

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*

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## 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](http://www.sfu.ca/~pendakur) and may be reproduced for not-for-profit educational use provided the source is properly acknowledged.

<b>Senior Writer</b>	Jennifer Hales (Educational Consultant and BC-Certified Teacher)
<b>Project Administrator</b>	Krishna Pendakur (Professor of Economics, SFU)
<b>Contributing Writers</b>	Elizabeth Byrne-Lo (High School Social Studies Teacher, Burnaby School District) Lynn Daniels (District Vice-Principal, Aboriginal Education, Burnaby School District) Erin Yakiwchuk (High School Economics Teacher, Burnaby School District)
<b>Reviewers</b>	Cameron Gray (Former Director, Housing Centre, City of Vancouver) Gail Franklin (Fraser Valley Housing Network) Judy Graves (Coordinator, Tenant Assistance Program, City of Vancouver) Patrick Stewart (Chair, Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee in BC and President, National Aboriginal Housing Association)

## 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