons on homelessness for teachers to do with their students
- a list of supplementary resources related to homelessness (teacher's guides, films, books, reports)

The overall goals of the resource are:

- To develop in students an understanding of homelessness, including the reasons for the increase in homelessness over the past decades and the policy tools that exist to reduce homelessness
- To foster empathy and a sense of justice regarding the suffering of others
- To develop in students a sense of civic responsibility and to encourage their meaningful participation in society

Why Teach about Homelessness?

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was barely any visible homelessness in British Columbia and other parts of Canada. Over the past ten to fifteen years, the number of people who live in severe destitution and deprivation on the streets and in precarious housing situations in towns and cities across British Columbia has dramatically and rapidly increased. Teaching students about homelessness gives them the opportunity to gain more in-depth knowledge about the problem, to explore and clarify their views about homelessness, to develop a sense of empathy and justice, to understand that they and society have a responsibility as citizens of a democracy to contribute to ending homelessness, and to understand that policy tools exist to reduce homelessness.

The resource will be available for free to download from www.sfu.ca/~pendakur and may be reproduced for not-for-profit educational use provided the source is properly acknowledged.

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Sections of the Resource

Introduction

Teacher Backgrounder on Homelessness

Activity 1: Myth Buster/Ranking Activity

Students will:

- Reflect on and clarify their beliefs and perspectives about homelessness
- Negotiate for consensus building

Activity 2: Homeless True/False and *Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn*, a Film about Homelessness

Students will:

- Gain a general understanding of homelessness
- Students may dispel some of the misunderstandings they have around homelessness and the population of homeless
- Learn that Aboriginal people are over-represented among the homeless population

Activity 3: Contributing Factors and Effects

Students will:

- Identify some of the factors that contribute to homelessness
- Understand the interconnectedness of many of these contributing factors, and their short-term, long-term, intended and unintended effects or consequences

Activity 4: Could You Afford It? The Rent Reality

Students will:

- Analyze and understand the difficulty of finding affordable housing

Activity 5: Why Is Affordable Housing Difficult to Find?

Students will:

- Understand the influences which have contributed to high rent as well as low supply of affordable housing

This lesson re-enforces the following Grade 12 Economic concepts:

- *Shifts in Supply and Demand*
- *Price Ceilings/Floors*
- *Elasticity of Supply (with relation to land)*

Activity 6: The Rights Balloon

Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of human rights

Activity 7: Housing as a Human Right #1. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Right to Shelter – The Victoria (City) V. Adams Case, 2008, BCSC 1363

Students will:

- Examine the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Canada's national instrument that guarantees rights
- Learn that in Canada housing is not a human right

- Examine and understand how the *Charter* has been used to support homeless people and promote social justice and the role played by Courts and citizens

Activity 8: Understanding the Life and Culture of Danse Crowkiller: Aboriginal Man who is Homeless

Students will:

- Understand the life, culture and perspectives of Danse Crowkiller as he presents himself in the DVD, *The Purpose of Life is Rice...Wink*
- Understand that Aboriginal homelessness is rooted in colonial policies that separated Aboriginal peoples from their land, homes, communities and each other

Activity 9: Distribution of Resources – “Stacked Snacks”

Students will:

- Realize that unequally distributed resources prevent some people from getting a fair share
- Define ‘equitable redistribution of resources’

Activity 10: We Can End Homelessness: Policy Tools to Solve the Problem

Students will:

- Develop an understanding of some of the policy tools that exist to solve homelessness

Activity 11: Take Action

Students will:

- Develop a sense of agency and active citizenship with respect to finding ways to ending or reducing homelessness

Supplementary Resources

Films about Homelessness

Canadian websites with teacher’s guides on homelessness

Reports, articles, books, novels